

Dan Hoffman ([00:00](#)):

Welcome to Part 2 of the Rouss Review, the City Works portion of our program. We're about to invite in Sergeant Sean O'Connor. Pretty sure he is a Sergeant. I'll double check when he gets here. But we'll talk to Officer O'Connor here in just a moment. We're gonna talk about all things animals. We'll talk about the police department's animals. We're gonna talk about wild animals. Talk about your animals. So let's go ahead and get Sean in so we can dive in.

Dan Hoffman ([00:33](#)):

Okay. Welcome Sean O'Connor. Sean, officer. My bad. Officer, Sean O'Connor remind me. I'm still getting everyone's names down, but I think I'm almost there. There was one officer this past weekend who I ran into, who I hadn't actually met before, but I think at this point I've got names with all of the officers faces. Of course, it helps that they have it on their shirt.

Amy Simmons ([01:00](#)):

It always helps. Yes.

Dan Hoffman ([01:02](#)):

It's that's very helpful. But ranks, I'm still getting those worked out. Sean, you are a...

Sean O'Connor ([01:09](#)):

Sergeant.

Dan Hoffman ([01:10](#)):

Sergeant O'Connor. And Officer of the Year of...year before last? Megan Minor just got Officer of the Year and then the year before Sean got Officer of the Year, is that right?

Sean O'Connor ([01:27](#)):

No, I got the Gold Medal of Valor.

Sean O'Connor ([01:29](#)):

Gold Medal of Valor. Yes. Even better.

Amy Simmons ([01:31](#)):

Even better. Yes.

Sean O'Connor ([01:32](#)):

<Laughs>.

Dan Hoffman ([01:32](#)):

That's way up there. But that's not why we're here today.

Amy Simmons ([01:37](#)):

Darn.

Dan Hoffman ([01:38](#)):

We could do an entire podcast about Officer O'Connor's heroism. Today, we're talking about animals. So, Sean, you used to run the animal control? No. You now run it.

Sean O'Connor ([01:52](#)):

Yes.

Dan Hoffman ([01:52](#)):

But you had a canine.

Sean O'Connor ([01:54](#)):

I do. I still do. I'm still the canine supervisor for the canines at Winchester PD.

Dan Hoffman ([01:59](#)):

Excellent.

Amy Simmons ([01:59](#)):

Which is why he's here.

Dan Hoffman ([02:00](#)):

Which is why he's here. But he's moved up. Now he oversees it.

Sean O'Connor ([02:04](#)):

I oversee it. Yes.

Dan Hoffman ([02:05](#)):

Got it.

Sean O'Connor ([02:06](#)):

I'm the supervisor for it.

Dan Hoffman ([02:06](#)):

Who else is on that team?

Sean O'Connor ([02:08](#)):

Corporal Keller, Corporal Schraff, Officer Dick, and Detective Bansal kind of reports to CID but it's still a dog. I kind of look after everybody that's on the team.

Dan Hoffman ([02:21](#)):

Got it. So, and how long have you had your dog?

Sean O'Connor ([02:27](#)):

Probably almost four and a half years now. He'll be six this year. So, I've had him since he was about 16, 18 months.

Dan Hoffman ([02:34](#)):

What's the normal length of service for a working dog?

Sean O'Connor ([02:39](#)):

As long as their health's in good condition, usually they'll serve between ages eight and 10. Shepherd's lifespan is, usually 12 to 14 years. So Riggs ideally will serve probably another three, maybe four years just depends on his health. And all our dogs are in great health, so I don't perceive it to be an issue.

Dan Hoffman ([02:58](#)):

That's awesome. And we give our officers the option of keeping them once their service is done?

Sean O'Connor ([03:05](#)):

Yes. So when they retire or we decide it's their time to retire, we always, as far as I know, give the dogs to the handlers. I don't know of anybody that's ever really turned one down before, so they always retire to us.

Dan Hoffman ([03:18](#)):

And we have different types of dogs we do working for us. Tell us about the different types.

Sean O'Connor ([03:23](#)):

We'll start with Riggs. Riggs is a purebred shepherd. He was imported from Czechoslovakia. He's a brute. He's about 90 pounds right now. He's the heaviest of all the dogs that we have. He's squatty and muscular, well built. Then, we have corporal Keller's dog. Who's also a shepherd.

Dan Hoffman ([03:43](#)):

Back to Riggs real quick. What's Riggs trained for.

Sean O'Connor ([03:46](#)):

He initially was trained in narcotics. With the new laws in Virginia, he doesn't do narcotics anymore because he was originally certified on marijuana. And for the majority of that, that's being legalized or civil fine now, so we don't implement him. But his main duty right now is patrol. So he does criminal apprehension. We do tracking. We do evidence recovery, handler protection, vehicle deployments, that type of thing.

