

Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement

Pennsylvania

Department of Agriculture

www.agriculture.state.pa.us

Pennsylvania Dog Laws

[What are Pennsylvania's Dog Laws?](#)

1. All dogs three months of age or older must be licensed.
2. All dogs must be under control and may not be allowed to run at large. Dogs are personal property and owners are responsible for damages caused by their dog.
3. It is illegal to mistreat or abuse any animal. Violations should be reported to the local humane organization or police.
4. You may not place any poison or harmful substance in any place where it may be easily found and eaten by dogs whether it be, your property or elsewhere.
5. It is illegal to abandon or attempt to abandon any dog. Fines for abandonment range from \$300 to \$1,000 plus court costs.
6. No dog under seven weeks old may be bartered, traded, sold or transferred.
7. You must have a current kennel license if you operate a kennel that keeps, harbors, boards, shelters, sells, gives away or transfers a total of 26 or more dogs in any one calendar year.
8. It is illegal to interfere with an officer or employee of the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture engaged in the enforcement of the Dog Laws.

[About Dogs](#)

- Owning a dog is one of the great American pastimes and privileges. Dogs fill the role of companion, guide, hunter, guardian, herdsman and entertainer. But owning a dog is a major responsibility as well. That responsibility extends not only to proper care and training of your dog, but also to your responsibility for the dog's behavior. A proper understanding of the responsibilities of dog ownership is necessary in today's complex society.
- ALL DOGS over 3 MONTHS of age or older MUST be LICENSED.
- ALL DOGS must be UNDER CONTROL. This means that when your dog is not on your property, it must be under the DIRECT CONTROL of you or a handler. The best way to control your dog is

with a LEASH. Remember, dogs are PERSONAL PROPERTY. You are RESPONSIBLE for any DAMAGE caused by your dog.

[Some Responsibilities of The Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement](#)

- Reimburse people for dog-caused damage to livestock, poultry and domestic game birds.
- Enforce licensing and control of dogs.
- Seize and detain any dog seen running at large.
- Investigate dog bites.
- Enforce licensing and control of dogs.
- Enforce kennel licensing and inspections.
- Establish and enforce quarantine of dogs, in certain areas.
- Fund counties and humane organizations to establish dog control facilities.
- Provide educational services concerning dog ownership in Pennsylvania.
- Enforce rabies law.
- Reimburse people for rabies-caused death to livestock.

[Responsibilities of The Police in The Dog Law](#)

- Assist in the enforcement of the Dog Law, including licensing and control.
- Seize and detain any dog viewed running at large, unaccompanied by the owner.
- Investigate dog bites.

[There are Penalties for Violators](#)

- The Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement conducts random checks to determine if rabies vaccinations are current. Authorities investigating complaints about strays, animal bites and disturbances also check for violations.
- Owners of dogs and house cats 3 months of age that are not vaccinated or have not received a booster shot at the required time can be fined up to \$300 in magistrate's court.
- Failure to have a pet vaccinated jeopardizes its life by leaving it vulnerable to exposure to rabid wildlife or domestic animals that may have contracted the disease. If your pet gets rabies, it cannot be saved.

- Unvaccinated pets exposed to positive rabies carriers may be placed under quarantine up to six months in an enclosure to insure there is no contact with other animals or humans.
- If an unvaccinated pet acquires rabies, it could pass the disease along to you, your family, neighbors or others through bites or scratches. The treatment to prevent rabies from developing in humans is costly, and once rabies develops it is nearly always fatal.

Pennsylvania's Dangerous Dog Law

Act 46 of 1990 is known as the "Dangerous Dog Law." It was enacted to provide greater protection to persons attacked by a "dangerous dog," and to provide for greater control by owners of dogs considered to be dangerous.

[Listed below is a brief description of the provisions of the Dangerous Dog Law.](#)

1. A dangerous dog is defined as one which has attacked a human being without provocation, or killed or has inflicted severe injury to a domestic animal without provocation while off an owner's property. Furthermore, a dog is considered dangerous if it killed or has inflicted severe injury to a human being, or if it was involved in committing a crime.
2. The act does not apply to police dogs, guide dogs for the blind, hearing dogs for the deaf, aide dogs for the handicapped, or farm dogs (under certain circumstances). The act does not apply where a person attacked, provoked the animal, or was committing willful trespass or another unlawful act for which civil suit can be brought.
3. If a dog attacks a person, the person (or anyone acting on his/her behalf), the state dog warden or a police officer may file a complaint with a district justice charging the owner or keeper with harboring a dangerous dog.
4. If the dog is deemed dangerous by the district justice, the owner must:
 - You must register the animal with Bureau of Dog Law enforcement (includes a fee sufficient to cover costs of the program)
 - Confine the dog in a proper enclosure
 - Post a warning sign with a symbol that warns children of the presence of a dangerous dog
 - Keep the dog muzzled and leashed when outside its pen
 - Post a bond or purchase and maintain liability insurance in the amount of \$50,000 to pay for injuries inflicted by the dog
 - Agree not to cancel the liability insurance during the licensed period unless he/she disposes of the dog

- Sign a statement providing that he/she will notify the Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement, state dog warden and local police if the dog is loose, attacks a human or an animal, dies is sold or donated.

5. In terms of enforcement, a dangerous dog could be confiscated under certain circumstances (i.e., the dog is not properly registered or not kept in proper enclosure). The owner would be guilty of a criminal offense ranging from a summary offense to a first-degree misdemeanor.
6. All known incidents of dog attacks by dangerous dogs must investigate all reports.
7. The state Dangerous Dog Law overrides all local ordinances relating to dangerous dogs.

Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture

Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement

2301 North Cameron Street

Harrisburg, PA 17110-9408

717-787-3062

[Dog Law Regional Offices](#)

REGION 1

13410 Dunham Road - Meadville, PA 16335

(Clarion, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, Jefferson, McKean, Mercer, Venango, Warren Counties)

814-332-6890

REGION 2

2130 County Farm Road - Suite 2 - Montoursville, PA 17754

(Cameron, Clinton, Columbia, Lycoming, Montour, Northumberland, Potter, Snyder, Tioga, Union Counties)

717-433-2640

REGION 3

Rt. 92 South - Box C - Tunkannock, PA 18657

(Bradford, Carbon, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Monroe, Pike, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Wayne, Wyoming Counties)

717-836-2181

REGION 4

5349 Wm. Flynn Highway - Gibsonia, PA 15044

(Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Lawrence, Washington, Westmoreland counties)

724-443-1585

REGION 5

1304 7th St Cricket Field Plaza - Altoona, PA 16601

(Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Centre, Clearfield, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata, Miffling, Somerset Counties)

814-946-7315

REGION 6

2301 North Cameron St. - Harrisburg, PA 17110

(Adams, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Lancaster, Lebanon, Perry, York Counties)

717-787-4833

REGION 7

Route 113 - PO Box 300 - Creamery, PA 19430

(Berks, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Lehigh, Montgomery, Northampton, Philadelphia, Schuylkill Counties)

610-489-1003