

For more information on Pennsylvania's Dog Purchaser Protection Act, or to file a complaint, visit the Office of the Attorney General, Bureau of Consumer Protection Web site at [www.attorneygeneral.gov](http://www.attorneygeneral.gov).

**For more information:**  
**Department of Agriculture**  
**Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement**  
**2301 N. Cameron St.**  
**Harrisburg, PA 17110**  
**717-787-3062**  
[www.agriculture.state.pa.us](http://www.agriculture.state.pa.us)  
or contact your local humane society or animal shelter.



Compliments of  
State Representative  
**Nick Kotik**  
45th Legislative District

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## PENNSYLVANIA'S

# Dog Law



Owning a pet is a privilege and a responsibility that requires a lifelong commitment.

## LICENSING

Pennsylvania requires all dogs older than 3 months to be licensed by Jan. 1 of each year. To obtain a license, contact your county treasurer's office. A license costs \$8, or \$6 if the dog is spayed or neutered. Senior citizens and people with disabilities are eligible for a \$2 discount.

A lifetime license may be purchased instead of yearly licenses. The fee is \$51, or \$31 if the dog is spayed or neutered. Seniors may purchase a lifetime dog license for \$31, or \$21 if the dog is spayed or neutered.

Dog owners must pay \$50 to redeem their licensed dog if it is found running at large.

Failure to license a dog will result in a \$50 to \$300 fine for each unlicensed dog. In addition, a seized unlicensed dog can be held for at least 48 hours, not counting weekends or when the shelter/kennel is closed.

*\*\*Philadelphia does not participate in statewide dog licensing. Please check with the city health department for pet licensing requirements in Philadelphia.*

*You can download a dog license application from [www.agriculture.state.pa.us](http://www.agriculture.state.pa.us) to fill out and sign. Mail the application along with your check/money order to your county treasurer.*

## DANGEROUS DOGS

A dog is considered dangerous if it has attacked or killed a human being or domestic animal, including other dogs or cats, without provocation. The person attacked (or anyone on his or her behalf), the police or the state dog warden may file a complaint with the local district justice charging the owner with harboring a dangerous dog.

If the dog is found to be dangerous then the owner must register the dog with the Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement and pay \$500 a year, confine the dog and post a bond or pay liability insurance in the amount of \$50,000. If the law is not followed, then the dog may be confiscated.

Dangerous dogs also must be spayed or neutered and micro-chipped to provide increased public protection.



## VACCINATIONS

Pennsylvania's Rabies Law mandates that all dogs and cats older than 3 months must receive a rabies vaccination from a licensed veterinarian and continue to receive scheduled booster shots. Rabies is almost always fatal and jeopardizes not only your dog, but the people and other animals around your dog.

The Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement conducts random checks to make sure dogs are properly vaccinated. Dogs investigated by local authorities for disturbances also are subjected to checks. Owners of dogs that do not meet the requirements of the law are subject to fines of up to \$300.

*Anyone who keeps or transfers more than 26 dogs in a calendar year must have a valid kennel license.*

## ANIMAL CRUELTY

In Pennsylvania, it is illegal to abuse or mistreat any animal. Incidents of animal cruelty should be reported to your local humane society or to the police. This also means that you may not place any poison or harmful substance in any place where dogs or cats may easily eat it, whether it is on your own property or elsewhere. It also is illegal to abandon or attempt to abandon any dog.

Dog breeders and owners are not permitted to personally perform surgical procedures on dogs; this includes cutting or destroying a dog's vocal cords to "debark" them, ear cropping, dewclaw removal and caesarean sections. Owners are permitted to perform tail docking on dogs up to 5 days old, but only under the supervision of a licensed veterinarian.

Owners must be able to prove to dog wardens that the surgeries were performed according to law, with records that include the name and license number of the vet, and date and location of the procedure.

If a kennel owner or applicant has been convicted of cruelty within the past 10 years, or if there is evidence that the person has not rehabilitated from an earlier conviction, there is a mandatory loss or refusal of license.

## It is illegal to interfere with an officer or employee of the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture engaged in enforcement of dog laws.

### BUYER BEWARE

Avoid breeders who breed more than two breeds of dog; this may indicate that the breeder is operating a puppy mill.

Beware of breeders selling their puppies over the Internet who are willing to ship puppies anywhere in the country, and again, who are offering multiple breeds on multiple sites.

Pet stores must provide paperwork detailing breeder information. The breeder's address is listed on the paperwork. If the puppy was bred in Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Nebraska, Iowa or Arkansas, then there is a chance that the puppy could have come from a commercial breeding facility or puppy mill.

Pet stores may tell you that their dogs did not come from puppy mills but from small breeders who breed and raise the dogs in their homes. However, reputable breeders who breed to improve the standard of the breed are disinclined to sell their dogs to a pet store. They are far too careful about screening potential buyers to ensure their dogs are going to good homes, and they wouldn't put puppies on a tractor trailer with hundreds of other dogs and transport them across the country to be sold in a pet store.

Don't use a broker or a middleman who promises to "get you anything you want" and who works with numerous breeders. These people will often insist that they meet you away from the breeder's kennels, which could be a sure sign that they are distributing for a puppy mill.

Many people feel that if a dog has "papers" then the dog is a "good" dog. Papers do not guarantee good health or sound temperament. The one way to avoid buying from a bad breeder or supporting the inhumane practices in puppy mills is to adopt your new dog or puppy from your local shelter or rescue organization. A third of all dogs at SPCAs and humane societies are purebred dogs. The other two-thirds are incredible mixes that will often be healthier, smarter and more grateful for having a second chance to become part of your family.

