

CALGARY, ALBERTA - HOME OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL ANIMAL CONTROL PROGRAM IN NORTH AMERICA

Bill Bruce Director of Calgary's Animal and *Bylaw* Services says; "Virtually every animal that winds up in a shelter is the result of a failed human relationship." This is true.

Calgary encourages responsible pet ownership through licensing, public education and enforcement.

From mission statement to action, their goal is:

- Identify the issues
- Engage the community
- Build a process that works
- Make people see licensing is a win-win (95% voluntary compliance)
- Back it up (5% enforcement)
- Measure It (how do you know you are improving)

The traditional method of animal control was just not working, so the system was changed to responsible pet ownership and moved away from animal control.

4 Principles of Responsible Pet Ownership:

- License and provide permanent identification for your pets
- Spay or neuter your pets
- Provide training, care and proper medical attention for your pets
- Don't allow pets to become a threat or a nuisance

By using education and the media – pet owners in Calgary have a support system that addresses their needs before they become a problem. They have a mandatory licensing program for both cats and dogs. The animal control program is completely funded by pet owners. The program has lowered the number of impounded animals, increased owner return rates, lowered the euthanasia rates and lowered the number of fines for bylaw infractions!

Animal Courtesy Officers are certified mediators. Their driving force is conflict resolution to help the people that need it most. Animal Services also partners with the Police Dept., so if an animal is picked up and there is evidence of abuse or neglect the ACO will help prosecute.

While a fine for an unlicensed dog or cat is \$250 with a zero tolerance for noncompliance, Calgary's Animal Control Officers spend most of their days helping animals and their people. They are not on a witch hunt for offenders, but rather help educate folks on where to get subsidized spay/neuter, check in at the local dog parks and reunite owners with their pets that decide to talk an unaccompanied stroll! With their state-of-the-art, customized Animal Control mobiles which are outfitted with laptops and Internet service, as soon as they pick up an at large animal they are able to punch his or her information into their computer and find out where the animal lives. Then they take the animal straight home! This simple system helps keep the numbers of animals at the facility down while minimizing the possibility of spreading diseases or parasites.

Make It Easy

The intention is to make sure all owned animals never wind up in the shelter.

Here are the ways compliance is made as easy as 1, 2, 3:

- Renewal notices automatically sent out
- You can phone a 24 hour hotline to license your pet
- Online form from their website

- At the bank
- Directly to an officer
- Night deposit

Calgary has the most dog parks, per capita, of any city in North America. Dog parks are instrumental in proper training, socialization and exercise helping to achieve the goal of a well behaved dog. If you have a regulated dog park with an off leash area you can make sure that all the pets are licensed, complying with the rules of the park and inspire people to do their job. Like cleaning up after their dog, which is again a very proactive way to make the community a better place for all its members.

Getting Results

Calgary also has rigorous programs targeting kids of all ages. With the program's vision to promote responsible pet ownership and foster safe and responsible communities in Calgary, they go into the schools to teach young people proper pet ownership and how to treat animals.

Calgary has seen a huge reduction in dog bites even though the population has increased dramatically. They achieved an all time low in dog bites this year. **This is without Breed-Specific Legislation, mandatory neutering or limiting the number of pets you can own!** Their animal control facility is state-of-the-art with a friendly staff and an eye to customer service. Even with these successful programs in place and a proven track record to back them up, Calgary is looking to the future. They have broken ground for the free spay/neuter clinic to be available to less well-off families and strive for even higher compliance.

This program fits any size town, city or province. This program was presented to the current government of Ontario as an alternative to the breed ban, but was ignored!

