

What to do: Cheat Sheet

Assessing the Scene:

- Who owns the animal(s) - may be more than one owner
- How long have they owned the animal(s)?
- Where did they get the animal(s) from?
- Is there proof of ownership? (Veterinary paperwork, pictures, brand paperwork on equines, etc.)
- Is there food/water/shelter (species appropriate)?
- Is the food/water/shelter adequate? (species appropriate)
- What are the environmental conditions? For example, are the animals standing/lying in feces or standing in water, mud, or dangerous debris? Is it extremely hot or cold? Do the animals have access to adequate shelter? Is there a strong smell of urine and feces? Etc.
- Is there a threat or immediate danger to the animal(s)? Are there any exigent circumstances?
- Are there any deceased animals?

Assessing the Animal: Things to Look For

- Head tilting or shaking
- Scratching or licking at paws or other parts of body
- Missing fur (and/or) red or irritated skin
- Any swollen areas or body parts
- Limping
- Nasal or eye discharge (yellow, green, brown)
- Excessive salivation
- Squinting of the eyes, cannot open eyes, or won't stop rubbing at the eyes.
- Coughing or sneezing
- Overgrown nails or hooves
- Matted haircoats
- Can you see any bony prominences (ribs, hip bones, spinal vertebra, etc.) that would help indicate that the animal is underweight?
- Animals who won't stop biting at their stomachs, presenting with extended or swollen bellies
- Equines who are down and cannot get up
- Any vomiting (and/or) diarrhea (if there is blood in either of these, that needs to be addressed ASAP)
- For equines: Are there multiple underweight equines or just one or two out of the herd?

What to Do:

- If there is no immediate threat or danger to the animal but there is no food/water/shelter: Issue a warning for IMMEDIATE CORRECTION
- Be specific in this warning (species-specific food; water that is kept clean and non-frozen; specify what adequate shelter is, such as a doghouse)



- If there is no immediate threat or danger to the animal but the animal is ill or injured:
- Issue a warning to get veterinary care by a **licensed veterinarian** – be sure to put that on the warning
- Give the owner a fixed timeline and due date
- Be specific (must be seen and treated as the veterinarian recommends)
- You could use the following wordage: example
 - “Please have “Rusty” been seen by a licensed veterinarian within one week due to poor body condition and limping. Documentation must be provided. Any and all medical recommendations must be followed. Failure to comply could result in criminal charges. Thank you”
- Follow-up with owner and veterinarian to verify the owner has complied. Obtain those records from the veterinary office. Ask if there are any follow-ups needed for the animal.

Follow-ups:

- Is the owner unwilling or unable to comply?
- Have they made any attempts? (is the owner actively trying to better the situation?)
- Do they need help? (such as help with veterinary costs, help with sheltering costs, etc.)
- Is the animal still at the same risk for pain, suffering, or death?
- Several follow-ups may be needed.
- If the owner has not complied, or attempted to comply and better the situation, it may be time to discuss removal and issuing charges to the owner.

What to Do: Abandonment

- If you suspect an animal has been abandoned: (if no exigent circumstances exist)
 - Try to find contact information for the owner.
 - Supply the animal with food and water and take pictures/videos of you doing so.
 - Post a notice of entry & care form to the property specifying that you provided food & water.
 - Post a notice of warning form stating something to the degree of "all animals must have access to food & water at all times. Please contact our office within 24 hours to discuss the situation. If no contact has been made within 72 hours, the animal(s) will be considered abandoned and further action will be taken."
 - Someone will need to supply food and water for the next 72 hours and document each time they go to the property.
 - After 72 hours, if there is no proof of someone caring for the animals, apply for a search warrant to remove the animals.
 - Once animals are removed, post the cost of care paperwork to the property. The animal(s) will need to be held on cost of care for 10 days.
- If after 10 days, no owner(s) comes forward, the animal(s) can be dispositioned (with proper paperwork).



Warnings: How much time should you give? (depends on the situation)

- **Dogs & cats:**
 - For adequate food, water, and shelter: This should be addressed and resolved ASAP
 - For things like overgrown nails, matting, etc.: It depends on how severe the nails or matting are. If the issue is impeding the animal's movement or is so severe that they cannot clean themselves as they normally would, it needs to be resolved ASAP (within 72 hours). If it is not severe, 2 weeks is sufficient.
 - For veterinary care: If the animal is actively showing signs of distress and discomfort, this should be addressed within 24 – 72 hours, depending on the situation. May require veterinary care ASAP.
 - If the animal is ill or injured but is not showing severe signs of distress or being uncomfortable, 1 – 2 weeks is sufficient depending on the situation. Examples of this would be minor limping, non-stop scratching at the ears or non-stop licking of the skin or paws, runny nose, itchy/watery eyes, skin issues. If the animal appears to be underweight (not emaciated), 1 – 2 weeks is sufficient to ask the owner to have the animal be seen.
 - If the animal is emaciated (think walking skeleton), this should be addressed ASAP, and a discussion on how to proceed should occur.
- **Equines:**
 - Farrier care: This depends on how severe the hooves are. If the hooves are severely overgrown (meaning curling over or slipped hooves), there should be a discussion on how to proceed, as this can cause other medical issues and may indicate long-term neglect. If the hooves need a trim (starting to pancake out, chipped, etc.), 2-4 weeks is a sufficient amount of time to ask the owner to complete the necessary farrier care and provide proof.
 - Veterinary care: If the equine is underweight (not emaciated), limping, showing signs of illness like a runny nose or watery eyes, and/or if the owner can't remember the last time the equine was seen or had their teeth examined, 1-2 weeks is a sufficient amount of time to ask them to get the horse looked at. The owner will need to provide proof and follow any medical recommendations made by the veterinarian.
 - If the equine is emaciated (think walking skeleton), this should be addressed ASAP, and a discussion on how to proceed should occur.
 - If an equine is down and cannot get up, this needs to be addressed ASAP.

Every situation is different, often requiring a unique and tailored response. Hopefully, this “cheat sheet” helps you, but please feel free to call us with any questions you may have or if you just want to talk through the case. We are here to help.



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