

Brief Guide to Dog Laws.

At present there is not one piece of evidence or document which conclusively proves who owns a dog where the law is concerned. So, having a:

- Tattoo/ microchip.
- Sales receipt.
- Vet records.
- Insurance.
- Kennel Club registration certificate.
- Evidence of who is primary carer or who pays for the dog's upkeep.....

does not prove ownership.

Combining the above 'evidence' along with financial records, photos* and videos would enable courts to look at the whole picture.

***Tip** -Taking a picture of your dogs' nostrils is on par with human fingerprints, unique to that dog.

Microchipping

This is now law, and all puppies must be chipped before 8 weeks by the breeder and register the puppy in their name before selling. It is the owner's responsibility once the puppy is theirs, to make sure details are up to date.

Entry of a person's name does not prove ownership.

Collar and tags.

Dogs and puppies outside of the home are by law required to wear these. The tag should have the owners:

- Name.
- Address.
- Telephone number (optional).
- Dogs name (optional).

Please note: While solicitors advise giving a full address; a surname, first line of address and postcode seem the preferred option of owners.

DANGEROUS DOG ACT 1991.

This act has been amended since this date and can carry some serious consequences for those owners who keep banned breeds.

The following dogs are **banned** in this country:

American Pit Bull Terrier.

Tosa.

Dogo Argentino.

Fila Brasileiro.

XL Bully (February 2024)

Please look on www.doglaw.co.uk for Breed Specific Legislation.

Section 1 & 4B **Dangerous Dogs Act 1991.**

Section 3 – Dangerous Dog Act. (brief description).

It is illegal for a dog to be ‘out of control’ or to bite, attack or to kill someone. In addition, it is an offence if a dog “makes someone reasonably fear injury.” This now includes anyone who visits your home whether inside, or outside in the garden.

Should your dog attack an intruder inside your house, there may be some defence, however not if this occurs in your garden.

‘Private dwellings’ also include public houses and gardens.

It is an **offence** for a **dog to attack an assistance dog** (jail term of up to 3 years), but on other animals it is not. If a person believes they would have been injured by trying to stop another dog attacking theirs, then the legal court could be involved.

For further information look on www.doglaw.co.uk

as well as the **Dangerous Dogs Act 1991** and **Section 2 Dogs Act 1871** to ensure you have the most up-date-information.

***PROTECTION OF LIVESTOCK -DOGS ACT 1953.**

***Before Christmas 2025 it was announced that amendments to the Protection of Livestock Act 1953, had passed both houses of Parliament and is now waiting for Royal Assent.**

Therefore, the information below has changed significantly. What is proposed will be in bold font.

As the present law stands, a brief description:

Handler control:

Definition of 'dog(s) under proper control' means the handler:

- Prevents a dog(s) from approaching livestock at any time*, and not 'recalling' the dog(s) afterwards.

(* includes fence running.)

- If a dog runs towards, hesitates or chases, even briefly, this is seen that control of the dog(s) has been lost.

Being a well-trained, friendly dog(s) does not make any difference when it comes to the law. So, lead control is strongly advised.

Where - Agricultural land or enclosures containing livestock.

Amendment- fields, public footpaths, roads or when any livestock is being moved.

Definition of livestock- any type of cattle, goats, sheep, pigs, horses, donkeys, mules or poultry.

Amendment - include alpacas and llamas.

Definition of 'worrying'-

- Actual maiming or killing of the animal(s).

Amendment- Livestock do not have to be bitten for an offence to take place.

- Chasing the livestock that is likely to lead to suffering/ injury e.g. sheep and/or cows aborting their lambs/calves.

- The dog being at large i.e. not on a lead or under close control in a field or enclosure of livestock.

Amendment – running at, chasing, causing fear or panic or being loose among livestock without proper control.

Stress on its own is considered “harm” legally, causing injuries, miscarriages and long-term effects for the animal concerned.

If a dog worries any livestock, then the owner or person in charge of the dog is guilty of the offence.

The farmer/ owner of the livestock may take appropriate action to protect their animals, so may shoot the dog(s) concerned.

The police may:

Seize the dog if no person is in charge, to find out who owns the dog.

Then detain said dog until all expenses incurred are paid.

Apply for a search warrant to search premises in order to identify the dog concerned.

Amendment- Police will have additional powers to seize a dog(s) and collect DNA for forensic evidence.

Fines:

Limited to £1,000.

Amendment- now unlimited. Fine will depend on the amount of damage/stress which has been inflicted.