Dan Hoffman ([04:13](#)):

Got it. So that's Riggs.

Sean O'Connor ([04:15](#)):

That's Riggs. So Axl does the pretty much the same thing. Axl is about six months or so younger than Riggs. He's also a pure-bred shepherd from, if I recall correctly, he's from Hungary.

Dan Hoffman ([04:29](#)):

Wow. Eastern Europe. That surprises me.

Sean O'Connor ([04:34](#)):

Well, over decades or hundreds of years, they've always done it. So they have pure lines over there versus in the U.S. Not saying they don't, but most, even government agencies, import from overseas. They got it right the first time. Why reinvent the wheel?

Dan Hoffman ([04:50](#)):

Yeah. My brother-in-law, he had a canine for Secret Service for a while and that dog came out of, I wanna say Belgium or something like that. Huge. This dog didn't sniff for anything. This dog bit for things. So we got Riggs, Axl and...

Sean O'Connor ([05:06](#)):

And then the newest edition we have is Officer Dick's dog, Clark. He's a German shorthair pointer. His job is strictly narcotics. He's not trained in human odor tracking, any of that nature really. He's not trained on marijuana. He's strictly a narcotics canine and he's performing very well out there on the street right now

Dan Hoffman ([05:26](#)):

I know we're getting a little off topic, the whole purpose of this conversation was to talk about the different laws related to animals in Winchester, but this is also fascinating topic. So I'm going to use a bit of personal privilege and talk about it. The last dog, the name was...

Sean O'Connor ([05:45](#)):

Clark.

Dan Hoffman ([05:45](#)):

Thank you. So Clark, he can do certain drugs, certain narcotics. Yes. Which ones? I mean, how does that work? Is he just trained on a few different ones or is there a family of narcotics and he can smell all of them?

Sean O'Connor ([06:01](#)):

He is trained on heroin, crack, cocaine, MDMA. We're implementing doing PCP cuz it's not really something we see all the time, but it is something we want to train on. We do the base of those narcotics. So the chemical makeup, essentially is what goes into it. The imprinting processes where they learn to do all that. There's multiple different methods, but if you take each drug, you train 'em on it and it's a game. They find it, they get a toy. They find it, get a toy. And then you have the cocktail method where you put 'em all in the same jar. Do the same game and then you start breaking them out piece by piece. So that they still recognize that odor.

Dan Hoffman ([06:43](#)):

Interesting. Are there any narcotics that a dog can't smell? Are there just ones that don't...

Sean O'Connor ([06:49](#)):

Not to my knowledge. Even if you were to train to smell ibuprofen as long as we implement that and train them to find that odor they'll find just like we do human odor or we do EOD stuff, you know, gun powder. If we train them to smell that, that's what they're gonna locate. It doesn't matter if it's illegal or legal. It just what we train them to do.

Dan Hoffman ([07:11](#)):

Huh. Very interesting. So, then there's another one who's not really...well, Leo's in the field.

Amy Simmons ([07:18](#)):

<Laughs>.

Sean O'Connor ([07:18](#)):

Leo's special.

Dan Hoffman ([07:20](#)):

He's more in the laps than in the field.

Amy Simmons ([07:22](#)):

He's so cuddly.

Dan Hoffman ([07:23](#)):

Yes. So Leo and we have Leo as well. Tell us about Leo real quick.

Sean O'Connor ([07:27](#)):

Detective Bansal uses Leo more for therapy, comfort. She brings them to her special victim's cases, especially involving children. It's kind of a new field for us. Never had it before at the PD. Leo's a great dog. He's full of energy, loves to play, loves, like you guys said, loves to cuddle. It's a work in progress for sure, seeing where he's useful, seeing where maybe he's not so useful. So, that's still evolving.

Dan Hoffman ([08:00](#)):

Very cool. So those are our dogs. For your dogs and cats and whatnot out there. Let's talk about what is the role of an animal control unit at a police department, as it relates to the pets. You know, furry children of residents. What's the role of animal control in those situations?

Sean O'Connor ([08:22](#)):

Our animal control responds to calls of, maybe you have a rabid animal. Most of the time, people are calling about raccoons being out in the daylight, which is not normal. Our job is to go out there, assess what the animal's doing. Is it acting funny? Is it injured? And we do our best to take that animal, cage it, bring it to the SPCA or bring it to the emergency vet where they can get treatment. If an animal's been struck by a car and it doesn't have an owner, we'll respond to that. We respond pretty much anytime anybody calls for an animal, we'll try to go out and assess. Things that we're getting away from is dealing with poisonous snakes or squirrels in chimneys, that type of thing. It's an animal issue, but I think that

more or less falls on the homeowner to call rodent control or a specialist. We're not trained to deal with venomous snakes and things of that nature.

