

## **Dog Complaints**

### **6.07.01 PURPOSE**

This order establishes policies regarding the safe and appropriate response to emergency and non-emergency dog-related situations.

### **6.07.02 DEFINITIONS AND TERMS**

- A. Barking Dog** – “...a dog that barks, bays, cries, howls or makes any other noise continuously and incessantly for a period of 10 minutes to the disturbance of any other person” (San Francisco Health Code 41).
- B. Biting Dog** – “Any dog that bites any person or other animal in the City and County of San Francisco, provided, however, that the person or animal bitten was not at the time either provoking or teasing the dog without cause” (San Francisco Health Code 41.5.1).
- C. Citation Procedure** – as required per DGO 5.06 Citation Release.
- D. Commission of Animal Control and Welfare** – has the power and duties to hold hearings and submit recommendations regarding animal control and welfare; the maintenance of animals in public, private, and commercial care; and work with the Tax collector, ACC, and others to maintain licensing procedures and fees to the Board of Supervisors and the City Administrator. The Chief of Police will designate one supervisory officer assigned to the Investigations Bureau to serve on the Commission of Animal Control and Welfare.
- E. Department of Public Health** – the governing code by which dogs and their owners are required to adhere.
- F. SF Form 573** – Departmental Animal Bite report form. This form will be completed for all incidents and immediately scanned and emailed to ACC (ACCDispatch@sfgov.org).

- G. Hearing Officer** – “any designated representative of the Department of Public Health or the Police Department who conducts a hearing pursuant to Section 42.4” (San Francisco Health Code 42(g)).
- H. Immediate Impound and Quarantine** – dog is taken by ACC when: the dog is a stray; the dog cannot be securely confined and quarantined by owners; the dog poses an immediate threat to public health and safety (e.g. the dog is vicious and dangerous, used as a fighting dog, the bite is particularly severe, etc.)
- I. Incident Report** – the standard SFPD report shall be completed for all incidents. Report shall document member’s observations of the dog’s behavior and the owner’s handling of the dog. Reports shall be immediately assigned and emailed to VDDU.
- J. Quarantine by Owner** – the strict confinement of the offending dog at the owner’s residence for a period of 10 days.
- K. San Francisco Department of Animal Care and Control (ACC)** – responsible for operating the animal shelter, enforcing the provisions of the Health Code, and carrying out the duties and functions of the Animal Control Officer (San Francisco Health Code 41.4). The email for ACC is [ACCDispatch@sfgov.org](mailto:ACCDispatch@sfgov.org).
- L. Unleashed Dog** – “ It shall be unlawful for the owner or guardian of any animal, other than a domestic cat, to permit said animal to run at large within the City and County; provided, however, that the provisions of this subsection shall not be applicable to any area under the jurisdiction of the Recreation and Park Commission of the City and County, and which has been designated by said Commission as an animal exercise area” (San Francisco Health Code 41.12(a)).
1. **At Large** – any dog off the premises of its owners or guardians and not under restraint by a leash, rope, or chain of not more than eight feet (San Francisco Health Code 41.)
- M. Vicious Dog** –
1. “...any dog that when unprovoked inflicts bites or attacks a human being or domestic animal either on public or private property, or in a vicious or terrorizing manner, approaches any person in apparent attitude of attack upon the streets, sidewalks, or any public grounds or places; or
  2. Any dog with a known propensity, tendency or disposition to attack unprovoked, to cause injury or to otherwise endanger the safety of human beings or domestic animals; or

3. Any dog which engages in, or is found to have been trained to engage in exhibitions of dog fighting; or
4. Any dog at large found to attack, menace, chase, display threatening or aggressive behavior or otherwise threaten or endanger the safety of any domestic animal or person” (San Francisco Health Code 42(a)(1-4)).

**N. Vicious and Dangerous Dog Unit (VDDU)** – a unit of the San Francisco Police Department that investigates incidents involving dogs that exhibit menacing and/or aggressive behavior. VDDU also reviews and schedules all Vicious and Dangerous Dog Hearings. The email for VDDU is SFPDdangerousdogs@sfgov.org.

**O. Complaint of Vicious and Dangerous Dog Form (Form 584)**– the victim, owner, or member may submit a form to VDDU requesting a Vicious and Dangerous Dog Hearing for vicious or terrorizing dog behavior, including a dog bite. Form may be submitted to VDDU up to 90 days after incident.

**P. Vicious and Dangerous Dog Hearing** – the Incident may lead to a hearing. Hearings may be requested by the victim, owner, or department member. A hearing may also be requested based on observation by an Animal Control Officer or Department of Public Health representative. The Hearing Officer will decide if the dog is deemed Vicious and Dangerous, which could result in restrictions upon the dog and owner, or euthanasia (San Francisco Health Code 42.3).

1. If a member receives a Notice of Hearing via email, the member will attend and present their observations of the incident to the Hearing Officer.

