

Martin County approves new regulations on tethering dogs

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MARTIN COUNTY — New regulations prohibit leaving dogs tied outside without a "responsible party," such as the owner, present.

The County Commission Tuesday unanimously approved this and other new rules that apply countywide unless a municipality has its own, conflicting laws on animal welfare. The rules will become effective soon.

The regulations give Martin County more power to protect the welfare of dogs tethered outside.

The law was changed because the county has had difficulty enforcing tethering regulations, which made it illegal to leave an unattended dog tied outside for more than 10 hours within a 24-hour period.

That rule essentially meant that animal-control officers had to watch a dog for an entire 24-hour period to know whether there was a violation, Tanya Fender, assistant county attorney, has said.

And that's "not realistic," she told the commission last month, when the new ordinance was under review.

The issue of dogs tied up outside in bad conditions had been raised by a Palm City resident.

Keri Burgess last year saw four dogs tethered outside in the summer heat on a property along Kanner Highway. Burgess called authorities, but there was nothing they could do because the owner was within the law by providing food, water and cover for the dogs, she was told. So she contacted County Commissioner John Haddox.

Animal-control officers, Burgess said, should be empowered to do what they need to do to protect the welfare of animals.

Other new tethering regulation the commission approved are:

- A ban on tethering sick or injured dogs, puppies and dogs older than 7.
- A ban on tethering dogs in weather that endangers their health and safety, such as hurricanes, tropical storms and tornadoes.
- Requiring separate tethers if two or more dogs are tied outside.
- Requiring the tether be attached to a well-fitting collar or harness, and banning a collar that restricts the animal's airway.

The commission also approved regulations that apply to dogs, as well as to other animals, including cats and small domestic animals.

A ban was placed on leaving animals unattended in cars under circumstances that endanger their health, safety and welfare. Also, it's a violation to keep dogs, cats and small domestic animals outside in crates. They may be kept outside in a fenced enclosure as long as the shelter meets requirements, including it's clean, has enough room for the animal and has a roof and four walls.

The commission also increased fines for first-time violators of county animal regulations. The fine for attending, betting and wagering on fighting animals increased from \$100 to \$500; and for an animal involved in a biting incident, the fine increased from \$100 to \$150.

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<http://www.tcpalm.com/news/shaping-our-future/growth/martin-county-approves-new-regulations-on-tethering-dogs-253beb32-c17f-5310-e053-0100007f6349-353849951.html>

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