# Richmond Animal Care & Control Social Media Policy

The Director of the city of Richmond Animal Care & Control (RACC) currently manages all social media vehicles for the department, including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

This policy establishes guidelines for how social media is used by RACC to enhance and complement other traditional methods of communication. Social media vehicles used are RACC's online face, and as such, all posts and responses using social media must be in keeping with City of Richmond regulations.

## What is Social Media?

Social media is essentially changing the way we work by engaging customers, colleagues, the media, and the general public by utilizing established Internet platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and the city's website. RACC can convey its message directly without going through the filters of traditional media, and receive feedback in real time. We control the message.

## How RACC Uses Social Media

**Facebook** –Facebook provides the capability of making multiple photos of events available to the public via photo galleries, as well as videos, and links to articles of interest elsewhere on the Internet. Although the blogs and the Twitter feed do a more efficient job of distributing information, because of the popularity of Facebook with the general public, it's necessary to repeat the information from our other social media sources on Facebook. This is done automatically by linking Twitter and the blog to the Facebook account. Answers or direction links can be provided to Facebook "friends" who ask general questions here and the Q&A exchange can be viewed by all others in the group.

**Twitter** – Twitter quickly announces information to the media and interested citizens. It is, in essence, a mini-press release and has replaced the fax machine. Twitter can also directly respond to comments made relating to RACC by others in the stream, providing answers, correcting erroneous information, or directing the commenter to links where more information can be found.

**Instagram** – Instagram allows RACC to edit and upload photos and short videos through a mobile app. Users can add a caption to each of their posts and use hashtags and location-based geotags to index these posts and make them searchable by other users within the app.  Instagram can also directly respond to comments made relating to RACC by others in the stream, providing answers, correcting erroneous information, or directing the commenter to links where more information can be found.

## Comments and Feedback

The Director should be informed of any customer issues or potential customer issues identified through social media channels. The Twitter feed is periodically searched for comments about RACC and can also receive Direct Messages (DMs) from others via Twitter to its email account. Facebook "friends" can post comments to the Facebook "wall". Comments to the Facebook wall can be deleted if necessary.

*(The city is still debating whether or not to disable Facebook comments completely.)*

For citizens who are more comfortable using the Internet than calling customer service and risk being put on hold, social media is an efficient way to communicate customer service issues and receive an answer or a resolution to a problem.

## Social Media Guidelines

Individual divisions and employees cannot maintain separate city Twitter or Facebook accounts from the department unless approved in advance by the Office of the Press Secretary and set up by DIT – Department of Information Technology, which will maintain and regularly change the passwords.

Employees who write personal blogs, maintain Facebook pages or individual Twitter accounts should not use them to represent or discuss Richmond Animal Care & Control or city business. They should include a disclaimer on their account that nothing they write represents the city.

At least two or more employees should be familiar with all social media used by the department and know the passwords.

Personal account information should never be discussed on social media outlets where others can view confidential information, such as account numbers or payment status and history. If an account problem arises, request the poster provide an email address or phone number through a direct message to you or through your city email so customer service can assist them privately.

Any photographs of residents or employees included in social media must have a verbal or signed photo clearance. If you are photographing a public event, you must post a sign saying photographs taken at the event will be used on the Internet, and take a photo of the sign to include with the photo archive.

All photo clearance signatures, and social media, must be retained for seven years, so you will need to print out and file copies of all social media on a regular basis.