

## Draft Policy

# Shelburne Policy on Animal Coexistence

### Section A: Policy

This Policy is intended to guide the ways in which Town employees, as well as Town contractors and volunteers, interact with our animal neighbors and wildlife. The Town of Shelburne values all species as an integral part of the community and advocates for a harmonious coexistence behavioral style whenever interactions occur. While this policy is intended primarily for town personnel and associated stakeholders, it is also meant to inspire all Shelburne residents and Town visitors to be thoughtful and respectful in their interactions with animals and wildlife. Town employees, as well as contractors and volunteers working with the Town, will be guided by the following principles in the course of their activities and when dealing with the public in the course of interactions with animals and wildlife.

The purpose of this Policy is to transform conflict between wildlife, animals and humans into a more symbiotic state of greater coexistence. This Policy is also intended to ensure that the interactions among human, domestic animals and wildlife are consistent with the goal of maintaining and valuing healthy populations of all native species as valued natural resources that define the Town of Shelburne's character and heritage.

The Shelburne community recognizes the ethical and biological importance of maintaining a healthy ecosystem as well as the concept that a healthy natural environment increases the quality of life for the citizens of Shelburne. The community understands that its policies regarding development, transportation, recreation, and energy consumption ultimately impact habitat and other natural resources. The human causes of natural resource degradation are not always immediately apparent and are too often left unrecognized until it is too late and valued resources are lost. While adverse impacts can sometimes be identified and mitigated, it is the sum of direct and indirect impacts that, over time, undermines 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 interspecies conflicts, providing assistance in resolving common domestic animal problems, conserving wildlife, and helping to enable a sustainable, healthy, local ecosystem consistent with the Town Plan.

### Section B. Principles

1. All species - human and animal -- shall be able to coexist in Shelburne's ecosystem and have intrinsic value.
  2. The health of wildlife relates directly to the health of the ecosystem.
  3. Humans have an obligation to protect the right of wildlife to exist at both the species and individual levels, and protective efforts must be proactive to be effective.
  4. Wildlife protection requires an approach that preserves necessary wildlife habitat and natural resources in Shelburne.
  5. Humans and wildlife, although facing situations of conflict in a human dominated landscape, can and should successfully coexist.
  6. Humane solutions to human-wildlife interactions are effective and should be prioritized.
  7. Policies and practices in a changing environment must be defined by the best available scientific and community knowledge.
  8. Regulations and practices related to animal coexistence will be developed through collaboration with interested residents, town employees and other stakeholders.
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## APPENDICES

### Section A. Key Definitions

Animal: Refers in this policy to all members of the animal kingdom, including humans, unless otherwise stated. However, human to human interactions and coexistence are not a consideration of this policy.

Humane: 1) Prioritizes non-lethal solutions whenever possible. 2) When necessary, provides for 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 and 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 are included in the use of the word.

Habitat: In general, this term refers not just to terrain that lacks human development, but to any environment that is home to wildlife. Specifically, it can also mean an environment demonstrated as being decisive to the well-being of a species of wildlife at any period in its life including breeding and migratory periods as defined by the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife (under 10 V.S.A. §6086(a)(8)(a)).

Animal Coexistence: “Scientists define coexistence as a ‘dynamic but sustainable state in which humans and [wildlife] adapt to living in shared landscapes (Carter, N.H. and Linnell, J.D.C. 2016).’ To share space in perpetuity, conflict—even where unlikely or merely perceived—can typically be avoided with preventative measures. The best available modern science points to non-lethal techniques and changes in human behavior as more effective (relative to lethal measures) at reducing costs and preventing conflicts with wildlife over the long-term. Non-lethal methods are context dependent and require adaptive responses over time. Therefore, coexistence looks different depending on the place: the wildlife, domestic animals, humans, terrain, and climate all play a part (from *Coexistence: Living Harmoniously with Wildlife in a Human-dominated World* by Michelle L. Lute, PhD, International Fund for Animal Welfare, 2019).”

