

This Chapter Covers:

- ◆ Introduction
- ◆ Identification of Canines
- ◆ Identification of Felines
- ◆ Identification of Wildlife

Introduction

This chapter deals with the identification of different animals, including canines (dogs), felines (cats), and wildlife. It will also help you to standardize the description (everyone in the agency will give the same description for an animal) of impounded animals for record keeping purposes. This will help make sure that the correct action is taken with the right animal.

Identification of Canines

Few dogs are purebreds (all one breed). Most dogs are crossbreeds or mixed-breed animals. However, many will resemble a certain breed. To describe a dog, determine the breed the dog looks like the most, for example, a German Shepherd cross. Many mixed-breed dogs may not look like any certain breed. Other features must be used to describe these dogs.

Animal Identification (Basic)

Descriptions should include the:

- **Breed** - State the breed name or the breed the dog looks like the most.
- **Height** - When the animal is standing, height is measured from the ground to the top of the animal's shoulder.
- **Weight** - Use a scale to determine the heaviness of the animal. If a scale is not available, state a weight range (for example: under 10 pounds, 10 to 30 pounds, etc.)
- **Coat Color** - Dog coats can be **unicolor** (all one color, such as black), **bicolor** (2 colors, such as black and white), or **tricolor** (3 colors, such as black, white, and brown). Some common coat colors for dogs include:

Black

Brown

Chocolate

Cream - off-white color

Fawn - usually light grayish-brown

Gray

Liver - deep, reddish-brown

Wheat - pale yellow

White

Yellow

- **Markings** - The body areas consisting of various colors are also very important in a dog description. Markings are the way different colors are arranged on a dog. It is helpful to describe colors different from the body on the head or face, feet, tip of tail, and belly of the dog:

Points - some markings are referred to as points. Points are contrasting colors on the face, legs, ears, and tails of the dog. They are usually darker than the base coat.

Saddle - the saddle is another type of marking. It is a dark marking over the back of the dog.

Animal Identification (Basic)

Study a good book on dog breeds to become familiar with the different colors and markings.

- **Coat Length** - The length of the coat can be described as very short, short, medium, or long.
- **Coat Texture** - Texture describes the character of the hair coat. Sleek, soft, hard, straight, smooth, wavy, wooly, silky, curly, or wiry can be used to describe the texture.
- **Eye Color** - Some breeds have different colored eyes, and this can aid in the description.
- **Age** - If you can estimate it accurately, use age in the description. The following are helpful in determining age:
 - 1) **eyes** - a puppy's eyes will open 10 to 12 days after birth.
 - 2) **teeth** -
 - a) deciduous (baby) teeth begin growing through the gums at **1 month** of age.
 - b) by **2 months** of age, a puppy will have all 28 baby teeth.
 - c) by **5 to 6 months** of age, the deciduous canine teeth are replaced by permanent canine teeth (fangs).
 - d) by **6 to 7 months** of age, a dog will have all 42 of its permanent teeth.

Animal Identification (Basic)

- **Ears** - There are seven basic ear types found in dogs (see Figure 1 in chapter appendix):

Bat - large, erect ears turned more to the side of the head instead of forward (example: French Bulldog).

Button - ears that fold forward and completely cover the inside of the ears (example: Fox Terrier).

Cropped - surgical trimming of a dog's ears to cause drop ears to stand erect (example: Doberman).

Drop - ears that hang down (example: Bloodhound).

Prick - ears carried erect and usually pointed at the tip (example: German Shepherd).

Rose - ears which fold down and back and expose the inside of the ears (example: English Bulldog).

Semi-Prick - similar to prick ears except the tip folds forward (example: Collie).

- **Tails** - There are six basic tail types (see Figure 2 in chapter appendix):

Docked - surgically clipped or cut off. Tails are docked at different lengths for different breeds (example: Boxer).

Gay - tail is carried higher than the level of the back (example: Beagle).

