



RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERSHIP

There has been much media attention on recent debates regarding animal welfare, dangerous dogs and some of the legislation relevant to pet ownership has been updated. Therefore, we thought it would be helpful to clarify a few of the obligations and liabilities for pet owners that are covered by the law.

There are many acts of Parliament relating to animals generally and also to dogs specifically. Dogs are also covered by some of the environmental and countryside legislation.

In the eyes of the law the person who is responsible for an animal is the person who owns the animal or has it in their possession; if that person is less than 16 yrs old then the responsibility lies with the head of the household to which that person belongs. So basically parents may be liable for whatever their kids allow the dog to get up to when they take it out!

IDENTIFICATION

It is a legal requirement that any dog in a public place has a collar with the owners name and contact details on it. Tattooing and microchips don't count. Any dog not identified in this way can be treated as a stray and the keeper of that dog could be prosecuted.

STRAY DOGS

The Local Council have the right to seize any dog thought to be a stray. If the dog is not claimed within 7 days then they have the right to destroy or re-home it as they see fit. If the owner comes forward within that 7 days and reclaims the dog then the owner will have to pay all costs incurred. If the owner comes forward after the dog has been re-homed then they have no legal right to ownership and cannot claim the dog back.

We're not sure that dog owners realise how strict this legislation is; we often have dogs brought to us by members of the public who have found them wandering. Most times we are able to quickly reunite the dogs with their owners if they have a microchip or collar with owner details on it, and the Local Council never get involved

FOULING

Nowadays most dog owners pick up their dog's faeces and there are many designated bins to be seen. However, not to do this is an offence with a fixed penalty of up to £1000.

RIGHT TO ROAM

On open access land, land on which you are free to roam without having to stick to paths, dogs are NOT necessarily allowed off the lead. During the summer, between 1st March and 31st July and at any time around livestock they must be kept on a fixed lead of 2 metres or less.

www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk is a very good website with lots of information for dog owners and maps of open access land.

HUNTING

The hunting ban means that more than 2 dogs pursuing a quarry above OR below ground is illegal. So owners who let their terriers go down rabbit holes or their greyhounds and lurchers chase deer, are breaking the law if there are more than 2 dogs together. A pet owner was prosecuted when her 3 dogs chased after a Muntjac deer and killed it whilst out for a walk. The hunting legislation is taken very seriously.

These are some of the issues that we think may be relevant to our clients and we feel it is important that people know where their obligations lie because often times people may be breaking the law without even realising it. Everyone wants to enjoy their pets and have fun without getting into any trouble.

SPECIAL OFFER

For April microchips will be offered at a 40% reduction for under £12

Please call the surgery on 01256 764771 if you want to book an appointment for microchipping.