### **6.07.03 POLICY**

The San Francisco Police Department shall effectively and efficiently handle various types of dog complaints, including the investigation and processing of complaints, while ensuring the rights of individuals as defined in the United State Constitution, Federal, State, and local laws are followed.

### **6.07.04 PROCEDURE**

**A. UNLEASHED DOG.** Where appropriate, members shall enforce the San Francisco leash laws set forth in San Francisco Health Code 41.12(a).

**B. BITING DOG.**

1. MEDICAL TREATMENT. Arrange for medical treatment. The treating physician shall complete the Animal Bite Report form and provide it to the Department of Public Health.
    - a. IF MEDICAL TREATMENT IS REFUSED member shall complete the Animal Bite Report form and email to ACC with Form 573.
    - b. SEVERE INJURY OR DEATH. In the event of a severe injury or the victim is deceased, members will immediately contact the appropriate DOC, immediate supervisor, and the VDDU Officer.
  2. CITATION. If the bite was unprovoked, cite the owner (Health Code Section 41.5.1(a)(I)).
  3. QUARANTINE BY OWNER. Inform the owner that the dog must be quarantined for 10 days and must notify ACC if the dog becomes sick, dies, or gets lost.
    - a. IF OWNER CANNOT QUARANTINE for any reason, contact ACC or VDDU.
  4. EVIDENCE. Take photographs of injuries and book as evidence.
    - a. Where possible, members should look for and obtain surveillance video of the incident.
  5. COMPLETE FORMS. Member will complete an incident report and Form 573 for all incidents.
    - a. Form 573 is provided to ACC.
    - b. Incident Report and proof of ACC notification are uploaded to Crime Data Warehouse.
      - i. Assign and email incident report to VDDU, regardless of whether there was a puncture wound.
  6. NOTIFY ACC. Member shall contact ACC Dispatch at the scene of all incidents and complete the forms regardless of response.
  7. VICIOUS AND DANGEROUS DOG HEARING. Member will inform the bite victim and/or owner that they may request a Vicious and Dangerous Dog Hearing by submitting a Form 584 to VDDU. Member may also submit Form 584 on behalf of the victim or another person.
- C. VICIOUS AND DANGEROUS DOG.** In addition to the steps for Dog Bite, member will:
1. IMMEDIATELY IMPOUND DOG. If immediate impoundment is necessary, stay on the scene until ACC arrives.
    - a. If it is after hours, follow the procedure under section D.
  2. NOTIFY VDDU.
    - a. At their discretion, member may request VDDU to begin the Vicious and Dangerous Dog hearing process.

3. VICIOUS AND DANGEROUS DOG HEARING. Members will inform the bite victim and/or owner that they may request a Vicious and Dangerous Dog hearing through VDDU by completing Form 584.

**D. AFTER HOURS (0000 HRS – 0600 HRS) RESPONSE.**

1. ACC does not have coverage. Member shall contact VDDU Officer or DOC if:
  - a. Dog owner is arrested;
  - b. Dog owner is incapacitated; or
  - c. The dog is vicious and dangerous, and the dog cannot be controlled.
    - i. If it is unsafe to transport the dog, ensure the dog is confined to a space where it can do no further harm to the public.
2. POSSESSION OF DOG. If the dog is not vicious and dangerous, and can be controlled, VDDU may take possession of the dog.
  - a. ACC will come get the dog when they have coverage, or VDDU may transport to ACC.
3. After hours, if the dog can be safely transported, can be transported to SAGE Veterinary Center located at; 600 Alabama St. San Francisco, California. (415) 566-0540

**E. LOCATING AN UNHOUSED OR UNCOOPERATIVE DOG OWNER.**

1. VDDU will contact Healthy Street Operations Center (HSOC) and ACC for assistance in locating unboxed dog owners.
2. VDDU will email all SFPD staff when attempting to locate a dog owner for the purpose of serving a Notice of Hearing or Decision. Officer shall include:
  - a. Name(s), photograph of dog, photograph of dog owner (if available)

**F. HEARING ORDER VIOLATION(S).**

1. When a member is aware of vicious and dangerous dog restrictions, member shall follow and enforce the terms of the Hearing Order.
2. If a member observes that a vicious dog violates its restrictions, members shall:
  - a. Cite the owner (San Francisco Health Code 42.4)
  - b. Notify VDDU that the dog is in violation
    - i. VDDU will notify ACC and request them to seize the dog to protect public safety.

- G. OTHER COMPLAINTS.** All other dog-related reports (e.g. stray dogs, dog or animal fighting, abandonment, animal cruelty, animal poisoning, animal without proper care or attention) will be emailed, but not assigned, to VDDU.

- H. CASE MANAGEMENT.** VDDU under the supervision of the OIC shall be responsible for the management and oversight of records. VDDU is responsible to ensure data is entered into the Case File Tracking System and that case assignment criteria is consistent with Department policy.
- I. I.** VDDU will constantly communicate and collaborate with Station Platoon Commanders, District Station Captains and the Commanding Officer.

References

San Francisco Public Health Section 41 & 42  
DGO 5.06 Citation Release

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