Plumed - a tail with a fringe of long hair, sometimes called feathered (example: Irish Setter).

Screwtail - a naturally short tail which is twisted or crooked (example: Boston Terrier).

Straight - long, slick tail carried lower than the level of the back. Sometimes called a sabre tail (example: Pointer).

Tightly Curled - similar to the gay tail but it is curled almost into a ring over the back (example: Basenji).

Animal Identification (Basic)

Identification of Felines

Most cats can be described based on their coat length, color, and pattern. Attend a cat show to see what the different breeds look like or use a good book on cat breeds as a guide. **Descriptions should include the:**

- **Coat Length** - The length of the coat can be described as short, medium, or long:

Domestic Shorthair (DSH)

Young kittens that are DSH may have coats that spike like porcupine quills. A kitten is a shorthair unless the coat is soft and wavy.

Domestic Medium Hair (DMH)

These cats have long hair on their stomachs, a bit of a ruff (long hair at the neck/chest area), and usually have long, bushy tails.

Domestic Long Hair (DLH)

This type of cat has a coat that flows and hangs down its sides. Some of these cats have hair so long that it touches the floor when they are standing. The hair on the tail usually flows as well and does not have the bushy appearance of the DMH tail.

- **Coat Color** – Typical cat coat colors include:

Black

Blue - officially used to describe gray cats; can vary from light to dark.

Brown - warm deep brown, like a chestnut or coffee grounds.

Cream - a soft, blonde color.

Red - the same color and shades as people with red hair; it ranges from "Irish Setter red" to a pale "carrot top" color. This color is often referred to as "orange" or "yellow" by lay people.

White - no shades of color are on this animal. For identification purposes, it is important to note the color of the eyes on white cats.

Animal Identification (Basic)

- **Coat Pattern** - Unless a cat is one solid color without markings, the description should include the pattern of how the colors are distributed.

Particolor - These cats have two or more colors. The pattern includes bicolor cats (for instance, black and white patches) and calicos and tortoiseshells.

Bicolor - patches of white fur next to dark fur.

The white markings may cover only a small part of the cat or most of it. When describing a bicolor cat, list the color that covers most of the body first. For example, you would describe a mostly black cat as: "bicolor; black/white; white on face/stomach/legs."

Calico - white coat with patches of black and red.

Tortoiseshell - black coat with patches of red and cream.

Calico and tortoiseshell cats are almost always queens (females).

Colorpoint - These are light-colored cats with darker markings only on the ears, face, legs, and tail; examples of breeds of cats that are colorpoint include Siamese, Himalayan, and Birman.

The points come in all cat colors. The points darken with age and the color spreads on the cat's body. A very young kitten may be white or off-white with only a dash of color on the nose and ears. The proper way to list the color of these cats is to put the color of the markings in front of the word "point," such as:

Blue Point (gray)

Chocolate Point (brown)

Flame Point (red)

Lilac Point (dark silver)

Seal Point (dark brown)

A colorpoint cat with tabby markings on the points is called a lynx point with the color listed in front of the word "lynx."

Animal Identification (Basic)

Tabby - Tabby is a coat pattern and not a color. All tabbies have stripes on their tails, legs, throats, and faces. Tabbies also have an "M" pattern on their foreheads.

a) **Tabby Markings** - The most common tabby markings are:

Classic - broad stripes that make circles and swirls on the sides of the body.

Lynx Point - the stripes are only on the tail, legs, and face.

Mackerel - narrow stripes that run vertically down the sides to the belly and sometimes with a stripe down the back. It is often referred to as a "tiger" pattern by lay people.

Spotted - just like it sounds, instead of stripes on the body there are spots of color that are usually in a random pattern.

b) **Tabby Colors** - Tabbies come in all cat colors with varying shades. The proper way to list a tabby cat is to state the color first, and then the word "tabby." The most common ones are:

Blue - dark blue stripes on a lighter blue background.

Brown - black or very dark brown stripes on a lighter brown background.

