

**Chapter 16.08 RCW**  
**DOGS**

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**RCW 16.08.010 Liability for injury to stock by dogs.** The owner or keeper of any dog shall be liable to the owner of any animal killed or injured by such dog for the amount of damages sustained and costs of collection, to be recovered in a civil action. [1985 c 415 § 14; 1929 c 198 § 5; RRS § 3106. Prior: 1919 c 6 § 5; RCS § 3106.]

**RCW 16.08.020 Dogs injuring stock may be killed.** It shall be lawful for any person who shall see any dog or dogs chasing, biting, injuring or killing any sheep, swine or other domestic animal, including poultry, belonging to such person, on any real property owned or leased by, or under the control of, such person, or on any public highway, to kill such dog or dogs, and it shall be the duty of the owner or keeper of any dog or dogs so found chasing, biting or injuring any domestic animal, including poultry, upon being notified of that fact by the owner of such domestic animals or poultry, to thereafter keep such dog or dogs in leash or confined upon the premises of the owner or keeper thereof, and in case any such owner or keeper of a dog or dogs shall fail or neglect to comply with the provisions of this section, it shall be lawful for the owner of such domestic animals or poultry to kill such dog or dogs found running at large. [1929 c 198 § 6; RRS § 3107. Prior: 1919 c 6 § 6; 1917 c 161 § 6; RCS § 3107.]

**RCW 16.08.040 Dog bites—Liability.** (1) The owner of any dog which shall bite any person while such person is in or on a public place or lawfully in or on a private place including the property of the owner of such dog, shall be liable for such damages as may be suffered by the person bitten, regardless of the former viciousness of such dog or the owner's knowledge of such viciousness.

(2) This section does not apply to the lawful application of a police dog, as defined in RCW 4.24.410. [2012 c 94 § 1; 1941 c 77 § 1; Rem. Supp. 1941 § 3109-1.]

**RCW 16.08.050 Entrance on private property, when lawful.** A person is lawfully upon the private property of such owner within the meaning of RCW 16.08.040 when such person is upon the property of the owner with the express or implied consent of the owner: PROVIDED, That said consent shall not be presumed when the property of the owner is fenced or reasonably posted. [1979 c 148 § 1; 1941 c 77 § 2; Rem. Supp. 1941 § 3109-2.]

**RCW 16.08.060 Provocation as a defense.** Proof of provocation of the attack by the injured person shall be a complete defense to an action for damages. [1941 c 77 § 3; Rem. Supp. 1941 § 3109-3.]

**RCW 16.08.070 Dangerous dogs and related definitions.** Unless the context clearly requires otherwise, the definitions in this section apply throughout RCW 16.08.070 through 16.08.100.

(1) "Potentially dangerous dog" means any dog that when unprovoked: (a) Inflicts bites on a human or a domestic animal either on public or private property, or (b) chases or approaches a person upon the streets, sidewalks, or any public grounds in a menacing fashion or apparent attitude of attack, or any dog with a known propensity, tendency, or disposition to attack unprovoked, to cause injury, or to cause injury or otherwise to threaten the safety of humans or domestic animals.

(2) "Dangerous dog" means any dog that (a) inflicts severe injury on a human being without provocation on public or private property, (b) kills a domestic animal without provocation while the dog is off the owner's property, or (c) has been previously found to be potentially dangerous because of injury inflicted on a human, the owner having received notice of such and the dog again aggressively bites, attacks, or endangers the safety of humans.

(3) "Severe injury" means any physical injury that results in broken bones or disfiguring lacerations requiring multiple sutures or cosmetic surgery.

(4) "Proper enclosure of a dangerous dog" means, while on the owner's property, a dangerous dog shall be securely confined indoors or in a securely enclosed and locked pen or structure, suitable to prevent the entry of young children and designed to prevent the animal from escaping. Such pen or structure shall have secure sides and a secure top, and shall also provide protection from the elements for the dog.

