

Laws Affecting Dog Ownership in the UK
ALTERNATIVE VETERINARY MEDICINE CENTRE
Information Sheet WS034/07
Christopher Day - Veterinary Surgeon

Copyright © 2007 AVMC
Chinham House, Stanford in the Vale, Oxon SN7 8NQ UK
01367 710324

This is a page from www.alternativevet.org

LAWS AFFECTING DOG OWNERSHIP IN THE UK

In order to try to clarify the legal situation affecting dog ownership in the UK, the AVMC has listed below, to the best of its ability, the legislation currently in force, affecting dog owners in the UK. However, a dog owner is responsible for knowing the legislation that may affect him or her. Responsible dog ownership extends to consideration of other citizens, in addition to ensuring the welfare of dogs.

N.B. Neither the AVMC nor anyone involved in the construction of this site can be held responsible, should there be any omissions or errors in this list. Ignorance of the law has traditionally not been a defence, in the UK.

The list of legislation:

Control of Dogs Order 1992	This requires that every dog, while in a public place, should wear a collar, on which is displayed the name and address of the owner either on the collar itself or on a disc attached to it. Police may seize and treat as a stray any dog in a public place, that is not wearing such a collar. An owner (and any person in charge of the dog at the time) who permits the dog to be in a public place without such a collar will each be guilty of an offence and may be prosecuted and fined. If your dog does stray, you should immediately contact your local dog warden (through the Environmental Health Department at your local council) and the local police station. The Environmental Protection Act 1990 allows for your dog to be seized and sold or destroyed if unclaimed after a seven day period.
Town Police Clauses Act	These Acts prohibit anyone from allowing an un-muzzled, ferocious dog to be left at large or for a person to set on or to

Laws for Dogs - AVMC

1847 (outside London) Metropolitan Police Act 1839 (London)	urge any dog to attack, worry or put in fear any person or animal in the street.
Dogs Act 1871	This Act permits a court, upon receipt of a complaint that a dog is dangerous and not kept under proper control, to order the owner to keep the dog under proper control or for the dog to be destroyed.
Animals Act 1971	This Act permits a farmer to shoot a dog, without warning, if it is seen worrying to be his livestock. The owner is liable to criminal prosecution for the same offence under the Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act 1953 .
Road Traffic Act 1988	Under this Act, it is an offence to have a dog on a 'designated road', without the dog being restrained on a lead.
Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005	This Act permits the designation by Local Authorities of areas of land where dogs must be kept on leads, or where dogs are excluded. It also permits the Local Authority to place limits on the number of dogs being walked by a single person.
Guard Dogs Act 1975	This Act makes it an offence to use or to permit the use of a guard dog on any premises, unless the handler (who is capable of properly controlling him) is present on the premises and unless the dog is under control. The dog must be secured, so that he is not at liberty to go about the premises. The premises must carry signs warning that a guard dog is present and these must be clearly exhibited at each entrance to the premises.
Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005	This empowers Local Authorities to introduce and enforce dog-fouling byelaws, under which a person in charge of a dog can be heavily fined for allowing dogs to foul in a designated public place. This designated land may include roads, parks and other public areas within the Local Authority's boundaries; in fact any land which is open to the air and to which the public are permitted to have access. An offence is committed if a person in charge of a dog fails to clean up its faeces. One cannot claim as defence ignorance of the law, ignorance of the dog's actions or not having equipment for removing the faeces. The penalty may be a fine.
Animal Welfare Act 2006	The new (April 2007) legislation that applies to the ownership and care of all animals. This legislation has yet to prove itself. Many dangers are foreseen, in the powers (and the freedom of interpretation) that appear to be invested in those who might

	prosecute under the Act.
<i>Dangerous Dogs Act (DDA) 1991</i>	Section 1 applies to specific types of dog, including 'any dog of the type known as the pit bull terrier' and 'any dog of the type known as the Japanese Tosa'. It also includes 'any dog of any type designated for the purposes of this section by an order of the Secretary of State, being a type appearing to him to be bred for fighting or to have the characteristics of a type bred for that purpose'. Owners of these dogs must comply with certain legal requirements, including having the dog registered, neutered, micro-chipped and tattooed. This particular legislation has inherent problems, in that the 'pit bull terrier' is not a recognised breed in the UK. As a result, many owners of cross-bred dogs that resemble 'pit bull terriers' have been prosecuted. Section 2 applies to all dogs, making it a criminal offence to allow a dog to be dangerously out of control in a public place. This includes instances where there is fear that an injury might occur. Penalties under this Act include: the dog may be destroyed; the owner may face up to six months in prison and/or a fine not exceeding level 5 (at present up to £5,000). As a result of two tragic incidents, towards the end of 2007, there were calls to add Rottweilers to this list. These calls were resisted.
<i>Animal Health Act 1981 and subsequent Orders</i>	This Act makes it the duty of anyone possessing an animal suffering a 'notifiable disease' to inform a policeman. "any person having in their possession or under their charge an animal affected or suspected of having one of these diseases must, with all practicable speed, notify that fact to a police constable." The link above lists those diseases which are 'notifiable' at the time of writing. In practice, for dog owners, the one to remember is Rabies.
<u>Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966</u>	This Act makes it illegal for anyone, other than a veterinary surgeon (MRCVS) to treat your animals. Exceptions: you may treat your own animal. Also, 'physical therapists' (e.g. chiropractors, osteopaths, physiotherapists) may treat your animal, on the recommendation of and under the supervision of a vet but they may not prescribe medicines.

To return to the web site of the AVMC, click the 'BACK' button of your browser or click www.alternativevet.org

This site is subject to frequent ongoing development and expansion - please revisit to view new material