Cream - darker cream stripes on a lighter cream background.

Gray - gray stripes on a lighter gray background.

Red - darker red stripes on a lighter red background.

Silver - black stripes on a silver background.

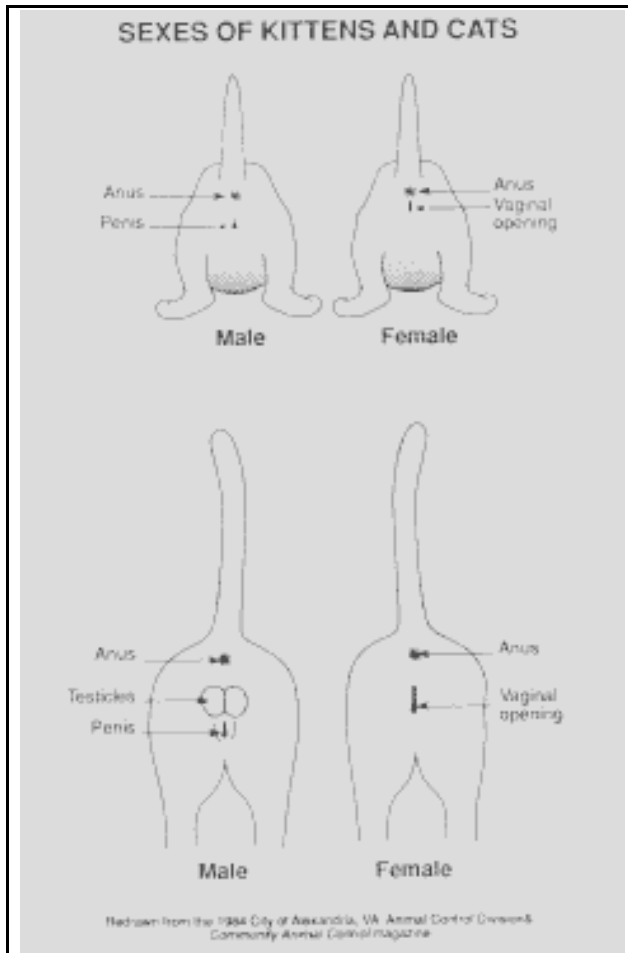
- **Eye Color** - Eye color may sometimes be the only way to tell two cats apart. Cat eye colors include blue, green, yellow, copper, and hazel. Sometimes a cat will have two differently colored eyes.

Animal Identification (Basic)

- **Age** - Cat age can be estimated in the same way as dog age. The following are helpful in determining age:
 - 1) **eyes** - a kitten's eyes will open 8 to 10 days after birth.
 - 2) **teeth** -
 - a) deciduous teeth begin growing through the gums at **2 weeks** of age.
 - b) by **2 months** of age, a kitten will have all 26 baby teeth.
 - c) by **5 months** of age, the deciduous canine teeth are replaced by permanent canine teeth.
 - d) by **5 to 6 months** of age, a cat will have all 30 of its permanent teeth.

Animal Identification (Basic)

- **Gender Identification** - It is often difficult to determine the sex of cats, especially kittens. Compare the following features in kittens until you can easily identify males and females.



Males - the penile opening has a circular shape. It is a greater distance below the anus than the vaginal opening on a female. This allows room for the testicles to descend into the scrotum. It is often difficult to see or feel the testicles in a young male kitten.

Females - the vaginal opening will be a vertical slit. It is located a very short distance below the anus.

One method of sexing kittens is to hold them on their backs with their hind end toward you. On a male, the openings will look like a colon (:); on a female, the openings will look like an exclamation point (!).

Animal Identification (Basic)

Identification of Wildlife

You may sometimes have to work with wildlife. You will need to know the difference between animals that are categorized as high risk and low risk for rabies as described in Chapter 826 of the Texas Health and Safety Codes.