### Section B. Suggested Best Practices

## **1. Town department employees**

- a) The Town will assign the responsibility to develop best practices to a "Coexistence Champion". This champion will develop the practices and help train Town employees to ensure the prevention and effective management of issues of conflict between animals and Town employees, Town contractors and volunteers working for the Town. Such practices will be built on the principles stated in this policy, and will promote the most humane solutions to human-wildlife interactions.
- b) Town employees shall receive ongoing training on issues related to animal coexistence and be provided with appropriate background education about the context in which they operate (ex. key ecological corridors in Shelburne)
- c) All Town operating departments shall review and modify their procedures to identify actions which are not in compliance with this policy. Because contractors hired by the Town should also adhere to this policy, Town departments hiring contractors will be responsible for ensuring that contractor procedures adhere to the policy. Contractors working on Town projects could be required to sign a policy compliance statement, acknowledging that they have reviewed, understand and will comply with policy when implementing a project.
- d) The Town will update employee job requirements to ensure they adhere to the policy. Job descriptions shall be reviewed and updated regularly by the Policy Champion and an appropriate staff member with thorough knowledge of Town job descriptions to ensure that they most effectively forward the goals of this policy.
- e) The Town will enable pathways for personnel to access updated training/educational resources related to this policy.
- f) All Town operating departments shall minimize activities that are harmful to the habitats of our wildlife.
- g) Town staff should be prepared to pass on policy-related resources to Town residents and visitors.

## **Police**

Police department incident management procedures and job requirements shall be reviewed for improvements that will forward the goals of this policy. Specific actions will need to be defined.

### **Town staff**

Staff procedures and job requirements shall be reviewed for improvements that will forward the goals of this policy. Specific actions will need to be defined. Staff shall also review licensing procedures for dogs and cats for improvements related to policy goals. For example, outdoor cats could be required to wear bells.

### **Animal control**

Currently, the Shelburne animal control officer (ACO) is responsible primarily for actions regarding issues with animals. The ACO's job requirements shall be reviewed to achieve portions of this policy. At the very least, a strong commitment to the principles underlying this policy and communication skills that would adequately allow for training and advising Town employees and contractors and providing information and guidance to Town residents and visitors shall be requisite qualifications for the person in this role. Procedures need to be developed for the handling of events that happen when the ACO is not on duty.

#### a. ACO responsibilities - Wildlife

1. Data collection
  - monitor incidents by date, species, character of incident, solution
  - monitor indicator species
  - compile and provide data summary reports to Town officials and residents
2. Response to situations
  - injured or orphaned wildlife
  - aggressive animals
  - abnormal animal behavior
  - disposal of dead animals
  - destruction of property
  - human misbehavior towards animals
  - managing human-animal interactions as necessary
3. Reporting situations, violations of wildlife law, etc.
4. Creating and distributing periodic summary reports related to the policy to the Selectboard, relevant Town committees, Town manager and residents.
5. Training or arranging training for Town employees and contractors

6. Maintaining communications with relevant Town committees and other wildlife professionals
7. Advising and educating the public in policy-related matters

b. ACO - Wildlife and Agricultural Animal Situations

- managing and reporting escaped pets and livestock, aggressive animals, etc.
- reporting violations to appropriate authorities
- managing human-animal interactions as necessary

### **Highway Department**

Road construction and maintenance practices shall take into account the principles of this policy and mitigate impact to species and habitats. More proactive use of road signage and other public signage shall be used to reduce situations of conflict, such as vehicle/animal collisions, and to identify key locations such as wildlife corridors.

### **Cemetery Department**

Procedures shall be reviewed for improvements that will support the goals of this policy. Specific actions need to be defined.

### **Zoning**

Moving forward, zoning regulation updates and changes should embrace and support the values expressed in this policy regarding animal coexistence and protection.

### **Reporting by the public, data collection and responses by Town employees**

In general, there needs to be improved record keeping of human-animal interactions so that factual data is available for review. Accurate data will serve several useful purposes, including:

1. Defining positive and negative human-wildlife interaction patterns to allow for developing and refining coexistence strategies,
  2. Identifying wildlife corridors so that possible monitoring and protection can be introduced,
  3. Monitoring threats to and the health of species and family groups.
- Reports of suffering animals, cruelty toward wildlife and illegal activity or suspicion of illegal activity (such as out of season hunting and trapping)

directed at wildlife are currently brought to the VT Department of Fish and Wildlife game warden for Shelburne, and that should continue.