(5) "Animal control authority" means an entity acting alone or in concert with other local governmental units for enforcement of the animal control laws of the city, county, and state and the shelter and welfare of animals.

(6) "Animal control officer" means any individual employed, contracted with, or appointed by the animal control authority for the purpose of aiding in the enforcement of this chapter or any other law or ordinance relating to the licensure of animals, control of animals, or seizure and impoundment of animals, and includes any state or local law enforcement officer or other employee whose duties in whole or in part include assignments that involve the seizure and impoundment of any animal.

(7) "Owner" means any person, firm, corporation, organization, or department possessing, harboring, keeping, having an interest in, or

having control or custody of an animal. [2002 c 244 § 1; 1987 c 94 § 1.]

**Severability—1987 c 94:** "If any provision of this act or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of the act or the application of the provision to other persons or circumstances is not affected." [1987 c 94 § 6.]

**RCW 16.08.080 Dangerous dogs—Notice to owners—Right of appeal—Certificate of registration required—Surety bond—Liability insurance—Restrictions.** (1) Any city or county that has a notification and appeal procedure with regard to determining a dog within its jurisdiction to be dangerous may continue to utilize or amend its procedure. A city or county animal control authority that does not have a notification and appeal procedure in place as of June 13, 2002, and seeks to declare a dog within its jurisdiction, as defined in subsection (7) of this section, to be dangerous must serve notice upon the dog owner in person or by regular and certified mail, return receipt requested.

(2) The notice must state: The statutory basis for the proposed action; the reasons the authority considers the animal dangerous; a statement that the dog is subject to registration and controls required by this chapter, including a recitation of the controls in subsection (6) of this section; and an explanation of the owner's rights and of the proper procedure for appealing a decision finding the dog dangerous.

(3) Prior to the authority issuing its final determination, the authority shall notify the owner in writing that he or she is entitled to an opportunity to meet with the authority, at which meeting the owner may give, orally or in writing, any reasons or information as to why the dog should not be declared dangerous. The notice shall state the date, time, and location of the meeting, which must occur prior to expiration of fifteen calendar days following delivery of the notice. The owner may propose an alternative meeting date and time, but such meeting must occur within the fifteen-day time period set forth in this section. After such meeting, the authority must issue its final determination, in the form of a written order, within fifteen calendar days. In the event the authority declares a dog to be dangerous, the order shall include a recital of the authority for the action, a brief concise statement of the facts that support the determination, and the signature of the person who made the determination. The order shall be sent by regular and certified mail, return receipt requested, or delivered in person to the owner at the owner's last address known to the authority.

(4) If the local jurisdiction has provided for an administrative appeal of the final determination, the owner must follow the appeal procedure set forth by that jurisdiction. If the local jurisdiction has not provided for an administrative appeal, the owner may appeal a municipal authority's final determination that the dog is dangerous to the municipal court, and may appeal a county animal control authority's or county sheriff's final determination that the dog is dangerous to the district court. The owner must make such appeal within twenty days of receiving the final determination. While the appeal is pending, the authority may order that the dog be confined or controlled in compliance with RCW 16.08.090. If the dog is determined

to be dangerous, the owner must pay all costs of confinement and control.

(5) It is unlawful for an owner to have a dangerous dog in the state without a certificate of registration issued under this section. This section and RCW 16.08.090 and 16.08.100 shall not apply to police dogs as defined in RCW 4.24.410.

(6) Unless a city or county has a more restrictive code requirement, the animal control authority of the city or county in which an owner has a dangerous dog shall issue a certificate of registration to the owner of such animal if the owner presents to the animal control unit sufficient evidence of:

(a) A proper enclosure to confine a dangerous dog and the posting of the premises with a clearly visible warning sign that there is a dangerous dog on the property. In addition, the owner shall conspicuously display a sign with a warning symbol that informs children of the presence of a dangerous dog;

(b) A surety bond issued by a surety insurer qualified under chapter 48.28 RCW in a form acceptable to the animal control authority in the sum of at least two hundred fifty thousand dollars, payable to any person injured by the dangerous dog; or

(c) A policy of liability insurance, such as homeowner's insurance, issued by an insurer qualified under Title 48 RCW in the amount of at least two hundred fifty thousand dollars, insuring the owner for any personal injuries inflicted by the dangerous dog.

