



**Maryland  
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Emergency Medical  
Services Systems**

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To: Highest Jurisdictional Officials  
EMS Medical Directors

From: Theodore R. Delbridge, MD, MPH  
Executive Director

Timothy P. Chizmar, MD  
State EMS Medical Director

Date: February 17, 2022

Re: Authorization to care for police canines and other animals

We want to ensure you are aware that EMS clinicians, including emergency medical responders, emergency medical technicians, cardiac rescue technicians, and paramedics, are authorized to render emergency care to police canines, other working canines, and other animals that may be present at an incident scene. Emergency care should be commensurate with the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the EMS clinician.

*MD. Courts and Judicial Proceedings Code Ann. § 5-614 – Emergency Veterinary Assistance* provides, in part, that a member of any State, county, municipal, or volunteer fire department, ambulance and rescue squad, or law enforcement agency, or a corporate fire department...Is not civilly liable for any act or omission in giving any veterinary aid, care, or assistance...The aid, care, or assistance must be provided without fee or compensation from the owner or custodian of the animal, and be provided at the scene of an emergency, in transit to a veterinary facility, or through communications with licensed veterinary personnel.

We fully anticipate that EMS clinicians will call on their personal expertise and available resources to care for an acutely ill or injured animal at the scene of an emergency, unless such aid would interfere with care for an ill or injured person. In fact, we are aware that several EMS departments have procured or accepted donations of canine oxygen masks, expecting their EMS clinicians to use them if the need presented itself. We are fully supportive.

Recently, we received indications of a sense of ambiguity among EMS clinicians regarding their personal discretion in caring for acutely ill or injured animals, particularly law enforcement canines, at the scene of an emergency incident. With this communique' we affirm the authority of EMS clinicians to exercise their knowledge, skills, and abilities in the best interest of the animal.

We understand that the interface of the EMS system and law enforcement is nuanced in each jurisdiction, and that needs, priorities, and resources differ. Thus, we encourage you to assess the needs or appropriateness of policies, specific to your jurisdiction, related to caring for police canines and other working dogs. Collaboration with your law enforcement colleagues is optimal. We are happy to be of assistance, as needed.

PC: Senator Mary Beth Carozza