### PUPPY MILLS

For too long, Pennsylvania has been known as the "Puppy Mill Capital of the East." Thanks to a new commercial kennel law, however, that dubious distinction is at an end.

The new law greatly improves the health and treatment dogs receive while in commercial kennels.

Under an old law, dogs could spend their entire lives in cramped, stacked cages with no opportunity to exercise and very little care. These conditions led to dogs with physical and psychological problems and a poor standard of living. But no more. Under the new law, dogs benefit from larger cage sizes with flooring that won't harm their feet, mandatory exercise periods and care by a trained veterinarian.

The law also allows only veterinarians to euthanize dogs in commercial breeding kennels, and also requires veterinary examinations for each dog two times a year. Other improvements include maintaining a certain temperature range in kennels, requiring documentation for kennel records and prohibiting the stacking of cages. Licensed kennels must be inspected twice annually and state dog wardens and Agriculture Department employees may apply for a search warrant to inspect any kennel or to remove dogs if they are refused entry for an inspection or reasonably believe the dog law is being violated.

These improvements help to ensure that pets that families welcome into their home will be happier and healthier. A commercial kennel is defined as any kennel that breeds or whelps dogs to sell or transfer to a dealer or pet shop or sells or transfers more than 60 dogs per year.

For more specific information on the requirements for commercial kennels, please visit or call the Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement within the Agriculture Department at [www.agriculture.state.pa.us](http://www.agriculture.state.pa.us) or 717-787-4847.

The requirements for other types of kennels, like sporting and hobby dog kennels, are virtually unchanged. These entities do not operate with the purpose of breeding large quantities of dogs to sell for profit.

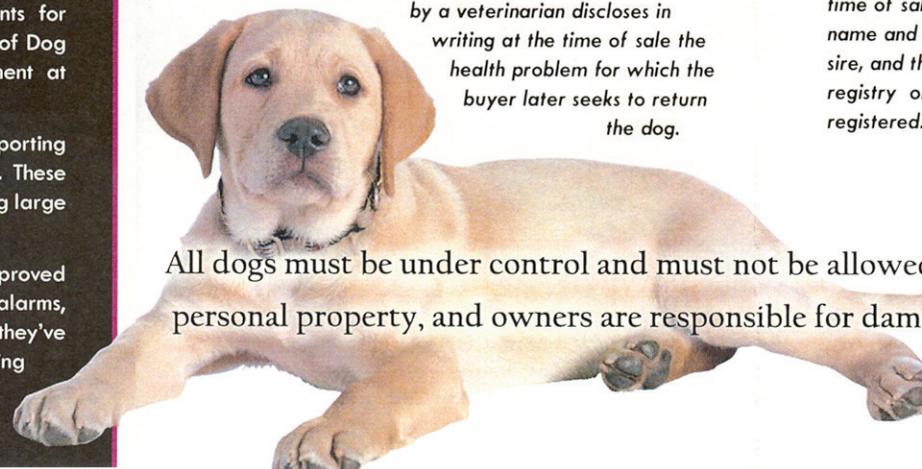
However, all kennels must have an exercise plan approved by a veterinarian, have fire extinguishers or smoke alarms, display their kennel license, sell puppies only after they've reached 8 weeks of age and refrain from buying from out-of-state dealers.

### PUPPY LEMON LAW:

In an effort to ensure that consumers buying a dog in Pennsylvania know their new pet has a clean bill of health, Pennsylvania's dog sellers and breeders must post a visible notice that informs consumers of their rights under the state's Dog Purchaser Protection Act, also known as the "Puppy Lemon Law." Sellers and breeders must also provide a written copy of the consumer's rights at the time of the sale, which include:

1. A seller must provide you with a health record for the dog at the time of sale.
2. The seller must provide a health certificate issued by a veterinarian within 21 days prior to the date of sale or a guarantee of good health issued and signed by the seller.
3. To preserve your rights, you must take your newly purchased dog to a licensed veterinarian for examination within 10 days of purchase. If a veterinarian determines, within 10 days of purchase, that your dog is clinically ill or has died from an injury sustained or illness likely to have been contracted on or before the date of sale and delivery, you have the following options:
  - a. Return the dog for a complete refund;
  - b. Return the dog for a replacement dog of equal value; or
  - c. Retain the dog and receive reimbursement for reasonable veterinary fees not exceeding the purchase price.

*These options do not apply where a seller who has provided a health certificate issued by a veterinarian discloses in writing at the time of sale the health problem for which the buyer later seeks to return the dog.*



All dogs must be under control and must not be allowed to run at large. Dogs are personal property, and owners are responsible for damages caused by their dog.

Before purchasing any animal, please make sure you can properly care for it, so do the research. Before making the purchase, check into things such as caging requirements, veterinary costs and diet.

4. If, within 30 days of purchase, a licensed veterinarian determines that your dog has a congenital or hereditary defect which adversely affects the animal's health or that your dog died from a congenital or hereditary defect, you have the same options as outlined in number 3.
5. Within 2 business days of a veterinarian's certification of your dog's illness, defect or death, you must notify the seller of the name, address and telephone number of the examining veterinarian. Failure to notify the seller within 2 business days will result in forfeiture of rights.
6. Refunds or reimbursements shall be made no later than 14 days after the seller receives the veterinarian certification. Veterinarian certification must be presented to the seller not later than 5 days after you receive it.
7. Registerable Dogs – If the seller does not provide within 120 days all documentation needed to register your dog, you may:
  - a. Return the dog and receive a full refund of the purchase price; or
  - b. Retain the dog and receive a 50 percent refund of the purchase price.
8. If registerable, the seller shall provide at the time of sale: the breeder's name and address, the name and registration number of the dam and sire, and the name and address of the pedigree registry organization where the dam and sire are registered.