

Town of Bridgton

Dog Control Ordinance



Enacted: June 9, 1999 (repealing and replacing *The Control of Dogs Ordinance*, enacted in March 1973 and re-enacted with amendments June 3, 1993).

Amended: November 3, 2009; June 11, 2019; November 8, 2022.

**TOWN OF BRIDGTON
DOG CONTROL ORDINANCE**

ARTICLE I. AUTHORITY; PURPOSE

Section 1.1. Authority

This ordinance shall be known as the Town of Bridgton Dog Control Ordinance, and is referred to herein as “this Ordinance.” The Town of Bridgton is referred to herein as “the Town.” This Ordinance is adopted pursuant to Article VIII, Part Second, of the Maine Constitution; 30-A M.R.S. § 3001 *et seq.*; and 7 M.R.S. § 3950.

Section 1.2. Purpose

The purpose of this Ordinance is to require that all dogs in the Town be licensed and under reasonable control in order to protect the health, safety, and general welfare of the Town’s residents and visitors.

ARTICLE II. DEFINITIONS

The following definitions apply to this Ordinance, unless the context clearly otherwise requires. Any reference to a state law includes amendments thereto and successor provisions.

Section 2.1. “AT LARGE” means off the premises of the owner and not under the control of any person whose personal presence and attention would reasonably control the conduct of the dog. “Reasonable control,” for purposes of this Ordinance, shall mean that the dog is (i) located within a vehicle; (ii) on a lease, cord, chain, or other similar restraining device not more than eight (8) feet in length; or (iii) confined within a secure cage or enclosure.

Section 2.2. “DANGEROUS OR NUISANCE DOG” means (i) a dog that inflicts bodily injury on an individual or a domesticated animal who is not trespassing on the premises of the owner; (ii) a dog that causes a reasonable and prudent person who is not on the owner’s premises and is acting in a reasonable and nonaggressive manner to fear bodily injury by assaulting or threatening to assault that person or person’s domesticated animal; or (iii) a dog that causes damage to property or crops not owned by the owner while the dog is not on the owner's premises. “Dangerous or nuisance dog” does not include (i) a dog certified by the State of Maine and used for law enforcement use; (ii) a dog that injures or threatens to assault an individual who is on the owner’s premises if the dog has no prior history of assault and was provoked by the individual immediately prior to the injury or threatened assault; (iii) a dog that inflicts bodily injury on an individual who is committing a crime against an individual or property owned by the owner.

Section 2.3. “DOG” means (i) a member of the genus and species known as *Canis familiaris*; (ii) a wolf hybrid, as defined in 7 M.R.S. § 3907(30); or (iii) any canine, regardless of generation, resulting from the interbreeding of a member of *Canis familiaris* with a wolf hybrid. “Dog” includes both male and female dogs, whether or not neutered or spayed.

Section 2.4. “LIVESTOCK” has the same meaning as in 7 M.R.S. § 3907(18-A).

Section 2.4. “OWNER” means any person, firm, association, or corporation owning, keeping, or harboring a dog. The provisions of this Ordinance that apply to the owner of a dog shall apply equally to any person having its custody or possession.

Section 2.5. “PREMISES” means the residence or residences, including buildings and land and motor vehicles, belonging to the owner of a dog.

ARTICLE III. LICENSE REQUIRED

Section 3.1. All dogs kept, housed, harbored, or maintained by their respective owners in the Town shall be licensed when the dog becomes six (6) months old and annually thereafter on January 1 of each year, in accordance with 7 M.R.S. Chapter 721 and this Ordinance.

Section 3.2. License applications to the Town shall be accompanied by a fee as provided in the *Town of Bridgton Uniform Fee Ordinance* except applications that are exempt from the payment of license fees pursuant to 7 M.R.S. §§ 3923-A(3) and 3921.

ARTICLE IV. RESPONSIBILITIES OF OWNERS

Section 4.1. It shall be unlawful for an owner to cause or permit their dog to disturb the peace of any person. Any owner causing or permitting their dog to bark, howl, or yelp continuously for twenty (20) minutes or intermittently for one (1) hour or more shall be in violation of this section, except that this provision shall not apply to dogs engaged in herding livestock or to agricultural guard dogs engaged in protecting livestock or warning the owners of danger to the livestock.

Section 4.2. It shall be unlawful for any owner to cause or permit their dog to bite, chase, or damage the property of any person.

Section 4.3. It shall be unlawful for any owner to cause or permit their dog to get into or open any garbage bags, bins, or other containers, or to cause garbage to be strewn from such containers. The owner must clean up and dispose of any strewn garbage.

Section 4.4. An owner must promptly remove and properly dispose of their dog’s feces left on any sidewalk, street, beach, public property, or private property other than the property of the owner or of a person who has consented to the presence of the dog on the person’s property.

Section 4.5. A handicapped owner, who, by reason of the handicap, is physically unable to comply with the requirements of Section 4.3 or Section 4.4 is exempt from those requirements.

ARTICLE V. DOGS AT LARGE

Section 5.1. All dogs must be under the owner’s reasonable control when off the owner’s property while within the Town limits.

