

July 2010

Laws Pertaining To Dogs

I have noticed an increase in the number of cases involving dogs recently.

Ohio law requires that dogs be licensed for any dog more than three months old. Animal license renewals are due between December 1, and January 30 of each year. The price of a license is \$18.00 if purchased before January 31 and an additional \$18.00 penalty if purchased after that date. Dog licenses may be purchased locally at ACE Hardware, Discount Drug Mart and Novotny's Farm Market. A dog license may also be obtained online but there is an additional \$2.00 online fee. In Lorain County the website is www.loraincounty.com and in Erie County it is www.doglicenses.us.oh.erie. In addition, dogs must wear a valid identification tag.

An unlicensed dog can be seized and impounded and the owners fined up to \$100.00 plus court costs.

Dogs must also be under the control of their owners at all times. Loose dogs may be impounded and their owners cited. It has been reported that nationally 2.2 million stray dogs are taken to animal shelters each year. Only about 600,000 are returned to their owners, mostly due to the dog not having a license or identification.

The law requires that every dog at least three months old must be vaccinated against rabies by a licensed veterinarian.

Under the Vermilion ordinances every dog bite case must be reported to the Vermilion Police Department. The dog must be examined by a veterinarian and the results reported within 24 hours. The dog must be placed in quarantine for 10 days.

Under Ohio law the owner, keeper or harbinger of a dog who bites someone is strictly liable for any injuries caused by the dog. The only defense is that the person bitten was trespassing or was teasing, tormenting or abusing the dog on the owner's property.

There are also laws pertaining to "dangerous dogs" and "vicious dogs". Under Ohio law, dangerous dog is defined as follows: "Dangerous dog" means a dog that, without provocation has chased or approached in either a menacing fashion or an apparent attitude of attack, or has attempted to bite or otherwise endanger any person, while that dog is off the premises of its owner.

A "vicious dog" is defined as follows: "Vicious dog" means a dog that, without provocation, meets any of the following requirements: 1. has killed or caused serious injury to any person; 2. has caused injury, or killed another dog; 3. Belongs to a breed that is commonly known as a pit bull dog.

Except when lawfully hunting, a dangerous or vicious dog must be kept securely confined at all times. The owner of a vicious dog must also obtain liability insurance with limits of not less than \$100,000.00.

Finally, Vermilion has an ordinance against "unreasonably noisy dogs". A dog is "unreasonably noisy if such dog barks, howls or yelps, or produces any combination of the foregoing sounds: for a total of more than five minutes in a twenty minute period or such barking, howling or yelping is audible by a person of normal hearing at a distance of at least one hundred feet from the perimeter of the property of which such dog is present".

The owner of an "unreasonably noisy dog" is subject to being charged with a minor misdemeanor with a maximum fine of \$150.00. Especially during the summer with many children playing outside owners must be careful to properly secure their dogs.