



POLICY ID# 2024-002
CLEARED BY: Jawad Cook
DATE: 03/25/2024

Scott Harris, M.D., M.P.H.
STATE HEALTH OFFICER

MEMORANDUM

TO: Medical Officers
District Administrators and Assistant District Administrators
Bureau and Division Directors

FROM: Scott Harris, M.D., M.P.H.
State Health Officer

DATE: March 21, 2024

SUBJECT: Use of Animal Defense Spray, Policy ID 2024-002

Attached is the department's Policy for Use of Animal Defense Spray (ADS). This policy provides procedures for the safe use of ADS by employees working in the field and guidance on proper storage, distribution, expiration and transportation of ADS.

Please circulate to all employees who work in the field while on duty for the department. Copies of this policy may be printed from the Policy Library in Lotus Notes.

SH/TA
Attachment

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY FOR USE OF ANIMAL DEFENSE SPRAY

Purpose

The department is concerned for the welfare and safety of its employees in the field, especially in areas where animals such as dogs, hogs, and other animals roam unrestrained and may become aggressive. To address possible encounters with potentially dangerous animals, the department supports use of animal defense spray (ADS) by employees in the field to protect themselves. This policy provides procedures for safe use of ADS and guidance on proper storage, distribution, expiration, and transportation.

ADS has been proven to be an effective method of self-protection when encountering dangerous animals. The spray does not kill the animal, but when properly applied, stops the animal and provides the user with time to safely leave the area. The active ingredient in ADS is capsaicin, a substance derived from the cayenne pepper plant. ADS (also known as Oleoresin Capsicum Spray or OC spray), is designed to affect an inflammatory reaction such as dilating capillaries, causing an intense burning sensation to the skin, eyes, and in some cases can induce temporary blindness. As mucous membranes of the mouth, nose, eyes, and respiratory tract react to the capsaicin, tears will be produced, the nose will run, breathing may become labored, saliva will be produced, and coughing will occur as the airways and lungs try to rid itself of the chemical. Rubbing will intensify the burn. Unlike tear gas that wears off quickly, ADS will continue to be painful for 30 minutes or more and discomfort may be experienced for hours.

Requirements

Employees working in the field who complete all required training and receive authorization from the department, may carry and use department issued ADS as a self-defense measure while on duty and working in the field. Occupational use of ADS must be in accordance with the guidelines and procedures set forth in this policy. ADS is considered an available self-defense option to facilitate an employee's withdrawal from an attack by an animal. ADS is not authorized for use on people.

Required training includes, but is not limited to, reading and understanding department policy and procedure; all product instructions on the use, transport, maintenance, decontamination, and storage of ADS; and completing all department approved training opportunities.

Employees shall acknowledge that they have read and thoroughly understand department policy and procedure, the product label information, and have completed required training by signing the acknowledgement form that shall be maintained in the employee's worksite personnel file. Once all requirements are met, the employee is authorized to carry ADS into the field. Employees are required to keep training current in order to maintain authorization.

Employees may only use department issued ADS during their field work; personal defense sprays are not allowed.

The District Administrator shall designate a Safety Officer to ensure safe and secure storage of ADS at the worksite location. The Safety Officer shall ensure that the stored ADS are within the

expiration dates and when necessary, properly dispose of the sprays. Access to the stored sprays shall be limited to the Safety Officer, Environmental Supervisor, and County Office Manager.

The Employee's immediate supervisor shall ensure that all requirements are met by the employee before issuing ADS for field work, maintain the signed acknowledgment in the employee's worksite personnel file, and provide a copy of the signed acknowledgment to the employee.

Procedures

Employees may request authorization to carry ADS while on duty. Only employees who have completed all required training are authorized to carry ADS.

