

July 02, 2024

Two Animal Control Statute Changes Took Effect on 7/1/24





1. Domestic Animals Running at Large

[Act 160](#) (H.877) of the 2024 legislative session brings Vermont laws that govern domestic animals running at large into the 21st century by significantly increasing many of the statutory fines and providing explicit authority to municipal officials to enforce them, effective July 1, 2024.

Act 160 also gives municipalities the explicit authority to regulate by ordinance the control of livestock running at large. Livestock, under Vermont law means “cattle, horses, sheep, swine, goats, camelids, fallow deer, red deer, reindeer, and American bison.” In response to these statutory changes, the VLCT Municipal Assistance Center will review and update our model animal control ordinance and resources in the coming weeks.

2. Animal Control Officer Authority

A section of [Act 167 \(2024\)](#) affecting the authority of Animal Control Officers (ACO) took effect on July 1, 2024. This separates ACOs into two distinct categories.



Animal Control Officers who are contracted by or work for a municipality but whose positions are not organized within the municipality's police department will no longer be considered Humane Officers as listed in 13 V.S.A. § 351(4).

- This group of non-Humane Officer ACOs will no longer have the authority to investigate animal cruelty cases as described in Vermont Statutes Annotated [Title 13 Chapter 8](#).
- They do retain the authority to serve as local Animal Control Officers enforcing local ordinances and the elements of [Title 20 Chapter 193](#).

Animal Control Officers who are employed by a local law enforcement agency and who attend the training developed by the Animal Cruelty Investigation Advisory Board (ACIAB) will be classified as Humane Officers and retain full investigative authority.

- The required training has not been released by the ACIAB.
- It is recommended that these ACOs partner with a law enforcement officer until the training is available and completed by the ACO. It is not yet known when this training will become available.

VLCT members with questions regarding Animal Control Officers should feel free to contact VLCT PACIF Law Enforcement Consultant, Trevor Whipple, at twhipple@vlct.org or 802-262-1929.