Dan Hoffman ([09:19](#)):

Possums. I bet you get a fair amount of possums.

Sean O'Connor ([09:22](#)):

Yeah. Everybody's got trash sitting outside on trash day, so raccoons, the possums get in there. If we can, we will try to just, push 'em on their way, get 'em on their way type of thing. The only time we want to deal with them, take 'em into a cage or take 'em to SPCA or the emergency vet, is when they're injured or they appear to be significantly sick to where we want to get 'em off the street so they don't infect any other animals or actually bite somebody that they shouldn't have.

Dan Hoffman ([09:47](#)):

Yeah. I get relatively frequent calls for deer where residents are like, 'we gotta do something about the deer.' I'm like, 'is there a particular issue? Is there a specific deer?' 'No, it was in my garden' or 'it was in the road and something might hit it'. Again, not the city, that's not us.

Sean O'Connor ([10:08](#)):

Yeah. I think people, especially in the city atmosphere, aren't used to seeing wild animals out here. But we have a good population that is here. Especially with the museum and all its property out there. We chase cows down the street on occasion that get out.

Dan Hoffman ([10:23](#)):

There you go.

Amy Simmons ([10:24](#)):

I've seen goats get out before.

Sean O'Connor ([10:26](#)):

Goats. I chase pigs through neighborhoods, you know, it happens.

Dan Hoffman ([10:31](#)):

That's awesome.

Amy Simmons ([10:32](#)):

When do you get involved when there are deer issues? There's a specific reason why you would.

Sean O'Connor ([10:37](#)):

Me specifically? Well I'll use the animal control officers. I just kind of oversee what they're doing. They tell me about the things that they do or if there's documents that need to be signed. That's my job. But as far as the deer go, most of the time when we get involved is when it's been hit by a car, it's sick wandering in circles, if it looks like it's got a blue tongue, or it's got CWD, something like that. We'll

unfortunately have to put that animal down, send it off to get tested, just so that we are aware. Is it diseased? Is it carrying something that can be hurtful to other animals?

Amy Simmons ([11:09](#)):

So basically when it's injured or sick is the only time that you guys get involved.

Sean O'Connor ([11:11](#)):

Yeah. Anytime that happens, we'll go out and we'll deal with it. But if it's a four-legged animal in your backyard that lives there, then it is what it is. We try to relocate 'em, get 'em off the property, but at the same time, we have a lot of woods around here. Especially in the city or on the outskirts of it, where animals are gonna come here and it's their habitat. We're not just gonna start wiping 'em out because we don't like 'em.

Dan Hoffman ([11:36](#)):

That's right's. And the State plays a big role in that, too. Some of 'em are protected, I believe. In fact, I think deer, Whitetail deer are protected in the State of Virginia. So, we can't just go out and start shooting deer because people don't like them.

Sean O'Connor ([11:50](#)):

No, no.

Dan Hoffman ([11:51](#)):

What about geese?

Sean O'Connor ([11:52](#)):

Geese are Federally protected. To hunt geese, you have to have a Federal stamp in order to even hunt them.

Dan Hoffman ([11:58](#)):

I didn't know that.

Amy Simmons ([11:59](#)):

I didn't either.

Sean O'Connor ([11:59](#)):

The ducks on Wilkins Pond [Lake] and others, people are constantly out there feeding 'em and what they don't realize, the more you feed 'em, the more they come. And then that does cause a problem with all their feces and so forth in the water. And that causes a problem for the fish. So we do encourage people, read the signs, don't feed the ducks.

Amy Simmons ([12:18](#)):

We have new signs out there now asking people not to do that.

Dan Hoffman ([12:21](#)):

Wonderful. So for a pet owner, obviously, if you have a dog in the City of Winchester you have to have it registered. I think we just wrapped that up...

Amy Simmons ([12:31](#)):

Yep.

Dan Hoffman ([12:31](#)):

Every year you gotta get it. But how often do you run across situations where people are not doing what they should be doing with their pet in terms of care?

Sean O'Connor ([12:42](#)):

So the biggest thing I think that we see right now is homeowners using Jim Barnett Park. We had complaints of dogs running at-large. That's a big thing. In my opinion, I have a trained canine, I'm not gonna just let 'em roll around and do whatever he wants. Dogs should be on leashes, any animal that you have in your house that you're gonna take out for walk needs to be on a leash. That prevents other animals from getting to you. It prevents them from attacking somebody or attacking another animal. Riggs doesn't like other animals, so I'm not just gonna let 'em run around. They need to be on leashes.

Dan Hoffman ([13:18](#)):

Let's say, God forbid, someone's not taking care of their pet. How frequently do we run into issues with that here?

