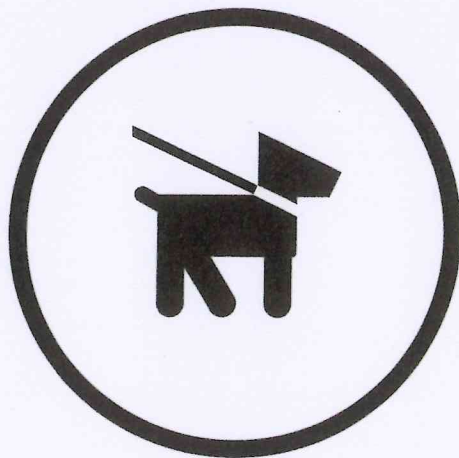


# Rights *and* Responsibilities



Dog owners must keep their dogs appropriately confined by a leash, crate, cage or other enclosure on the owner's property.



People have pets for a variety of reasons. Many like the animals for the companionship they can provide, while some have pets for more practical purposes, like hunting and protection.

## The Dangers of Pet Ownership

Unfortunately, pets aren't always your best friend. Each year more than 4.7 million Americans are bitten by dogs. Of those bitten, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that approximately 1 in 5 people will require medical attention. Dog bites affect children more adversely than adults. In fact, the CDC reports that over half of those bitten are children, and children require medical attention more often than adults. Since 2005, 159 people have died from dog bites. Children under 2 account for a third of the deaths that occurred in 2009.

The most recent CDC data shows the most common injury resulting from a dog bite is an injury to the arm/hand region. However, almost 65% of child dog bite injuries occur in the head/neck area.

## Legal Obligations as a Pet Owner

It's important for families with pets to understand the responsibilities of pet ownership extend beyond food, water and walks. All Illinois residents must consider the legal implications of pet ownership before making an animal a part of your family. What follows are just a few things to keep in mind that will keep your family and others safe.

Do some research before you bring home that cute little puppy. Research the temperaments of certain breeds and pick an animal that is typically non-aggressive and family friendly. Be aware, however, that all animals are capable of aggression.

Be watchful of aggressive behavior from your animal. Most dog bites come from male dogs that have not been neutered. Make neutering a priority for your pet. If your dog shows signs of aggression such as nipping and snarling, contact your veterinarian for advice on how to modify this behavior before it gets out of control.

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Caring for your pet in an adequate manner is not just a household chore. It's the law. According to the Illinois Humane Care for Animals Act, pet owners are required by law to provide animals with a sufficient amount of good food and water, shelter and protection from the weather, and veterinary care to prevent suffering and humane care and treatment. Violating these requirements can result in a fine and time in jail.

Cruel treatment of animals is not only morally wrong, it's against the law. Beating, tormenting, starving or abusing any animal are all punishable by law. This includes engaging in dog fighting. Report any suspicion of this vicious practice to the local law enforcement officers. Abandonment of an animal that leads to injury, hunger or exposure for the animal is also illegal.

Leaving your animal in the car can hurt your pet and get you into trouble with the law. Through the Illinois Humane Care for Animals Act, Illinois lawmakers have enacted provisions making it illegal to leave your animal confined inside a car alone for prolonged periods of extreme heat or cold and/or without proper ventilation. Law enforcement officers who are made of aware of such situations have probable cause to enter the car after making an effort to locate the owner animal.

Pet ownership requires ongoing commitment to upkeep and maintaining proper licensure. Pet owners are legally responsible for having their pets properly vaccinated against rabies and to make sure that the animals are wearing updated license tags at all times.

Don't leave children and your pet together unsupervised. Children are the group most likely to receive dog bites, so never leave your pet alone with any child and don't allow small children to walk the dog without help from an adult.

Not all pets are traditional. For the animals' protection and yours, Illinois law prohibits ownership or private care of

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dangerous animals such as lions, tigers, leopards, jaguars, cheetahs, mountain lions, bears, hyenas, wolves, coyotes, or any poisonous, life-threatening reptiles. Although there are no state requirements to prevent a person possessing non-human primates and other exotic species not defined as "dangerous animals," carefully consider the dangers to your family and those visiting your home before taking on one of these non-traditional pets. These animals are better off in the wild, or in institutions that are equipped to give them

the nutrition, environment and medical care that they deserve.

Keep your dog properly restrained. Dog owners must keep their dogs appropriately confined by a leash, crate, cage or other enclosure on the owner's property. The Illinois Animal Control Act holds pet owners liable for any injury or damage caused to another person. Consider purchasing homeowner's insurance that covers injury due to dog or cat bites. Anyone witnessing such a bite must, by law, contact Animal Control, so that the proper procedures to prevent the spread of rabies can be taken. Familiarize yourself with the local ordinance for your municipality about the specific laws regarding pet restraint.

Your pet bit someone, what now? Make sure you confine your pet. Check on the victim's condition and if necessary, call 911. Make sure to provide information about yourself and your pet, including veterinary contact information and your pet's vaccination records. Ensure you report the dog bite if local ordinance requires you do so. ▾

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