



CITY OF ST. PETERSBURG

Police Department

1300 First Avenue North
St. Petersburg, Florida 33705

June 2, 2008

Ms. Susan M. Bell and
Mr. Paul Gilchrist
2256 Burlington Avenue North
St. Petersburg, FL 33713

Dear Ms. Bell and Mr. Gilchrist:

Thank you for your letter of May 15, 2008, sharing your concern about the St. Petersburg Police Department's policy regarding animal cruelty complaints and, specifically, the response of police officers to the report of cruelty involving your cat, Amy, on April 12, 2008. This matter has been thoroughly investigated to ensure that there was an appropriate response to this incident.

A call was received into our Communications Division on April 12, 2008, at 12:11 p.m.. This call was processed as an animal complaint/animal cruelty for an officer to be dispatched. Officer John Douglas was dispatched to the area of Burlington Avenue North and 23rd Street at 12:24 p.m. and arrived on-scene at 12:25 p.m. The caller indicated that he did not want to speak with the officer when he arrived. Officer Douglas was not able to locate a suspect or the injured animal and cleared the call at 12:31 p.m.

The perception may have existed that no officer responded because, at the caller's request, the officer did not make direct contact with the caller. I can assure you that each call for police service is important to us and that this Department takes allegations of animal cruelty very seriously.

In your letter you request a change in our policy for handling calls for service regarding violent crimes against animals. This is to assure you that our policy does dictate that an officer be dispatched to investigate a report of animal cruelty. Although the outcome in your case was unfortunate and tragic, our policy was followed; an officer was dispatched, and the incident investigated based on the information provided. Once contact was made with you, it became possible to conduct a more thorough investigation.

I appreciate this opportunity to clarify our procedures and assure you that customer service is a primary focus of the St. Petersburg Police Department. Please know that this investigation is ongoing, and we are hopeful that the suspect in this case will be identified and brought to justice for you and Amy and to prevent future similar incidents.

Sincerely,

Cedric F. Gordon, Assistant Chief
Administrative Services Bureau

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