

Town of Hartford, Maine

Animal Control Annual Report – Calendar Year 2025

Brandon E. Holmes, Animal Control Officer

Overview

In 2025, the Town of Hartford received on-call Animal Control coverage for the first time under a formal municipal contract with Brandon E. Holmes. While response to Hartford calls began early in the year, the contract was formally reviewed and approved during a budget meeting in April 2025 and an employee review was conducted in June. Services included stray response, bite investigations, cruelty and neglect investigations, livestock containment, ordinance enforcement, and kennel inspections.

A total of 116 calls for service were logged within Hartford town limits during calendar year 2025.

Call Volume by Category

- Stray or loose animals – 54
- Bite investigations and quarantine enforcement – 11
- Abandonment cases – 10
- General animal control and ordinance – 9
- Livestock at large – 7
- Kennel inspections – 6
- Cruelty to animals investigations – 6
- Sick or injured animals – 4
- Deceased animals – 2
- Neglect investigations – 2
- Continuing education – 2
- Noise complaints – 1
- Aggressive behavior complaints – 1
- Administrative – 1

Stray and roaming animals make up the largest share of calls. Cruelty, neglect, and abandonment cases require significantly more time per incident due to documentation requirements, coordination with the Maine Animal Welfare Program, and multi-visit follow-up.

Public Safety and Enforcement

Eleven bite investigation case activities were documented in Hartford in 2025. These entries include both initial bite reports and required follow-up visits to verify quarantine compliance with Maine rabies law. Several cases involved unvaccinated animals, requiring additional coordination and documentation.

Cruelty and neglect investigations were coordinated with the Maine Animal Welfare Program and the Oxford County Sheriff's Office as appropriate. Cases were documented with photographic evidence and written notices, with enforcement escalation when voluntary compliance was not achieved.

Livestock and Large Animal Response

Seven livestock-at-large complaints were documented in 2025, including loose horses, donkeys, goats, cattle, and rabbits. These incidents required rapid roadside response, coordination with property owners, and in several cases, direct involvement in animal containment. One prolonged situation involved repeated livestock escapes and coordination with the Maine Animal Welfare Program for compliance.

To improve readiness for large animal situations, both parts of the Large Animal Emergency Rescue (LAER) training were completed in 2025, including hands-on work with horses and donkeys. Hartford was part of the proportional cost-sharing for this training.

Cruelty and Neglect Investigations

A significant multi-visit cruelty and neglect case was documented at a Hartford property during 2025. The situation involved livestock, sheep, rabbits, and chickens kept in unsanitary conditions. Coordination with the Maine Animal Welfare Program resulted in a formal Notice to Comply and subsequent compliance follow-up. By the time of the final inspection, major improvements had been made and most animals had been sold or relocated. The case required multiple on-site visits, photographic documentation, and close coordination with Animal Welfare agents.

Abandonment Cases

Ten abandonment-related case activities were documented in Hartford. A notable case involved felines left in a condemned property with no running water or electricity. The case required repeated contact attempts with the property owner, coordination with a shelter partner, and multiple trapping sessions under hazardous ammonia conditions. All animals were ultimately recovered and transported to a shelter for care.

Community Cat Efforts

A feral cat colony was identified and assessed at a Hartford property in late 2025. Coordination with the Cat Coalition of Western Maine confirmed the presence of ten adult felines and several kittens. In December 2025, eight community cats were successfully trapped and transported to the Animal Welfare Society for spay and neuter procedures. Surgical costs were covered through Maine Humane. Animals were returned to their colony following recovery, and remaining individuals will be addressed through continued trap-neuter-return efforts in 2026.

Kennel Inspections

Six kennel-related case activities were documented in Hartford in 2025. Annual kennel inspections were completed at Permagrin Kennel, a sled dog facility, with satisfactory results on both visits. A separate kennel was contacted and ultimately determined to no longer meet the threshold requiring a municipal license following recent downsizing. The owner was advised to license dogs individually.

Continuing Education

In 2025, the following training and education activities were completed, with Hartford's proportional share included in the mileage and billing records:

- Maine CARES training – hosted by ASPCApro, focused on coordinated community animal response and emergency preparedness
- Large Animal Emergency Rescue (LAER) Part I – scene assessment, equipment, and coordinated response for livestock and large animals
- Large Animal Emergency Rescue (LAER) Part II – hands-on work with horses and donkeys in a field setting
- Maine Humane Conference – three CE credits awarded; sessions on humane animal handling, community cat programs, and empathetic communication

Mileage and Field Activity

In 2025, 1,696.27 miles were logged responding to Hartford calls. This includes emergency response, shelter and veterinary transports, follow-up compliance visits, kennel inspections, and training travel allocated to Hartford.

Community Education and Outreach

Residents received guidance throughout the year on containment requirements, tethering law, bite prevention, quarantine compliance, livestock fencing, and available community resources. A public post was shared for multiple lost animal situations to aid in community-assisted recovery.

Hartford's first formal budget review under the contract included a presentation on how call volume, population, and geographic density were used to calculate the town's proportional share of service costs.

Closing

Hartford's first year under a formal Animal Control contract demonstrated steady demand for service across a wide range of call types. The 2025 data establishes a baseline for evaluating future resource needs and contract planning. Enforcement was carried out with an emphasis on early education, voluntary compliance, and escalation only when necessary.

Respectfully submitted,

Brandon E. Holmes

Animal Control Officer

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