It is also important for the public to understand that Shelburne's ACO should receive notification of such activities so data can be gathered. A protocol for acquiring and processing such information would need to be created. Perhaps the game warden could automatically share reports received from Shelburne residents with the ACO. In the event that a resident reaches the ACO first, the ACO could notify the game warden. The Human Society office in Burlington might also serve a role in data collection. Individual residents will have their differing inclinations about who to talk to.

Given limitations on the availability of the game warden and the ACO (the latter most likely will work part time), having multiple sources to contact seems reasonable, especially in cases where an immediate response is required.

Other potential legal violations concerning wildlife, including intentional poisoning, should be directed to the VT Department Of Fish and Wildlife. The ACO will need to be notified.

In the case of illegal activity directed at domestic or ag animals, the ACO or the police department will explain how to file a complaint. In situations where the animal is in imminent danger, the Vermont State Police could also be called.

## **2. Guidance for Town volunteers on commissions, boards and committees dealing with everyday human-wildlife interactions**

The Selectboard shall regularly review and revise its guidance for and requirements of the volunteer organizations working on behalf of the Town with respect to this 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 shall be ongoing. Moving forward, zoning regulation updates and changes should embrace and support the values expressed in this policy regarding animal coexistence and protection.

The Natural Resources and Conservation Committee could function as representative for this policy, providing ongoing support for further developments to the policy and helping to ensure that it is implemented and followed. As an alternative, the Selectboard could also consider forming a specific "animal coexistence committee" for this purpose as well as to develop and focus on best practices. Any designated committee would have a role in assisting the

Coexistence Champion with training Town employees and contractors and in educating the public about the policy.

### **3. Education of the public (residents and visitors)**

The Town of Shelburne shall support and encourage through education and outreach programs public use of the most current and humane solutions in their interactions with wildlife at home and elsewhere. These resources should at the least be made available on the Town website and via hand out documents at town hall.

### **4. Key resources lists should be widely available**

#### **Summary of resource lists:**

1. List of area rehabilitators
2. List of humane wildlife management businesses
3. Guides to understanding/addressing wildlife issues by species
4. Guides for coexisting with wildlife
5. Resources for public reporting of cruelty towards wild or domestic animals or suspected violations of law or other concerns
6. Resources for training
7. Very partial suggested list of topics/resources for public education

#### **A. List of area wildlife rehabilitators**

Vermont wildlife rehabilitators (note that rehabilitators volunteer their time and don't charge for services so donations are appreciated. Also, rehabilitators tend to specialize in certain species).

Find a list here -- [shorturl.at/hzITZ](http://shorturl.at/hzITZ)

#### **B. Local humane wildlife management businesses**

Heart Wildlife Removal; contact JoAnn Nichols, 802-651-6863, [info@heartwildliferemoval.com](mailto:info@heartwildliferemoval.com), <https://www.heartwildliferemoval.com/>

For a consumer Guide to choosing a humane wildlife control company: <https://www.humanesociety.org/resources/choosing-wildlife-control-company>



### **C. Guides to understanding/addressing wildlife issues by species**

<https://www.humanesociety.org/resource/wildlife-management-solutions>

<https://wildlifehelp.org/>

<https://vtfishandwildlife.com/node/256> (VT Dept. Of Fish & Wildlife guide to managing bears on your property)

Tips on living with bears from the NH Harris Center -- [shorturl.at/moLR7](http://shorturl.at/moLR7)

### **D. Guides for coexisting with wildlife**

1. Tips for coexistence with wildlife

<https://www.awarewildlife.org/how-to-live-with-wildlife>

2. Making the home wildlife-proof

[https://www.oakville.ca/assets/general%20-%20environment/Wildlife\\_ProofingProperty\\_Factsheet.pdf](https://www.oakville.ca/assets/general%20-%20environment/Wildlife_ProofingProperty_Factsheet.pdf)

3. Making the yard more wildlife friendly

*Bringing Nature Home* and *Nature's Best Hope* by Douglas Tallamy

*Planting in a Post-Wild World* by Claudia West

### **E. Resources for public reporting of cruelty towards wild or domestic animals or suspected violations of law or other concerns**

1. For wildlife violations, contact VT Department of Fish & Wildlife:

<https://vtfishandwildlife.com/contact/report-a-violation>

or call 1-800-75ALERT (1-800-752-5378) anytime the violation is in progress or time sensitive.

