

April 2026

The ACO Voice

A Monthly Magazine from the Animal Control & Care Academy ■ The Only Monthly Publication Dedicated to Animal Control



**Who is the Owner?
Exploring the Diversity
in Pet Custody and Ownership**



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Notes from our Senior Instructor...

Greetings to all!

ACCA training is successfully going on all over the country, and frequently the instructor corps are stopping at home for a day or two before heading right back out to the next program. One-day trainings and in-service agency training is becoming more and more frequent. In our efforts to keep tuition costs lower, we are producing training materials and sending them out to the instructors based on the number of people registered to attend rather than mass producing training materials in bulk. It is for this reason that we ask that anyone attending training register well in advance. Even if your agency isn't prepared to pay the tuition yet, registration gets you added to the roster and ensures sufficient training materials are prepared and shipped. On several occasions over the past year, day one classes began without all attendees having workbooks and tests, and ACCA has incurred higher shipping fees to get training materials overnighted to the venue. We don't want to have to increase tuition rates, so please everyone, if you know you're coming to a training program, please register in advance. The late fee is applied to registrations received within seven days of the start of the training program. Occasionally we waive late fees, but only when there are plenty of training materials on-hand. Registration gets you on the roster. Paying the tuition can be done by credit card through our website, by mailing a check or bringing a check with you to training, or we can invoice your agency and payment can be made after you've started training.

We look forward to serving all of your training needs, be it through our standard certification courses or through a professional development course where you choose the topics covered from our catalog. We also look forward to acting as consultants in helping you develop new programs, animal shelters, ordinances, and policies and procedures. Give us a call, text, or email, and we'll see you in the future!

JT Taylor

Senior Instructor, ACCA

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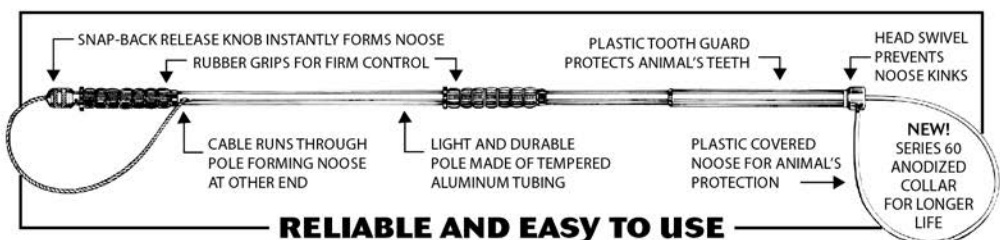
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It's all very simple and honest. The Animal Control & Care Academy is specific to the animal control profession. Our contacts and resources encompass a wide variety of animal control agencies – city and county, large and small. Our e-magazine – published every month – will feature our advertisers, focusing on their services and/or product in every issue. Our goal is to increase traffic to the ACCA website, and our advertising partners can help us achieve that goal. Our current monthly audience is comprised of over 3,000 animal control professionals who have found ACCA to be a useful resource.

You may download the current edition of our e-magazine via this link:

<https://accacademy.net/newsletter>

Please take a moment to review the rate card on the next page and let us know if we can assist with your advertising needs.

Sincerely,

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Who's the Owner? Exploring the Diversity in Pet Custody and Ownership

In most of the United States, pets continue to be considered property of their owners. Some jurisdictions have recognized the unique relationship between pets and their humans and have established laws that address custody and ownership. States do not require pets be licensed with the local municipal governments but rather leave that decision to the individual municipality to enact such a law or laws. A clearly established owner can be essential in modern animal care and control, not only for the welfare of the animal but for enforcement of law and protection of victims as well.

Generally, ownership is established in one of four ways. Laws establish a person or persons as the owner, harbinger, or keeper of the animal or animals through such law language as a person becomes the owner, harbinger or keeper of an animal when he or she provides food, water, or shelter for a dog or cat for more than three consecutive days, or words to that effect. Another method is through purchasing contracts or receipts when the pet is purchased from a pet store or commercial breeder, or through adoption contracts when adopted from an animal shelter or animal rescue organization. Lastly, ownership is commonly established through animal licensing of all dogs, or in many cases, all dogs and cats which are privately owned.

