

# Coffee Break



ANIMAL PHOTOS: MICHELLE RILEY/HUS

## How have reality TV shows like *Animal Cops* and *Animal Precinct* affected the community's perceptions of what you do?

When we asked that question, you flooded our inbox with responses. We received so many answers about these Animal Planet programs that we are publishing more at [AnimalSheltering.org/coffeebreak](http://AnimalSheltering.org/coffeebreak).

*Animal Cops* has been a godsend to our shelter. People are actually reporting more neglect and cruelty, and those who commit these horrible acts know that there are not only people who care; there are people who will prosecute. People in our community of 12,000 have commented more than once on how well we do our job and compare us to the show. Thanks, *Animal Cops*, for making my life easier.

—Gabby Evans, Director, Stephen Memorial Animal Shelter, Oskaloosa, Iowa

I do enjoy shows like *Animal Cops*, but it is hard to explain to the public when our resources don't allow us to arrest people and take hurt animals to get the vet care they need. We don't have cops on staff. We are a part of the police department but are not certified peace officers and cannot arrest people, and we do not have lawyers and vets on staff at the ready. I would like to see a full investigation done from beginning to end on TV, from the first call about an incident or complaint to the arrest to what happens at the court and the outcome.

—Christine Hastings, Animal Services Officer, Flower Mound Animal Services, Flower Mound, Texas

I was able to persuade the Los Angeles City Council to create our first Animal Cruelty Task Force by pointing out that L.A. was not on TV because we lagged behind other cities. Now we have the largest anti-cruelty task force in the U.S., along with special prosecutors. I'm hoping we'll eventually make it on TV also—with our special prosecutors, which other cities don't have.

—Robert Ferber, Animal Protection Unit Supervising Prosecutor, City Attorney's Office, Los Angeles, California

I personally love *Animal Cops*, but they make it look easy and simple to get help quickly for an animal in need. People who do step up and file complaints can't understand why we can't just go in and remove horses from the terrible abuse/neglect they are suffering from. They see quick and speedy relief for horses in need on *Animal Cops* and can't understand why it takes two to three weeks after we give proof from our investigations for a county to finally get something done. If they could let the public know these things don't get solved overnight in all states, it would be very helpful.

—Nina Margetson, Executive Director, Horse Haven of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee

We find that oftentimes people say, "I watch the Animal Planet channel and we appreciate all that you do." It has also made people more aware that investigators for humane societies and law enforcement departments are to be taken seriously. I think there is not enough drama and follow-up regarding the serious cases and too much drama on the not-so-serious. When violators are convicted, those court hearings should also be aired. This way, those who watch will begin to understand even more what fines and jail time may be imposed.

—Dillard Rance McEntyre, Chief, Kitsap Animal Rescue and Enforcement, Silverdale, Washington

Each week, at least one member of the community brings up these shows. This gives us the opportunity to tell them about the cases we see in our own community that are just as despicable and heartbreaking. The fact that we have the same issues in our area as they do in much larger cities is a real eye-opener, and we take advantage of this interest to educate the public about important issues. Seeing graphic images of animal abuse and neglect on television allows the public to better understand concepts such as cross-species abuse and hoarding—and gives them a notion of the types of incidents shelter staff deal with. These programs also tend to lead people to the shelter, rather than the pet store or the backyard breeder, for their next family pet.

—Anne White, Associate Director, Stevens-Swan Humane Society, Utica, New York

I think the idea of the cop shows is an excellent one and has educated many people. What I don't like is the public now has the impression that all shelters have the financial means to do the things that New York City, Houston, Detroit, etc., do. Not all shelters—in fact very few—will come pick up your dog just because you no longer want it. None that I know of will provide medical care and then return the pet. By showing these unrealistic services being provided, they are putting already overburdened shelters in a bad light and giving the public expectations that can never be met.

—Sue Mowry, Animal Control Officer/  
Shelter Manager (retired), York County,  
Pennsylvania

I truly believe that both *Animal Cops* and *Animal Precinct* have opened the eyes of the public. They have taken away the stigma of the old “dogcatcher,” and they give the public a greater perception of the dangers we encounter. The viewers can be our eyes, ears, and voice that are vital in today's vicious cycle of animal neglect, abuse, and control. The programs send a message to people who have a cruel intent to hurt animals that they will not be exempt from prosecution. The programs also show that we can rehabilitate animals and place them in loving homes. Some people in my community say to me, “I did not realize that your job responsibilities are so dangerous and demanding. I thank God we have animal protection officers in our township.” I thank everyone from the bottom of my heart who had a part in making this program a reality.

—Gary Hill, Administrative Shelter  
Manager, Township of Hamilton Animal  
Protection, Hamilton, New Jersey

**Animal Sheltering congratulates Nina Margetson of Knoxville, Tennessee, whose submission was selected in a random drawing from those published in this issue. Her organization, Horse Haven, will receive a free coffee break: a \$50 gift certificate to a local coffee shop. “Bone” appetit!**

## Our next question: What signs of progress have you seen in our field since you first became involved in animal protection?

Please submit your responses (150 words or less) at [AnimalSheltering.org/coffeebreak](http://AnimalSheltering.org/coffeebreak) or send them to Editor, *Animal Sheltering*/HSUS, 2100 L St. NW, Washington, DC 20037; [asm@humanesociety.org](mailto:asm@humanesociety.org). **Your answer may be printed in a future issue of *Animal Sheltering*.** If your response is chosen for publication, you will be entered into a drawing to win a **free coffee break (valued at \$50)** for your organization. No donation or purchase is necessary to win; see [AnimalSheltering.org](http://AnimalSheltering.org) for contest rules, or send an e-mail or letter to the above addresses to request a printed copy.

