



Coalition for Living Safely with Dogs

Model Elements for Your Community's Dangerous Dog Ordinance

- (1) **Clear, fair, and easy-to-follow procedures.** A well-defined procedure for determining whether a dog is potentially dangerous or dangerous. This procedure should include a complaint process, a notice period for owners, a hearing, and procedures that would allow dogs to be removed from the list after meeting some objective criteria. (e.g., passing a behavior test, combined with X number of months with no reported incidents.)
- (2) **Owners are held accountable.** A mechanism that tracks ordinance violations by owner, not by the individual dog involved. (e.g., if an owner has two dogs, and each is found running at large on separate occasion, the ordinance should allow animal control professionals to charge the owner with an elevated penalty for the second infraction, despite it being the individual animal's first incident).
- (3) **No injury to people or animals required for action.** Inclusion of a classification for dogs that have not yet attacked or killed people or animals, but have shown a propensity towards aggressive/vicious behavior. (e.g., a "potentially dangerous" or "aggressive" classification.)
- (4) **Increased penalties.** Increased penalties for the first and second "running at large" incidents and other violations of animal control ordinances. Owners could be given the choice between a very costly reclamation fee for first running at large offense and spaying/neutering their dog.
- (5) **Sterilization required.** Spay and neuter requirement that is triggered when the dog is found running at large more than one time. This provision would also require sterilization of dogs that have been adjudged to be potentially dangerous or dangerous. Under this system, authorities would also have the ability to defer certain enumerated fines, such that owners would only be required to remit payment if they failed to undertake court-mandated actions (e.g., sterilizing or microchipping their dog).
- (6) **Owners can choose education over fines.** In conjunction with increased penalties, offering a "first-time animal ordinance offender diversion program." Offenders would be given the choice between attending the diversion program or paying a very costly fine (e.g., at least \$500). Classes should cover the basic health, nutrition, and safety requirements of dog ownership. Additional points that could be covered include: information about local spay/neuter and vaccination clinics and services offered at local shelters.
- (7) **Increased licensing fees for intact and dangerous animals.** Differential licensing fees based on the animal's spay/neuter status and on the animal's potentially dangerous/dangerous status.
- (8) **No tethering permitted.** Prohibition of/restrictions on tethering of dogs.
- (9) **Mandatory microchipping.** Mandatory microchipping for dogs found running at large more than once. Requirement should include some means of enforcement (e.g., microchip registration materials are submitted by the owner to the animal control agency, which forwards them to the database administrator).
- (10) **Strong anti-cruelty provisions.** Anti-cruelty provisions that are enforced in conjunction with the municipality's dangerous dog law.

The Coalition for Living Safely with Dogs is a group of Colorado animal health, care, and control professionals seeking to educate dog owners about responsible pet ownership, inform citizens about their rights and responsibilities for making communities safer, and assist municipalities in creating and enforcing good dangerous dog laws.

- All Breed Rescue Network (ABRN)
- Animal Assistance Foundation (AAF)
- Colorado Association of Animal Control Officers (CAACO)
- Colorado Association of Certified Veterinary Technicians (CACVT)
- Colorado Federation of Animal Welfare Agencies (CFAWA)
- Colorado Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA)
- Denver Area Veterinary Medical Society (DAVMS)
- Metro Denver Shelter Alliance (MDSA)
- Summerlee Foundation

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