Many local governments choose not to establish licensing requirements for dogs and cats based on a philosophy that it is an unnecessary tax on its residents. Residents generally consider it a "money grab," and don't like having to do it. These jurisdictions generally rely on "owner, harbinger, or keeper" laws to establish ownership and accountability. Others, however, impose the licensing requirement as a means of establishing ownership and as a means of ensuring dogs, and in some cases cats, have current rabies vaccinations. The owners must show proof of rabies

vaccination to obtain the license. Normally, when licensing their pets, all "owners" will be listed on the license application, so persons in some form of relationship can share joint ownership. No local government is going to fund their animal control program on the normally minor fees charged for a pet license. However, in situations where owners are to be held accountable for the activities of the animal, licensing establishes ownership.

Who gets the animal in situations where more than one person is claiming to be the owner of the animal is often settled through who the animal is licensed to. All too often pets are found apparently homeless or lost. States have open record laws that limit access to certain records and require written consent from the victim before releasing any information. The person searches for the owner of the animal and when finding no one, ultimately ends up keeping the animal. Then months or years later another owner sees the dog and makes a challenge for ownership. The easiest answer? Who is the dog currently licensed to and for how long has it been owned by the licensee?



City or County Animal Licenses Enable ACOs to Return Pets to Owners
Dogs and cats alike can be returned to their owners rather than brought to the shelter when licenses can identify the owner.

Another aspect of animals being property or not comes from issues of custody and in domestic violence situations. When couples end their relationships for whatever reason, the family pet has become a greater issue in the last decade or so. Disputes over who gets to keep the pet have prompted several states to address the issue.

Alaska, in 2016, was the first state to establish comprehensive pet custody statutes by recognizing that pets, as living beings, are deserving of special consideration in custody disputes over inanimate objects of property like furniture or vehicles. Alaska courts have the ability now to award shared custody much in the same manner as children shared by the parents, recognizing the “unique emotional and dependent nature of human-animal relationships, otherwise known as the Human-Animal Bond.

In 2018, Illinois amended its marriage and dissolution laws to read “If the court finds that a companion animal of the parties is a marital asset, it shall allocate the sole or joint ownership of and responsibility for a companion animal of the parties. In issuing an order under this subsection, the court shall take into consideration the well-being of the companion animal.” Similarly, in 2018, California enacted laws that allow courts to consider pet care and welfare in custody determinations; award shared custody arrangements; enter temporary orders requiring pet care pending final determination; apply it to companion animals that are marital property; and mandate that it applies statewide. New Hampshire followed suit a year later, passing legislation that allows courts to make determinations in the best interest of companion animals and allowing for the court to award joint or shared custody.

In many other states, like Arizona, Idaho, Louisiana, Texas, and others, companion animals are considered community property and they have language in their laws that classify property acquired during the course of the marriage as belonging to both parties equally. Pets acquired during marriage are presumed to be community property and are subject to 50/50 division.

Many states have begun to address pet protections in their domestic

violence laws. Missouri, for instance, has recently expanded its laws to include giving courts the ability to include pets in orders of protection and has laws that limit access to certain records or require written consent from the victim before releasing any information. This includes the release of information on animals of victims of domestic violence held in animal shelters under Safe Harbor or other similar programs. Some states also have provisions in their domestic violence laws that allow animal shelters to deny the alleged domestic violence offender from reclaiming their pet, as harm to the pet is often a means of an offender’s control over his or her victim.

There are a variety of reasons for having local laws which address ownership of companion animals, pets, dogs, and/or cats, or however the local law defines it. Licensing establishes ownership. Licensing fees do contribute to offsetting the cost of a licensing program. Because of the emotional and dependency relationships between pets and their owners, custody laws help ensure the best interest of the animal in situations of divorce or separation. And ownership laws included in care and custody of family pets laws can often ensure the safety of pets owned by domestic violent offenders and victims, ultimately ensuring the safety of the animal.



Ownership of a Pet is Established by Pet Licensing

Ownership of a family’s dog or cat is established by purchase or adoption contracts as well as by having the animal licensed by the owner.

