

La Plata Police Department – General Order

	Title: Rabies		Order #: 607	
	Effective Date: April 1, 2015	Review Date:		
	<input checked="" type="radio"/> New <input type="radio"/> Amends <input type="radio"/> Rescinds			
Approved by: Chief Carl Schinner			CALEA 5 th Edition	
CALEA Standard:			Pages: 2	

01 POLICY: Calls for suspicious animals will be responded to as promptly as possible. Officers shall use due care when approaching animals such as raccoons, skunks, foxes, squirrels, cats and bats as they are common carriers of rabies. A Charles County’s Animal Officer shall be notified to respond to assist with the incidents and take charge of disposing of animal carcass.

02 SYMPTOMS OF RABIES:

- A.** After contact with the rabies virus, a period of a few days or several months can pass before signs of the disease show. Toward the end of the incubation period, the animal can spread rabies, sometimes even before symptoms appear.
- B.** In any animal, the first sign of rabies is a marked change in behavior, with the animal either becoming unnaturally withdrawn or unnaturally approachable.
- C.** In “furious” rabies, the animal is excited, aggressive and irritable and may snap at anything in its path. The animal loses all fear.
- D.** In “dumb” rabies, the animal will appear unusually tame, affectionate and friendly. Staggering, convulsions, spitting, frothing at the mouth, and gradual paralysis are sometimes noted. Many animals have marked change in voice.

03 OFFICER RESPONSIBILITY: In all situations involving living or dead animals that may be rabid, the officer shall:

- A.** Make extra effort to locate the animal if it is not present upon arrival.

B. Detour citizens from the area to prevent contact with the animal, whether it is living or dead.

C. Ensure that the animal does not escape or in any way endangers the officer or the community.

D. If any wild, or suspect rabid animal, has had any physical contact with any human or domestic animal, utilize any resources to prevent the animal from escaping including, as a last resort, shooting the animal. See 607.H below.

E. Wild animals in traps, raccoons in particular, still have the ability to bite or scratch if not handled properly. Wild animals can easily bite through leather gloves. If an officer must deal with a trapped animal, a pole or other long object should be placed through the trap handle.

F. The removal of animals from private property will be the responsibility of the property owner, unless there is evidence of rabies. County Animal Control shall be notified for the removal of any suspected rabid animal. If the animal is found dead on a State Road, the State Highway Administration will be contacted.

G. In cases of animal bites, responsibility for impounding the animal, if required, lies with the responding Animal Control officer. Officers will provide reasonable assistance as necessary to confine the animal until the Animal Control officer arrives.

- H.** Use of a weapon will be a last resort when attempting to contain a possible rabid animal.
 - 1. The officer will weigh all safety factors prior to this action.
 - 2. Whenever reasonably possible, the on-duty Shift Supervisor's permission shall be obtained prior to destroying an animal.
 - 3. The officer using a weapon will take care to preserve the animal's brain, if possible, as it is needed for laboratory confirmation of rabies.
 - 4. If an officer shoots an animal, he/she will:
 - a. Notify Animal Control to pick up the carcass.
 - b. If feasible, remain with the dead animal until Animal Control arrives.
 - c. Not touch the animal or allow anyone else to touch the animal.
- D.** Officers will explain the "conditions of quarantine" to the animal owner. These guidelines are listed on the Animal Bite Report.
- E.** If the Animal Bite Report cannot be served for any reason and several attempts have been made, the "owner copy" will be sent to Animal Control so that they can attempt to serve the owner's copy.
- F.** The Department's Administrative Assistant will ensure that the Health Department's copy is forwarded separately from the Animal Control's copy.

04 REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:

- A.** It is state and federal law that all animal bites be reported to the appropriate county Health Department for investigation. All exposures, including bites, scratches and contact with saliva, carry the potential for transmitting rabies, and must be reported to the Health Department.
- B.** Officers will complete an Animal Bite Report, obtain a Department incident number, and forward the report to the Records Unit.
- C.** It is imperative that the address where the animal will be quarantined for the (10) days be completed and the report signed by the owner of the animal. If the animal is impounded by Animal Control, the Animal Control address must be placed in the "place of impoundment" space.