



Position Statement on Safety Equipment, Tools, and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The National Animal Care and Control Association (NACA) in partnership with state associations, advocate that all animal control officers (ACOs) should be equipped with appropriate safety equipment, tools, and personal protective equipment (PPE) to perform their duties effectively, safely, and humanely. This position statement sets forth minimum safety standards while recognizing gold standards for best practices in the field.

Minimum Standards for Safety Equipment, Tools, and PPE

At a minimum, all animal control officers should be equipped with the following:

- **Protective Clothing and PPE:** This includes bite-resistant gloves, eye protection, N-95, and appropriate footwear to protect against animal-related injuries, zoonotic disease transmission, and environmental hazards.
- **Animal Handling Tools:** These tools should include control poles, catch poles, snare tools, snake tongs, humane traps, and dog leashes for the safe and humane capture, restraint, and transport of animals. Additional items: blankets, towels and muzzles.
- **Communication Equipment:** Reliable two-way radios or communication devices to maintain contact with dispatch, law enforcement, and fellow officers in the field. Additional items may include cameras, clipboard, and laptop.



- **Vehicle Safety Features:** Vehicles should be equipped with climate control systems for animal compartments, secure kennels, GPS tracking to ensure officer and animal safety, adequate lights, and a fire extinguisher.
- **Emergency Medical Kit:** Basic first aid supplies for officers and animals in the event of injuries or emergencies.

Specialized Equipment and Situational Use

NACA recognizes that high-risk situations may require additional equipment such as Tasers, bulletproof vests, chemical immobilization equipment, and expandable batons (ASPs). These should only be issued to officers who meet the following criteria:

- **Properly Trained:** Officers must complete comprehensive training in these tools' use, handling, and legal implications to ensure responsible and appropriate use.
- **Properly Fitted:** All safety gear, such as bulletproof vests, must be appropriately fitted to each officer to provide effective protection.
- **Used in Specific Situations:** The deployment of this specialized equipment should be limited to situations where officer or public safety is at significant risk, and where the use of such tools aligns with written department protocols and ethical standards.

Gold Standard for Best Practices

In addition to the minimum standards, NACA encourages the following best practices for agencies looking to further enhance safety and professionalism:



- **Body Cameras:** These devices provide valuable transparency and accountability in interactions with the public and animals. However, their use requires proper management and regular auditing to ensure they're used effectively and responsibly.
- **Advanced PPE:** Including respiratory protection for officers exposed to zoonotic diseases or hazardous conditions, and flame-retardant outerwear for high-risk situations.
- **Advanced Vehicle Safety Features:** Including field ruggedized laptop, and universal microchip scanner.

Uniform Recommendations

NACA recognizes the importance of presenting a professional yet approachable appearance and recommends that agencies offer uniform options that allow officers to adjust their appearance based on the situation. By tailoring uniform choices to the context, agencies can ensure their officers project a balanced image of approachability and authority, strengthening public trust and reinforcing professionalism.

- **Professional and Approachable Attire:** Agencies should be mindful that uniform choices convey important messages to the public. For day-to-day fieldwork and public interactions, an approachable uniform—such as a branded polo or field attire—helps build trust and accessibility. When a situation requires enhanced safety or tactical capability, officers should have the option to add equipment like a duty belt, an outer carrier, or a protective vest over their base attire. This flexible approach allows officers to remain approachable while being prepared for higher-risk situations.



- **Court and Formal Testimony Attire:** To support professionalism in formal settings, such as providing court testimony, a traditional dress uniform can reinforce authority and credibility. Encouraging a more polished, professional appearance for court enhances the officer's role as a respected expert witness and contributes to the overall professionalism of the field.

Training and Confidence in Equipment Use

NACA emphasizes that animal control officers must be thoroughly trained and confident in using any equipment and tools. Training should focus on the least aversive, most humane methods, incorporating animal behavior, situational assessment, and de-escalation techniques. Training should be given on a regular, continual basis to ensure that proficiency, efficiency, professionalism, and job knowledge are current with our ever-changing world. This aligns with NACA's Minimum Training Standards to safeguard the well-being of officers, the community, and the animals.



Strength in Collaboration: National Safety Statement for Animal Control Officers

For the first time, state associations and the National Animal Care & Control Association (NACA) have come together to develop a unified position statement on safety equipment, tools, and PPE for Animal Control Officers. This collaborative effort reflects a shared commitment to setting clear, consistent standards that can be adopted nationwide. The statement, featuring the logos of participating associations, serves as a guiding resource to support ACOs across the country in performing their duties safely and effectively.

This statement has been endorsed by:

- Texas Animal Control Association
- Florida Animal Protection and Advocacy Association
- Kansas Animal Control Association
- Arkansas Animal Control Association
- North Carolina Animals Federation
- North Carolina Animal and Rabies Control Association
- Washington Federation for Animal Care and Control Agencies
- Arizona Animal Control Association
- California Animal Welfare Association
- Southeastern Animal Control Association
- Alabama Animal Control Association
- Missouri Animal Control Association
- Animal Care & Control Association of Tennessee
- Virginia Animal Control Association
- Alaska Animal Control Association
- Michigan Association of Animal Control Officers
- Ohio County Dog Wardens Association
- Animal Welfare Association of Colorado
- Louisiana Animal Control Association
- Kentucky Animal Control Association