

Shelburne Policy on Animal Coexistence

This Policy is intended to guide Town employees, as well as contractors and volunteers working for the Town in common interactions with our animal neighbors. The Town values animal life as an integral part of the community and ~~supports~~ **advocates** a harmonious coexistence behavioral style whenever interactions occur.

~~The~~ This Town policy applies to activity on Town property, including lands or facilities the care and protection of which is entrusted to the Town by agreement or, as in the case of water bodies, by situation. This Town Policy applies to actions by Town employees, as well as contractors and volunteers working for the Town that they will be guided by these following principals in the course of their activities and when dealing with the public in the course of interactions with animals.

The purpose of this Policy is to transform conflict between ~~residents~~ individuals and wildlife, between individuals and aggressive dogs, and between domesticated cats who are natural hunters and our wildlife into co-existence. ~~and~~ This policy is also intended to **ensure that the interactions among human, domestic animals and wildlife are consistent with the goals to maintain and value healthy populations of all native species within the context of as valued natural resources that define the Town of Shelburne's character and heritage.**

The community recognizes the ethical importance of maintaining a healthy ecosystem and the associated quality of life. The community recognizes that its policies regarding development, transportation, recreation, and energy consumption ultimately have impacts on habitat resources. The human causes of natural resource degradation are not always immediately apparent and are often not recognized until it is too late and valued natural resources are lost. While local adverse impacts can often be identified and mitigated, it is the sum of direct and indirect impacts that, over time, undermine the health of the ecosystem.

This Town Animal Coexistence Policy is a set of principles to be implemented in procedures and protocols which establish rules and guidance for managing inter-animal conflicts, assistance in resolving common domestic animal problems, conservation of the wildlife resource, and promotion of the wildlife contribution to a sustainable, healthy local ecosystem consistent with the Town Plan.

A. Principles: these principles underlie Shelburne's strategy:

1. All species - human and animal -- coexist in the ecosystem and have intrinsic value.
2. Humans have an obligation to protect the right of wildlife to exist at both the species and individual levels.
3. Wildlife protection requires an approach that preserves necessary habitat and natural resources in Shelburne.
4. Humans and wildlife, although facing conflicted interactions in a human dominated landscape, can successfully coexist. Humane solutions *to human-wildlife interactions* are effective and prioritized.
5. Policies and practices in a changing environment must be defined by the best available scientific and community knowledge.
6. *Policy Regulations* and practices will be developed through collaboration with interested residents, employees and stakeholders.

B. Best Practices

1. Preventing conflict by Town Operating department employees

The Town will develop best practices for Town employees, as well as contractors and volunteers working for the Town which require the prevention of conflict between humans and animals.

All Town operating departments shall also review and modify their procedures to identify actions which are not in compliance with this policy. job requirements shall be reviewed for improvement toward this goal.

All Town operating departments shall minimize activities which are harmful to natural habitat of our wildlife.

Define policies for town personnel and subcontractors that promote the most humane solutions to human-wildlife interactions on town-managed land and waters.

Incident management Police job requirements shall be reviewed for improvement toward this goal.

What town staff should do with incident info. Define roles.

Animal Control -- expand this position's responsibilities Role of animal control officer's job requirements shall be reviewed for improvement toward this goal.

What if the officer is not on duty

Licensing procedure of dogs and cats shall be reviewed for improvement toward this goal.

Road construction and maintenance practices

Train staff in practices re: key ecological corridors in Shelburne

Data collection-

Road injuries

Finding injured or young wildlife

Destruction of property

Escaped pets or livestock

Abnormal animal behavior, Bites

Monitor indicator species

Monitor incidents by date, species, character of incident, solution

Human misbehavior towards wildlife (where to complain)

Reports of cruelty to wild or domestic animals should be reported to the Shelburne's town animal officer (phone number), VT Dept. Of Fish and Wildlife game warden (phone number) for for the Shelburne area and the nearest Humane Society of the US office (reference).

If you suspect illegal (for example, out of season) hunting and/or trapping of wild animals, contact the state game warden for the Shelburne area at _____

Other potential legal violations concerning wildlife, including intentional poisoning, should

be directed to the VT Dept. Of Fish and Wildlife at (number) except in the case of migratory birds. In these cases, suspected violations should be reported to ----- . For a list of birds included under the Migratory Birds (cite relevant act) go to-----

Role of animal officer in gathering data

Development of resources necessary for policy related requirements in employees jobs. Ways for town personnel to access updated resources

Education and training of town employees

Referential

Town staff should be prepared to pass on resources to residents

Environment

Signage

2. Guidance for Town volunteers in Commissions, Boards and Committees Dealing with everyday human-wildlife interactions

Select Board shall regularly review and revise its guidance and requirements of the volunteer organizations working on behalf of the Town with respect to this Town policy. **Town employees, as well as contractors**

and volunteers working for the Town shall be educated regarding this policy and related requirements. Education and training of town affiliates

3. Education of the public (residents and visitors)

Support and create education and outreach programs that encourage all members of the community to use the most current and humane solutions in their interactions with wildlife on their property.

*Animal licensing and entrance fee to parks to support cleanup of waste pollution
Education regarding impacts of animal waste on water quality etc
Outdoor cats required to wear bells*

Opportunities for provision (dog park, licensing, voting day, path signs, tree warden, library, schools, town website, vet and petfood businesses, etc.)

Animal enforcement - define role in training

Volunteer projects - public involvement in training the public

Volunteer teams organized to keep parks clean of pet waste

Communication of resources to deal with incidents (humane operators, DFW, rehabilitators)

Town sponsored training (ex. dog obedience classes. Lectures by professionals at town hall)

Education - ex. wildlife-proofing the house *and yard*

Wildlife in the *private* yard

Encounters with wildlife around town

Bites - In the event that a person is scratched or bitten by a wild (or domesticated) animal, it is imperative to immediately wash the area thoroughly with warm water and soap. If there is any suspicion that the animal has rabies, see a doctor for further assessment and treatment.

