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Cruelty/Neglect - Animal Hoarding

Guideline Statement

Animal control agencies should implement comprehensive policies for the investigation, seizure, care and disposition of animals resulting from animal hoarding cases. Such policies should address care, housing, evaluation, treatment and disposition utilizing all available resources in cooperation with animal care, control and welfare organizations, law enforcement agencies and the judicial system. If necessary, legislative changes to existing laws are encouraged to facilitate such policies. Such policies should include provisions for the evaluation, care and assistance to the persons engaging in these acts considering that some may suffer from medical conditions.

Basis for Guideline

Animal Control Officers routinely seize or receive animals as the result of cruelty cases related to animal hoarding. Frequently, these cases involve large numbers of animals that exceed the ability of the owner or caregiver to provide adequate humane care and treatment. Animal hoarding cases attract significant community concern from neighbors, animal welfare groups, elected officials and the media. These animals may have medical conditions, physical injuries and behavioral issues that present challenges to care, housing and disposition resulting in substantial costs to agencies. Animal control agencies, animal welfare organizations, medical providers, public safety departments, the judicial system and appropriate government or non-governmental agencies should form cooperative working agreements to facilitate timely, positive outcomes that benefit the individuals and the animals involved in animal hoarding situations.

Guideline Recommendations

Animal control agencies should:

1. Work with law enforcement, judicial, and medical providers to insure that all aspects related to the person or persons engaged in animal hoarding are addressed;

2. Seek positive outcomes for both the persons and animals involved in animal hoarding cases;
3. Seek legislation that incorporates the authority for mandatory mental health evaluations of persons involved in animal hoarding cases at the direction of the court;
4. Seek legislation that incorporates progressive penalties that may limit or prohibit the ownership or custody of animals by persons found to have engaged in animal neglect or animal cruelty related to animal hoarding recognizing that in certain cases, limited numbers of animals may be returned to such persons with appropriate monitoring and inspections subject to court enforcement;
5. Establish a disposition protocol that provides the appropriate transfer, adoption or alternative placement of the animals in accordance with the NACA Guideline for Disposition of Animals from Cruelty Cases

Approved: May 23, 2010

The foregoing Guideline has been affirmed as duly adopted by the NACA Board of Directors.

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