



Date: September 27, 2023
To: Christopher Constant, Assembly Chair
Thru: ✉ Kimberly Rash, Acting Director
From: 📧 Tamiah Liebersbach, Administration Manager
Subject: Anchorage Animal Care and Control Briefing for the Assembly Health Policy Committee

The Anchorage Health Department (AHD) respectfully submits the below briefing to the Assembly Health Policy Committee on proposed changes to Title 17 under AO 2023-94 and the status of intakes at Anchorage Animal Care and Control.

AO 2023-94/AM 705-2023 Amending Title 17

AO 2023-94 is the result of a multi-year process conducted by the Animal Control Advisory Board (Board). The Board began looking at revisions to section 17.10.010 – Animals in public places in 2019 after numerous requests from the public and Assembly for the Board to consider stricter leash laws for Anchorage. As outlined in AM 705-2023, the Board put several iterations of proposed changes out for public comment between 2020 and 2023 with the final version being what is now before the Assembly as AO 2023-94. The changes in AO 2023-94 do not change when or where an animal must be on leash. They are meant to make the code easier to understand by members of the public and clearer to enforce. Below are some points for consideration.

- Title 17 only applies to Municipal land. Other areas are governed by State and/or Federal law even if they are within the Municipal boundary. For example, Title 17 does not apply to Chugach State Park or the federal land around the Campbell Creek Science Center.
- The AO adds further guidance on what it means for an animal to be considered under control by command.
- Title 17 currently considers an electronic collar as an equivalent to a leash. AO 2023-94 creates a separate definition for control by an electronic collar but does not change that an electronic collar can be used in the same way as a leash.
- Title 17 currently does not permit off-leash animal while walking, running, hiking, skiing, or biking outside of designated off-leash dog areas. The AO adds language to explicitly state this in code as it is a common misconception that these activities are allowed under control by command.
- The Board believes that the outlined changes will help the public better understand this portion of code, make enforcement for Animal Control more clear, and make it easier for members of the public to educate one another.
- The Animal Control Advisory Board cannot make changes to code that would, by default, make certain land off-leash areas. For example, the Board cannot say that leashes are only required on paved trails because this makes non-paved trails off-leash trails by default. The Board can make recommendations for off-leash areas with concurrence of the parks and recreation commission and the mayor, and subject to approval by the assembly. Current off-leash areas can be viewed [here](#).

Status of Anchorage Animal Care and Control (AACC)

AACC is currently open to animal intakes.

- Stray animals can be brought in anytime during business hours.
- Owners surrendering their animals are asked to call and make an appointment ahead of time. Appointments are done before the shelter opens to the public to try and reduce stress to the owners. AACC moved to taking owner surrenders on an appointment basis for several reasons.
 - It allows AACC to try to divert the surrender and intake into AACC by offering owners resources that may allow them to keep their animals or by helping them rehome their animal on their own.
 - It allows AACC to gather as much information on the animal as possible, which helps with adopting the animal into a new home.
 - This is a best practice that shelters around the country are adopting.
- The night drop kennels are currently closed to the public while we update them with cipher locks.

AACC Closure from 8/31-9/20

For at least the past year, AACC has consistently been dealing with capacity and population issues. In an effort to reduce overcrowding, AACC held multiple special adoption events with drastically reduced adoption fees. Unfortunately, we continue to see intake numbers outpace adoption numbers, leading to an increase in the population at the shelter. Data from 2023 is provided below to help illustrate what AACC is facing. Prior to the 8/31 closure, AACC was at a maximum physical capacity and capacity for care.

We decided to pause intakes to the shelter for 2 weeks to try and reduce the population and streamline our intake processes. Without doing this, we would have been forced to euthanize adoptable animals in order to make space in the shelter for intakes. Just after this decision had been made, we had 2 dogs test positive for parvovirus, which is highly contagious and deadly to young, old, and immunocompromised dogs. This would have caused us to close the shelter to all dog intakes for at least 14 days anyways. The shelter was closed beyond the initially planned 14 days because we had other dogs test positive for parvovirus on 9/6/23, restarting the 14-day clock.

One of our challenges is that the physical space of the shelter is not meeting the increased need currently seen in the community. We are addressing this in several ways. First, we are trying to divert as many animals as possible from coming into the shelter. This is done by increasing engagement with individuals considering owner surrendering their animals so that we can connect them with resources to keep their pet with them or help them rehome their animals themselves. Second, we are working to increase the number of foster homes we have available for adoptable animals. If we can move an animal to a foster family while it waits to be adopted, we free up shelter space and reduce stress to the animal caused by staying at the shelter. Third, we are pursuing a needs assessment to determine the shelter's most immediate maintenance needs so we can prioritize funding to address those items.

AACC is one of many shelters nationwide that is currently experiencing overpopulation and overcapacity issues and there is no simple or quick fix.

AACC Data for January-August, 2023						
Animal Type	Live Intakes	Reunited with Owners	Adopted	Remaining	Shelter Capacity	Amount Over Capacity
Dogs	1294	572	582	140	65	75
Cats	1156	116	824	216	74	142
Other	299	3	200	96	N/A	N/A