

Area Governments Find Canine Pounds Costly

Dog May Be Man's Best Friend -- But Not Strays

By W. W. EDGAR
Observer Roving Editor

For years dog has been called man's best friend. He's a protector in time of trouble and a companion day after day. And there is nothing more pleasing to the eye than the sight of a young boy and his dog.

But don't mention these things to the law enforcement officials in suburbia.

To them dogs, for the most part, are a problem and a constant source of trouble and few people realize the tax money that is spent just to rid the streets and highways of stray animals.

FROM FARMINGTON Township to Westland and from Redford Township to the western precincts of Plymouth, the man in the police department are kept on the jump with the stray-dog problem.

Long before the population explosion that caused the rush to suburbia two decades ago, dogs have been a source of much concern.

Much of the trouble was caused deliberately when folks from the city, who wished to part company with a dog, wouldn't think of putting it to sleep humanely. Rather, they'd take a ride to the "country" and drop the dog along some lonely road, there to care for itself.

The seriousness of the dog problem first came to light during the incorporation of the City of Livonia almost two decades ago.

"If we become a city," the residents used to ask, "What will you do about stray dogs?"

It was to seek a solution to the problem that the City of Livonia constructed a dog pound in 1945 and it has been a source of some relief ever since.

"We have outgrown the old pound," Sgt. Robert Baumgartner, of the Livonia police department, commented recently. "And I am hopeful that we can come up with a more modern facility, for the problem is still with us."

THE LIVONIA POUND is the only government-owned facility in the area. It is a small building, the service of two dog wardens (dog catchers) and a supervisor.

"We deal with 1,680 dogs during the last fiscal year," Sgt. Baumgartner explained. "And of this number we had to destroy 1,440 because they weren't claimed."

"We also service Redford Township," he added. "And we had 573 dogs from that area, of which 428 were destroyed."

While explaining the work of the department, Sgt. Baumgartner picked up a pamphlet from his desk and proudly displayed

it, saying "This is the latest model machine for putting dogs to sleep. It costs \$3,000, but it is considered more humane than the other machines we are using."

Because the Livonia pound is government owned there is no charge to the city for destroying dogs. But in the case of those imported from Redford there is a charge of \$1 per day for board with no charge for extermination.

IN CASES where Livonia dogs are claimed by their owners there is only a charge of \$1 per day for board, plus the impounding fee of \$3.

When the dog problem was broached to John Dinan, City Manager in Farmington, he checked the records and rather surprisingly remarked:

"We spend more money on stray dogs out here than we do on prisoners in jail."

"Just look at this," he added, "we spent \$500 for board and extermination of dogs last year, while we spent only \$200 on the prisoners."

Neither the City of Farmington nor Farmington Township has a dog pound. They use the Farmington Dog and Cat Hospital where the charge is \$1.50 per day for board and \$3 for extermination.

"We had 54 dogs run through the facility August of this year, but only 10 of them were destroyed," Dinan commented.

According to the city manager, the dogs become more of a problem because the men on the police force aren't geared for that type of work -- and the department isn't large enough to have a dog warden.

BOTH THE CITY of Plymouth and Plymouth Township use the Parkway Clinic in lieu of a government-owned facility for stray dogs.

"We had 13 dogs impounded in August," Acting Police Chief Loren Johnson stated. "But not all of them were put to sleep. Under the plan we use, the stray dog is kept three days and then, if not claimed, it is exterminated. When the owner claims the dog, he is asked to pay the bill."

In Plymouth Township, the Dog Warden is employed only at night, and the job of picking up strays or vicious dogs during the day is given to anyone who happens to be around the Township Hall.

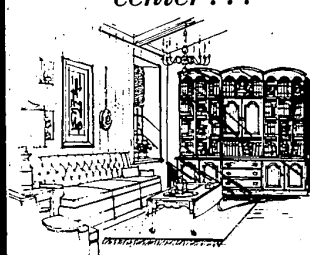
"We have appropriated \$1,000 in our budget for the dogs," Supervisor John McEwen pointed out, "but this will be amply handled by the license fees. Last year these fees amounted to \$4,053."

lem is much the same.

Sgt. Charles Wilmoth, of the Police Department, stated that the problem is just as acute in that area, but that the government-owned pound became too small and a private dog farm now is used.

"We have to pay for board-

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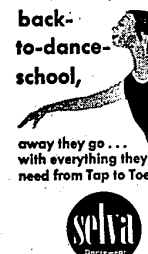
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