Sean O'Connor ([13:26](#)):

Not as much as people would think, but we do run into people., Neighbors being neighbors will say, 'oh, I looked in their backyard and the dog doesn't have any food or water, shelter.' The Code specifically says that any animal that's outside is supposed to have shelter, food, and water, all accessible to the animal. Some homeowners have dog doors that come in and out. So they don't realize that there is care being taken. It may just not be to their liking. Where they have to see that stuff. Well, my dogs, they run around and then, when I'm done, I put 'em up. Some people you go to their house, he's got food water on the front porch. There's shade, you know? And that meets the Code section. Other half of it is people are, 'well, dogs are outside, it's below 40 degrees.' Listen, Riggs can stand up to negative 10 degrees temperature. He was built for that. When it's 30 degrees, 15 degrees, he loves it. He hates coming into my house cuz he's got all that fur. He's got two coats. And I think people forget that for the majority of the part, dogs like shepherds, huskies, any longhaired animal is prepared to be outside. That's that's what they were originally, God's creation. That's what it was. Shorthaired dogs like our GSP, 30 degrees, yeah. He probably should come in the house or have something that's insulated to keep him warm. But I think we get a lot of complaints when it's cold outside or it's too hot. Dogs were built to deal with that type of temperature.

Dan Hoffman ([14:53](#)):

Got it. Now cats are a little different in that sometimes people just let their cats wander and go do whatever cats do when they're not hanging around. They come back. Do you guys find that to be a bigger issue than dogs where people just kinda let their cats go free range?

Sean O'Connor ([15:12](#)):

I can't think of any problem that I've had with somebody calling in saying, 'oh, the cat did this or cat did that.' There's a large population of feral cats in the city as almost anywhere. People feed 'em and yeah, they keep coming back. The cats do the same thing the dogs do. They know how to survive in cold weather. They know how to survive in the heat. Animals are not stupid. I have say it sometimes. They're very intelligent and they know what they're doing. And it's our job to make sure that we just check on 'em. Do they look good? They're healthy. They're fine. And that's just one of those things that we deal with.

Dan Hoffman ([15:49](#)):

Yeah. And we don't require cats to be registered here in the city.

Amy Simmons ([15:52](#)):

No.

Dan Hoffman ([15:53](#)):

Which that would just be a pain.

Amy Simmons ([15:55](#)):

Yes. <Laughs> Paperwork nightmare.

Dan Hoffman ([15:57](#)):

Absolutely. Okay. So if you were to come across somebody that, and we've had a few pretty high profile incidents, I'd say in the last year, where somebody just had way too many animals and they weren't taking care of them. Some very sad situations.

Sean O'Connor ([16:15](#)):

Sure.

Dan Hoffman ([16:17](#)):

What are the limits in terms of how many pets somebody can own?

Sean O'Connor ([16:23](#)):

I don't know. Off the top of my head, I can't think of a specific code section says you can only have so many dogs. There may be a City ordinance that I'm not familiar with, but my opinion is, even if you have 15 cats, if I walk into your house and it smells nice, there shouldn't be an issue. But if I walk in there and it smells like urine and it smells like cat, then obviously you're not able to take care of your animals. And usually the cases that I've seen, especially with the previous ACOs is, you go in those houses and there's feces all over the floor. There's pee all over the floor, whatever.

Kelly Henshaw ([16:57](#)):

Immediate signs.

Sean O'Connor ([16:58](#)):

Immediate signs the dog hasn't been let out or the animal hasn't been let out, they're not being fed, they're not being taken care of. Those are the cases where we'll go in, we'll seize the animal. We'll have certain conditions the homeowner's gonna have to provide to us to say, 'yeah, I can do this.' Rabies vaccinations. When was the last time they had their checkups, that type of thing. Farm animals, the City has ordinances against having chickens.

Dan Hoffman ([17:23](#)):

No chickens people.

Sean O'Connor ([17:24](#)):

Cows, or all this other stuff you can't have in the city. It's to be expected. You can't have a chicken running around in your house. It's just probably not a good idea. <Laughs>.

Amy Simmons ([17:31](#)):

<Laughs>

Dan Hoffman ([17:31](#)):

No, no. If that's your thing, then the county's a better place for you.

Sean O'Connor ([17:36](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. We've been to houses where there's chickens in cupboards.

Dan Hoffman ([17:41](#)):

Wow.

Sean O'Connor ([17:41](#)):

Yeah. That's not something you see every day.

Dan Hoffman ([17:44](#)):

No.

Amy Simmons ([17:44](#)):

It's sad.

Sean O'Connor ([17:44](#)):

But we do have that.

Dan Hoffman ([17:46](#)):

Getting some fresh eggs, I guess.

Amy Simmons ([17:48](#)):

But in a cupboard?

