

## Licensing

-  If you keep or own a dog you must get an annual licence from your local council. You must be over 16 to apply for a licence.
-  You will need to provide the microchip number when applying for your licence.
-  If you own a dog you are responsible for how it behaves at home and in public and for keeping it under control.
-  Your dog should have a collar with the owner's name and address on it, or on a plate or badge attached to the collar.
-  Dog licences are issued by your local council, contact them for information on cost and how to make an application, or check their website.

## Control conditions

-  Additional control conditions can be imposed by a court or council dog warden if certain breaches of the Dogs Order have occurred, such as:
  - Muzzled when in a public place.
  - Ensure that the dog is kept under control in a public space, i.e. on a lead.
  - Securely confined in a building or other enclosure.
  - Neutered (if male).

## Dog Fouling

-  If your dog fouls in a public place, you must clean up the mess.
-  If you fail to do so, the council can fine you.
-  Refusal to pay the fine can lead to prosecution.
-  Remember to **bag it and bin it**.

If you keep a dog, you **MUST** follow these requirements.



## Checklist for responsible dog ownership

### I MUST

- Ensure my dog is microchipped and details kept up to date on the microchip database.
- Have a valid dog licence issued by my local council.
- Ensure my dog wears a collar or a tag with my contact details attached.
- Keep my dog under control at home, in rural areas and in public places.
- Ensure my dog has access to clean water and appropriate food suitable to my dog's needs.
- Ensure my dog is wormed regularly.
- Keep my dog in a manner that safeguards my dog's health and welfare.
- Keep my dog in a manner that does not threaten the welfare of another.
- Keep my dog in a manner that safeguards the health and welfare of people.



## Who do I contact if I suspect animal cruelty?

### Suspected cases of dog cruelty or animal welfare concerns should be reported to:

- Pets and non-farmed animals - **your local council**.
- Farmed animals - **DAERA: 0300 200 7852**.
- Wild animals and criminal activity involving animals **PSNI 101 or 999 in an emergency**.



# Responsible Dog Ownership



## DAERA

Department of Agriculture,  
Environment and Rural Affairs

An Roinn Talmhaíochta,  
Comhshaoil agus Gnóthaí  
Tuaithe

Department of Fairmin,  
Environment and Kintra  
Matthers

[www.daera-ni.gov.uk](http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk)



[nidirect.gov.uk/articles/buying-dog-and-responsible-dog-ownership](https://nidirect.gov.uk/articles/buying-dog-and-responsible-dog-ownership)

While pet dogs can significantly enhance the lives of their owners, dog ownership demands significant commitment and responsibility.

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural affairs have compiled this guide to responsible dog ownership in Northern Ireland

## Is a dog right for me?

Owning a dog is a long-term commitment, often up to 20 years. Before you get a dog you should consider if your home and family lifestyle are suited. Ask yourself:

### Is my home right for a dog?

- First determine if your living conditions are suitable for a dog. If living in rental accommodation, you may need your landlord's permission to keep a pet.

### Is my, and my family's lifestyle suited to caring for a dog?

- Are all family members in agreement with having a dog?
- Have you researched dog breeds to find the most suitable for your lifestyle/circumstances?
- Have you time each day to care for, interact with, and provide your dog with adequate exercise for their breed?
- Will commitments, such as travelling to or for your job, impact your caring for a dog?
- Who will look after your dog if you are away from home?

### Do I have the financial resources to cover expenses?

- As well as household expenses such as dog food, bedding and accessories, consider costs like licensing, microchipping, veterinary care, vaccinations, neutering, grooming, dog training classes, pet insurance and boarding kennel fees.



## How to be a responsible dog owner

### Responsible Sourcing

- Consider adopting from a local dog shelter or animal welfare charity.
- Never agree to collect a dog without seeing the dog in its home environment and the dog's mother.
- Reputable breeders may have waiting lists so, please be prepared to wait.
- If sourcing your dog from a Dog Breeding Establishment, ask to see their licence issued by the local council.

## Basic Care

### The FIVE welfare needs.

Anyone in Northern Ireland who owns or looks after an animal is required under The Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 to provide for the animal's needs.

These needs are:

- 1 Need for a suitable diet:** Provide clean water and appropriate food.
- 2 Need for a suitable environment:** A warm and comfortable place to sleep that is dry; space to exercise and to go to the toilet.
- 3 To be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns:** To do things that are natural to them such as playing, walking or enjoying the outdoors.
- 4 Need to be housed with or apart from other animals:** A space where they can be on their own as well as places where they can socialise.
- 5 To be protected from pain, suffering and disease:** A vet can advise on how to care for your dog. Take them to the vet if they are feeling unwell and make sure they have all their vaccinations.

## Dog control

- It is a legal requirement that dogs are kept under control. It is a legal requirement that dogs must be kept on a lead on land where livestock is present. It is recommended that your dog be kept on a lead when you are in public spaces and designated pedestrian zones.
- Make sure your dog does not cause a nuisance or danger to others and respect rules in relation to where dogs are welcome.

## Your legal responsibilities as a dog owner

### The Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

- You are responsible for making sure the needs of your animal are met.
- It is an offence to fail to take reasonable steps to ensure its welfare.

### The Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 makes provision for the licensing of dogs.

#### Microchipping

- By the time your dog is eight weeks old you must ensure your dog is microchipped and registered on an approved database.
- If you keep, sell, purchase, give away or rehome a dog it must be microchipped and registered on a microchip database accessible to local councils.
- The database must include the microchip number, keeper's name, address, and contact number, along with dog identification details.
- You must update the database with any changes of owner/keeper; address; contact number.
- If your dog goes missing, there is a much greater chance of being reunited if your dog is microchipped.
- Please contact your vet for advice on getting a dog and on microchipping.

