



# Dogs Running At Large Ordinance Related FAQs

Many concerns related to the discussion of dogs running at large (ordinance Louisa County Sec. 14-28 "Dogs not to be off owner's premises except when under control; enforcement") may actually be addressed by existing state law or other processes. Please see FAQs below with more information.



## **My dog runs in my unfenced yard without a leash. Will I be in violation?**

**Answer:** No. Per Virginia state code: "a dog shall be deemed to run at large while roaming or running off the property of its owner or custodian and not under its owner's or custodian's immediate control."

State Code  
§ 3.2-6538



## **My dog escaped my yard by accident. Will I be penalized?**

**Answer:** If no damage was caused, no. Accidents happen. This ordinance is intended to create an enforceable structure for habitual offenders. Plus, officers in Virginia may exercise discretion as the code allows when assessing each unique situation.

Proposed  
Sec. 14-28



## **Why aren't hunting dogs included in the recent amendment?**

**Answer:** By state law, hunting dogs are exempt from inclusion in local ordinances prohibiting dogs running at large. Per Virginia state code: "Any locality may by ordinance prohibit the running at large of all or any category of dogs, except dogs used for hunting, in all or any designated portion of such locality during such months as it may designate."

State Code  
§ 3.2-6538



## **My neighbor's hunting dog attacked my animal. What can I do?**

**Answer:** Any dog, including hunting dogs, is subject to being found a "dangerous dog." If a dog is found dangerous, the owner is obligated to the following in addition to other requirements: "Any dangerous dog not confined inside a locked enclosure constructed pursuant to subsection D shall be (i) confined inside the owner's residence or (ii) if outdoors, controlled by a physical leash employed by the responsible adult owner and securely muzzled in a manner that does not cause injury to the animal or interfere with the animal's vision or respiration but prevents it from biting a person or another animal."

State Code  
§ 3.2-6540.01



## **If you find my dog, will you confiscate it?**

**Answer:** We make every reasonable effort to return a dog to its owner. We may impound a dog until the owner is located. However, note, § 3.2-6569 states we may "seize and impound any animal that has been abandoned, has been cruelly treated, or is suffering from an apparent violation of this chapter that has rendered the animal in such a condition as to constitute a direct and immediate threat to its life, safety or health."

State Code  
§ 3.2-6569



## **I have proof of a dog habitually running at large. What can I do?**



Call 540-967-1234 about the process

Whether or not a Louisa County Animal Control Officer has found a dog running at large on your property or not, you have legal options you may pursue. For example, if you have proof the animal (i.e. a video) was there and would like to file a criminal complaint, you may do so at the magistrate's office.



## **I found a stray. Am I now responsible for the animal?**



Call 540-967-1234

Call the Animal Control Office (ACO) or the Animal Shelter when an animal is found. The ACO will pick up the same day during business hours or the following morning if found after hours (exceptions made if the animal is sick/injured). Animals can also be taken directly to the shelter by the finder during the shelter's business hours. Or, the finder can foster through the stray period with the shelter, and the shelter provides all the animal and foster will need.



## **I need help to properly care for my dog. What do I do?**



Call 540-967-1234

Please contact Louisa County Animal Control, ideally before you have a problem. The officers are aware of many resources available to provide dog houses, straw, fence builds, and even food. Speak with us so we can determine how to best help, to include working with non-profit groups.

