

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH
4500 Office of Animal Welfare

4502 Regulations for Certification of Animal Welfare Officers

1.0 Authority and Purpose

- 1.1 These regulations are promulgated by the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services pursuant to 16 **Del.C.** §§122(3)bb and 139 pertaining to training and certification requirements for animal welfare officers.
- 1.2 The overall purpose of these regulations is to establish minimum training requirements for the certification of animal welfare officers working in the State of Delaware. These regulations also establish procedures for documenting all complaints filed against the officers/agents, and conducting investigations of complaints concerning violations of this chapter.
- 1.3 These regulations define:
 - 1.3.1 Training and certification requirements for animal welfare officers;
 - 1.3.2 Procedures for obtaining a certification from the Office of Animal Welfare;
 - 1.3.3 Training course approval processes;
 - 1.3.4 Continuing education and recertification obligations;
 - 1.3.5 Disciplinary sanctions; and
 - 1.3.6 Complaint documentation and investigation procedures.
- 1.4 Effective Date. These regulations are effective March 11, 2019.

2.0 Definitions

The following words or terms, when used in these regulations, shall have the meaning indicated, unless the context otherwise requires:

"Animal welfare officer" means any person qualified to act pursuant to 11 **Del.C.** §1325 and 16 **Del.C.** §3041F, notwithstanding additional training/certification requirements listed in those sections.

"Certified Animal Welfare Officer" means an individual who has been certified by the Office to perform animal control pursuant to Section 3.0.

"Department" means the Department of Health and Social Services or its duly authorized representatives.

"Office" means the Division of Public Health Office of Animal Welfare or its duly authorized representatives.

3.0 Animal Welfare Officer Certification

- 3.1 Except as permitted by subsection 4.7, below, no person shall serve as a Delaware animal welfare officer unless such person is trained and certified by the Office of Animal Welfare as set forth in this section.
- 3.2 Individuals seeking certification as an animal welfare officer shall submit a written application to the Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health, Office of Animal Welfare.
- 3.3 In order to qualify for certification as an animal welfare officer, an applicant shall submit proof of the following requirements with their application:
 - 3.3.1 Is eighteen (18) years of age or older;
 - 3.3.2 Is employed as an animal welfare officer in Delaware. A letter of intent from an organization hiring the individual as an animal welfare officer may be accepted;
 - 3.3.3 A Certified Delaware Criminal History, obtained at the State Bureau of Identification not more than 90 days prior to submitting an application for certification, showing the individual has no convictions or pending criminal charges of a crime against person or property;
 - 3.3.4 Has successfully completed an animal control/welfare training course that has been approved by the Office;
 - 3.3.5 Has passed an examination given by or approved by the Office; and
 - 3.3.6 Has completed a minimum of 80 hours of infield training under the direction of one or more Certified Animal Welfare Officers currently working in that capacity. The infield training shall commence upon successful completion of the animal control/welfare training course and exam.

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- 3.4 The Office may, by endorsement, without written examination, certify an animal welfare officer who has completed a training program that meets the educational requirements for certification defined in Section 4.0 and who, in the opinion of the Office, meets the qualifications specified by these regulations for an animal welfare officer.

