

Did you know?

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DANGEROUS DOGS

Most municipalities have by-laws in place to deal with dogs who have irresponsible owners. The most common by-law is one that prohibits dogs from running at large. Owners are required to keep their dogs under immediate charge or control when away from their own home. If a dog is found running at large it may be impounded and the owner will have to pay a significant fine to get the dog back. In the past few years the media has reported many incidences of dogs that are considered dangerous. These are the dogs who attack other pets or children. The provincial government has laws in place relating to dangerous dogs that apply to all municipalities. An animal control officer or peace officer can seize, impound and detain a dangerous dog in the interest of public safety.

What is a dangerous dog?

The definition includes a dog that has, or is likely to kill or seriously injure a person. A dog is also dangerous if it has killed or seriously injured a domestic/companion animal in a public place other than the dog owner's property. It is the animal control officer who decides whether or not a dog is dangerous. Since each circumstance is unique, the officer will look at all factors. Some of the things he or she may consider are: **1)** the seriousness of the injury; history of the dog; **2)** whether the dog was trained for fighting; whether the dog was provoked or responding to pain or injury; and **3)** whether the dog was protecting itself, its owner, its owner's property or offspring.

Seizure of a Dog

A dangerous dog can be seized, impounded and detained in three ways.

- 1)** The first is if the owner consents.
- 2)** The second is by way of a warrant when an animal control officer satisfies a Justice that there is evidence to support a determination that a dog is dangerous.
- 3)** The third is when a dangerous dog is an immediate threat to the public and it is impractical to obtain a warrant. The animal control officer may, accompanied by the police, enter private property other than a dwelling place, and seize, impound and detain a dog. An animal control officer may apply for a provincial court order to destroy the dog before or after the dog is seized, if he or she thinks it is necessary. Once a dangerous dog is seized, an application for the destruction of the dog must be commenced in 21 days. Otherwise, the dog is returned to the owner.

For More Information

- ♦ Contact your local municipality and the Ministry of the Attorney General.
- ♦ For the Ministry, look in the blue pages of your phone book, under Government of BC.
- ♦ You can also visit the government's website for more detailed information:
www.ag.gov.bc.ca/legislation/dogs.htm