(7) (a) (i) If an owner has the dangerous dog in an incorporated area that is serviced by both a city and a county animal control authority, the owner shall obtain a certificate of registration from the city authority;

(ii) If an owner has the dangerous dog in an incorporated or unincorporated area served only by a county animal control authority, the owner shall obtain a certificate of registration from the county authority;

(iii) If an owner has the dangerous dog in an incorporated or unincorporated area that is not served by an animal control authority, the owner shall obtain a certificate of registration from the office of the local sheriff.

(b) This subsection does not apply if a city or county does not allow dangerous dogs within its jurisdiction.

(8) Cities and counties may charge an annual fee, in addition to regular dog licensing fees, to register dangerous dogs.

(9) Nothing in this section limits a local authority in placing additional restrictions upon owners of dangerous dogs. This section does not require a local authority to allow a dangerous dog within its jurisdiction. [2002 c 244 § 2; 1989 c 26 § 3; 1987 c 94 § 2.]

**Severability—1987 c 94:** See note following RCW 16.08.070.

**RCW 16.08.090 Dangerous dogs—Requirements for restraint—Potentially dangerous dogs—Dogs not declared dangerous.** (1) It is unlawful for an owner of a dangerous dog to permit the dog to be outside the proper enclosure unless the dog is muzzled and restrained by a substantial chain or leash and under physical restraint of a responsible person. The muzzle shall be made in a manner that will not cause injury to the dog or interfere with its vision or respiration but shall prevent it from biting any person or animal.

(2) Potentially dangerous dogs shall be regulated only by local, municipal, and county ordinances. Nothing in this section limits restrictions local jurisdictions may place on owners of potentially dangerous dogs.

(3) Dogs shall not be declared dangerous if the threat, injury, or damage was sustained by a person who, at the time, was committing a wilful trespass or other tort upon the premises occupied by the owner of the dog, or was tormenting, abusing, or assaulting the dog or has, in the past, been observed or reported to have tormented, abused, or assaulted the dog or was committing or attempting to commit a crime. [1987 c 94 § 3.]

**Severability—1987 c 94:** See note following RCW 16.08.070.

**RCW 16.08.100 Dangerous dogs—Confiscation—Conditions—Duties of animal control authority—Penalties and affirmative defenses for owners of dogs that attack.**

(1) Any dangerous dog shall be immediately confiscated by an animal control authority if the: (a) Dog is not validly registered under RCW 16.08.080; (b) owner does not secure the liability insurance coverage required under RCW 16.08.080; (c) dog is not maintained in the proper enclosure; or (d) dog is outside of the dwelling of the owner, or outside of the proper enclosure and not under physical restraint of the responsible person. The owner must pay the costs of confinement and control. The animal control authority must serve notice upon the dog owner in person or by regular and certified mail, return receipt requested, specifying the reason for the confiscation of the dangerous dog, that the owner is responsible for payment of the costs of confinement and control, and that the dog will be destroyed in an expeditious and humane manner if the deficiencies for which the dog was confiscated are not corrected within twenty days. The animal control authority shall destroy the confiscated dangerous dog in an expeditious and humane manner if any deficiencies required by this subsection are not corrected within twenty days of notification. In addition, the owner shall be guilty of a gross misdemeanor punishable in accordance with RCW 9A.20.021.

(2) If a dangerous dog of an owner with a prior conviction under this chapter attacks or bites a person or another domestic animal, the dog's owner is guilty of a class C felony, punishable in accordance with RCW 9A.20.021. It is an affirmative defense that the defendant must prove by a preponderance of the evidence that he or she was in compliance with the requirements for ownership of a dangerous dog pursuant to this chapter and the person or domestic animal attacked or bitten by the defendant's dog trespassed on the defendant's real or personal property or provoked the defendant's dog without justification or excuse. In addition, the dangerous dog shall be immediately confiscated by an animal control authority, placed in quarantine for the proper length of time, and thereafter destroyed in an expeditious and humane manner.

