



Laws for Responsible Dog Owners

The Dog Act 1976

Who enforces the Act?

The Dog Act 1976 (the Act) is administered and enforced by local governments within their respective districts. The Act addresses the control and registration of dogs; the ownership and keeping of dogs; and the obligations and rights of dog owners and others.

If you are aggrieved by a local government's application of the Act, you may be entitled to have that decision reviewed in the State Administrative Tribunal.

Why do these obligations apply?

Everyone who is a dog owner has a responsibility to ensure that their dog is well looked after.

In addition, it is important that dog owners respect other people. This can be achieved by keeping dogs adequately confined on their properties or on a leash in public places, preventing aggressive behaviour and controlling excessive barking.

Legal responsibilities for dog owners:

Dog control — Penalty: \$200 to \$5000

If you own a dog, you have a legal responsibility to keep the animal under control, either within a fenced area on your property or on a leash when in public.

Local governments can set out dog exercise areas where dogs can be taken off a lead without penalty. Please contact your local government for further details on the exercise areas in your district.

Barking dogs — Penalty: \$200 to \$5000

While dogs are allowed to bark, they are not allowed to bark excessively in a way that causes a nuisance.

Dog droppings — Penalty: \$50 to \$5000

Dog droppings are a source of annoyance to the users of footpaths and public recreation areas.

Most local governments have local laws in place that require a dog owner to remove their dog's droppings if the dog excretes in a public area. The penalty for failing to do this will vary between districts.

Dog attacks — Penalty: \$200 to \$20,000, Potential Imprisonment

A dog attack is a very serious matter, and a violent dog may inflict serious injury to other animals or people.

If your dog attacks a person or another animal, you can be held responsible even if you are not there at the time. If the dog causes serious injury or death, you may even receive a jail sentence.

Dog registration — Penalty: \$200 to \$5000

A dog owner is legally required to register the dog with the appropriate local government once the dog is three months or older.

To register your dog, contact your local government for a registration form and a list of applicable fees.

Registration tags — Penalty: \$200 to \$5000

A registered dog is required to wear a collar with a valid registration tag.

This tag will be issued by your local government when you pay your registration fee.

Microchipping — Penalty: \$200 to \$5000

All dogs must be microchipped once they reach three months of age.

Non-microchipped dogs cannot be sold or transferred to a new owner. This rule applies even if the dog is under three months of age.

Dogs may be exempt from receiving a microchip if they cannot receive one due to medical grounds. In those situations, the owner will need to obtain a medical exemption certificate from a registered vet.

Dangerous dogs

The Act has specific obligations which apply to:

- restricted breed dogs
- commercial security dogs
- dogs who have previously committed a dog attack.

In many cases, the penalty issued for an offence under the Act will be doubled if a dangerous dog is involved. Dangerous dogs also have specific requirements regarding collars, muzzling and general confinement.

Dog Local Laws

Each local government can introduce local laws on a range of matters, including the number of dogs which can be kept on the premises.

For further information on your local laws, please contact your local government.

If you wish to inspect your district's dog local law, a copy can be freely accessed on the department's local law register.

Review of decisions

Dog owners have a right to seek a review of certain decisions made under the Act, if the owner believes the decision was incorrect.

These decisions can be internally reviewed by the local government or they can be appealed in the State Administrative Tribunal.

This right of appeal applies to:

- a decision on whether excess dogs may be kept on the premises
- a local government's refusal to register your dog
- an order declaring that your dog is dangerous
- the seizure of your dog
- a dog destruction order.

If you wish to have one of these decisions reviewed, you should notify the local government as soon as possible and consider obtaining legal advice.

Where can I get more information?

For more information on laws within your district please contact your local government.

For other enquiries —

Department of Local Government, Sport
and Cultural Industries
PO Box 8349
Perth Business Centre WA 6849

Telephone: (08) 6552 1530

Freecall: 1800 634 541 (regional WA callers only)

Email: legislation@dlgsc.wa.gov.au

Website: www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au

Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) —
Telephone: 13 14 50