



Veterinary Services for Injured Animals Responsibilities and Payment Policy (1102/2026)

Abstract

This policy is required in order that there is provision for cases when the owner cannot be contacted readily or where the police need to assume responsibility for the welfare of an animal for a variety of reasons.

Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 This Sussex Police policy is required to facilitate provisions being made for a sick or injured animal when the owner cannot be found or if the police need to seize an animal for any reason. The associated procedures provide clear information in relation to dealings with sick and injured animals or animals that have been seized during the course of police enquiries. For procedures to be followed when dealing with a dog incident as defined by the Dangerous Dogs Act (DDA) 1991 and the action that will be taken following a police dog bite incident refer to the Police Dog Unit Policy (Surrey and Sussex) (1154).

2. Scope

2.1 This policy covers the care structure and payment responsibilities for animals that fall within the remit of this policy.

3. Policy Statement

3.1 Sussex Police will ensure that any animal in our care or under our control will be treated appropriately to maintain their welfare or minimise suffering.

Procedure

1. Foreword

1.1 The Animal Welfare Act 2006 makes it an offence to cause any unnecessary suffering to any animal. Unlike previous legislation, the Act applies to all vertebrates, domesticated in Britain, under the control of a human and not living in a wild state.

1.2 This policy recognises that provisions need to be made for cases when the animal is injured or deemed to be suffering and the owner cannot be contacted readily or where the police need to assume responsibility for the welfare of an animal for a variety of reasons e.g., recovery of a stolen animal.

2. Animals Subject to these Procedures

2.1 The policy will apply to animals as defined at section 2 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 which states

An animal is a “protected animal” for the purposes of this Act if

- (a) it is of a kind which is commonly domesticated in the British Islands,
- (b) it is under the control of man whether on a permanent or temporary basis, or
- (c) it is not living in a wild state.

The services of a vet or animal specialist should also be called in certain circumstances where wild animals are injured, for example road traffic collisions which involve deer.

3. Injured Animals

3.1 Anyone responsible for an animal must take reasonable steps to make sure the animal’s needs are met. The police may incur costs to comply with this duty (e.g., veterinary costs). The police should look to recover these costs wherever possible from the owner of the animal as the primary duty of care to the animal rests with them.

3.2 Owner identified.

If police come into contact with an injured animal and the officer believes the animal is so diseased or so severely injured or in such a physical condition that there is no possibility of removing it without causing unnecessary suffering, they shall, if the owner is identified but absent or refuses to consent to the destruction of the animal, request the presence of a registered veterinary surgeon to humanely euthanise the animal. Costs will be recovered from the owner or in the case where a collision with a vehicle has occurred, the driver of the vehicle.

Alternatively, a Firearms Officer can be requested with humane dispatch equipment to end any unnecessary suffering. Refer to Armed Policing Policy (Surrey and Sussex) (1139).

If the animal can be moved, police can choose to take the animal to a veterinary practice. In these circumstances, veterinary costs will be met by the owner or vehicle driver if there was a collision.

3.3 Owner not identified.

If a vet decides that it is necessary to keep an animal for further treatment and no owner can be traced, the police will pay the veterinary account from the Divisional Budget of the officer dealing with the incident for the first nine days. The vet must provide an invoice at the end of treatment up to and including the 9 days. For cases whereby the treatment is longer than 9 days and is still under the care of the police, authorisation must be sought from the budget holder.

If the vet subsequently decides the animal needs to be euthanised and the owner cannot be ascertained, the animal will be euthanized.

4. Seized Animals

4.1 Any animal seized in connection with a police enquiry will be boarded at a designated place of safety.

4.2 Fees relating to boarding costs and/or general veterinary fees will be met by the owner if identified. If the owner refuses to pay, then consideration should be made to making an application enforcing payment under section 18 (13) of the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

4.3 Fees relating to a recovered stolen animal will be met by the offender via formal police disposal option. In line with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) Offences Involving Domestic and Captive Animals. Section Charging Practice.

4.4 If no proceedings are taken in relation to an animal seized or removed under this policy the vet's account will be settled by the police and should be sent to Finance Operations with a covering report and authorisation from the budget holder. For manual payment requests please use the Accounts Payable BACS Form. Alternatively, if you have access to a Government Procurement Card (GPC) you can pay on this and add a brief rationale when submitting your claim to Finance Operations for our audit purposes including all relevant authorisations and receipts.

Team: Finance Department