High-Risk Animals - animals which have a high probability of transmitting rabies (giving the rabies virus to people or other animals):

- **Bats** - small, winged mammals that feed on insects. There are many species of bats found in Texas. Four species that you might encounter include:
 - * Brazilian, or Mexican, Free-Tailed Bat – a medium-sized bat with broad ears, large feet, and the terminal half of the tail free.
 - * Hoary Bat – a large bat with short, rounded ears with black rims.
 - * Red Bat – a medium-sized, distinctively reddish bat.
 - * Silver-Haired Bat – a medium-sized, nearly black bat with white tips on hairs that produce a frosted appearance.

- **Raccoons** - found throughout the state. The raccoon is recognized by the black mask on the face outlined in white. It can also be recognized by its tail, which has alternating black and brown rings.

- **Coyotes** - found throughout the state. The coyote is a medium-sized carnivore that resembles a slender wolf or a small-framed dog. It is usually a grizzled buff and grayish color with some black.

Animal Identification (Basic)

- **Foxes** - three species of foxes found in Texas include:
 - * **Red Fox** - lives mainly in central and eastern Texas. It is rusty-red on top and white underneath with black legs and a white-tipped tail.
 - * **Gray Fox** - found everywhere in Texas except the northern Panhandle. It is grizzled gray on top with reddish sides, a black line down the spine, and a whitish throat and belly. It also has a dark stripe along the top of the tail.
 - * **Swift Fox** - also called the **kit fox** or **desert fox**; found in the western third of Texas in the open desert or dry grasslands. It is the smallest fox indigenous to America. It is pale yellow on top and has a gray tail with black tip.

- **Skunks** - small black and white animals with characteristic scent glands. There are four species found in Texas:
 - * **Striped Skunk** - the most common skunk found in Texas. Usually has 2 broad stripes down the back. The number of stripes varies, some have narrow stripes and others do not have any stripes.
 - * **Spotted Skunk** - found throughout the state. It is smaller than the other skunks and black with irregular white stripes and spots.
 - * **Hooded Skunk** - found in the Big Bend area. It is marked similarly to the striped skunk but has a distinct white ruff on the back of the neck. It often lacks distinct stripes on its back.
 - * **Hog-Nosed Skunk** - found in central and western Texas. It is a large skunk with a single, broad white stripe from the top of the head to the base of the tail. It has a long snout which is hairless on top and a broad nose pad. The claws on its forefeet are larger than on its rear feet; these are adapted for digging. It is also called a "rooter skunk."

Animal Identification (Basic)

Low-Risk Animals - animals which have a low probability of transmitting rabies:

- **Order Rodentia** - rats, mice, squirrels, gophers, beavers, prairie dogs, voles, muskrats, porcupines, and nutria.
- **Order Lagomorpha** - jackrabbits, cottontails, and swamp rabbits.
- **Order Didelphimorphia** - opossums (the only marsupials native to Texas).
- **Order Insectivora** - shrews and moles.
- **Order Xenarthra** - armadillos (the only member of this order native to Texas).

Snakes - You will also be called upon to deal with reptiles, mainly snakes. There are many species of nonvenomous snakes in Texas. Even if they are nonvenomous, you must still handle them carefully to avoid being bitten. There are only four groups of venomous snakes in Texas. It is important that you be able to recognize them. There are pictures of venomous and nonvenomous snakes at the end of this chapter.

There are four groups of venomous snakes:

- **Rattlesnakes** - there are almost a dozen different kinds of rattlesnakes in Texas. All of the rattlesnakes found in Texas have a rattle on the tip of the tail.
- **Copperheads** - there are three subspecies of copperheads in Texas. All are stout-bodied snakes. They are copper and orange colored with bold reddish-brown bands.
- **Cottonmouth** - also called a water moccasin. It is a dark, heavy-bodied water snake. It has a distinctive white lining in its mouth.

Animal Identification (Basic)

- **Coral Snake** - colorful snake with red, yellow, and black bands. The red bands have black spots on them. The red and yellow bands touch each other. In nonvenomous snakes that look like coral snakes, the red and black bands will touch each other.