Kelly Henshaw ([17:48](#)):

Well, I don't know. Chickens are chickens. So, here in the city, I know Frederick County has a shelter over by the jail.

Sean O'Connor ([17:58](#)):

Ester Boyd.

Dan Hoffman ([17:59](#)):

But we use the SPCA here. So tell us about it a little bit about that relationship.

Sean O'Connor ([18:05](#)):

Again, I've been with Winchester for 14 years this month. As far as I know, we've always had a good relationship with them. Being that I'm overseeing the program now I hope that relationship continues. They've always, to my knowledge have helped us out when we needed help.

Dan Hoffman ([18:23](#)):

What do they do for us?

Sean O'Connor ([18:25](#)):

So if we have a dog or a cat that we find that's got tags, or even doesn't have tags, we can bring it into their facility. We'll log it. And most people, when they lose an animal first place they're gonna check is what they used to call the pound. They're gonna go down to the SPCA. They're gonna see if their dog or cat or chicken's there. <Laughs> And then claim it and help process it. The SPCA provides food for those animals. They watch those animals over the weekends. So they really help take care of the animals. And then, if they're not claimed, they'll put 'em up for adoption and say, 'this two-year-old pit bull needs a home is friendly with kids' that type of thing. So they kind of put it through their own process of, 'Hey, this is gonna be a good fit for this person or this type of family.'

Dan Hoffman ([19:16](#)):

Which raises a question that I'm curious to get your thoughts on. What are your thoughts on pit bulls? A lot of people they've got strong emotions one way or another. There are groups that form basically just to advocate for pit bulls cuz they feel they get a bad rap. And there's some people that feel that they're dangerous. What are your thoughts?

Sean O'Connor ([19:38](#)):

I have a pit bull at home. He's probably 12 years old now. We adopted him from Ester Boyd and he's been the best dog I've ever owned. He's loving, he is protective over the family, but not to the point where he's aggressive. He's a loud mouth when somebody comes to the house. I think pit bulls in general have a terrible name attached to 'em and that's because their owners were terrible. I can train Riggs to be the biggest, you know, angry dog out there. And he can be, but when I tell him to yeah. And I think pit bulls people associate it with dog fighting. Well, that's not the dog's fault. That's the owner's fault for allowing that to happen. Every for the most part, every pit bull that I've ever come across shows you affection. Very loyal animals. Play with kids, you know, my kids rolled all over my pit bull as they grew up, never got bit. Never had an aggression issue.

Dan Hoffman ([20:34](#)):

Which is sad cause if you go to...I was at the SPCA maybe 3-4 weeks ago, and that was the majority. Pit bulls, terriers of some variety. Normally, they're a mix <laugh> but it was sad because that was the most common animal. The other dogs get snapped up pretty quick.

Sean O'Connor ([20:54](#)):

Yeah. Cute and cuddly ones.

Dan Hoffman ([20:55](#)):

Cute and cuddly the little ones, but yeah, those pit bulls, you could see, they just,

Sean O'Connor ([21:02](#)):

It's a shame cuz I told my wife years ago when we got my pit bull that I'd love to have a pit bull rescue because I they're extremely friendly animals. You could train a Chihuahua to be aggressive. It all comes down to the handler. I say handler, but to the homeowner. How they treat 'em. Do they treat 'em right? Do they love on them? If they train 'em to fight, that's what they're gonna do. And I think the pressure needs to be put back on the homeowner, not the animal. The animal's just doing what it was trained to do.

Dan Hoffman ([21:33](#)):

I agree.

Amy Simmons ([21:34](#)):

Or if you mean to the dog, the dog, most likely's probably gonna be mean to other things.

Sean O'Connor ([21:38](#)):

Yeah. If you abuse an animal then eventually they're gonna, just like humans, they're gonna have about enough of it, and they're gonna react. It's only nature. Just like we are,

Dan Hoffman ([21:47](#)):

Don't beat jerks to your dogs. People.

Sean O'Connor ([21:49](#)):

No doubt.

Dan Hoffman ([21:50](#)):

All right, Sean, thank you so much for coming in.

Sean O'Connor ([21:52](#)):

Absolutely.

Dan Hoffman ([21:53](#)):

Always a pleasure. Now, if somebody sees you out and about with Riggs or any of the, other than Leo <laugh>, whether it's Riggs or Clark or Axl, what should people not do?

Sean O'Connor ([22:12](#)):

That's a great question. So, a lot of people, especially at the PD, even when we have the dogs at the PD, I've kind of got a standing rule: talk to handler before you ever touch my dog. That's the same way on the street. Your kids always want to grab things. Well, one dog may not like you grabbing his tail. Always talk to the owner who's handling that animal. Say, 'Hey, is your dog friendly? Do you mind if I pet him?' They should be able to say yes, no, or stay away from him type of thing. A lot of people, they run into problems when they just go up and start handling somebody's dog. And that dog could be very friendly, but doesn't know you and isn't gonna care for that. And that's when bad things happen. So always, always ask the homeowner or the person handling the dog before you ever engage in somebody else's animal.

