

January 4, 2022

Dear Town Health Officers:

Governor Scott signed into law Act 38 (2021), which amends 13 V.S.A. § 351. The changes in state law affect your authority as a town health officer.

As of July 1, 2021, humane officers authorized to conduct animal cruelty investigations must be certain types of law enforcement, designated humane society employees, or animal control officers who receive specialized animal cruelty investigation training pursuant to statute at 20 V.S.A. § 2365b. Town health officers are no longer categorized as humane officers, unless they are otherwise employed by a humane society or appointed by a municipality to perform the duties and functions of a humane officer, and have completed the trainings as required.

Complaints or reports of potential animal cruelty received by a town health officer should be referred to a humane officer, such as a sheriff, deputy sheriff, constable, police officer, State's Attorney, State game warden, or State Police. Complaints may also be referred to an animal control officer, the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets, Animal Health Section (for livestock) at 802-828-2421, the Vermont Humane Federation at vermonthumane.org, Humane Society's New England Regional Office at 802-368-2790 or the Vermont Veterinary Medical Association at 802-878-6888 or <https://www.vtvets.org/animal-cruelty-reporting>.

The Town Health Officer Manual will be updated to reflect these changes.

Thank you for the important work you do. Town health officers serve an important role in investigating and mitigating potential or existing public health hazards in their town.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Department of Health questions or for technical support. You can reach the Environmental Health Division at 800-439-8550 or ahs.vdhtho@vermont.gov.

Sincerely,



Meg McCarthy
Environmental Health Division
Vermont Department of Health