Remember: Red and yellow, kill a fellow.
Red and black, venom lack!

Some nonvenomous snakes may look like a familiar venomous snake. This is a form of protection against people and other animals. If you are not sure whether a snake is venomous or not, assume it is venomous.

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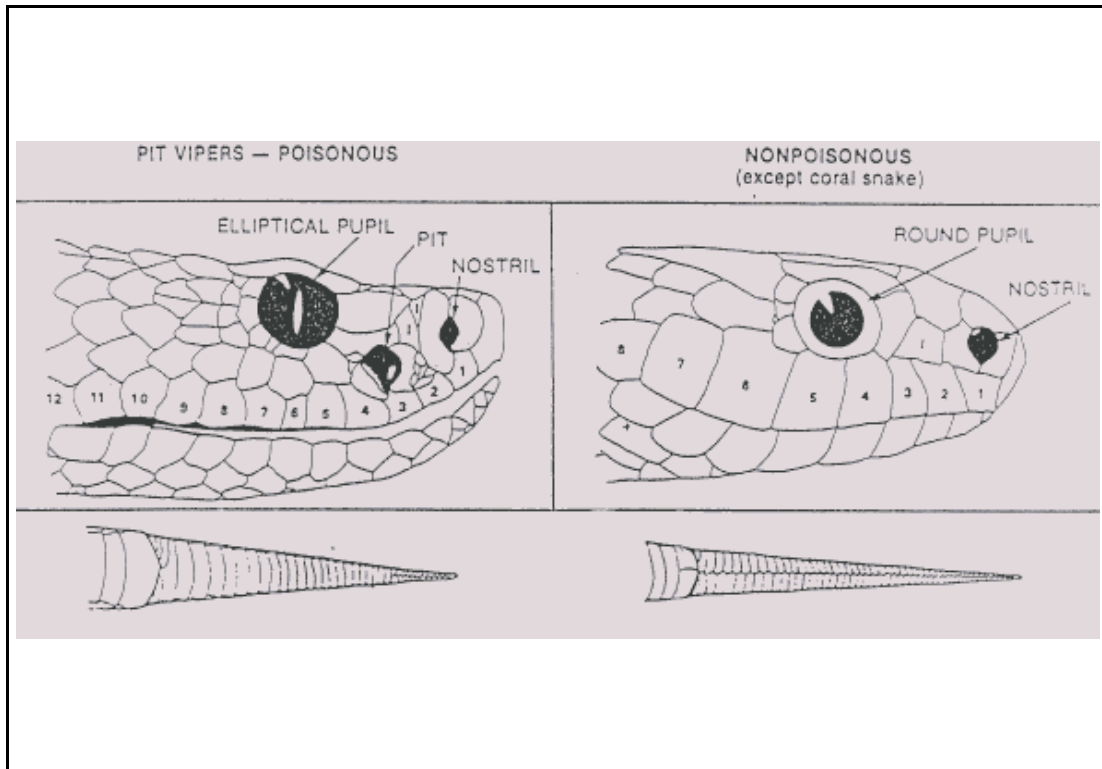
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Animal Identification (Basic)

Venomous (Poisonous) and Nonvenomous (Nonpoisonous) Snakes



Source Unknown

Animal Identification (Basic)

Chapter Appendix

Figure 1 - Dog Ears

Figure 2 - Dog Tails

Source: American Kennel Club, *The Complete Dog Book*

Figure 1 - Dog Ears



PRICK - German Shepherd



ROSE - English Bulldog



SEMI - PRICK - Collie



DROP - Hounds/Setters



BUTTON - Fox Terrier



BAT - French Bulldog



CROPPED - Doberman/Boxer

Figure 2 - Dog Tails



TIGHTLY CURLED - Basenji



GAY - Beagle



PLUMED - Irish Setter



SCREW - Boston Terrier



STRAIGHT - Pointer



DOCKED - Boxer