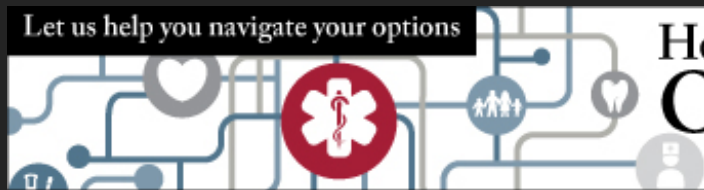


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## Ohio Dog Owners Must Follow State Laws

Many laws in Ohio deal with dog ownership and treatment. This article addresses the most basic laws applying to pet dogs.

**Q:** I'm thinking of getting a dog for a family pet. Does Ohio have any dog laws I should know about?

**A:** Yes. There are both state statutes and local ordinances. The state statutes define how a dog is

determined to be dangerous, and what you can and cannot do with a dog. Local ordinances may ban certain breeds of dogs or restrict the number of dogs you can own in your private home. Local ordinances may also require certain immunizations for your dog. Some local ordinances also include leash laws. Ohio law, however, does not permit pet dogs to run loose. They must be under someone's control, and if a dog is in heat, she must be on a leash.

**Q: Must I have a license for my pet dog?**

**A:** Yes. Every dog over three months of age must be registered with the county auditor by the 31st of every January. If your dog is not registered by January 31, your fee will double. Depending on local ordinances, you may have to pay a higher fee if the dog is not spayed or neutered. Also, your dog must wear a tag issued by the county auditor. If the dog warden sees a dog without a collar or tag on—even in your yard—the warden can seize the dog.

**Q: Does Ohio law prevent anyone from owning a dog?**

**A:** Yes. Ohio law now says that anyone who has been convicted of a felony since December 1, 2013, cannot own certain dogs. Such a felon cannot own or live in a residence with an unsprayed or unneutered dog, or any dog that has been deemed to be dangerous, until the felon has been released from all sanctions for a period of three years. Even after that three-year waiting period, a felon who owns or lives with a dog must have the dog microchipped for permanent identification. This law does not pertain to any dog owned by a felon before December 1, 2013, or to people while they are in rehabilitation or correctional facilities.

**Q: Is there anything legal I have to do if I sell or give away a dog?**

**A:** Yes. If you transfer of ownership of any dog, you must give the buyer a signed transfer of ownership certificate. The certificate must contain the dog's registration number, your name, and a brief description of the dog. You can get blank forms of this certificate from the county auditor, and you will have to pay a \$5 fee when you record the form with the auditor. Before you transfer ownership or possession of any dog, you must give the dog's prospective new owner, upon request, written notice about the dog's behavior and propensities.

**Q: Does Ohio law consider dogs and other animals property?**

**A:** Yes. Ohio law considers pets to be personal property, except that the law does not allow you to abandon or throw away a pet as you might a piece of furniture. And while you are free to keep a piece of furniture out in the rain until it is ruined, there are laws in Ohio that protect dogs from inhumane neglect or abuse.

**Q: Since my dog is my personal property, can I do anything I want with my dog?**

**A:** No. You cannot (or allow anyone else to) torture, torment, needlessly mutilate or maim, cruelly beat, poison, needlessly kill or commit an act of cruelty against a dog (or any other companion

animal). Also, you cannot neglect your dog or cause unnecessary pain, or allow the dog's pain to continue when there is a reasonable remedy or relief; neither can you needlessly kill your dog. Further, you cannot deprive your dog of necessary food or confine the dog without providing adequate and wholesome food and water, and you cannot impound or confine your dog without providing access to shelter from heat, cold, wind, rain, snow or excessive direct sunlight.

**Q: What if my dog hurts someone or someone's property? Can I be held liable for damage or injuries?**

**A:** Yes. Damage caused by your dog is a strict liability offense. This means that, as long as your dog wasn't attacked, you will be responsible for any damage your dog may do. Therefore, you must properly restrain and control your pet dog at all times. Be sure the dog will not be able to escape from your property or wherever you are keeping it.

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*This "Law You Can Use" consumer legal information column was provided by the Ohio State Bar Association. It was prepared by attorney Michelle L. Baumeister.*

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