

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

**FROM:** Ken Weatherill  
Assistant Deputy Minister  
Public Safety Division

**SUBJECT:** **Recommended Best Practices and Requirements to  
Support Enforcement of the *Provincial Animal Welfare  
Services Act, 2019***

<b>DATE OF ISSUE:</b>	<b>January 20, 2025</b>
<b>CLASSIFICATION:</b>	<b>General Information</b>
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Further to All Chiefs Memorandum 19-0093 issued on December 19, 2019, regarding the [Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, 2019](#) (PAWS Act), I am writing to share guidance on recommended best practices and requirements to support enforcement of the PAWS Act; specifically, police taking possession of animals in distress and the requirement to notify Animal Welfare Services (AWS).

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 AWS Branch, with a Chief Animal Welfare Inspector who in turn appointed animal welfare inspectors across the province.

Police officers and First Nation Officers 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

Amongst other authorities, section 60 of the PAWS Act provides that police and First Nation Officers may exercise the powers of an animal welfare inspector under section 31 (taking possession of animals in distress). An animal may be removed where a veterinarian has advised that relieving the animal's distress necessitates its removal; where there are reasonable grounds for believing that an animal is in distress and the

owner/custodian cannot be promptly found, or where an animal is in critical distress; and an order respecting the animal has been made and it has not been complied with.

The PAWS Act defines:

“**distress**” means the state of being,  
(a) in need of proper care, water, food or shelter,  
(b) injured, sick, in pain or suffering, or  
(c) abused or subject to undue physical or psychological hardship, privation or neglect;

“**critical distress**” means distress that requires immediate intervention in order to prevent serious injury or to preserve life;

### Steps Where an Animal is Deemed in Distress

#### **1. Determining whether to take possession of an animal**

AWS has inspectors available on call to provide guidance and support, 24/7. It is encouraged that police officers and First Nation Officers contact AWS for information and support prior to removing the animal. An AWS inspector may be reached upon request when contacting the call centre at **1-833-9-ANIMAL** (1-833-926-4625).

The AWS inspector 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.

Police services and First Nation Officers that have access to NICHE may wish to consult the database to determine if AWS is actively involved and/or has any pertinent information (e.g., next of kin, current and/or previous AWS involvement, etc.) that may help with the situation.

#### **2. Requirement to provide notice to AWS**

Pursuant to section 60 (3) of the PAWS Act, a police officer or First Nation Officer who exercises the power in section 31 to take possession of an animal must promptly notify an animal welfare inspector.

Where this takes place, police officers and First Nation Officers can contact the call centre at **1-833-9-ANIMAL** (1-833-926-4625) and request to speak with an AWS inspector to fulfill this legal obligation. AWS inspectors are available 24/7.

Following this notice, as required pursuant to section 60 (4) of the PAWS Act, an animal welfare inspector shall inspect the animal and determine whether to take possession.

**Note:** If a police officer or First Nation Officer has not removed an animal pursuant to their legal authority under the PAWS Act, AWS may decline to cover costs that

police services incur while animals are in their possession and AWS may not be able to take possession of the animal. Police services are strongly encouraged to contact an AWS inspector to discuss the provision of necessities and costs.

### 3. Transporting the animal(s)

Please be prepared to safely transport the animal to a local emergency veterinary clinic for medical care and/or boarding in your region.

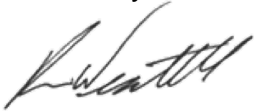
Local kennels or animal control services may also be available for after hours arrival and boarding services.

It is also recommended to contact the call centre at **1-833-9-ANIMAL** (1-833-926-4625) and request to speak with an AWS inspector who may be able to refer you to local services.

Please share this memorandum with police officers and First Nation Officers who may be exercising powers under the PAWS Act.

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

Sincerely,



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Assistant Deputy Minister  
Public Safety Division

Attachment

c: Mario Di Tommaso, O.O.M.  
Deputy Solicitor General, Community Safety