Dan Hoffman ([22:55](#)):

Yeah. Do you hear that mom? Stop just randomly petting people's dogs. My mom, on a beautiful day when people are all out with their dogs, I can't walk with my mom for two or three blocks. It's like a 30-minute process cause she has to stop and talk to every person with a dog. Every dog, every small child. But even the working dogs...

Sean O'Connor ([23:16](#)):

Especially the working dogs.

Dan Hoffman ([23:18](#)):

Give them space.

Amy Simmons ([23:22](#)):

The last [safety] fair, you had Riggs out. And he was just talking to little kids. He was being friendly to little kids, but they did ask first. And they were able to love on him for a little while.

Sean O'Connor ([23:33](#)):

Riggs is he's a very well-mannered dog. All his professional stuff is all done by command. I've been lucky with him. He loves people, except for when it's time to go to work and do what I tell him to do. That's the difference. Having that relationship versus the different more aggressive relationships, if you will.

Dan Hoffman ([23:52](#)):

Put simply, he's a good boy.

Amy Simmons ([23:54](#)):

He's a good boy.

Sean O'Connor ([23:55](#)):

He is. <Laughs>.

Amy Simmons ([23:56](#)):

That's one thing we didn't talk about is training.

Dan Hoffman ([23:59](#)):

Yeah. That's a whole <laugh> and that's a big one. How long? So you get him, you said when he was how old?

Sean O'Connor ([24:06](#)):

Riggs was 16-18 months. Axl was about a year and some change old.

Dan Hoffman ([24:10](#)):

So it takes them a year and a half to be ready. And then they're still training when they get here and then refreshing the training, I'm sure, to reinforce things along the way.

Sean O'Connor ([24:20](#)):

When we got Axl and Riggs they had no training at all. The only thing that they were familiar with was a little bit of apprehension work which comes from just playing with a ball.

Dan Hoffman ([24:30](#)):

Oh. Wow.

Sean O'Connor ([24:31](#)):

When we get 'em, our school was 19 weeks long just for the patrol aspect. Obedience, tracking, apprehension, articles, that type of stuff. Narcotics work was another eight weeks that we went through of just constantly working narcotics. And then we train twice a month, 10-hour training days, every month to maintain our certification.

Dan Hoffman ([24:55](#)):

These dogs are better educated than many people.

Amy Simmons ([24:58](#)):

<Laughs>

Sean O'Connor ([24:59](#)):

They go through just as much training as we do.

Dan Hoffman ([25:01](#)):

Absolutely. That's fantastic. All right. I could talk all day about dogs.

Sean O'Connor ([25:07](#)):

<Laughs> Me, too.

Dan Hoffman ([25:07](#)):

If you're a cat person, don't feel slighted that we haven't spent as much time talking about cats. But hey, dogs are better, so it's okay. Sean, thank you so much.

Sean O'Connor ([25:16](#)):

Yes, sir.

Dan Hoffman ([25:16](#)):

And we'll see you around.

Sean O'Connor ([25:17](#)):

Sounds good.

Dan Hoffman ([25:18](#)):

All right. There goes Sean with his very strong handshake.

Amy Simmons ([25:21](#)):

<Laugh>.

Dan Hoffman ([25:21](#)):

I always feel like with the police officers and firefighters, there's like this unspoken contest when they shake my hand. They're like, 'let's see how hard I can squeeze the City Manager's hand.' What they don't know is I got a pretty strong handshake myself. So I can hang right there with him. But Sean had a very strong hand shake.

Amy Simmons ([25:36](#)):

Yeah. I didn't get that. Thank goodness.

Dan Hoffman ([25:38](#)):

Oh, no. He might have broken your little hands. The dainty...

Amy Simmons ([25:43](#)):

Dainty little hands. <Laughs>

Dan Hoffman ([25:43](#)):

So, one aspect of animals that we touched on a little bit in talking with Sean, is poop. We spoke with Kelly Henshaw. We recorded a little segment with her, too, to get into why that's so important. So let's go ahead and play that. I really want folks to understand the impacts of not picking up after your pet. So let's go and roll that.

Dan Hoffman ([26:14](#)):

Okay. Kelly Henshaw. Welcome.

Kelly Henshaw ([26:17](#)):

Thank you.

Dan Hoffman ([26:18](#)):

All right. So you're back and we're talking about an entirely different subject. I think last time we talked about stormwater when we had you in.

