

# Adding a **D**og to Your Family



People who would like to add the companionship of a dog to their household may choose to purchase a dog from sellers, breeders or individuals, or they may choose to adopt a dog from one of the many animal shelters or rescue organizations operating in the Commonwealth.

Even if you are looking for a specific type or breed of dog, you may be able to find that dog by searching online for rescues specific to the breed you are interested in adopting.

If you are purchasing a dog from a breeding kennel, you may want to check the kennel inspection reports, which are available at [www.agriculture.pa.gov/Animals/DogLaw](http://www.agriculture.pa.gov/Animals/DogLaw). The Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement is responsible for inspecting licensed kennels in the Commonwealth to ensure the health and safety of the animals.

## Dog Purchaser **PROTECTION ACT** (or the Puppy Lemon Law)

Law requires Pennsylvania's dog sellers and breeders to 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**." This notice shall be conspicuously posted in the place of business of persons subject to this section as enforced by the Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General. Sellers and breeders must also provide a written copy of the consumer's rights at the time of the sale. A seller shall provide you with a health record for the dog at the time of sale. The health record must contain information as required by the law.

To preserve your rights under the law, 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: *return the dog for a complete refund; return the dog for a replacement dog of equal value; or retain the dog and receive reimbursement for reasonable veterinary fees, not exceeding the purchase price.*

More information about the Puppy Lemon Law is available at [www.attorneygeneral.gov](http://www.attorneygeneral.gov) or by calling 1-800-441-2555.

# Owning a



## FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON PA DOG LAWS

Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture  
[www.agriculture.pa.gov](http://www.agriculture.pa.gov)  
Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement  
2301 N. Cameron St., Harrisburg, PA 17110  
717-787-3062  
Tipline: 1-877-364-8471  
Email: [ra-doglaw@state.pa.us](mailto:ra-doglaw@state.pa.us)

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## What are PA'S DOG LAWS?

### Benefits & Responsibilities of HAVING A DOG

Studies show a variety health benefits to owning a dog, including decreased blood pressure and cholesterol, weight loss due to walking and other activities with your dog, less stress and better overall mental health.

However, owning a dog is also a responsibility. Pennsylvania laws require you to license your dog and obtain rabies vaccinations. You have to keep your dog under control at all times, and you are responsible for any damage your dog may cause to another person or property. Additional laws define animal abuse or cruelty, and the fines and penalties that go with it.

Whether you are a long-time dog owner or just thinking about adding a canine companion to your family, please take a moment to familiarize yourself with dog-related laws in our Commonwealth.



The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture is home to the Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement. The bureau, along with police, are responsible for enforcing dog licensing and vaccination requirements, as well as kennel licensing and inspections; investigating dog bites; and seizing and detaining any dog running at large. The Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement does NOT enforce anti-cruelty laws; that is handled by Humane Society Police Officers and state and local police.

The following measures are under the enforcement jurisdiction of the Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement:

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



- **All dogs three months of age or older, or upon transfer to a new owner, whichever comes first, must be licensed. Licenses are issued by the County Treasurer and their agents in your county of residence.**
- **It is illegal to interfere with an officer or employee of the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture engaged in enforcement of dog laws.**
- **Dogs and house cats are required to have a current rabies vaccination before they reach 16 weeks of age.**
- **You must have a current kennel license if you operate a facility that keeps, harbors, boards, shelters, sells, gives away or transfers a total of 26 or more dogs in any one calendar year.**
- **No dog under eight weeks of age may be sold, traded, bartered or transferred.**
- **It is illegal to purposely poison a dog, whether it is yours or someone else's. Additionally, you may not place any poison or harmful substance any place on or off your property where dogs may easily eat it.**

## Animal Cruelty LAWS



It is illegal to mistreat or abuse any animal. It is also illegal to abandon or to attempt to abandon any dog. Abuse should be reported to a local humane organization or the police.

In 2017, the General Assembly passed **Libre's Law** (Act 10 of 2017), making several updates to the state's animal cruelty laws.

### The changes are as follows:

- **Redefining abuse:** Animal abuse is defined by grades of severity, from neglect at the low end of the scale to aggravated cruelty, when someone tortures an animal or causes serious bodily injury or death to an animal.
- **Raising penalties:** Penalties for animal cruelty have been increased, ranging from 90 days in jail and a \$300 fine to seven years in jail and a \$15,000 fine.
- **Mandatory forfeiture:** If someone is convicted of seriously abusing an animal or animals, the animals that were victims of the abuse must be forfeited to an animal shelter.
- **Tethering restrictions:** Dogs should not spend more than nine hours tethered unattended in a 24-hour period. The maximum time limit is reduced to 30 minutes when the temperature exceeds 90 degrees or is below freezing. Also, a dog may not be secured with a tow or log chain or a choke, pinch, prong or chain collar, and there may not be "excessive waste" in the tethered area. The tether must be the longer of three times the length of the dog or 10 feet. Dogs tethered outside for more than a brief time must be provided with basic needs, including water and shade.
- **Civil immunity:** Veterinarians, veterinary technicians and Humane Society Police Officers are provided with immunity when reporting suspected cases of animal cruelty, protecting them against lawsuits.

If you suspect animal abuse and would like to report it, you should contact your local humane society police officer (a registry is available at [www.agriculture.pa.gov](http://www.agriculture.pa.gov)) or local police station. In the absence of local police, contact the Pennsylvania State Police.

Read more about PA Dog Laws and the Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement at [www.agriculture.pa.gov](http://www.agriculture.pa.gov).