

February 2023

The ACO Voice

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

Public Perception of the ACO



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Public Perception of the ACO

By John Mays, ACCA

We have all had the experience, at one time or another, when we took one look at someone and had a bad feeling about that person. First impressions are extremely hard to change. Make the first impression a good one and things can go a lot smoother no matter what you are trying to accomplish.

How do we do that? With any public contact, the first thing observed is how we look and how we act. Think about the picture you present to a stranger when getting out of the vehicle. What do they see? Is it a person that they expected to see or someone else? Proper uniforms are very important. Care should be taken when selecting a uniform type to assure it portrays the image you want. Imagine the impression if you exit your vehicle dressed in a police swat uniform. That citizen would believe that harm may come to an animal, or possibly even them. Don't make the mistake of going too far in the

other direction either. A uniform does represent an authority figure and should be just another tool used to accomplish your mission. A functional uniform that identifies who you are and who you represent is essential to the image you need to portray. The uniform should include a badge and patch that identifies the agency whom you represent. It also should include any safety equipment, radios, etc. needed to accomplish the tasks you are required to accomplish. Color can be important, but don't get stuck in a rut. If you keep being mistaken for someone from another agency, change something so you are unique and people will recognize you for who and what you are.

Now that you have a sharp uniform, what comes next? The public will focus on your demeanor as you exit the vehicle. This is one of the most difficult skills to self-critique. You can look in a mirror and see your physical appearance, but it's hard to see how others perceive

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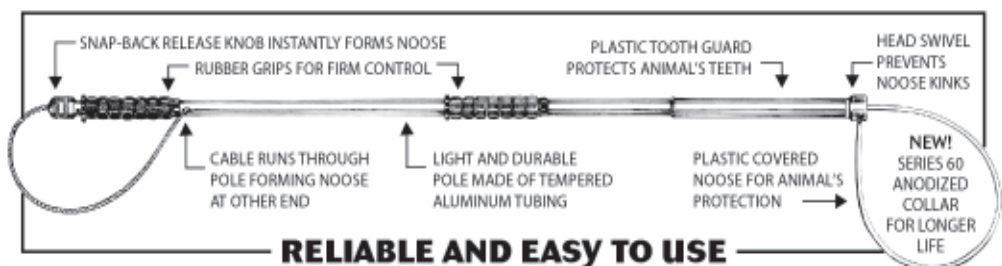
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Euthanasia Training

EBI in Animal Shelters

Illinois Federation of Humane Societies
(DBA Illinois Animal Welfare Federation)

Euthanasia means a humane and stress-free end of life for the animals in shelter care. The Illinois Federation of Humane Societies intends to provide those workers who must euthanize the proper training in a supportive and compassionate environment for the benefit of the animals. The Federation's workshop provides information and instruction on best practices in euthanasia as well as the technical knowledge necessary to perform the procedure humanely and safely.

The Illinois Federation of Humane Societies offers *EBI in Animal Shelters* training for animal shelter and animal control workers. In this 2-day workshop, students learn about anesthetics and sedatives, anatomy, safe and effective restraint, injection techniques, equipment, worker safety, legal requirements, and verification of death. A wet lab provides students with direct experience. Students receive a comprehensive manual, materials, and upon passing the workshop exam, a certificate verifying the successful completion of training.

The instructor is a Certified Euthanasia Technician in the State of Illinois with years of experience. This curriculum has been approved by the States of Illinois, Kentucky, Ohio, Tennessee, and Wisconsin. It may also be used in Iowa, Indiana, and Kansas. **Registration is limited to those working in companion animal welfare and control.**

For information on scheduling an EBI in Animal Shelters workshop in your area, or the schedule of upcoming workshops, go to www.iawf.net or contact training@iawf.net. If you have questions, contact training@iawf.net.



your actions. There may be things you are doing subconsciously that you are not even aware of that may not be appropriate. Picture this: an officer leaves his/her vehicle, pushes the sunglasses back up a notch, pulls the hat down, hooks a thumb in the belt, walks up and leans on the house, folds his or her arms against their chest and says, "What do ya want?" If you had a problem, would you like to be approached in such a manner? But, you can learn a lot by doing some role playing, deliberately acting like a macho maniac and then as a meek, mild mannered reporter. As you do this, always ask yourself how you act normally on a daily basis. Should you change some of the things you do? If so, make a conscious effort to change until it becomes habit. Good habits are difficult to maintain, but they are well worth the effort.