4.0 Training of Certified Animal Welfare Officers

- 4.1 An animal welfare officer training course shall provide at least forty (40) hours of instruction.
- 4.2 The course must be administered by or approved by the Office and minimum curriculum requirements shall include:
- 4.2.1 Role and authority of an animal welfare officer;
 - 4.2.2 Delaware laws governing rabies control, animal control and protection, dangerous dogs, animal cruelty, and enforcement powers;
 - 4.2.3 Animal health and disease recognition, control, and prevention;
 - 4.2.4 First aid for injured animals;
 - 4.2.5 Principles and procedures for humanely capturing and handling domestic animals, wildlife, and livestock;
 - 4.2.6 Criminal justice system, investigative techniques, rules of evidence, and report writing;
 - 4.2.7 Principles of courtroom testimony and prosecution;
 - 4.2.8 Communications, conflict resolution, and officer safety; and
 - 4.2.9 Emergency management.
- 4.3 Following the training detailed in subsection 4.2, the applicant shall take an examination provided by or approved by the Office. Applicants who fail to obtain a minimum score of 75% after testing two times must repeat the training course before additional testing is permitted.
- 4.4 Upon completion of an examination outlined in subsection 4.3, the applicant shall complete a minimum of eighty (80) hours of infield training under the direction of one or more Certified Animal Welfare Officers currently working in that capacity.
- 4.5 The Office may waive the completion of all or part of the curriculum required in subsection 4.2 upon presentation of documentary evidence that the individual has satisfactorily completed equivalent training or experience.
- 4.6 An animal welfare officer, if serving as such on the effective date of this Rule shall, within 6 months after the effective date of this Rule, complete the certification requirements outlined in Section 3.0. Persons who fail to complete the certification requirement within 6 months after the effective date of this Rule will not be authorized to act as an animal welfare officer in the State of Delaware and shall be subject to penalties pursuant to 16 **Del.C.** §107(a).
- 4.7 An animal welfare officer hired on or after the effective date of this Rule shall, within 60 days after the date of hire, complete the certification requirements outlined in Section 3.0. Officers that have not completed the certification requirement within 60 days after the date of hire will not be authorized to act as an animal welfare officer in the State of Delaware.

5.0 Approval of Training Course

- 5.1 Any organization or institution desiring to conduct an animal welfare officer education program shall apply to the Office for approval. The organization must submit evidence, deemed satisfactory by the Office, that it is ready and qualified to instruct students in the prescribed basic curriculum for certifying animal welfare officers, and that it is prepared to meet other standards which may be established by the Office.
- 5.2 If the Office determines that any approved educational program is not maintaining the standards required by these regulations and by the Office, written notice thereof, specifying the deficiency and the time within which the same shall be corrected, shall immediately be issued to the program. The Office shall withdraw such program's approval if it fails to correct the deficiency within the time proscribed. The organization or institution may reapply for approval to the Office once the program meets standards established by the Office.

6.0 Issuance of Certification

- 6.1 The Office shall issue a certificate to each qualified applicant who has successfully met the requirements under subsection 3.3.

- 6.2 A copy of the certificate shall be kept on file at the animal welfare officer's place of employment.
- 6.3 The employer shall notify the Office in writing, no later than 10 days from the date of termination or resignation, of an animal welfare officer's employment. The employer shall state the reason for termination in the notification.
- 6.4 The Office shall maintain a current registry of all persons certified as animal welfare officers in the state.
- 6.5 If a certified animal welfare officer resigns or leaves the employment of an animal control/cruelty agency in good standing and is no longer working in the role of animal welfare officer, the officer's certification shall become inactive. If the officer is rehired as an animal welfare officer within 12 months, the certification will be reinstated to active. If the officer is not rehired within 12 months, the certification shall be revoked. The officer can apply for recertification once they become employed as an animal welfare officer.
- 6.6 If a certified animal welfare officer has been found by an employer to be unfit or incompetent, the Office may impose sanctions as outlined in subsection 9.3.

7.0 Continuing Education and Recertification

- 7.1 A certified animal welfare officer shall complete 8 hours of continued education and training by December 31 every calendar year, commencing the year after initial certification in order to maintain certification. The Office may grant an officer additional time for good cause, not to exceed one year, to complete the training.
- 7.2 Evidence of completion of the training shall be submitted to the Office within 30 days after training is completed to satisfy the continuing education requirement in subsection 7.1.
- 7.3 The certification of an animal welfare officer shall be suspended if the officer fails to satisfactorily complete the training in accordance with subsection 7.1. Training must be completed before the suspension may be lifted.

8.0 Conducted Electrical Weapon (CEW)

In order for an animal welfare officer to carry/use a conducted electrical weapon (CEW), he/she must complete a training program taught by a certified instructor and all certifications or re-certifications must be on file with the Office of Animal Welfare.