Kelly Henshaw ([26:25](#)):

Yeah.

Dan Hoffman ([26:26](#)):

This time we're talking about waterfowl, birds in general, and poop.

Amy Simmons ([26:35](#)):

And still a little bit related to...a lot related.

Kelly Henshaw ([26:37](#)):

A lot related, actually.

Dan Hoffman ([26:39](#)):

Yeah. So we have a rule in the city: pick up after your dog. There's a reason for that. There's actually multiple reasons for that. There's the obvious reason that normally gets people a little twerked off.

Amy Simmons ([26:54](#)):

It's nasty.

Dan Hoffman ([26:55](#)):

It's gross. And man, ain't not the worst and stepping in it. It's just the worst. If you're out for a walk and you realize about a block later, that something smells that is...

Amy Simmons ([27:07](#)):

You. <Laughs>

Dan Hoffman ([27:07](#)):

So frustrating. There's that reason, but what I think a lot of people don't realize is that there's another, kind of bigger, reason that we make them clean up after their dogs. And that is...

Kelly Henshaw ([27:22](#)):

Any sort of animal waste contains fecal coliforms and that is a very dangerous bacteria. And actually a few of our streams in Winchester are impaired for fecal coliforms.

Dan Hoffman ([27:34](#)):

Fecal coliforms.

Kelly Henshaw ([27:35](#)):

Yes.

Dan Hoffman ([27:35](#)):

Coliforms. It sounds like that little arts and crafts thing we used to do as kids: color forms. Remember? But it's not that.

Kelly Henshaw ([27:41](#)):

No, it's not that. <Laughs>

Dan Hoffman ([27:42](#)):

So it's a bacteria.

Kelly Henshaw ([27:45](#)):

It's a bacteria and it can really make people sick if they ingest it.

Dan Hoffman ([27:49](#)):

Well. And I would say, who on earth is eating poop off the ground? How do they get it? Because I'm assuming that they're not getting it from eating it.

Kelly Henshaw ([28:01](#)):

No, no. And that's one reason why we really don't like people swimming in our creeks. Because you know, you can just be in that water, and it can absorb or have it on your hands and touch your face and get sick.

Dan Hoffman ([28:16](#)):

So don't go swimming in Town Run is what you're saying.

Kelly Henshaw ([28:18](#)):

No, I wouldn't. I mean, I think we've improved on our impairments, but it really takes a village and that's why we educate people: please pick up after your dogs because that bulk animal waste, when it washes into the storm drain, that's just like a big plop of bacteria.

Dan Hoffman ([28:40](#)):

Plop. <Laughs> Good choice of words.

Kelly Henshaw ([28:42](#)):

Yes.

Dan Hoffman ([28:43](#)):

Big ole plop.

Kelly Henshaw ([28:43](#)):

Well, I was with kids last week teaching about this. And of course this is their favorite one to talk about.

Dan Hoffman ([28:48](#)):

Of course.

Kelly Henshaw ([28:49](#)):

They like the poop.

Dan Hoffman ([28:50](#)):

It's the funnest one. I don't know if many people clean up...well, cats have litter boxes for the most part. Dogs, you gotta pick up after your dog. And that actually, is a law. You can get a ticket for not picking up after your dog. It falls under littering. So, please pick up after your dog. There's this one poor family who, I don't know, they must have some bad neighbors. Every other month, I get a call from them and they've got signs up saying, please pick up to your dog. But something about the little median strip in front of their house, it's like a dog poop magnet for some reason. So please pick up after your dog. And then there are other animals that also poop on the ground. And sometimes people have a role in encouraging that. And what is that?

Kelly Henshaw ([29:43](#)):

Yes. So that's geese.

Dan Hoffman ([29:46](#)):

Nasty geese.

Kelly Henshaw ([29:48](#)):

In the city, we see them most frequently around Wilkins Lake, which is at the park and people love to go there and feed the ducks or feed the geese. But we really discourage people because when the geese know that there's a food source there, they continue to return and unfortunately, Wilkins Lake is structured in such a way that there's no deterrent for the geese to not be there. It's very open, so they don't feel vulnerable. They can see predators coming, and so it is an ideal habitat for them because they feel safe there. And if people are feeding them, there's a food source. There's a section of the Green Circle Trail that goes through there and especially in the spring and the summertime, if you walk, it's just littered with goose...

Dan Hoffman ([30:32](#)):

Yuck.

Amy Simmons ([30:33](#)):

And at the visitor center.

Dan Hoffman ([30:35](#)):

So your average birds poop everywhere too. Do they do the same thing?

Kelly Henshaw ([30:43](#)):

I mean, I guess they do. It's just not such a bulk.

Dan Hoffman ([30:45](#)):

The volume is not there.

Kelly Henshaw ([30:47](#)):

Exactly.

