

City Business
by Michael Leamons

It would seem some follow up on animal control matters is warranted. Some have called City Hall happy about stepped-up animal control efforts, while others are unhappy. If we were all living in the country with wide expanses between our dwellings, animal control wouldn't be near the concern it is here in town, where we live in close proximity to one another.

Maybe you're different, but most people don't like listening to the neighbor's barking dogs, especially when they're trying to sleep. They don't like being threatened or chased by a dog running loose down the street. They don't like the smell, the dust, the flies or the general unsightliness of a yard or lot with too many animals.

Apologies to all the responsible pet owners reading this litany, because you don't allow your pets to create conditions like those described above. Thank you for being considerate of your neighbors.

The City's Animal Control and Nuisance Ordinances were adopted to help those who, for whatever reasons, haven't shown as much consideration for their neighbor as they should. Animal Control Officer Gary is committed to helping those who have come up short to improve their animal management practices.

Presently, he is focused on making sure your dogs are restrained and are currently vaccinated. It is a violation of the City's Ordinances to keep a dog or cat which is not currently vaccinated for rabies or to allow your dog to run at large in the City. All dogs must be kept in a secured enclosure, like a fenced-in yard, or on a leash. And, be careful; State Law provides strict guidelines to regulate those who would simply chain a dog out in the yard. There are requirements regarding the dog's mobility and access to food, water and shelter. You're less likely to get crossways with the law if you keep your dog in a pen or fenced-in yard.

The Animal Control Officer is also addressing situations where too many animals are being kept on too small a lot. If the lot has been reduced to bare ground, there's a good chance you have too many animals. Overcrowded lots are prone to creating odor, noise, dust and insect nuisances. Maybe, you are willing to put up with those nuisances for the joy that comes from having your animals. Your neighbors don't always share the joy your animals bring to you, but quite likely, they are regularly annoyed by the unpleasant sights, smells and sounds your animals bring to the neighborhood.

Some have suggested they are "grandfathered" because they had animals before the City ever adopted an Animal Control Ordinance. The City has been advised, where public nuisances are involved, pre-existing conditions can be addressed under the City's Ordinances.

We don't want to fine you or impound your animal, but those are the tools at our disposal, the tools of last resort, to ensure you become a better, more considerate neighbor. If your animal is impounded, you will be assessed a \$35 impoundment fee and a \$20/day boarding fee. Violations of the Animal Control Ordinance, depending on how Municipal Judge Buenger rules, are subject to a \$25 to \$500 fine with each day being considered a separate offence.

May God bless the City of Hico.