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▲ Cherie Vaughan | BCP Photo

Barren County Attorney Mike Richardson described the current animal control ordinance as “bare bones, but sufficient” and spoke in support of needed updates in the Barren County Fiscal Court meeting on January 20.

Counties are statutorily charged with animal control in the state of Kentucky, and Richardson said due to the county’s growth, the current ordinance in place is “bare bones, but sufficient.” Due to a number of complaints Richardson said he has received over many years and also acting as both prosecutor and defense in criminal charges associated with animal welfare, he said the new language is crafted to “address just about any situation you can possibly deal with.”

Animal Control Officer Shelly Furlong told the court that clauses dealing with animal nuisance and running-at-large were removed in 2020 when some changes occurred, noting her concern about dogs damaging property or attacking someone.

Glasgow Police Chief Guy Howie said the new ordinance language is “strictly complaint-driven” – formulated to address complaints received. The police department received 1,484 calls for service, specifically involving dogs going onto

other people’s property, according to Howie.

However, Howie emphasized that the changes are not what are referred to as leash laws.

“This is not a leash law,” Howie said. “There is no leash law in this ordinance.” He added that it does set the monetary fines whereas now fines are variable and set per the animal control officer and that the ordinance is for the “protection of the property owners.”

The City of Glasgow has already approved an updated animal control ordinance, which does have a leash law; however, Richardson said the county has different needs and larger farm properties, and it’s “reasonable” to let dogs roam.

Howie also said, “We’re not trying to take away anybody’s rights to having a dog. We understand that out in the county that dogs roam, but when they roam onto other people’s property and cause problems with cattle and livestock, it

becomes an issue.”

According to the proposed ordinance, an animal running at large is defined as any animal that is off the property of its owner and not restrained, with the exception of a hound or other hunting dog that has been released for hunting purposes. It further states, “All canines (dogs) of any age running at large...shall be seized by animal control and impounded at the Barren River Animal Welfare Association.” This also applies to sick or injured animals found abandoned or running at large, which closely aligns with the Kentucky Revised Statutes for animal control.

No handler or owner will be found to be in violation of the above if the dog is temporarily lost or has wandered from control or sight of the owner, according to the local ordinance.

The county attorney emphasized that when reports are made, proof will be required and attempts to discuss with the dog owner are important.

Later in the meeting and after a vote, public comment was given by Freddie Joe Wilkerson, who shared his concerns about his dogs that protect his livestock.

“My pyrenees can withstand the cold, and their job is to guard my sheep and guard my goats,” Wilkerson said. “They have a purpose, and when [a] coyote whines in the distance, they will bark and bark until the threat is gone. That’s their job.”

Wilkerson said nothing in the new language addresses this issue and pointed out that he could be held in violation of disturbing the peace or quietness. “It’s not a one size fits all,” he added.

According to the proposed language in the ordinance, “Allowing animals to disturb the peace and quiet of any

person by excessive, continuous, or untimely noise including, but not limited to, barking, howling, yelping,... [and/or] Disturbs the peace, comfort, or health of persons in any other manner... will be subject to confinement of up to 30 days in the County Jail and/or a \$250 fine.”

Additionally, section 90.02 [E] further states that an animal control officer or law enforcement may choose to issue a warning, allowing up to seven days to correct a violation, “except violations of public nuisance or running at large shall be corrected immediately.”

The ordinance defines “excessive barking” between 9:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m. It also includes specific fees and fines for offenses and impoundments.

The proposed ordinance does not pertain to laws regarding wildlife.

Magistrates Jeff Botts, Tim Coomer, Marty Kinslow, Ronnie Stinson, and Brad Groce voted in favor of the ordinance.

Durham voiced his “no” vote was due to the number of concerns he had received from constituents and plans to talk with them before the second reading.

“I had several calls, more on this than I had in a long time about this ordinance,” Durham said. “I told them I would come back and talk to them because I know there’s going to be two readings.”

The proposed ordinance does remove the requirement of licensing tags for dogs, which Richardson said became too cumbersome to manage.

The second and final reading is expected to occur at the February 17 fiscal court meeting at 9 a.m. in the Barren County Fiscal Courtroom.

Barren County Animal Ordinance Update Highlights Specific Changes; Existing Rules Remain in Place

Jeff Jobe
Community Publisher Barren County Progress/JPI

The Barren County Fiscal Court is considering an updated animal control ordinance that largely reaffirms existing regulations while clarifying and consolidating several specific provisions, according to county officials.

With cross-referencing of the existing ordinance, officials say there are fewer substantive changes than some residents may have been led to believe, noting that political positioning and misinformation circulating on social media have contributed to confusion about the scope of the update.

Court members emphasized that the highlighted sections represent the changes or reorganized language, while all other provisions of the county’s animal control code remain the same.

Among the highlighted updates are clarifications related to humane treatment, tethering standards, animal fighting penalties, vicious dog procedures, and the removal of a previously proposed licensing section.

Humane Treatment and Animal Welfare Clarifications

The updated ordinance reinforces standards requiring animals to be provided adequate food, water, shelter, ventilation, and warmth, including specific language addressing adequate warmth during winter months.

The ordinance also makes clear that no animal may be confined in the trunk of an automobile, authorizing animal control or law enforcement officers to rescue animals by any reasonable means necessary if found in such conditions.

Tethering requirements are clarified, stating that if a dog is tethered, the tether must be designed to prevent choking or tangling, be at least ten feet in length, be attached to a collar or harness rather than directly to the neck, weigh no more than one-eighteenth of the animal’s body weight, and allow the animal to move freely.

Animal Fighting Penalties

The ordinance explicitly states that it is unlawful to stage, cause, permit, observe, or attend any dog fight, cockfight, bullfight, or other combat between animals or between animals and humans. Violations may result in fines of up to \$500, jail sentences of up to 12 months, or both. Individuals convicted, entering an Alford plea, or pleading guilty must forfeit ownership of the animals involved, which would then be disposed of in a manner deemed in the best interest of Barren County.

Harboring a Vicious Animal

Clarified language outlines when a person may be found guilty of harboring a vicious animal, specifically when a dog attacks a human without cause while off the owner’s premises.

Under the ordinance, complaints are handled through District Court. Courts may impose fines, jail time, or both, and judges may order secure confinement of the dog or order the animal destroyed. Animal Control Officers are authorized to act as officers of the court to enforce court orders.

It also remains unlawful for an owner to allow a dog deemed vicious by court order to run at large or appear in public except as permitted by the court.

License Tag Section Removed

One previously proposed section requiring license tags for dogs has been removed, with that removal approved by the Animal Control Board. No new licensing requirement is included in the updated ordinance. No new fees for law abiding animal lovers.

No Broader Changes to Enforcement Structure

County officials noted that the remaining provisions of the animal control ordinance are unchanged, including complaint-driven enforcement practices, impoundment procedures, livestock regulations, nuisance definitions, and rabies control requirements. Therefore, no additional expenses are to be realized by law enforcement.

The highlighted changes are intended to clarify expectations, align language with state statutes, and consolidate previously separate sections, not to expand enforcement authority beyond what already exists.

The ordinance will continue through the public consideration process, during which residents may review the language and provide input before any final action is taken by the Fiscal Court.

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