9.0 Denial, Revocation and Disciplinary Sanctions

- 9.1 The Office may impose sanctions, defined in this chapter singly or in combination when it finds a certified or former certified animal welfare officer committed any offense described below:
 - 9.1.1 Engages in fraud or deceit in procuring or attempting to procure a certification/license;
 - 9.1.2 Is guilty of a crime against person or property;
 - 9.1.3 Has been found by an employer to be unfit or incompetent;
 - 9.1.4 Has had a certification or license to serve as an animal welfare officer suspended or revoked in any jurisdiction; or
 - 9.1.5 Has willfully or negligently violated this chapter.
- 9.2 In determining whether to impose sanctions, the Department shall consider the following factors:
 - 9.2.1 The seriousness of the offense;
 - 9.2.2 The circumstances surrounding the offense;
 - 9.2.3 The relation of the offense to the duties of a certified animal welfare officer; and
 - 9.2.4 Consultation with the certified animal welfare officer's employing agency.
- 9.3 Disciplinary sanctions shall include one or more of the following:
 - 9.3.1 Permanently revoking a certification;
 - 9.3.2 Refusing a certification or certification renewal;
 - 9.3.3 Suspending a certification;
 - 9.3.4 Issuing a letter of reprimand;
 - 9.3.5 Requiring additional training; or
 - 9.3.6 Placing a certification on probationary status and requiring the individual to:
 - 9.3.6.1 Report regularly to the Office upon the matters which are the basis of probation;
 - 9.3.6.2 Limit practice to those areas prescribed by the Office; or

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- 9.3.6.3 Continue or renew professional education until satisfactory degree of skill has been attained in those areas which are the basis of the probation.
- 9.4 An animal welfare officer may request an administrative hearing if they wish to contest the disciplinary sanctions.
- 9.4.1 The request shall be made in writing to the Secretary of the Department within 20 calendar days after issuance of the final written report and associated sanctions.
- 9.4.2 As soon as possible, but not later than 30 calendar days of receipt of the request for an administrative hearing, the Department shall set a time and place to conduct a hearing.
- 9.4.3 Notice of the hearing shall be given and the hearing conducted in accordance with the Administrative Procedures Act, 29 **Del.C.** Ch. 101, and the Freedom of Information Act, 29 **Del.C.** Ch. 100.
- 9.4.4 The Department shall make a determination based upon the evidence presented.
- 9.4.5 A written copy of the determination and the reasons upon which it is based shall be sent to the officer within 30 calendar days.
- 9.5 During an administrative hearing:
- 9.5.1 The animal welfare officer has the right to be represented by counsel;
- 9.5.2 All statements made shall be under oath;
- 9.5.3 The animal welfare officer has the right to examine and cross-examine witnesses; and
- 9.5.4 A stenographer recording will be made by a qualified court reporter. At the request and expense of any party, such record shall be transcribed with a copy to the other party.
- 9.6 The decision of the Department shall be based upon sufficient legal evidence. The Department may continue, modify or revoke the disciplinary sanctions.
- 9.7 All decisions of the Department shall be final and conclusive. Where the officer is in disagreement with the action of the Department, the officer may appeal the Department's decision to the Superior Court within 30 days of service or of the postmarked date of the copy of the decision mailed to the officer. The appeal shall be on the record to the Superior Court and shall be as provided in 29 **Del.C.** §§10142-10145.

10.0 Documenting and Investigating Complaints

- 10.1 The Office shall document all complaints filed directly with the Office or the employer against certified animal welfare officers of alleged violations of 16 **Del.C.** §139.
- 10.2 All complaints must be received in writing and shall be reviewed. Only complaints concerning violations of this chapter will be investigated by the Office. Complaints that do not involve alleged violations of 16 **Del.C.** §139 may be referred to the employer, another agency or entity as appropriate according to the subject matter of the complaint.
- 10.3 The Office shall notify the animal welfare officer and the officer's employer of the complaint investigation within 10 days of receipt of said complaint.
- 10.4 The Office shall issue a final written report of the complaint investigation findings and any associated disciplinary sanctions outlined in subsection 9.3 to the animal welfare officer and the officer's employer sent by Certified Mail or hand delivered. If the complaint concerns an officer employed by the Office of Animal Welfare, the complaint will be forwarded to the Division Director or Deputy Director for investigation.

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