- ADS may be used for self-defense when an employee reasonably believes that it is necessary to protect him or herself from an imminent physical threat posed by an animal.
- The use of ADS must be reasonably proportionate to the apparent need to defend against an imminent threat of physical injury. Once the attacking animal is incapacitated, use of ADS is no longer justified.
- The effects of ADS are temporary; therefore, once the animal is incapacitated, the employee should make reasonable efforts to remove themselves from the area to prevent further attack or aggression.
- Use of ADS shall strictly be a defensive measure to protect an employee from attack or aggressive behavior from animals encountered in the field and shall never be used on people or for any illicit, unlawful, or unintended purpose. Employees shall be subject to disciplinary actions for improper use of department issued ADS and/or non-compliance with this policy.
- Whenever possible, employees should take precautions to discharge ADS in low-wind conditions, be upwind from the attacking animal before using ADS, and avoid entering the spray area.
- Employees should maintain a safe distance from the attacking animal of between 4 and 6 feet.
- A single spray burst of between 1 and 3 seconds should be directed at the attacking animal's eyes, nose, and mouth. Additional burst(s) may be used if the initial or subsequent burst proves ineffective.
- An Automated Report of Accidents and Incidents (ARIA) is required to be completed for use of ADS on the day of the incident, but no later than by the end of the next work day.
- A notice of incident to owner of property where incident occurred is required by the employee on the day of the incident, but no later than by end of the next work day. The notice, which is provided in the Document Library should include the date of the incident and the description of the animal. The employee may notify the owner of the property by telephone if the number is available; however, written notice is still required.
- Employees are responsible for following the manufacturer's instructions for care and storage of ADS.

- Employees are responsible for requesting replacement of a damaged, inoperable, or empty device.
- Employees should return department issued ADS to their immediate supervisor if the employees are not scheduled to be in the field. See Distribution below.

Proper Storage, Distribution, Expiration, and Transportation

1. Storage: ADS should be stored as directed on the label and kept in a locked container when not in use to prevent unintentional use. It should be kept in a cool place, not to exceed 120 degrees F (48 degrees C) in temperature.
2. Distribution: When removing ADS and the accompanying decontamination kit from the storage site, the employee will sign out the items on an inventory sheet for a specified time period and sign in the items when placed back into storage at the end of the specified time period. If it is necessary to keep the ADS and decontamination kit longer, the employee shall repeat the sign out/in procedure for the additional time.
3. Expiration: Expiration dates for defense sprays are typically 3-4 years after the date of purchase. Because potency can decrease over time, all defense sprays or cartridges shall be replaced every year to ensure the most potent spray possible. If the cartridges are not date stamped, the date of purchase should be written on the can with indelible ink. Items in decontamination kits should also be replaced before their expiration date.
4. Transportation: Employees are responsible for following the manufacturer's instructions for care and storage. ADS is a nonflammable chemical agent that may be transported inside the passenger compartment of a vehicle, on the person, or in a pack with the following transport conditions:
 - a. Sealed in a plastic container to be provided by the department.
 - b. Employees carrying ADS within a plastic container shall make every effort to place the ADS in such a way to prevent unintentional discharge.
 - c. A safety lock or device in place that protects the trigger mechanism from accidental discharge.
 - d. Stored away from direct sunlight or exposure to temperatures exceeding 120 degrees F (48 degrees C).
 - e. Do not store in a vehicle. Extreme hot or cold temperatures can damage or weaken the canister's pressure resulting in the canister not working properly or causing an accidental discharge.

USE OF ANIMAL DEFENSE SPRAY POLICY ACKNOWLEDGMENT

My signature below certifies that I have read the **Alabama Department of Public Health Use of Animal Defense Spray**, Policy ID 2024-002.

I have read and understand the Use of Animal Defense Spray policy and procedures, all product instructions on the use, transport, maintenance, decontamination, and storage of defense sprays, and completed all required department approved training opportunities. I agree to comply with the rules, policies, standards, and procedures contained in the policy. I understand that non-compliance or misuse of animal defense spray may result in disciplinary action.

EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE: _____

EMPLOYEE NAME (printed): _____

DATE: _____

LAST 4 DIGITS OF SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER: XXX-XX-_____

JOB CLASSIFICATION: _____

DISTRICT/BUREAU/OFFICE OF EMPLOYMENT:

File completed form in the employee's worksite personnel file and provide a copy to the employee.
Do not send to Human Resources.

{Date}

{Name}
{address}
{address}

Dear {Name},

Re:

This letter serves as notification that on {enter date} an employee of the Alabama Department of Public Health used Animal Defense Spray for self-defense because the employee reasonably believed that it was necessary to protect him or herself from an imminent physical threat posed by an animal. The unrestrained aggressive animal was located at or near {address} and can be described as follows:

{enter description}

Please contact your veterinarian with any questions.

Sincerely,

Brent M. Hatcher, MBA/GM, SPHR, SHRM-SCP
Director, Office of Human Resources

BH
cc:

