



Dangerous Dogs Act Revised Changes 2014

New Aim to The Act:

To encourage responsible dog ownership and reduce incidents involving dogs especially the number of dog bites.

‘Since 1991 it’s been illegal for dogs to be ‘dangerously out of control in a public place’.

Until recently the law only covered incidents on public land, private land was excluded. The new law now covers private land. This covers your home including front and back gardens, due to the number of incidents that have been recorded since 1991. It also applies if the person was or wasn’t invited onto your land. Therefore owners can now be prosecuted for an incident involving their dog and maximum prison sentences have now increased.

	Before	Present
Fatal Dog Attack	2 Years	14 Years
Injury	2 Years	5 Years
Attack on Assistance Dog	None	3 Years

The Dangerous Dog Act applies to everyone who owns a dog regardless of the breed in England and Wales. It is illegal for a dog to be ‘dangerously out of control’ or to bite or attack someone. It is also an offence if someone feels ‘reasonable apprehension’ (threatened) that a dog may bite him or her. Therefore you must keep your dog under control at all times in all situations.

So what does ‘out of control’ mean?

- Behaving in a way that the person feels reasonable apprehension of being bitten
- Being boisterous and over excited
- Jumping up
- Unreliable recall
- Whilst off lead not having adequate supervision
- Not paying attention to the owner

The Dangerous Dogs Act now includes a specific offence to protect assistance dogs from attacks. On average 10 guide dogs are attacked every month, which can have devastating effects on the vulnerable people who rely on them for their independence and freedom.

What does this all mean to you as a dog owner?

If a friendly greeting from your dog (jumping up) is misinterpreted as a threat to the ‘victim’ you and your dog could be in serious trouble with the authorities.

Dogs barking at visitors to your home could be misinterpreted as a threat.

If a passer-by touches or strokes your dog over or through a fence you could be held liable to any incident that occurs.

20th October 2014 - Another New Law

The police and local authorities have now been given new legal powers to tackle the on going issue of irresponsible dog ownership. They can now demand owners take action to prevent a dog attack or receive a fine of up to £20,000. The owners could be made to:

- Attend dog training classes
- Muzzle the dog or require the dog to be on a lead in public
- Require the dog to be microhipped and/ or neutered
- Repair fencing to prevent the dog from escaping the property

Where do dog owners stand with intruders?

The law does provide a defence for if your dog 'attacks' an intruder in your home but if the 'attack' happens in your garden this could land you in court!

Does the law cover dog on dog attacks?

Although the RSPCA campaigned for attacks on dogs to be included the recommendation was not taken up. If this does happen to your dog you should still report it to the police and local authorities.

However if the incident leaves you with emotional distress through witnessing the attack the owner is liable for prosecution. This could result in a fine, control order, or the destruction of the dog that initiated the attack.

So what can you do to prevent a situation from arising?

If you feel you need extra help with your dogs behaviour you can start with finding your nearest force – free trainer or behaviourist. These are qualified professionals, who do not use choke chains, slip leads, electric shock collars, spray collars, correction sprays and believe in dominance theories.

Positive Training For Canines believe in reward based training without the use of force.

If your dog is excitable when you have visitors it may be best to encourage your dog to his bed, into a different room or be placed onto a lead whilst visitors enter your home. You may wish to bring your dog out when he is calm and if your visitors are happy for you to do so. Teach your dog to settle when your visitors are present and encourage your visitors to ignore your dog (no eye contact, not talking to him, not touching him etc)

It is best not to allow your dog free run in the front garden due to postal workers entering your property or visitors you are unaware of. If your dog is in the back garden make sure there is a secure gate that is locked to prevent people from entering this area. Ensure your garden is secure to make sure your dog doesn't escape and get into trouble in public unsupervised inadvertently causing an incident where you could be liable.

Authorised visitors which include postal workers and utility workers should be able to carry out their work without feeling threatened, afraid, bitten or coming into contact with your dog. Remember if someone entering your property (invited or not) feels threatened by your dog you could be prosecuted. If your dog manages to nip or bite the person you could face imprisonment and your dog could be euthanised.

It's not worth the risk!!

If this is something you need help with please contact us through www.positivetrainingforcanines.co.uk

If your dog reacts to the doorbell or post coming through the letter box it is your responsibility to introduce a management routine to ensure the safety of everyone in/on your property. Place an outside letterbox for dogs that do not like letters coming through the door.

Ensure all visitors are interacting safely with your dog.

Learn and understand the subtle signs your dog uses when he isn't feeling comfortable. Educate yourself in dog body language to recognise the signs of stress. Waggy tails do not necessarily mean a 'happy' dog! Learn how to help your dog in situations – a good reward based trainer and behaviourist can teach you these skills.

Provide your dog with his own personal space to escape too. Encourage all visitors including children to ignore the dog when he goes into his space. Encourage children to act appropriately around any dog. For example not squealing around the dog, not putting their face into the dogs face, teaching the child to hold out their hand for the dog to sniff but not necessarily stroking the dog especially if the dog has moved away from them

It is the responsibility of the owner to protect their dog from unwanted attention but I believe it is also the responsibility of parents to control their children around all dogs.

Teach your dog to focus on you when passing other people. If your dog can't do this encourage him to sit and reward him.

Do not leave your dog tied up outside shops or schools. They cannot escape threat and may end up biting or barking at people.

Use a well-fitted harness instead of just a collar. You can use a double-ended lead attached to the harness and collar to give you more control.

Be aware of other people's perceptions of your dog. Some people generally don't like dogs, they will cross the road or children will 'freak' out at the sight of a dog passing them.

If you employ a dog walker (or someone walks your dog for you) they are considered the 'keeper' of the dog whilst in their care so therefore they are legally responsible for the dog. If they allow the dog off lead they must ensure it has a reliable recall and is not seen as a threat to the public.

Children under 16 years of age are not legally responsible for a dog in their care. The responsibility will rest with the dog owner or the adults in the child's household. Therefore do not allow children to walk your dog unsupervised and allow them to hold the lead.

By 2016 it will be a legal requirement that all dogs are microchipped in England.