



Humane Officers Program

Program Overview

Humane officers investigate complaints of animal abuse and neglect for local governments. They may be employees of a city, town or village; employees of humane societies that contract with local governments to provide these services; or self-employed contractors.

The common thread is that they must specifically be appointed by a local government as humane officers in Wisconsin. Unless they are appointed, they have no authority to investigate these cases. Their job is to gather evidence to see whether neglect or abuse are occurring and put together a case that the district attorney can prosecute. In some cases, if charges are not warranted, they may also work with animal owners to educate them and improve their animal care.

Local government do not have to appoint humane officers; they can rely on the local police or sheriff's department to handle animal cases. Some police officers or deputies who are designated by their departments to handle animal cases take the extra step of being formally appointed as humane officers. Law officers do not need to be appointed as humane officers to handle these cases, but some choose to do so. The specialized training provided for humane officers is helpful to them.

Humane officers must:

- Complete a [40-hour training course](#) within one year of being appointed, and pass the final exam
- Apply for certification from the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
- Complete 32 hours of continuing education every two years to maintain their certification

Humane officers can:

- Investigate suspected violations of humane laws and gather evidence under inspection warrants
- Ask the district attorney to obtain subpoenas to compel testimony and obtain documents
- Ask law enforcement officers and district attorneys to enforce and prosecute violations

They cannot:

- Execute a search warrant (although they may gather evidence when accompanied by law officers who execute search warrants)
- Carry firearms
- Stop or arrest anyone
- Stop, search or detain vehicles except under an inspection warrant

Humane Officer Employment

We do not have the staff or resources in the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection to provide job placement services for humane officers. Here are some suggestions for your job search:

- Public employee jobs in Wisconsin are posted online at [wisc.jobs](#).
- County jobs are listed at the [Wisconsin Counties Association](#) website.
- City and village jobs are listed on the [League of Wisconsin Municipalities](#) website.
- Township jobs are listed on the [Wisconsin Towns Association](#) website.

You should be aware that, while more and more local governments are appointing humane officers, the majority of those in Wisconsin have not done so. You will not find many humane officer jobs listed on the websites above. You may be better off starting as a self-employed independent contractor and approaching counties, towns, villages and cities in the part of the state where you want to work to sell them on the humane officer idea.

Resources

- [Humane Officer Training and Continuing Education](#)
- [Humane Officer Continuing Education Course Verification Form](#)
- [List of appointed humane officers](#)

Contact

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Contact Us

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