

October 2025

The ACO Voice

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



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ACCA Instructor Speaks at Animal Care Expo 2025

By Cody Mace

Animal control professionals are often in situations that jeopardize our comfort, safety, and well-being to protect public safety and improve the quality of life for the people and pets we serve. If you are an animal control or animal welfare professional, it might sometimes feel as though you are walking around with a series of paid advertisements plastered to your uniform requesting that you be harassed, name called, or otherwise bothered while you pursue the common good.

As an animal control officer over the last six years and as a public servant in emergency management throughout the United States, I have been exposed to a plethora of uncomfortable and all-too-common experiences that result from the inherently escalatory nature of our profession. My passion for avoiding being screamed at and threatened has led to the development of a series of techniques as well as the application of theories by renowned social psychologists to produce a preventative approach to de-escalation called structural de-escalation. Structural de-escalation led me to Las Vegas, Nevada, in April to present at Animal Care Expo 2025, held at Caesar's Forum.

Animal Care Expo is the world's largest international educational conference and trade show for animal welfare professionals and volunteers. Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) organizes the event annually, and in 2025 they revealed the organization would rebrand as Humane World for Animals. Animal Care Expo 2025 saw more than 2,500 animal welfare professionals visit the conference and attending educational workshops, roundtable discussions, and more than one hundred vendors in the exhibit hall.

One of the workshop speakers was me, and I presented Structural De-escalation: A Preventative Approach to Difficult Interactions. De-escalation courses are commonplace among onboarding and in-service training for staff in law enforcement, animal control, animal shelters and customer service. Course material for de-escalation is focused on using techniques in response to an already escalated situation.

Rarely is there a focus on preventative de-escalation. What if we had the training to approach a

difficult situation that minimized escalation to begin with? In this workshop, I discussed implications of sociological theories on occupational stigma, equipped audience members with terminology to identify elements of interactions, and provided examples of structural de-escalation successfully used in the office and the field. This training also provided discussion of tactics to minimize escalatory behaviors in persons whom staff interact with, how to anticipate and defuse escalatory behaviors with individuals and groups, and what to do when de-escalation fails.

My time in Las Vegas was a great opportunity to network with the dedicated professionals advocating and fighting in the trenches for the improvement of animal welfare across our nation.

While at Animal Care Expo 2025, I made friends with animal control officers from Utah, expanded my network of animal welfare professionals in Iowa, and had a wonderful conversation with the Geronimo Animal Rescue Team out of Arizona.

Between the great food and entertainment from premiere Frank Sinatra and Elvis impersonators, there were many serious topics covered by speakers from Humane World for Animals. One topic which the conference organizers addressed was the sometimes divisive relationships between animal rescue and welfare organizations toward government animal control organizations. A recurring theme was the tendency to use animal suffering and negative emotions to promote animal adoptions and fundraising in nonprofit organizations, sometimes at the expense of public perceptions and feelings toward animal control organizations.

Humane World for Animals encouraged visitors at Animal Care Expo 2025 to take accountability for their roles in perpetuating negative stereotypes about animal control and collectively called on the industry to move toward promoting adoptions and fundraising through the use of humor, creativity, and advertising the endearing qualities of our adoptable pets.

Although the Expo was only a four-day event, I left feeling invigorated and excited for the future of animal welfare in our nation. Any animal control officer or animal welfare professional should make it a point to attend this conference for the training,

networking, and the innumerable benefits of being surrounded by others who can understand and relate to the successes and struggles we face in our roles.

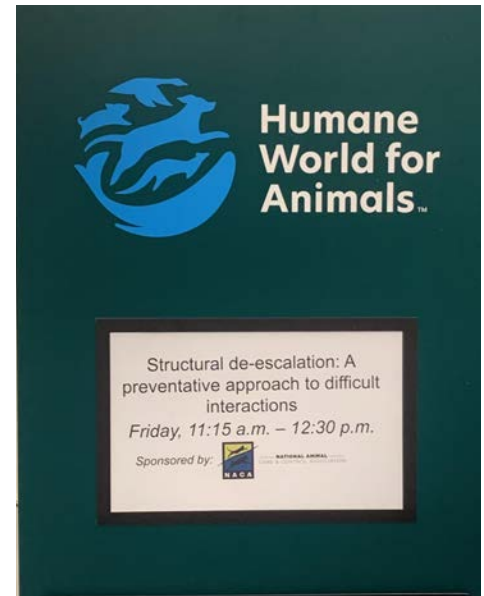
Quality de-escalation training is an important investment in the wellbeing of those who serve our communities. It is well-known that animal control and animal welfare organizations suffer from burnout and compassion fatigue. One may not immediately consider how de-escalation can help reduce this burden, but the effects of the difficult interactions we face only compound the stressors that we are exposed to.

