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# DEALING WITH VICIOUS ANIMALS DURING THE SERVICE OF WARRANTS

## 8081.1 PURPOSE

These guidelines provide officers with information and resources that may be used to control vicious animals when planning and serving arrest and/or search warrants.

## 8081.2 INTRODUCTION

Animal Services Officers (ASOs) typically handle all animal-related calls in the City, including requests from officers preparing to serve warrants where vicious animals may be present. Regardless of the time planned to serve the warrant, it is best to call an Animal Services Officer (ASO) prior to executing a warrant. ASOs can provide expertise in dog handling and be present during the service to control any animals on scene. It is imperative when planning to serve a warrant that officers include strategies for controlling vicious dogs and other animals.

The Department fully recognizes that, in rare instances, situations may occur in which the need to quickly occupy and control a location makes it impractical to employ any option listed below. However, officers must realize some animals (i.e. dogs) are considered property and therefore protected under the Constitution from unreasonable seizure. Officers should always be prepared to encounter animals and the destruction of a vicious animal should only occur when exigency exists and other reasonable alternatives are not practical.

## 8081.3 PROCEDURES

Pre-planning a warrant service should include information pertaining to vicious animals. If informants are used, they should be interviewed to determine whether dogs or any other dangerous animals are present at the location. Officers should walk or drive by the property, prior to serving the warrant, to determine if dogs or other animals may be present. Additionally, officers should check with Santa Ana Animal Services or Animal Control to determine if any dogs are licensed at the property.

The City has an obligation to protect animals on private property when serving search or arrest warrants. Shooting a dog with a firearm can lead to liability for both the City and individual officers.

## 8081.4 WARRANT SERVICE INVOLVING DOGS AND OTHER VICIOUS ANIMALS

It should be assumed that most dogs will exhibit territorial behavior when officers enter property where they reside. In these cases, pre-planning for the execution of the warrant should include the method and manner in which officers will control any dogs found on the property. Pre-planning may include:

1. Contacting the Animal Services Unit to determine if an ASO can be present to help deal with the dog(s) during entry onto a property. It is important to remember that ASOs are not sworn officers and are not armed with firearms. As such, their safety must be taken into consideration when they are used

# Santa Ana Police Department

Santa Ana PD Procedures Manual

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2. Officers should ask Dispatch/Records to run a location search and incident history for the location to determine if there are indications that animals have been present in the past
3. If ASOs are not available or an officer needs assistance with controlling vicious animals, the following alternatives should be considered:
  - A. Officers can obtain a catchpole from the Station Supervisor's Office or animal control vehicle
  - B. The use of Oleoresin Capsicum (OC) spray directly on the animal's eyes and nose may be effective. If OC spray is used, officers must be aware of wind conditions and the presence of other officers in the immediate area who may be affected by the use of the spray
  - C. The use of the TASER is acceptable to ward off aggressive dogs. Difficulty in the placement of a TASER probe hit should be considered with a backup plan in place in the event the probes miss or are not effective in stopping the aggressive animal
  - D. The uses of an ASP or standard baton are acceptable methods to keep an aggressive dog away. Most dogs do not like to bite onto metal objects and may be frightened away if struck
  - E. Tranquilizers may be appropriate however, tranquilizers may only be deployed by ASOs or trained SWAT officers
  - F. The use of powder type fire extinguishers discharged into the animal's face may cause the animal to flee

A backup officer armed with a firearm should always be present to protect officers in the event the less-lethal alternative is ineffective.

### **8081.5 SUMMARY**

Aggressive animals can be unpredictable. Officers planning to serve a warrant where dogs or other dangerous animals are known to be present should plan for options to control these animals. Pre-planning helps reduce hazards faced by officers and increases the safety of animals found at the scene. Using the assistance of an ASO will help ensure animals are handled safely and may eliminate the need for officers to focus their attention on controlling animals instead of concentrating on safely serving the warrant.