

Humane Society of Missouri

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Dear Humane Society Of Missouri, Cass County and Raymore, Missouri Officials:

I am shocked by the Labor Day 2009 shooting death of the Wesner family's 19-year-old cat Tobey in Raymore, Missouri I understand a Raymore police officer fired two bullets into the elderly cat's head, wrapped the body inside a plastic bag and tossed Tobey into a city dumpster.

As you know, Tobey had slipped out of his house and roamed into a nearby garage where a neighbor forced him out with hose spray. Raymore police were summoned to apprehend a "large, vicious, feral cat." Though Kelly Wesner describes her six-pound cat as declawed, deaf, and on prescription meds — a supervisor directed an officer to "put [the cat] down" in a remote area. Unbelievably, no one involved with the cat's slaying has been penalized.

I trust that an unbiased internal investigation is underway. If inquiries by the police department and/or Humane Society of Missouri warrant animal cruelty charges, these officers should be prosecuted under Missouri Revised Statutes, Chapter 578. Punitive action is reasonable, whether Tobey's killing stems from malicious intent or stupidity. At the very least, the unprovoked killing of a family's companion animal denotes police misconduct.

When officers encounter any animal perceived as sick, aggressive, or feral — they should know how to neutralize the animal without resorting to lethal force. I commend Captain Roger Mayberry for arranging such training after Tobey's death. Officers ought to be able to distinguish anxiety, fear and protective behaviors from genuinely hostile or diseased behavior. If they can't, an experienced animal control officer needs to make that decision.

Circumstances in the case do not even make sense. If police believe Tobey had rabies, why did they destroy his head and discard his remains? Certainly they know that the brain of any potentially rabid animal is preserved for analysis. Moreover, this was not their decision to make. Strays, even those considered dangerous, are taken to shelters rather than gunned down in fields.

Armed law officers displayed an utter lack of judgment. Their response was inappropriate and demands your utmost attention. Please inform me of any progress in this disturbing case.

Thank you,