Structural de-escalation allows trained individuals to have less stressful interactions with the public, in staff to staff interactions, and in interactions between staff and management.

One organization that believes in the investment of quality training is CalAnimals. The California Animal Welfare Association (CalAnimals) was established in 1909 and serves more than 500 incorporated cities and 58 counties in the state of California. One of the many ways that CalAnimals promotes their mission to support the success of animal welfare organizations is through the CalAnimals Executive Leadership Program (CAELP).

CAELP was established to prepare executives to excel in their roles as CEOs and to prepare the next generation of leaders to step into the roles of their predecessors.

It is my great privilege to have been invited to participate as a speaker and present to the 2026 CAELP participant cohort. If you or your organization are interested in Structural De-escalation training, this and many other great course options are available. An investment in quality training is an investment in the safety and well-being of staff members and an investment in the communities they serve.



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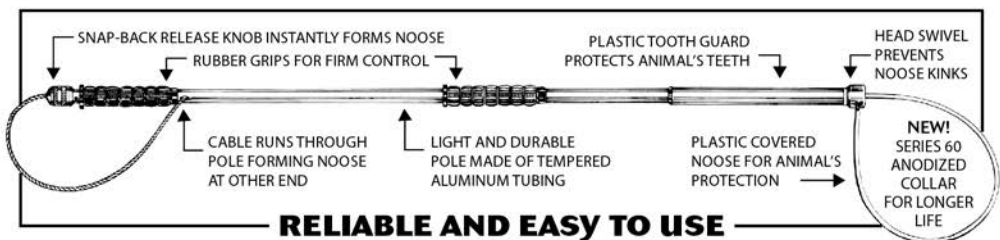
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2025 Advertising Rates

"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.

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

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ACCA and MāSA Partner as Exhibitors at State Conferences

Animal Control and Care Academy has begun supporting state animal control association conferences this year and is considering expansion to other conferences next year. In July, ACCA was an exhibitor at the Small Rural Law Enforcement Executives Association's conference.

ACCA CEO Mark Kumpf and ACCA Senior Instructor J.T. Taylor attended that conference before taking on teaching and exhibiting roles at state conferences in September.

Kumpf exhibited ACCA services and provided certification training during the 36th Connecticut Municipal Animal Control Officers Association

Annual Conference in mid-September. Mark also awarded scholarship certificates as door prizes to some attendees. Focusing on all ACCA services and programs, Kumpf's exhibit also showcased chemical immobilization.

ACCA partnered with Midwest Animal Services Academy (MaSA) as sponsors at the Missouri Animal Control Association's annual conference in late September in Branson, Missouri. As sponsors of the annual event, they were provided an exhibitor booth space and the opportunity to speak to the conference attendees on ACCA and MaSA training programs and opportunities. ACCA Senior Instructor

and MaSA Executive Director J.T. Taylor represented both organizations. In addition, he presented training on Animal Control and the ADA, Service Animals, Emotional Support Animals, and Therapy Animals.

According to both Kumpf and Taylor, their respective conferences went very well and they are considering participation in other state conferences in the future.



ACCA partnered with MaSA to sponsor the MACA Annual Conference
Animal Control and Care Academy and Midwest Animal Services Academy joined forces to sponsor the Missouri Animal Control Association's Annual Conference in Branson, Missouri.



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The Missouri Animal Control Association is proud of its annual conference sponsors and promotes them at the entrance to the conference center. Senior Instructor J.T. Taylor manned the ACCA/MaSA exhibit during the MACA Conference.



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