Section 5.2. It shall be unlawful for any dog, licensed or unlicensed, to be at large within the Town limits, except a dog which is engaged in legal hunting.

ARTICLE VI. CONFINEMENT OF DANGEROUS OR NUISANCE DOGS

Section 6.1. Any person who is assaulted or threatened with bodily injury by a dog, or any person witnessing such an assault or threatened assault against a person or domesticated animal, or any person with knowledge of such an assault or threatened assault against a minor, or a person whose property or crops have been damaged by a dog may file a written complaint with a law enforcement officer or animal control officer of the Town, within 30 days of the incident, that the dog is a dangerous or nuisance dog. For the purposes of this section “domesticated animal” includes, but is not limited to, livestock.

Section 6.2. Procedures regarding the investigation and disposition of complaints of dangerous or nuisance dogs and the method of restraint, confinement, or disposal are prescribed by 7 M.R.S.A § 3952-A.

ARTICLE VII. IMPOUNDING

Section 7.1. Any Town law enforcement officer or animal control officer shall seize, impound, or restrain any dog that is in violation of this Ordinance or state law.

Section 7.2. A dog found at large pursuant to Article V shall be delivered to its owner if known or, if the owner is not known, to the animal shelter designated by the Town’s municipal officers.

Section 7.3. When a dog of known ownership is found at large pursuant to Article V and is apprehended by a Town law enforcement officer or animal control officer three (3) or more times in a six (6) month period, the law enforcement officer or animal control officer shall take the dog to the designated animal shelter and notify the owner in accordance with Section 7.6.

Section 7.4. When impounding any dog, the law enforcement officer or animal control officer shall at the time of such impoundment list in writing the number and description of any violations of this Ordinance or state law, and shall make a complete registry of the date of impoundment, breed, color, sex, license number, name and address or telephone number of the owner, if known, and general condition of the dog as can be reasonably ascertained.

Section 7.5. A copy of the registry record described in Section 7.4 shall be furnished to the designated animal shelter with written instructions setting forth conditions under which the dog may be released.

Section 7.6. When a dog is impounded under the provisions of this Article VII, the law enforcement officer or animal control officer shall notify the owner if the owner can be ascertained. Failure to give such notice shall in no way impose any liability upon the Town or its designated animal shelter for the destruction or transfer to another of any dog so impounded and not reclaimed.

Section 7.7. If an owner of an impounded dog does not claim the dog within six (6) days following impoundment, ownership of the dog is vested in the animal shelter and the animal shelter may dispose of the animal by adoption or otherwise in accordance with 7 M.R.S. §§ 3911-B and 3913.

Section 7.8. An owner may reclaim an impounded dog by any time within six (6) days following impoundment by (i) paying all impoundment fees, including and any actual fees incurred by the animal shelter for food, shelter, veterinary care, and any other fees required by state law for each day that the dog has been sheltered; (ii) licensing the dog, if applicable, according to Article III, and (iii) paying to the Town any penalties imposed on the owner for violations of the provisions of this Ordinance, in accordance with Article VIII. All licenses must be secured and all fees and penalties must be paid, and a receipt of same presented to the animal shelter, prior to the release of the impounded dog. License fees and court fines shall be deposited by the Town in the separate account as required by 7 M.R.S. § 3945.

ARTICLE VIII. ADMINISTRATION AND ENFORCEMENT

Section 8.1. It shall be the duty of the Town Clerk to administer the licensing provisions of this Ordinance and the municipal duties set forth in 7 M.R.S. §§ 3941-3945 and 3949.

Section 8.2. It shall be the duty of all Town law enforcement officers to enforce all the provisions of this Ordinance and to perform the duties imposed by applicable state law. Further, there shall be appointed one or more qualified animal control officers who shall have the primary responsibility of enforcing this Ordinance and of performing the duties imposed by applicable state law, including without limitation 7 M.R.S. § 3947.

Section 8.3. Upon a determination that an owner is in violation of any provision of this Ordinance, a Town law enforcement officer or animal control officer shall have the authority to issue a summons. Execution of the summons may lead to imposition of a fine. All files so assessed shall be recovered for use by the Town. The Town shall be entitled to recover any attorney's fees incurred in recovering fines assessed under this section.

ARTICLE IX. PENALTIES

Section 9.1. A violation of any of the provisions of this Ordinance or applicable state law is a civil violation punishable by a fine of \$50 for the first offense, and \$100 for a second or subsequent offense.

Section 9.2. Upon notification to the owner of the persistence of a violation, each day of such a violation shall constitute a separate offense and subject the owner to the fine as stipulated for a second or subsequent offense for each day the violation exists.

ARTICLE X. MISCELLANEOUS

Section 10.1. If any part of this Ordinance shall be held invalid, such part shall be deemed severable and the invalidity thereof shall not affect the remaining parts of this Ordinance.

Section 10.2. This Ordinance shall not affect the requirement to comply with any other law, ordinance, rule, or regulation. When this Ordinance imposes a greater restriction on owners of dogs than provisions of any other law, ordinance, rule, or regulation, the provisions of this Ordinance shall control.

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