

Dangerous Dogs in Minnesota

[Minnesota Statutes, sections 347.50](#) through 347.565, address the regulation of dangerous dogs. The 1988 Legislature created the classification and established requirements for owning a dangerous dog. Amendments in 2001 allowed owners to petition for review of the dangerous dog designation and also required that dangerous dogs be implanted with a microchip for identification. The 2008 Legislature greatly expanded and amended the state law provisions relating to dangerous dogs. Changes increased the amount of coverage owners must carry to reimburse a person who suffers personal injuries caused by a dangerous dog, shifted authority from counties to the animal control authorities, established the requirements related to the disposition of seized animals, created the ownership prohibition, enhanced the penalty for subsequent violations, and expanded the situations in which a dog could be destroyed.

What is a “dangerous dog”?

Minnesota law classifies dogs as “dangerous” or “potentially dangerous” based on a dog’s actions. A “dangerous dog” is one that has:

1. without provocation, inflicted substantial bodily harm on a human being;
2. killed a domestic animal without provocation while off the owner’s property; or
3. aggressively bitten, attacked, or endangered the safety of humans or domestic animals after the owner has notice that the dog was found to be potentially dangerous.

A “potentially dangerous dog” is one that:

1. unprovoked, bites a human or domestic animal;
2. chases or approaches a person on a street that is not the owner’s property in an apparent attitude of attack; or
3. has a known propensity to make an unprovoked attack that threatens the safety of humans or domestic animals.

Can a person own a dangerous dog?

Minnesotans can own dangerous dogs, but dogs must be registered with the local animal control authority and owners must meet several specific conditions.

What requirements must a person meet to own a dangerous dog?

To register a dangerous dog, an owner must pay an annual fee of up to \$500 in addition to any regular licensing fees and show an animal control authority that:

1. the owner has a proper enclosure with a warning sign and symbol;
2. the owner has either a surety bond or liability insurance in an amount of at least \$300,000 to cover any personal injuries inflicted by the dog; and
3. the dangerous dog has had a microchip implanted.

Following registration, an owner must:

1. keep the dog in a proper enclosure while on the owner's property and muzzle the dog while off the property;
2. renew registration annually;
3. within 30 days, notify animal control of the death of the dog or its transfer to a new location;
4. pay for the sterilization of the dog;
5. before renting property, inform the property owner of the dog; and
6. if transferring the dog, notify the new owner that the dog is identified as dangerous and inform animal control of the new owner.

Are there exceptions to the dangerous dog requirements?

A dog is not subject to registration if it is used by law enforcement officials or if it (1) attacked a person trespassing on the owner's premises; (2) was provoked or abused at the time of the attack or repeatedly before the attack; or (3) attacked a person committing or attempting to commit a crime.

Can dangerous dogs be confiscated and destroyed?

If an owner fails to comply with the dangerous dog requirements, the local animal control authority can seize the dog. An owner can show compliance with the requirements and reclaim the dog within seven days. The animal control agency must seize a dog if an owner previously convicted of violating the dangerous dog ownership requirements is charged with a subsequent violation relating to the same dog. If the owner is convicted of that new offense, the animal control agency must destroy the dog. In addition, the authority may destroy a dog if it:

1. inflicted substantial or great bodily harm on a person without provocation;
2. inflicted multiple bites on a person without provocation;
3. bit multiple people in the same attack without provocation; or
4. bit a person in an attack where more than one dog participated.

Can an owner challenge the "dangerous dog" designation?

An owner has the right to a hearing. The authority declaring the dog dangerous must give a notice that identifies the dog, describes the reason for the declaration, and explains the right to appeal. Within seven days of seizure, the owner must post a security in an amount sufficient to provide for the dog's actual cost of care and keeping. The hearing must be held within 14 days of the request and the hearing officer must issue a decision within ten days. If the decision is upheld, the owner is responsible for up to \$1,000 of the costs of the hearing.

Can local governments create additional restrictions?

Local governments are authorized to regulate dangerous dogs in a more restrictive manner than state statute, but dogs may not be considered dangerous or potentially dangerous based solely on their breed.

How many dangerous dogs are there in Minnesota?

Individual animal control authorities are responsible for registration procedures, but there is no central database of dangerous dog statistics. Some cities, including Minneapolis, make information about dangerous dogs living within city boundaries available online.

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