To contact a game warden: <https://vtfishandwildlife.com/contact/contact-a-warden>

Shelburne area game warden is Dana Joyal, 878-7111 (state police phone) and 498-5469 (cell)

2. For wildlife and domestic violations, contact:

Shelburne animal control officer Bob Lake: 802-985-8051 or <https://vtfishandwildlife.com/contact/contact-a-warden>

And Chittenden Humane Society: (802) 862-0135 or (802) 862-0135

Or HSCC Helpline: (802) 862-0135 ext. 29 or [helpline@hscvvt.org](mailto:helpline@hscvvt.org)

3. For concerns or questions about a wild animal, including wild animals that are injured or abandoned. Resource:

[https://vtfishandwildlife.com/sites/fishandwildlife/files/documents/Learn%20More/Living%20with%20Wildlife/Rehabilitation/Wildlife\\_Rehabilitator\\_Location\\_Map.pdf](https://vtfishandwildlife.com/sites/fishandwildlife/files/documents/Learn%20More/Living%20with%20Wildlife/Rehabilitation/Wildlife_Rehabilitator_Location_Map.pdf)

Contact:

- Shelburne animal office Bob Lake: 802-985-8051 or <https://vtfishandwildlife.com/contact/contact-a-warden>
- VT Department of Fish & Wildlife, 802-828-1000 or [fwinformation@vermont.gov](mailto:fwinformation@vermont.gov).

4. For concerns or questions about a domestic animal

Chittenden Humane Society: (802) 862-0135

Or HSCC Helpline: (802) 862-0135 ext. 29 or [helpline@hscvvt.org](mailto:helpline@hscvvt.org)

5. For concerns about a human who is bitten or scratched by an animal  
Develop a response protocol.

## **F. Resources for training**

Animal Cruelty Investigation training has been offered by the VT Humane Federation in conjunction with the VT Criminal Justice Training Council.

VT Criminal Justice Training Council, 317 Academy Road - Main Building  
Pittsford, VT 05763, 802.483.6228, or [gail.williams@vermont.gov](mailto:gail.williams@vermont.gov)

VT Humane Federation <https://www.vermonthumane.org/animal-cruelty/training/>

Training in humane interventions and in human-wildlife coexistence for both town employees and residents is available through Heart Wildlife Removal. Heart is the only humane wildlife removal company registered in Vermont. Education and outreach are central to their mission. They provide Animal Control Services for the City of South Burlington, and provide training for officers and ACOs in this regard.

Heart Wildlife Removal: contact JoAnn Nichols, 802-651-6863, [info@heartwildliferemoval.com](mailto:info@heartwildliferemoval.com), <https://www.heartwildliferemoval.com/>

### **G. Very partial suggested list of topics/resources for public education**

1. Use the Town website or create one for the purpose
2. Displays and material in the Pierson Library
3. Create fact sheets on species that tend most to interact with the public
4. Offer classes to the public on coexistence and related issues
5. Address the issue of speeding and destruction of wildlife
6. Identify wildlife corridors and especially places where wildlife tend to cross roads and find ways to caution drivers
7. Provide education regarding impacts of animal waste on water quality, etc.
8. Get the public involved in educating the public and invite guest speakers
9. Organize volunteers to help keep parks clean of pet waste
10. Educate about animal behaviors that are threatening versus behaviors that are normal (including what to do if an animal is acting strangely)
11. Take advantage of all Shelburne resources for getting the word out (FPF, Shelburne News, Town website, retail stores, vet offices, pet food stores, Town office, dog park, local dog rescue/adoption organizations, doggie daycare/boarding facilities, schools, etc.)