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FEATURED

Residents concerned about dumped pets

By Joy Hampton Senior Staff Writer 5 hrs ago



Norman resident John Swink snapped this picture of a recently dumped dog near the Swink home in Ward 5 and posted it on Facebook on Feb. 22.

Photo Provided



While many folks enjoy the country life in Norman's large rural areas, they say dealing with dogs that have been dumped is heartbreaking.

Pets abandoned in the country face many hazards and the possibility of death.

"We have coyotes, we have cougars and we're near the highway. People lose their dogs out of their yards," Ward 5 resident John Swink said. "It comes in waves. Some years, you get five to 10 dogs dumped out by my house; some years, you only get two."

Animal Welfare Supervisor Trey Amrein said there are better options.

"There's always an avenue for you to get rid of your dogs, if that's what it comes down to and you can't take care of them anymore," Amrein said.

"Contact us if you live inside the city, or even outside the city. We have resources, whether it be the city shelter or outside rescue groups, such as Bella Foundation and Central Oklahoma Humane Society."

In addition to the dangers of coyotes, cougars and cars, dogs may be shot by locals who are forced to protect their livestock.

"In my case, I have chickens that are free-range," Swink said. "I don't want to have to shoot a dog that's just hungry looking for food, but I have a neighbor that lost 13 goats in one morning. He raises pygmy goats. None of them were eaten, just killed."

In a case like that, he said, it's clear wild dogs were killing the goats for sport.

"Another neighbor raises sheep and cattle, and he's had to shoot dogs, literally, while they're eating his sheep," Swink said.

Depending on how long they've been on the loose, Amrein said dogs can become wild and form packs.

"They can become predators of livestock and be true nuisances to people who live out there," Amrein said.

Amrein said Norman Animal Shelter serves rural areas. Last year, an ordinance went into effect that covers all of the city limits.

"We have started patrolling more, and we get our fair share of calls out there," Amrein said. "We may have to set live traps to humanely catch them."

Another rural resident, Carla Poole, said she recently adopted an abandoned puppy that was left in the Country Boy parking lot.

"I live out in the country and there are a lot of dogs left out here stranded and dumped," she said.

That young pup was the exception to the rule.

"People don't even have fences out here for their dogs," Poole said. "This little dog was freezing and whining, and I just had to take it home with me."

Poole said she has a fenced yard and will take the dog to a veterinarian for vaccinations, but most animals dumped in the country don't find homes.

"This is definitely a problem in this area out here," Pool said. "I live off Highway 9 east of town, and I drive these back roads and I see animals abandoned along the side of the road all of the time."

Some people may hesitate to call Norman Animal Welfare because service has been more limited in the past, but Amrein encourages people to report dumping incidents. Residents should call the Norman police dispatch at 321-1444 to make animal reports because animal control is dispatched out of the police department.

"If you see a dog dumped and get a license plate and a description, we will look into it," Amrein said. "We've had success, as long as we have a tag number to go by."

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