(3) The owner of any dog that aggressively attacks and causes severe injury or death of any human, whether or not the dog has previously been declared potentially dangerous or dangerous, shall, upon conviction, be guilty of a class C felony punishable in accordance with RCW 9A.20.021. It is an affirmative defense that the defendant must prove by a preponderance of the evidence that the human severely injured or killed by the defendant's dog: (a) Trespassed on

the defendant's real or personal property which was enclosed by fencing suitable to prevent the entry of young children and designed to prevent the dog from escaping and marked with clearly visible signs warning people, including children, not to trespass and to beware of dog; or (b) provoked the defendant's dog without justification or excuse on the defendant's real or personal property which was enclosed by fencing suitable to prevent the entry of young children and designed to prevent the dog from escaping and marked with clearly visible signs warning people, including children, not to trespass and to beware of dog. In such a prosecution, the state has the burden of showing that the owner of the dog either knew or should have known that the dog was potentially dangerous as defined in this chapter. The state may not meet its burden of proof that the owner should have known the dog was potentially dangerous solely by showing the dog to be a particular breed or breeds. In addition, the dog shall be immediately confiscated by an animal control authority, quarantined, and upon conviction of the owner destroyed in an expeditious and humane manner. [2020 c 158 § 1; 2002 c 244 § 3; 1987 c 94 § 4.]

**Severability—1987 c 94:** See note following RCW 16.08.070.

**RCW 16.08.110 Breed-based regulations.** (1) A city or county may not prohibit the possession of a dog based upon its breed, impose requirements specific to possession of a dog based upon its breed, or declare a dog dangerous or potentially dangerous based on its breed unless all of the following conditions are met:

(a) The city or county has established and maintains a reasonable process for exempting any dog from breed-based regulations or a breed ban if the dog passes the American kennel club canine good citizen test or a reasonably equivalent canine behavioral test as determined by the city or county;

(b) Dogs that pass the American kennel club canine good citizen test or a reasonably equivalent canine behavioral test are exempt from breed-based regulations for a period of at least two years;

(c) Dogs that pass the American kennel club canine good citizen test or a reasonably equivalent canine behavioral test are given the opportunity to retest to maintain their exemption from breed-based regulations; and

(d) Dogs that fail the American kennel club canine good citizen test or a reasonably equivalent canine behavioral test are given the opportunity to retest within a reasonable period of time, as determined by the city or county.

(2) This section does not apply to the act of documenting either a dog's breed or its physical appearance, or both, solely for identification purposes when declaring a dog dangerous or potentially dangerous.

(3) For the purpose of this section, "dog" means a domesticated member of the family canidae, specifically species *Canus lupus familiaris*, and excludes nondomesticated members of the family canidae and any hybrids thereof, including but not limited to wolves, coyotes, wolf-dog hybrids, and coyote-dog hybrids. [2019 c 199 § 2.]

**Findings—Intent—2019 c 199:** "(1) A number of local jurisdictions have enacted ordinances prohibiting or placing additional restrictions on specific breeds of dogs. While the legislature recognizes that

local jurisdictions have a valid public safety interest in protecting citizens from dog attacks, the legislature finds that a dog's breed is not inherently indicative of whether or not a dog is dangerous and that the criteria for determining whether or not a dog is dangerous or potentially dangerous should be focused on the dog's behavior.

(2) The legislature further finds that breed-specific ordinances fail to address the factors that cause dogs to become aggressive and place an undue hardship on responsible dog owners who provide proper socialization and training. The legislature intends to encourage local jurisdictions to more effectively and fairly control dangerous dogs and enhance public safety by focusing on dogs' behavior rather than their breeds." [2019 c 199 § 1.]

**Effective date—2019 c 199:** "This act takes effect January 1, 2020." [2019 c 199 § 3.]