Dan Hoffman ([30:47](#)):

It's not as big of a plop.

Amy Simmons ([30:50](#)):

And it's bad for the geese, also with their migration too, right? If you feed them and they get used to getting it here, can tell us about that?

Kelly Henshaw ([30:56](#)):

It's the type of food that they should be eating versus what people feed them. And of course they like the stuff. It's like when you feed your dog table scraps. They're gonna like that a lot better than their dog food. Geese are the same way. So, if we can deter people from feeding them, they will stick more to their natural...

Amy Simmons ([31:16](#)):

They'll be healthier.

Kelly Henshaw ([31:16](#)):

Exactly.

Dan Hoffman ([31:18](#)):

And, I don't know if you've ever had a cross paths with an angry goose.

Kelly Henshaw ([31:23](#)):

They're not nice.

Dan Hoffman ([31:24](#)):

They're not, those are mean animals.

Kelly Henshaw ([31:28](#)):

They're very territorial.

Dan Hoffman ([31:28](#)):

Very territorial

Kelly Henshaw ([31:30](#)):

That again, when people wanna come enjoy the lake and it's full of geese, they're kind of like, 'no, this is our turf.'

Dan Hoffman ([31:37](#)):

I had one charged me one time. I thought I was gonna have to punt that geese, but thankfully it scurried off. But man.

Amy Simmons ([31:44](#)):

Be nice.

Dan Hoffman ([31:45](#)):

No, they're nasty. Those are nasty animals. So don't feed the geese. Don't feed the ducks. That's a little harder cause ducks are cute.

Kelly Henshaw ([31:56](#)):

They are.

Dan Hoffman ([31:56](#)):

You know, it would be fun to throw some bread crumbs to some ducks, but same thing guys, don't feed the ducks.

Amy Simmons ([32:03](#)):

We can go back to that stormwater discussion that we had. We don't treat storm water. So it just goes straight to our streams.

Kelly Henshaw ([32:12](#)):

Exactly. Right.

Amy Simmons ([32:13](#)):

So that's why it's important.

Kelly Henshaw ([32:14](#)):

With the geese and the ducks being aquatic animals, they're right there. This is one of the things when I go into the schools I talk to them about cattle. Now in the city, the only place that grazes cattle is the Glen Burnie property a little bit. But you know, out in the county around us, cows might be sweet and cute to look at, but they're not very smart. Cows don't understand, 'oh, we shouldn't be in the same water that we're drinking from.' But those streams from the county end up coming through the city and that also adds to our impairment numbers because of the land uses.

Dan Hoffman ([32:48](#)):

Interesting.

Kelly Henshaw ([32:49](#)):

The cattle that are outside of our city limits.

Dan Hoffman ([32:51](#)):

So cow poop does the same thing.

Kelly Henshaw ([32:53](#)):

Yes.

Dan Hoffman ([32:54](#)):

Didn't know that. Okay. So dogs, geese, cattle, any other animal's poop we gotta worry about?

Kelly Henshaw ([33:02](#)):

I think those are the three big ones.

Dan Hoffman ([33:03](#)):

Three big ones. All right. So here's the lesson, everybody: animal poop is gross and dirty.

Amy Simmons ([33:11](#)):

Please pick it up.

Dan Hoffman ([33:12](#)):

Please pick it up. There you go. Okay. Well, thank you very much.

Kelly Henshaw ([33:17](#)):

You're welcome.

Dan Hoffman ([33:18](#)):

We just had a very nice chat with Sean O'Connor about dogs and all of the other animal-related issues here. So nice to wrap it all up with a little poop talk.

Kelly Henshaw ([33:27](#)):

There you go. <Laughs>

Amy Simmons ([33:29](#)):

And as we have been posting on social media, there is no poop fairy.

Kelly Henshaw ([33:32](#)):

There isn't. No.

Amy Simmons ([33:34](#)):

So you gotta pick it up.

Dan Hoffman ([33:34](#)):

Pick up after your dog. All right. Thank you very much, Kelly.

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Dan Hoffman ([33:44](#)):

All right. So those were our guests, Kelly and Sean. Talking about animals, talking about poop.

Amy Simmons ([33:51](#)):

<Laughs>

Dan Hoffman ([33:51](#)):

Makes Amy giggle, evidently.

Amy Simmons ([33:52](#)):

What else are you gonna talk about. It's a fact of life, I guess.

Dan Hoffman ([33:55](#)):

How do we top that for the next one?

Amy Simmons ([33:58](#)):

I don't know.

Dan Hoffman ([33:58](#)):

I don't know either. We'll figure it out between now and then. Everybody, thanks for listening as always. I appreciate you taking the time with us today. Check us out in a couple of weeks and until then see you around City Hall.