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Casey’s Corner

**Joan Merriam: Animal laws — the dumb and dumber**

[](http://www.theunion.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/PETmerriam-gvu-012017.jpg%22%20%5Co%20%22You%20or%20your%20dog%20may%20want%20to%20brush%20up%20on%20silly%20animal%20laws%20just%20in%20case%20you%20are%20traveling%20to%20any%20of%20these%20cities%20mentioned%20in%20Joan%20Merriam%27s%20column.)Since we've just gone through one of the ugliest, most traumatic, and downright appalling chapters in American election history, I thought it might be a nice change of pace to focus on something more lighthearted this month.

We all agree that laws are necessary. Laws are, ostensibly, there to protect society. Some, however, are unnecessary, intrusive or unhelpful — and some are just plain bizarre.

Like the Florida law that makes it illegal for owners of commercial establishments selling alcohol to conduct a dwarf-tossing contest.

But just like stupid human laws, there are some equally strange laws pertaining to our animal brethren.

Like the Alaska law prohibiting anyone from shoving a live moose out of an airplane midflight.

With that in mind, I offer here some of the dumbest animal laws you'll ever read. Some are no longer on the books, but many still are. Much as I hate to say it, they're all true. Or they were at one time.

Only in America.

**California laws**

Let's start right here in California, where in some counties, it's illegal for animals to mate within 1,500 yards of a church or school. (You know what they say about impressionable young minds…)

Heading up to the almost-frozen North, in International Falls, Minnesota, cats are not permitted to chase dogs up telephone poles. (Yes, you read that right. Cats can't chase dogs up telephone poles. I don't know about you, but that's one thing I've never worried about with my dogs.)

Speaking of cats, until recently, there was a law on the books in Sterling, Colorado, that said any cat "allowed to roam freely at night" needed to wear…uhh…tail-lights. (I'm not even going there…)

Oklahomans are known to be friendly and sociable, but apparently they draw the line at their dogs having get-togethers: a law there states that if dogs plan to gather in groups of three or more on private property, they must first obtain a permit signed by the mayor.

Oklahoma also has a law against people making ugly faces at dogs.

**East Coast**

Silly pet laws aren't just the province of the West and Midwest: in Hartford, Connecticut, a law makes it illegal to educate dogs. (Maybe that's what they mean when they say you can't teach an old dog new tricks… if you try, you'll get arrested.)

Those folks in Connecticut must have some real problem dogs: they also have a law requiring any dog with tattoos to be reported to the police. And if your tattooed dog is also educated… well, I hate to imagine how you'd explain it to your fellow inmates. Hey, dude, what are you in for?

I'm all for regulations that limit where people can smoke…but I wonder if it applies to animals? It does if you're in Zion, Illinois, where you're forbidden to give lit cigars to dogs, cats and other pets. It's also illegal in Illinois to give whiskey to dogs. I always knew that whiskey and cigars don't mix.

Here's another law from the Midwest — this time from Marysville, Ohio — where dogs are prohibited from urinating on parking meters. The funny thing is that until recently, there were no parking meters in Marysville, Ohio. Guess they figured it was better to be safe than sorry.

With all the bad press that law enforcement has been enduring lately, maybe they should move to Palding, Ohio, where a police officer may bite a dog if it's out of control or misbehaving. Probably not going to need a body camera for that one.

Uh-oh: back to Illinois. In Northbrook, it's illegal for a dog to bark longer than 15 minutes. Come to think of it, that's not a bad idea for those of us who are plagued by incessantly barking dogs. Of course, you'd need to make the dog wear a timer so he could take a break after 15 minutes.

Illinois isn't the only state where raucous dogs are an issue: In Little Rock, Arkansas, dogs aren't allowed to bark after 6 p.m. The authorities in Collingswood, New Jersey, are even more callous: there, dogs can't bark or howl between 8 p.m. and 6 a.m. Not to be outdone, cats in Columbus, Georgia may not howl after 9 p.m.

**Car-molesting dogs?**

Meanwhile, in Fort Thomas, Kentucky, it's illegal for dogs to molest cars. Yeah, I know it really upsets me when dogs try to get intimate with my car.

New Castle, Delaware, prohibits couples from public displays of affection while walking their dogs.

Between 1982 and 2002, animals in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, were explicitly prohibited from producing solid waste. (Uhhh, how, exactly, did that work?)

Coming back to California, Belvedere has a city ordinance that reads: "No dog shall be in a public place without its master on a leash." (I think you may want to check the placement of that modifier, folks.)

Finally, lest you think that America is the only place with some very odd animal-related laws, in 2009 a law was proposed in Great Britain that would have required dog food manufacturers to make phosphorescent dog food so that people wouldn't step in dog poop at night.

And in the city of London, cab drivers aren't allowed to carry a rabid dog.

Maybe that one makes sense.

Happy New Year, everyone!

*Joan Merriam lives in Nevada County with her Golden Retriever Joey, her Maine Coon cat Indy, and the abiding spirit of her beloved Golden Retriever Casey in whose memory this column is named. You can reach Joan at* joan@joanmerriam.com*. And if you're looking for a Golden, be sure to check out Homeward Bound Golden Retriever Rescue .*