

Jan. 9, 2019

Investigation continues into Lethbridge officer-involved incident

As of the morning of Jan. 8, 2019, ASIRT has been directed to investigate the circumstances surrounding the response of a Lethbridge Police Service (LPS) officer to a report of an injured animal in distress.

On Jan. 5, 2019 at approximately 10 p.m., a LPS member responded to the 1600 block of Scenic Drive South to multiple calls of an injured deer in distress. The police officer responded and killed the deer in an incident that was partially recorded by a bystander on cellphone video.

On the afternoon of Jan. 7, 2019, a local media agency, having been approached by a civilian and provided a copy of the video, contacted the LPS regarding the incident. Having reviewed the video and considered the matter, the LPS notified the Director of Law Enforcement of what was determined to be an allegation of a serious or sensitive nature related to the actions of a police officer, as required by the *Police Act*. As a result, the Director of Law Enforcement determined that ASIRT should conduct an investigation.

ASIRT is now in the process of conducting a full investigation. While the video publicly released is evidence, which must now be properly secured, it reportedly captures only a portion of the incident. A full, fair and objective investigation must include additional investigative steps to ensure admissible evidence as to what occurred prior to the commencement of the video, the circumstances surrounding the taking of the video and chain of custody, the identification and interview of available witnesses, relevant communications and training, and securing any other evidence that may be relevant to the event.

ASIRT will, as always, be conducting an investigation that will follow best practices and highest standards governing any criminal investigation. It is recognized that this is an extremely sensitive and serious matter where there has been considerable public interest. ASIRT will examine a police officer's powers relating to dealing with events such as this and will consider the relevant provisions within the *Criminal Code*, the *Animal Protection Act* and the *Wildlife Act*.

Given the nature of this particular investigation, ASIRT has engaged with both Alberta Fish and Wildlife Enforcement (FWE) and the Alberta Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals (Alberta SPCA).

This matter has already received considerable public attention and interest. The video is disturbing, prompting many to step forward to make complaints to various agencies including ASIRT, FWE, Alberta SPCA, Lethbridge and District Humane Society and, of course, LPS. We are fortunate to be part of the Canadian community where people care about the treatment of others, including animals. That passion, however, must not supersede reason. The situation has escalated to reported death threats against the unidentified officer. These actions are now under investigation by LPS. Call centres for all the above agencies have been overwhelmed by the volume of calls and complaints that they are receiving. This has resulted in a disproportionate strain on both the resources of these agencies and their staff, who very much care about the treatment of animals.

We wish to assure Albertans, and indeed anyone who might be inclined to make any further complaints, that the matter is now well in hand and under full investigation, including the above engagement of both Alberta Fish and Wildlife and Alberta SPCA. ASIRT is, however, requesting that any members of the public who may have directly witnessed or recorded any portion of the incident contact 403-592-4306.

At the conclusion of the investigation, ASIRT will report publicly on the matter, including a review of the evidence and any determinations made. We are asking the public to remain patient and exercise restraint so that the investigation can proceed without interference and so that these other agencies can move forward and continue their important work.

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Media inquiries may be directed to:

ASIRT Media Line

780-641-9099