

A Case of Severe Weather!

I thought it might be a good idea to write an article on something that generates many calls to my office. As soon as the weather makes a drastic change to either very hot, very wet or very cold, my office receives a lot of calls about outside animals. Most of the calls go something like this. “My neighbors are leaving their dog out 24/7, and never bring him in.” I confirm the situation is taking place in Waukesha County, where I have jurisdiction. I ask, “Does the dog have shelter?” Sometimes it does, and other times no shelter is available to the animal. If the dog has shelter, I ask if the dog looks thin or does a lot of barking. If it is thin, I will put that case on my list to visit soon. If the dog does not have shelter, I follow up with the owner promptly. Unless the pet is in imminent danger, I leave a note at the owner’s home requesting they call me. Wisconsin State Statute 951.14 states that an animal must have appropriate shelter if left outside unattended. (There is some variation for livestock based on normally accepted animal husbandry practices of the region.) If the caller describes more of a nuisance barking complaint, I will steer them to local law enforcement to report a noise violation.

Nowhere in the statutes does it say that dog owners must walk their dog or show it affection. They don’t have to bring it inside or let it sleep on the couch. It surprises and upsets some dog lovers that people would not do all these things for their pet. They ask why someone who doesn’t treat an animal well even has the pet. I don’t have a great answer, as all my pets are of the Wisconsin Couch Anchor breed! I do what I can to improve conditions for outside animals. I require adequate shelter be provided, and I enforce the dog licensing law. This, at a bare minimum, ensures that the dog will be seen by a veterinarian, and get their required rabies vaccination. Surrender of the animal to the local animal shelters is always discussed. If the owners don’t have the time, interest or money to put into their pet, surrender can ensure a good outcome for owner and pet. It may seem like that is letting the owners off the hook for being irresponsible, but the well-being of the animal is my highest priority.

If you want to know more about animal laws, you can enter “Wisconsin state statutes” into your computer’s search engine. The animal laws covering cruelty are listed under Wisconsin State Statute 951. Specific rules about dogs are under statute 174. Each community in Waukesha County can set additional rules regarding animals. Your city, town, or village clerk can provide these to you or direct you to where they are listed online.

Enjoy pets through exercise,
Spoil them with training,
Love them with praise!

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