Upcoming Training Opportunities

For a registration form, visit www.accacademy.net or call 937-825-6709.



Advanced ACO Certification Course • Hosted by the Springfield - Greene County Health Department
May 4-7, 2026 • Springfield, Missouri

Schedule of Training

Animal Attack Investigation and Reporting; Animal Crime Scene Photography, Videography and Sketching; Animal Hoarding Investigations; Illegal Animal Fighting; Livestock and Exotics Cases; Obtaining and Executing Search Warrants; Officer Safety in the Field; Proactive Animal Control; Using Forensics in Animal Cruelty Investigations

Advanced ACO Certification Course • Hosted by Cusseta-Chattahoochee County Animal Control
May 11-14, 2026 • Cusseta, Georgia

Schedule of Training

Animal Attack Investigation and Reporting; Animal Crime Scene Photography, Videography and Sketching; Animal Hoarding Investigations; Illegal Animal Fighting; Livestock and Exotics Cases; Obtaining and Executing Search Warrants; Officer Safety in the Field; Proactive Animal Control; Using Forensics in Animal Cruelty Investigations

Chemical Immobilization Certification • Hosted by Cusseta-Chattahoochee County Animal Control
May 15, 2026 • Cusseta, Georgia

Advanced ACO Certification Course • Hosted by the Platte County Sheriff's Department
June 1-4, 2026 • Kansas City, Missouri

Schedule of Training

Animal Attack Investigation and Reporting; Animal Crime Scene Photography, Videography and Sketching;

Animal Hoarding Investigations; Illegal Animal Fighting; Livestock and Exotics Cases; Obtaining and Executing Search Warrants; Officer Safety in the Field; Proactive Animal Control; Using Forensics in Animal Cruelty Investigations

Comprehensive Animal Management Certification • Hosted by Montgomery Cty. Animal Control
June 8-10, 2026 • Clarksville, Tennessee

Schedule of Training

Advanced Case Supervision; Basic Budget Planning; Disciplinary Investigations; Equipment, Vehicles and Operational Needs; Evaluating Staff; Interviewing and Selection; Managing Generational Employees; Meetings: Individual, Specific Groups, Entire Staff; Policy and Procedures: Review and Development; Pushing Paperwork: Reports, Memos and Correspondence; Supervising Daily Operations; Training and Staff Development; Transition from Staff to Supervisor; Workplace Harassment and Violence

Basic Animal Control Officer Certification • Hosted by Claremore Animal Control
June 15-18, 2026 • Claremore, Oklahoma

Schedule of Training

Laws and Enforcement Procedures; Interpersonal Communication; Officer Safety and Protection; Basic Animal Control Officer Investigations; Evidence Law and Collection; Courtroom Testimony and Report Writing; Canine Behavior and Aggressive Dogs; Safe Animal Handling/Capture and Restraint Equipment

Basic Animal Control Officer Certification • Hosted by the Springfield - Greene County Health Dept.
July 20-23, 2026 • Springfield, Missouri

Schedule of Training

Laws and Enforcement Procedures; Interpersonal Communication; Officer Safety and Protection; Basic Animal Control Officer Investigations; Evidence Law and Collection; Courtroom Testimony and Report Writing; Canine Behavior and Aggressive Dogs; Safe Animal Handling/Capture and Restraint Equipment Animal Shelter Technician Certification

Field Training Officer Certification • Hosted by Montgomery County Animal Control
August 3-4, 2026 • Clarksville, Tennessee

Professional Development Training for ACOs • Hosted by Montgomery County Animal Control
August 5, 2026 • Clarksville, Tennessee

Schedule of Training

Interpersonal Communication; Courtroom Testimony and Report Writing; Community Cooperation and Educational Outreach

Animal Shelter Technician Certification • Hosted by Cusseta-Chattahoochee County Animal Control
August 24-26, 2026 • Cusseta, Georgia

Schedule of Training

Animal Care in a Sheltering Environment; Animal Disposition Options; Animal Identification: Breed and Description; Animal Shelter Design and Operations; Animal Shelter Record-Keeping; Canine and Feline