Also please look at **Public Spaces Protection Orders** and **Community Protection Notice** on www.doglaw.co.uk

Animal Welfare Act 2006

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/45/contents>

This covers a wide range of points covering welfare, for example, the use of e-collars, anti-bark collars which are banned in Wales, but not England, yet.

Whether the destruction of an animal might be in their best interest, and the

powers authorities have in welfare protection. It is a long list but worth a visit to the website just to see what is covered.

ANIMAL WELFARE ACT 2018. (Licensing).

This came into effect in October 2018 and covers:

- Breeding of dogs- For example, any puppy must be seen with the mother and not leave the breeder until 8 weeks old and any breeder having three or more litters in a year will need a licence.
- Selling animals as pets.
- Providing boarding for cats and dogs in kennels.
- Home boarding.
- Day care for dogs.
- Hiring out horses.
- Keeping and training animals for exhibition.

Any form of boarding must now to be licensed and registered with the local council who will have allocated a number to their business this includes day care for dogs.

Those not included are Rescues (providing rehoming is not commercial). Behaviourists, Dog Trainers, or Groomers.

It is worth noting that Professional Dog Walkers should not walk more than 6 dogs at a time. For owners, no more than 4 dogs. Check with your local council for up-to-date information.

This Act covers a wide area, so this is just a brief description. For more information visit:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2018/486/contents>

The Animal Welfare (Import of Dogs, Cats, and Ferrets) Act 2025.

Passed December 2nd, 2025. Covers the import of dogs and cats under 6 months old, those that have been mutilated e.g., cropped ears, or are heavily pregnant and reduces the number of pets that can travel non-commercially. Further information:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2025/30/contents>

LOST / STOLEN PUPPIES OR DOGS.

If you find yourself in this position report the matter to the police. Also contact the council, local vets, dog wardens and the company who holds your animals microchip details.

There is no central organisation where microchipped dogs are listed. This can make it difficult to find a puppy or dog who is lost or stolen. Any puppy or dog found is not automatically scanned, there is no law at present to say this must be done to locate the owner.

Should the **local council be involved (Dog Warden) they are required to give 7 days -notice to the owner if known.** After this time, they are entitled to rehome the animal. You will be expected to pay for any expenses incurred if the dog is returned to you.

Pet Abduction Act 2024-

This was passed on the 24th of August 2024. No longer are dogs considered to be viewed as “property” and thieves can face up to 5 years in prison. For further information visit:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2024/16/contents>

Other areas where the owner may find themselves at risk of the law and local councils being involved:

Dog on Dog aggression- i.e. the dog concerned is known for ‘being aggressive’ to others.

Noise- If a complaint is lodged, the council must investigate. Findings will be based on the level of noise, time of day, and how long it lasts. If the noise continues the owner can be issued with a Noise Abatement Order.

Loose Dogs

Near roads- potential to be severely injured if involved with other livestock e.g., horses, or cars. The consequences can be far reaching for everyone concerned so **Public Liability** insurance is **highly recommended** if you have dogs.

When visiting different parts of the country, some councils may have “Public Spaces Protection Orders” in place where dogs are required to be on a lead. Beaches have certain times of the year when dogs are banned and nesting

birds also have specific times on Open Access land (March- July), so worth checking to see what applies to you and your dog(s) when visiting new places.

Livestock- See Protection of Livestock- Dogs Act 1953.

Dog Fouling – It is a legal requirement to pick up after your dog.

Fines: Fixed Penalty Notice £100.00.

If prosecuted, £1000.00 for not complying.

It is also worth noting the following from **The Highway Code**:

Rule 56

Dogs. Do not let a dog out on the road on its own. Keep it on a short lead when walking on the pavement, road or path shared with cyclists or horse riders.

Rule 57

When in a vehicle make sure dogs or other animals are suitably restrained so they cannot distract you while you are driving or injure you, or themselves, if you stop quickly. A seat belt harness, pet carrier, dog cage or dog guard are ways of restraining animals in cars.

References:

Government website: www.govt.uk

Cooper and Co Solicitors. Based in Canterbury and considered one of the top specialist firms for Dog Law. Website: * www.doglaw.co.uk

* Their website uses plain English, so you have a clear understanding of the law. They are well respected within the pet profession. It is important for you to know where you stand should you ever be involved in a legal situation involving your dog(s).

(Other specialists in Dog Law are available.)

Highway Code. Website: www.highwaycode.co.uk

Blue Cross. Website: www.bluecross.org.uk

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