



# MEMO TO CITY COUNCIL

---

## Request to Include Topic on the City Council Agenda

**From:** Tishra L. Murray, Deputy City Attorney      **Meeting Date:** October 6, 2026  
**Presenter:** William L.M. Nary      **Estimated Time:** 10 minutes  
**Topic:** Proposed update to Meridian City code section 6-2-9, regarding minimum standards, Animal Cruelty.

---

### Recommended Council Action:

Review Dr. Rosenthal's email below. If any questions remain we can arrange for him to be present.

---

Hello - regarding the questions posed on the revised code proposal:

IHS already responds to complaints involving tethering, inadequate veterinary care, unsafe confinement, lack of food or water, and similar animal-welfare concerns. Therefore, I do not anticipate that the ordinance will create an entirely new category of calls for service. The potential increase in staff time would primarily result from what happens after the initial response. Under the current code, officers may respond, assess the animal, provide education, and document the situation but have limited ability to require corrective action or pursue enforcement. With clearer minimum-care standards, more cases may require written warnings, compliance deadlines, follow-up inspections, additional documentation, veterinary consultation, citations, and potentially court appearances.

The initial response workload may remain relatively similar, although clearer laws and increased public awareness could produce some additional complaints. The more significant impact would likely be increased follow-up and investigative time on cases that IHS is already responding to. Overall, we anticipate a modest rather than substantial increase in workload. Questions around tethering and how this is enforced?

IHS enforces Boise's tethering provision through complaints, officer observations, photographs or video, witness statements, and follow-up inspections. Officers would evaluate whether, the animal is tethered with a prohibited collar or unsafe equipment, the tether has become entangled or prevents the animal from moving freely, the animal can consistently reach appropriate shelter and clean water, the tethering area contains glass, sharp metal, nails, or other hazards, multiple animals can become entangled with one another, and determine that there is credible evidence that the animal has remained tethered for more than 12 hours during a 24-hour period. The 12-hour limitation will usually require evidence beyond a single observation. An officer may need multiple visits, time-stamped photographs or video, admissions from the owner, or statements from witnesses. A single visit can establish unsafe tethering conditions, but it may not establish how long the animal has been tethered.

IHS generally uses progressive enforcement when the animal is not in immediate danger. This can include educating the owner, providing written instructions, issuing a warning or notice to correct, and completing a follow-up inspection. A citation may be appropriate when the violation is serious, the animal is in danger, the owner refuses to correct the condition, or violations are repeated. Also "choke collar" is only one of the many types of collars that should not be used. Tethering with pinch collars and heavy chains are also a problem.

Question around veterinary care and how this is applied and enforced?

The veterinary-care provisions are applied using an objective, condition-based assessment. Officers would consider whether the animal has an observable injury, illness, or condition that reasonably requires professional veterinary attention and whether the owner acted promptly after becoming—or reasonably being expected to become—aware of the condition. Enforcement is based on the totality of the evidence, including the officer's observations, photographs, owner statements, veterinary records, witness statements, and, when appropriate, an examination or written opinion from a licensed veterinarian. "Promptly" should not necessarily mean that every minor condition requires an emergency visit. Officers should consider the severity of the condition, how long it has existed, whether it is worsening, whether the animal is suffering, whether the owner contacted a veterinarian, and whether the owner followed reasonable veterinary instructions. When there is no immediate threat to the animal's life or welfare, IHS may provide education and a reasonable compliance deadline, such as requiring the owner to schedule an examination and provide documentation (this is very common and covers most cases). Immediate intervention, citation, impoundment, or coordination with law enforcement may be appropriate when an animal is experiencing serious or prolonged suffering or when an owner refuses necessary care.

Question on penalty and if it is consistent with our neighboring agencies?

Yes the penalty is similar to neighboring agencies.

Question on how much additional time this will require IHS servicing our community?

Over time, aligning Meridian code with Ada County code should make enforcement more efficient because IHS officers can use substantially similar training, procedures, warning forms, documentation standards, and public-education materials.

Thanks!

Jeff

Jeff Rosenthal, DVM  
Chief Executive Officer  
208-342-3508 ext. 2226  
Jrosenthal@idahohumanesociety.org

IdahoHumaneSociety.org