Behaviors and Assessments; Disease Exposures in a Sheltering Environment; Emergency Animal Sheltering; Proactive Animal Sheltering

Oleoresin Capsicum (OCAT) Certification • Hosted by Cusseta-Chattahoochee County Animal Control
August 27, 2026 • Cusseta Georgia

Animal Shelter Technician Certification • Hosted by the Springfield - Greene County Health Department
September 14-16, 2026 • Kansas City, Missouri

Schedule of Training

Animal Care in a Sheltering Environment; Animal Disposition Options; Animal Identification: Breed and Description; Animal Shelter Design and Operations; Animal Shelter Record-Keeping; Canine and Feline Behaviors and Assessments; Disease Exposures in a Sheltering Environment; Emergency Animal Sheltering; Proactive Animal Sheltering

Advanced Animal Management Certification • Hosted by Montgomery County Animal Control
October 5-7, 2026 • Clarksville, Tennessee

Schedule of Training

Recruitment, Retention, Removal; Bargaining Units; Great Expectations; On-Call Employees; OSHA for Animal Services; Enhanced Equipment & PPG; Crisis Communications; Incident Command Systems; Show Me the Money

Basic Animal First Aid and Emergency Care Certification • Hosted by Montgomery County Animal Control
October 8-9, 2026 • Clarksville, Tennessee

Animal Shelter Technician Certification • Hosted by the Springfield - Greene County Health Department
October 13-15, 2026 • Springfield, Missouri

Schedule of Training

Animal Care in a Sheltering Environment; Animal Disposition Options; Animal Identification: Breed and Description; Animal Shelter Design and Operations; Animal Shelter Record-Keeping; Canine and Feline Behaviors and Assessments; Disease Exposures in a Sheltering Environment; Emergency Animal Sheltering; Proactive Animal Sheltering

Comprehensive Animal Management Certification • Hosted by the Platte County Sheriff's Dept.
November 30 - December 2, 2026 • Kansas City, Missouri

Schedule of Training

Advanced Case Supervision; Basic Budget Planning; Disciplinary Investigations; Equipment, Vehicles and Operational Needs; Evaluating Staff; Interviewing and Selection; Managing Generational Employees; Meetings: Individual, Specific Groups, Entire Staff; Policy and Procedures: Review and Development; Pushing Paperwork: Reports, Memos and Correspondence; Supervising Daily Operations; Training and Staff Development; Transition from Staff to Supervisor; Workplace Harassment and Violence

“The ACO Voice”

2026 Advertising Rates

"The ACO Voice" is an electronic magazine that is published 12 times each year by the Animal Control & Care Academy to provide information of interest to Animal Control Officers. Advertising is provided on a space-available basis.

Publication Dates: The first week of each month.

Available ad sizes are: Full Page (7½" x 10") and Half Page (7½" x 5")

Advertising Rates			
	Three Times Full Color or B/W	Six Times Full Color or B/W	Twelve Times Full Color or B/W
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Half Page	\$125 x 3	\$100 x 6	\$75 x 12

Payments: Payments must be made in advance via check or credit card (PayPal).

Prohibited Ads: ACCA does not accept advertising from organizations that solicit funds (tax-exempt or otherwise) nor advertising by politicians or political parties. ACCA reserves the right to reject advertisements or any other matter objectionable in character or wording or for any other reason deemed unacceptable. Prohibited ads also include those from organizations that demonize the animal control profession and/or contradict the philosophies of ACCA.

Responsibilities of Advertiser: All copy, text, display and illustrations are published upon the understanding that the advertiser and/or his agent are fully authorized to cause such material to be published. The advertiser and/or his agent further agree to save blameless ACCA from any liability arising out of such publication. Artwork is the responsibility of the advertiser. ACCA assumes no liability if for any reason it becomes necessary to omit an advertisement.

Ad Specifications: Electronic files in Adobe Acrobat PDF (Portable Document Format), fonts embedded, sent as a PDF attachment via e-mail to mkumpf@accacademy.net. All images must be at least 300 dpi.

For more information or to place an advertisement, please contact:

Mark Kumpf at mkumpf@accacademy.net or call 937-825-6709.

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