

## **COVID-19 KCMO ANIMAL DOCKETS IN I COURT (DIVISION 209)**

### **DEFENDANT FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**Can I appear on a virtual animal code violation docket instead of showing up in court on my court date?** Yes, you must schedule your virtual court appearance to take place prior to your scheduled court date. If you do not schedule and appear at your virtual animal code violation court appearance, you must come to court on your scheduled court date.

**How do I schedule a virtual hearing?** As soon as is practical, but prior to your scheduled court date, email the court at [kcmcvirtualdocket@kcmo.org](mailto:kcmcvirtualdocket@kcmo.org) and ask for a virtual hearing.

**Who will be present at the virtual hearing?** The judge, prosecutor and you. If you have hired a defense attorney, the attorney should be familiar with the procedures and should also be present. If the attorney is not familiar with the procedures, the attorney should contact the prosecutor at [housing.animal@kcmo.org](mailto:housing.animal@kcmo.org).

**If I have hired an attorney who has scheduled a virtual hearing, is it necessary for me to also be present virtually?** Yes. Unless your attorney has been authorized by the court to release you from your obligation to appear. Ask your attorney for guidance.

**Should I hire a defense attorney to represent me on my animal cases?** You have the right to be represented by an attorney. You also have the right to waive your right to be represented by an attorney. One of the main things to consider when deciding whether to hire an attorney are the possible consequences if you plead guilty or are found guilty after a trial. Examples of animal cases where the judge will consider putting you on probation are inadequate care, abuse of animal, animal placing a person in fear and public nuisance. Examples of animal cases where the judge rarely considers putting a person on probation are failure to license an animal and allowing the animal to run at large. The fine imposed on a failure to license and animal running at large case is usually \$50.00 but can be more based upon the circumstances.

**If I am charged with failure to license my animal but the animal is licensed now, can I communicate with the prosecutor about this even though I do not have an attorney?** Most likely, the prosecutor would be happy to communicate with you about this at [housing.animal@kcmo.org](mailto:housing.animal@kcmo.org). Typically, first time license violations are treated as a diversion and dismissed when you show that the animal is licensed.

**If I appear without an attorney at a virtual hearing and I am facing the possibility of a jail sentence, will the judge let me know?** Yes.

**If I appear without an attorney at a virtual hearing, will the judge give me a continuance if I decide to hire an attorney?** Yes.

**If I am facing the possibility of a jail sentence and I cannot afford to hire an attorney, will the court appoint a Legal Aid Attorney to represent me at no cost to me?** Yes. This possibility will be explored at the virtual hearing.

**If I have hired an attorney to represent me, can my cases be handled without a virtual hearing and without a personal appearance in court?** Yes, providing it is a written guilty plea agreement negotiated by your attorney and the prosecutor. For this, your attorney will need to follow the procedure described at [www.kcmo.gov/court](http://www.kcmo.gov/court) under the Information for Attorneys section.

**If I am pleading not guilty to any of the charges what will happen?** The judge will most likely set the case to a status date later in time.

tdw 5/12/20