

Your Dog and the Law

As a responsible dog owner you need to know about dog legislation in order to protect you, your dog and the wider community. Here is a brief summary of the main laws relating to dog ownership. Please note this is just an overview and it is your responsibility to check and keep up to date with legislation which applies in your area.

Animal Welfare Act 2006

You have a duty of care to ensure your dog has what is known as the Five Freedoms:

1. Freedom from hunger and thirst
2. Freedom from discomfort
3. Freedom from pain, suffering, injury and disease
4. Freedom to behave normally
5. Freedom from fear and distress

The Microchipping of Dogs (England) Regulations 2014

All dogs in England, Wales and Scotland from 8 weeks of age must be microchipped and the keeper's details registered on an approved database. For more information go to:

www.nawt.org.uk/advice/compulsory-microchipping-information-owners

The Control of Dogs Order 1992

Any dog in a public place **must** wear a collar and tag with the name and address of the owner engraved on it. It is also advisable to add your telephone number – a mobile number is best as you may well be out looking for your dog if he is lost. This law applies even if your dog is microchipped.

Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014

You have a legal duty to clean up every time your dog fouls in a public place and you could face an on the spot fine of up to £80 if you don't. Aside from the law it is a health hazard and unpleasant for other users of that public space.

Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO) enable local authorities to deal with persistent anti-social behaviour that affects other people using the public space. These may require for example:

- Dogs to be excluded from certain areas (such as a children's play area)
- Dog faeces to be picked up by owners
- Dogs to be kept on leads
- A restriction on the number of dogs walked by one person at any one time

It is important you are aware of any PSPOs in your area.

For further information on how the police and local authorities can tackle irresponsible dog ownership, including Acceptable Behaviour Contracts and Community Protection Notices go to:

www.nawt.org.uk/advice/new-laws-tackle-irresponsible-dog-ownership

Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 (Section 3) (Amended May 2014)

It is a criminal offence to allow a dog to be 'dangerously out of control' in a public place, a private place and the owner or keeper's house and garden. The law applies to the owner and/or the person in charge of the dog at the time, which could be the person looking after your dog whilst you are on holiday.

'Dangerously out of control' can mean either the dog has injured a person or behaves in a way that a person fears that they may be injured.

It is also an offence under this legislation to allow your dog to attack an Assistance Dog such as a Guide Dog or Hearing Dog.

Offences under this legislation carry heavy fines and even prison sentences.

Animals Act 1971

This Act makes you liable for any damage caused by your dog in certain circumstances for example biting a person or your dog causing a road traffic accident. We advise you have third party insurance to cover this, which is included in most pet policies and some household insurance policies.

Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act 1953

Your dog must not chase or attack cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, horses or poultry on agricultural land so keep your dog on a lead around livestock. The farmer has a right to stop your dog, even by shooting in certain circumstances.

The Road Traffic Act 1988

It is an offence to have a dog on a designated road without it being held on a lead. The Highway Code requires dogs travelling in vehicles should be kept secure so as not to distract the driver.

If a dog is injured in a road accident, the driver must stop and give their details to the person in charge of the dog. If there is no such person present, the incident must be reported to the police within 24 hours.

Dogs Act 1871

This is a civil law act so a case can be brought by anyone who considers a dog to be dangerous and not under proper control. The Act covers incidents involving other animals as well as people and can result in control orders or even destruction of the dog.

Environmental Protection Act 1990

If your dog's barking causes a serious nuisance to neighbours, the local authority can deal with the matter as a 'statutory nuisance' under the Environmental Protection Act.

Other Legislation

Above are the most relevant laws which apply to a pet dog owner, however there is other legislation which may apply to your specific circumstances:

- Pet Travel Scheme for taking your dog abroad www.gov.uk/take-pet-abroad/overview
- What to do if you find a Stray Dog www.gov.uk/report-stray-dog
- Breeding and Sale of Dogs (Welfare) Act 1999
- Guard Dogs Act 1975
- Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 Section 1 covering banned breeds