The next impression you make is when you actually open your mouth and speak. Words should be chosen carefully. Words spoken in haste, anger or with no forethought usually come back to haunt you. Make sure everything you say you would not be reluctant to repeat on a witness stand in front of a judge or jury. Make sure that your words are clear, factual and the truth. Trying to pull a "fast one" or bluffing someone may work, but in due time it will catch up to you. If you speak the truth, adhere to policy and use plain, unflowered language you never have to remember what you said to whom. If you stick to the truth, it's very easy to defend what you said no matter whom you said it to. How you say what you say is also very important. The inflection in your voice can mean more than the words themselves. Sarcasm is best left at home. Use friendly, clear tones when speaking. Don't let people pull you down to their level. Screaming matches have never solved anything. The first and most important part of any conversation is being a good listener. People get upset when they think no one will take the time to understand the problem or listen to their excuses. Even if there isn't anything you can do for them, they feel they have been given the opportunity to be heard.

It is always better to receive the phone call praising you or one of your officers on how humane and gentle an animal was treated during capture, rather than the opposite. Even when you think no one else is around, someone is probably watching you. Everything we do attracts attention. Your goal is to treat each and every animal in the most humane manner possible. Remember - we are the most scrutinized profession on the planet. The actions of a few reflect on all of us.

How is your response time? The public's image of you and your organization can be greatly influenced by

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how fast you respond. Look at it from their point of view. "I am concerned, so I called. They must not be because they didn't show up for three days. What kind of people are they?" If you work for government, the comment may be that you are just another typical government employee who is lazy and just doesn't care. If you are a Humane Society employee, people expect you to be compassionate and caring. If you are three days late, what impression does that leave? In either case, when you need support for a cause or fundraiser, the response probably won't be positive.

Your attitude is one of the few things in your life you have complete control over. Outside events, actions of others, policies and a million other things can influence your attitude, but only if you allow it. People have a tendency to treat others as they have been or are being treated. A good rule is always to "treat others as you would like to be treated." It's amazing how the right attitude can turn around a very bad situation. It doesn't always work, but it's amazing how often it does. If you enter any situation with the attitude that you are there to help in some way and genuinely attempt to do just that, your efforts will be noticed. Even in enforcement situations, when you need to talk with someone who has committed an offense, if you approach the problem as one where you will try to help the individual do the right thing, the outcome will normally be good. With the correct approach, it's amazing how often someone who has just been written a ticket will say "thank you" as you leave.

Smiles are contagious. Did you ever notice on those days when you really feel good about yourself things just seem to go better? If you continually do the right things with the right attitude, people are happy with what you do. When people are happy with what you are doing, it shows. Whether you know it or not, your self-esteem grows, too. As your self-esteem grows, you feel better about yourself and what you are doing. It rubs off on your fellow workers and the public, too. Believe it. People will notice.

Field officers, by the nature of their jobs, interact with other agencies. Police departments, social services, wildlife agencies, and animal welfare organizations are just a few of the agencies we work with. A good working relationship makes your job so much easier.

In working with these agencies, the way they treat you will mirror how you are treating them. They deal with the public and other agencies as much as you do, if not more. We have to remember that they have their jobs to do, also.

All agencies are after the same basic things: Trying to get people to do the right thing. Working together can be rewarding for all involved.

Having the proper equipment in good working order and proper training on how to use it is essential to accomplishing fieldwork. Equipment that is improper or used incorrectly can make a very bad, lasting impression on observers. Not only can it lead to disaster for the animal, it can lead to a public relations nightmare. None of us would like to be accused of strangling "Fluffy" with a control stick. It may not even be your fault, but that of a bad cable or other malfunction. Ask yourself the question: Which is cheaper? A new cable or a lawsuit? To be safe, you must be properly equipped to handle the types of animals you encounter. Using the proper equipment for the safety of the animal and yourself is the key. Training is a major issue regarding proper equipment usage. Training also is cheaper and makes more sense than lawsuits. Great training is available from ACCA - please consider it!

Who do people call when trouble arises with an animal? You! Make sure you can answer questions of all kinds. Don't be surprised when someone calls and asks why a nasty bird is pecking holes in the side of their house. After all, you are animal control and you should have the answer to anything animal-related. This is what the public and other agencies expect. We should be the "go-to people" when questions arise. If we become the "go-to people," citizens will also turn to us when serious problems do arise with full confidence that you can and will take care of the problem. Be honest with people. If you can't help them, tell them so. Don't be guilty of telling half-truths just to make someone feel good. These have a habit of coming back to haunt you. Don't perpetuate "old wives tales" such as don't touch the ducks eggs or it will abandon the nest. They will smell it and never come back. We all know ducks don't have olfactory organs so they can't smell. If the nest needs to be moved, move it, she may not come back but it won't be because she smelled human sent. If you don't know the answers to questions make it a point to find out and get back to them. That's making a good impression and providing service people don't soon forget.

Understand the laws that you enforce. Few things can make a person look as foolish as being wrong about the very things you are charged with enforcing. Listen to what people say about the laws you enforce and your policies. Sometimes there are bad laws and bad policies. They originally seemed to be appropriate, but time

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has proven them unenforceable or wrong. If so, change them. Your credibility will be boosted and you will be someone people trust.

Webster's Dictionary defines ethics as "a discipline dealing with good and evil and with moral duty." You could think of it as just doing the right thing. Laws are made so people in your profession can force people to do the right thing. You, on the other hand, are expected to know the right thing and do it. You are actually judged on a higher scale more than anyone else because of what you do. In your personal life, as well as your professional life, people will always be scrutinizing everything you do. Make sure it's the right thing you are doing. In our profession, laws don't cover every situation you may find yourself in. You should never turn your back simply because your laws do not cover the issue, and you refuse to get involved. Attempt to work out a solution that is fair and acceptable to everyone. That is not always possible, but that should be a goal we strive for. It's easy to explain how you attempted to help and the steps you took. It's not easy to explain why you turned your back and walked away. Besides, it's just the right thing to do.

What do you do when a complaint is received about your agency? First and foremost, LISTEN! Until you fully

understand what the complaint is, you can't deal with it. Many times the complaint is not valid and just letting a person vent will be all that is needed. For others, it's a simple misunderstanding. Either way, the remedy is to just listen and explain, if needed. The real problem arises when someone actually did do something he or she shouldn't have done. In either case, solving the problem starts with assuring the complainant that it will not be swept under the rug. That alone is one of, if not the most important thing that can be done. Next is to actually investigate, ask questions and find out what really took place. When the facts are in hand, do the best you can to make things right. Things do happen that can never be made fully right again, but we need to come as close as we can. It's easier to sleep at night when the end result is positive. When the problem has been solved, take steps to ensure it doesn't happen again.

How others see your agency or organization has a lot to do with you. The way you look, the way you act, what you say, even how you use your equipment, all reflects on the image you leave with others. It takes a very long time to build the image you can be proud of. Unfortunately, it only takes minutes to destroy everything that you've worked so hard to build.



ACCA Training Schedule

For a registration form, visit www.accacademy.net or call 913-515-0080

Basic Animal Control Officer Certification

Hosted by Jefferson County Animal Control

March 27-30, 2023 - Kearneysville, West Virginia

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 Schuyler County Sheriff's Office

April 3-6, 2023 - Watkins Glen, New York

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

Comprehensive Animal Management Certification

Hosted by Jefferson County Animal Control

April 10-12, 2023 - Kearneysville, West Virginia

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

Chemical Immobilization Certification

Hosted by the Polk County Sheriff's Office

April 17, 2023 - Columbus, North Carolina

Basic Animal Control Officer Certification

Hosted by the Mt. Juliet Police Department

April 24-27, 2023 - Mt. Juliet, Tennessee

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

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Shelter Technician Certification

Hosted by Jefferson County Animal Control

May 3-5, 2023 - Kearneysville, West Virginia

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

Basic Animal Control Officer Certification

Hosted by the Springfield - Greene County Health Department

May 15-18, 2023 - 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

Advanced ACO Certification Course

Hosted by the Springfield - Greene County Health Department

June 12-15, 2023 - 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

Field Training Officer Certification

Hosted by the Springfield - Greene County Health Department

July 20-21, 2023 - Springfield, Missouri

Basic Animal Control Officer Certification

Hosted by Montgomery County Animal Care & Control

July 24-27, 2023 - Clarksville, Tennessee

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

ACCA Training Schedule

For a registration form, visit www.accacademy.net or call 913-515-0080

Advanced ACO Certification Course

Hosted by Montgomery County Animal Care & Control

August 21-24, 2023 - Clarksville, Tennessee

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 Montgomery County Animal Care & Control

August 25, 2023 - Clarksville, Tennessee

Training Course for Animal Control Professionals

Hosted by Montgomery County Animal Care & Control

October 23-26, 2023 - Clarksville, Tennessee

Schedule of Training: Investigative Techniques for Cruelty/Neglect; Baton Bite/Stick Certification; Canine Behavior and Aggressive Dogs; Safe Animal Handling/Capture and Restraint Equipment; Community Cooperation – Education & Outreach; Courtroom Testimony and Report Writing; Diversion - Alternative Enforcement Programs; Oleoresin Capsicum Aerosol Training (OCAT) Certification; Utilizing Thermometry for Animal Control

Hosting ACCA Training

Want to host some ACCA training? ACCA would be honored to offer training for your agency and area agencies. We can tailor the training to your local needs. If you haven't already done so, review our training catalog for a list of training topics. Visit www.accacademy.net and click on the "training catalog" tab. Please contact John Mays at jmays@accacademy.net if you have any questions.