

**MEMORANDUM TO:** All Chiefs of Police and  
Commissioner Thomas Carrique  
Chairs, Police Services Boards

**FROM:** Richard Stubbings  
Assistant Deputy Minister  
Public Safety Division

**SUBJECT:** **Enforcement of the Provincial Animal Welfare Services  
Act, 2019**

<b>DATE OF ISSUE:</b>	<b>June 19, 2020</b>
<b>CLASSIFICATION:</b>	<b>General Information</b>
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Further to All Chiefs Memo 19-0093, issued on December 19, 2019, regarding the [Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, 2019](#) (PAWS Act), I am writing to provide some clarification regarding enforcement of the PAWS Act.

Effective January 1, 2020, the PAWS Act came into force creating a new provincial animal welfare enforcement model. The Ministry of the Solicitor General established the Animal Welfare Services (AWS) branch, with a Chief Animal Welfare Inspector who has in turn appointed animal welfare inspectors across the province.

As you know, the Ontario Animal Protection Call Centre, which is available 24/7 to respond to public calls regarding animals in distress or being abused, triages calls to the appropriate authority including provincial animal welfare inspectors or local police. Police officers and First Nations Constables have authority under section 60 of the PAWS Act to exercise the powers of an animal welfare inspector in relation to animals in distress and the investigation of offences.

#### Taking Possession of Animals in Distress

Section 60 of the PAWS Act includes the power for police officers and First Nations Constables to take possession of animals in distress in order to relieve their distress, as per section 31 of the PAWS Act.

In order to exercise this power under section 31, police officers and First Nations Constables who take possession of an animal must provide prompt notice to an animal welfare inspector per section 60 of the PAWS Act. They may do so by contacting the Ontario Animal Protection Centre at 1-833-9- ANIMAL (1-833-926-4625) and requesting to speak with the inspector on call. The inspector on call can provide advice and assistance in terms of the necessities that may need to be provided to relieve the animal's distress, including, for example, when veterinary care may be required, the scope of that care, and how to obtain these services.

Following this notice, as required per section 60 of the PAWS Act, an animal welfare inspector will conduct an inspection of the animal and determine whether to take possession of the animal.

AWS may decline to cover costs that police services incur while animals are in their possession prior to an animal welfare inspector taking possession. Police services are therefore encouraged to discuss the provision of necessities and costs with the inspector on call.

### Pets in Hot Cars

With the onset of warmer weather, it is anticipated that police officers and First Nations Constables will be receiving calls regarding pets left in hot cars. This can result in serious animal injury or fatality.

The public are advised to call 911 if they see an animal in a hot car and are concerned that the animal's life is in immediate danger. The PAWS Act authorizes police, First Nations Constables, and animal welfare inspectors to enter motor vehicles to remove animals. Members of the public are advised not to attempt entering a vehicle in these situations.

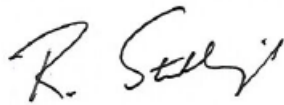
Where they have reasonable grounds to believe that an animal is in critical distress, police officers and First Nations Constables have the authority under section 29 of the PAWS Act to enter places including motor vehicles. Critical distress is defined in the PAWS Act as "distress requiring immediate intervention in order to prevent serious injury or to preserve life".

Some visible signs of critical distress in dogs, for example, include excessive panting or drooling, listlessness, collapsing or seizures. Should an animal be removed from a motor vehicle, section 60 of the PAWS Act applies and notification to an animal welfare inspector shall occur promptly, should animals need to be taken into possession as described above.

I ask that you share this memorandum with police officers and First Nations Constables who may be exercising powers under the PAWS Act and communications and dispatch personnel in your respective public safety answering points regarding 911 calls for service in relation to animals in hot cars, particularly with summer commencing.

The ministry looks forward to continuing to work in partnership with you as we implement the new provincial animal welfare enforcement model to help ensure animals are protected. Should you have any questions or comments, please contact Georgios Fthenos, Deputy Chief Inspector, Animal Welfare Services at [georgios.fthenos@ontario.ca](mailto:georgios.fthenos@ontario.ca).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Stubbings". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Richard Stubbings  
Assistant Deputy Minister  
Public Safety Division