Disposal of dead birds and animals -- Use one of two ways to dispose of dead animals in your yard.

1) Bury the remains at least 2 feet deep in an area not used as a vegetable garden.

Or double bag the remains in sealed plastic bags and place them in the trash. Use a shovel to gather the remains, or use gloves. Do not use bare hands. If rabies or another health concern is present, do not dispose of the remains yourself. Contact your town animal officer.

4. Key resources list

List of area rehabilitators

List of humane wildlife management businesses

Species specific conflict guide reference (HSUS, for one)

Tips for Coexistence Sheet

Guide to making home wildlife-proof

[file:///C:/Users/jimby/Desktop/Shelburne%20Wildlife/Best%20articles/Wildlife Proofing Property Checklist.pdf](file:///C:/Users/jimby/Desktop/Shelburne%20Wildlife/Best%20articles/Wildlife%20Proofing%20Property%20Checklist.pdf)

5. Key definitions

The term “Animal” used in this Policy refers to all members of the animal kingdom, unless otherwise stated. However, human to human interactions are clearly not included.

Humane: 1) prioritize non-lethal solutions whenever possible 2) when necessary, provide truly humane death in a way that minimizes physical suffering and emotional trauma

Wildlife: This term refers to all organisms that grow or live wild in an area which have not been introduced by humans. This includes both animals and plants, although the phrase often places emphasis on animals more than plants. Fish and other aquatic organisms should be assumed to be included in the use of the word.

Discuss individual species in terms of typical issues and solutions

Beavers (Link to Shelburne's beaver policy)

1. Social and biological snapshot
2. Positive impacts
3. Potential issues
4. Legal status in VT and US
5. Preventive measures
6. Sources of information

Raccoons

7. Social and biological snapshot
8. Positive impacts
9. Potential issues
10. Legal status in VT and US
11. Preventive measures
12. Sources of information

Coyotes

13. Social and biological snapshot
14. Positive impacts
15. Potential issues
16. Legal status in VT and US
17. Preventive measures
18. Sources of information

Deer

19. Social and biological snapshot
20. Positive impacts
21. Potential issues
22. Legal status in VT and US
23. Preventive measures
24. Sources of information

Bears

25. Social and biological snapshot
26. Positive impacts
27. Potential issues
28. Legal status in VT and US

29. Preventive measures

30. Sources of information

Woodchucks

31. Social and biological snapshot

32. Positive impacts

33. Potential issues

34. Legal status in VT and US

35. Preventive measures

36. Sources of information

Chipmunks

37. Social and biological snapshot

38. Positive impacts

39. Potential issues

40. Legal status in VT and US

41. Preventive measures

42. Sources of information

Skunks

43. Social and biological snapshot

44. Positive impacts

45. Potential issues

46. Legal status in VT and US

47. Preventive measures

48. Sources of information

Amphibians (what if you see a turtle in the road?)

6. Solutions to conflict

Humane solutions *to human-wildlife interactions* are effective and prioritized
(trapping is rarely justified)

Getting the right professional help

7. Town management practices and procedures

8. Threats to Wildlife: it is important to acknowledge and understand the tsunami of significant threats to wildlife in Shelburne, in the State of Vermont, and across the United States in the 21st Century. In the next decades, these threats are expected to decrease wild species by one third or more in North America. These include:

Habitat loss and fragmentation*

Climate change*

Pollution*

Road and transportation systems*

Light and noise pollution

Invasive species*

Human disconnect from nature* *Limiting impacts of domesticated animals on wildlife*

Keep wildlife wild

*Identified by the VT DFW (these could be acknowledged and then reference made to the VT Wildlife Action Plan for further detail).

9. Recommendations for future action

A. Recommendations about the responsibility and coordination of town government entities in monitoring, oversight and further development of this strategy. Should discuss town animal officer, town manager, highway dept manager, Natural Resources Committee, Select Board.

B. Policy development

Zoning and planning

Roads and ecology (signage, wildlife under road pass- throughs, temporary road closings)

Wildlife corridors and habitat

C. Integration with town plan

D. Monitoring and data collection -- what is needed and how will be it collected?

E. Invasive species -- town strategy for?

F. Education and outreach -- what steps can and should the town take?

G. Future budgeting considerations (ex. to expand animal control to wildlife, for training, signage, etc.)

Additional Notes:

Possible ideas for public education

1. Develop a series of short articles that discuss various aspects of the policy. Post these in FPF and/or the Shelburne News once the policy is in place.
2. Develop a post card-sized (or business card) handout that makes one or 2 key points and lists sources of more info. These to be placed in retail locations, including vet offices and petfood stores, within Shelburne.
3. Develop a poster-sized (11x12 or 11x17) info sheet that could be hung at Petfood Warehouse and a few other key locations.
4. Develop a multiple-page booklet that talks about different species in terms of issues and solutions. Have a stack available at town hall. Also at the library.
5. Take advantage of any events that bring residents to town hall -- voting day, getting pet licenses, paying taxes, etc.)
5. Place a table each season at the farmer's market to hand out material and answer questions.
6. Do some education events at the school, recruiting parents to organize them.
7. Feature wildlife experts lecturing at town hall.
8. Have an annual town-wide contest with a prize for the most exciting or interesting (and documented) sighting of a wild animal within Shelburne.
9. Have a quarterly piece in the Shelburne News for questions and answers about interactions with wildlife. Involve the animal control officer?

