

Animal Law Enforcement Douglas County

How do I file a complaint?

To have an Animal Law Enforcement Officer respond to a complaint, call the Douglas County Animal Law Enforcement Services Office at (303) 660-7529. An officer will be dispatched to investigate your complaint. If the officer witnesses a violation when he/she arrives, appropriate action will be taken. Our officers cannot take any legal action unless they actually witness a violation in progress. This does not mean nothing can be done about a violation. Citizens can fill out a complaint form and forward it to Douglas County Animal Law Enforcement Services. An officer will then investigate the complaint and take the appropriate action.

Tips on approaching your neighbor before filing a complaint:

If comfortable, approach your neighbors in a proactive and friendly manner. Your neighbors may appreciate you showing sincere interest in solving the problem together before resorting to a complaint. You may have valuable information to help them resolve the reasons for their dog's behavior, such as a pattern of the behaviors or a specific reason behind it. They may be oblivious to the specific issues and may be grateful for it being brought to their attention. ****NOTE** When contacting your neighbor, hostile attitudes can and do lead to more serious criminal charges. If you are unable to approach your neighbor in a civil manner or they are unreasonable, do NOT attempt to contact them.**

If I call in a complaint, can I be anonymous?

All calls received by Douglas County Animal Law Enforcement Services are subject to the public records laws, and are subject to public inspection. There are exceptions, such as information identifying juveniles, medical information, and information about ongoing criminal investigations in which a violator has not been charged with the crime. We will not give information over the telephone or in the field except in barking dog cases. In barking dog cases the Douglas County Ordinance requires us to provide a complainant's name and address to the animal owner/keeper, **See Barking Dog Reporting below**. Anyone wanting information can go to the Douglas County Sheriff Department and file a request for release of records and information will then be released in accordance with Colorado Revised Statutes.

Why do you take complaints from people who remain anonymous?

We cannot force people to provide personal information when they call, although we always request it and having it helps us to provide better service. However, there are circumstances that sometimes warrant anonymous calls. Fear of

reprisal and not wanting to have confrontations with the owners are the main reasons people give for remaining anonymous.

Many significant cases, such as animal cruelty and dangerous animals, would not be investigated if anonymous calls were not accepted. An Animal Law Enforcement Officer will investigate all cases reported to us. If there is probable cause to proceed, the officer will do so. Otherwise, the officer will close the case.

Barking dog Reporting

Reporting a barking dog complaint follows a different procedure than described above. Douglas County Resolution R-998-100 states:

A dog owner commits a Class 2 petty offense if:

Section 1.05 (1) (h)

The dog's owner fails to prevent his or her dog, regardless of whether the dog is on or off the owner's premises, from disturbing the peace of any person by loud, habitual, or persistent barking, howling, yelping, or whining.

Section 1.05 (2)

No dog owner shall be charged with violating Subsection (1) (h) of this section 1.05 unless and animal control officer previously has issued a written warning to the owner in accordance with the following warning process;

- a. The animal control officer shall issue the warning on the basis of a written statement from a complainant;*
- b. The complainant shall clearly identify himself or herself by stating his or her name, address, and telephone number, and shall state the dog owner's address, a description of the owner's dog if possible, a description of the incident, and the date, time, place, and duration of the incident.*
- c. The warning shall relate to a prior incident as described in Subsection(h) of this section 1.05;*
- d. The warning shall include a description of the incident, the date, time, place, and duration of the incident, and the name and address of the complainant;*
- e. The warning shall precede the incident being charged as a violation by at least seven (7) days;*
- f. A dog owner shall be deemed to have received a warning under this Subsection (2) if the warning was personally served on the owner or was posted on the owner's premises;*

- g. A Contractor shall keep records of all warnings issued and such records shall be prima facie evidence that such warnings were issued by an animal control officer and were received by the owner.*

This resolution dictates that in order to address a barking dog problem a complainant must submit a written statement. The written statement must identify the:

- Complainants name, address, telephone, number
- Owner's address, and description of the dog if possible
- Description of the incident and date, time, place, and duration of the incident

Once this written statement is received, Douglas County Animal Law Enforcement Services will determine if a written warning or citation has been issued within the last twelve months.

If a warning or citation has not been issued, the officer will issue the owner a written warning and attempt to educate the animal owner about the topic. The owner will then have seven (7) days to correct the problem. If the problems continues after this seven day period and additional complaints are received, Douglas County Animal Law Enforcement Services will make contact with the dog(s) owner and issue a citation for an alleged violation.

If a warning or citation has been issued within the previous twelve (12) months, the officer will make contact with the owner and issue a citation for the alleged violation.

The resolution also requires Douglas County Animal Law Enforcement Services to provide the dog owner the name and address of the complainant. Therefore, the complainant's name and address will appear on any warning or citation issued as a result of a written statement.