

Animal Ordinances for the City of Columbus, Georgia

If you would like to make a complaint regarding an animal in Muscogee County, please contact our administrative office at: 706.653.4512.

The administrative office is open Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. After office hours, weekends or holidays, please call 911 and an Animal Control Officer will be dispatched to your location.

IF YOU HAVE BEEN BITTEN OR SCRATCHED BY AN ANIMAL, PLEASE CONTACT US IMMEDIATELY!

Below are a few city ordinances that our office enforces. Should you have any questions, give us a call at 706.653.4512.

Responsible pet ownership shall mean:

- a) Care of a pet in such a manner as to provide living conditions for the pet;
- b) Control of the pet so that the pet does not cause a nuisance or unsanitary conditions for the neighborhood or community;
- c) Such a pet would have current rabies and city registration tags.

Section 5-8. Rabies vaccination

Responsibility. The owner or person having custody or control of any dog or cat four (4) months of ages or older shall be responsible for having each dog or cat vaccinated for rabies by a licensed veterinarian. Three-year rabies vaccinations are authorized and encouraged.

Section 5-9. Registration of dogs and cats

Registration Required. In addition to the requirement for rabies vaccination, owners of dogs four (4) months of age and older are required to register each such dog and/or cat with the animal control and enforcement division. The dog and/or cat must be vaccinated for rabies before registration is authorized and valid certificate of rabies vaccination must be presented before a dog or cat may be registered, except in the following specially exempted circumstances. A dog or cat may be registered without the required rabies vaccination when:

- 1) A licensed veterinarian has examined the animal and certified that at the time of registration such vaccination would endanger the animal's health because of age, infirmity, debility, illness, or pregnancy. The exemption certification must include the date when a rabies vaccination can be administered.

- 2) The owner shall be required to have the exempted dog or cat vaccinated within ten (10) days of the expiration date of the veterinarian's certificate.
- 3) Veterinarians issuing exemption certificates are authorized to charge the pet owner a medication examination fee.
- 4) Veterinarians registering animals under the provision of this exemption authorization shall attach a copy of the certificate to the animal registration form which shall be forwarded to the animal control and enforcement division in accordance with administrative instructions issued by the animal control and enforcement division. The owner of the animal will be provided with a copy of the certificate of exemption and the owner will be required to present the certificate for inspection on request of an animal control officer.

Section 5-10. Control of dogs and cats

(a) **Generally.**

Irrespective of and/or in addition to impoundment provisions, including assessment of penalty fees relating to impoundment of animals as prescribed in other sections of this chapter, it shall be unlawful for owners of dogs to allow, permit, or by negligence to permit their dogs to be unattended. Any dog on the owners property and not confined thereto by fence, chain, or other suitable and effective means, and when no responsible person is present to control such dog, shall be considered unattended and in violation of this chapter only if said dog has been observed on public property or private property other than property of the owner, and not in voice control of a responsible person, by an enforcement officer of Columbus, Georgia or by a complainant willing to testify in court. Dog and cat owners residing in rural areas of the city and whose lots are zoned A-1 (agricultural) and whose said lots are five (5) acres or more in area, are exempt from the requirement to keep dogs penned, or on a leash, and/or under voice control. These exempted owners are required to ensure that their dogs and cats do not leave the limits of the owner's property, and these owners are subject to all other provisions of this chapter.

(b) **Female dogs.** It shall be unlawful for any person to allow a female dog, when it is breeding season, to go upon or have access to the streets, roads or public areas of Columbus, Georgia. Female dogs shall be confined in such places and manner as well as avoid nuisances being caused by the attraction of male dogs to the premises of others or under any circumstances.

(c) **Leash required in public parks.** Without regard to other provisions of this article or other sections of the Columbus Code, it shall be unlawful for owners of dogs, cats or other

animals to allow or permit such animals to be, or by negligence fail to prevent such animals from being in public parks, unless restrained by a leash and under the control of a responsible person.

(d) **Nuisance control.** Without regard to other provisions of this article or other sections of the Columbus Code, it shall be unlawful for owners of dogs, cats, or other animals to allow, permit or by negligence fail to prevent such animals from acting or performing in such a manner as to cause damage or unsanitary conditions to the property of another, public streets, public parks and recreation areas, or otherwise to cause a nuisance in Columbus. Animal owners residing in rural areas of the city on lots zoned A-1 (agricultural) and which lots are two and one-half (2.5) acres or more in an area, are exempt from nuisance control provisions contained in section 5-10(d) (4). Acts deemed to be nuisances shall include, but are not limited to the following:

- 1) Any animal to enter any place where food is stored, prepared, served or sold to the public except dogs trained specifically to assist a person with a disability when such dog is actually being used by a disabled person as an aid for that disability.
- 2) Any dog to chase, run after, or jump at vehicles moving on public streets and alleys.
- 3) Any dog to attack, bite or injure a person, or to snap, growl, snarl, jump upon or otherwise threaten persons without provocation, unless in defense, protection or assistance of its master or other persons, except when such person is using the dog in conjunction with a criminal activity. These acts shall be considered a violation of this chapter whether or not the dog is confined by fence, chain or leash, or under the voice control of a responsible person.
- 4) Any animal to howl, yelp, whine, or bark in such a manner as to reasonably disturb any person or neighborhood.
- 5) An animal to feed from, turn over, or otherwise disturb garbage containers.
- 6) Any animal to scratch or dig in flowerbeds or to soil or damage any property other than that of the owners.
- 7) Male animals to have access to female animals or vice versa during breeding season, except within enclosures so arranged as to obstruct such animals entirely from view of persons outside of such enclosures.
- 8) Any dog or cat to go onto the property of another or onto public sidewalks, streets, alleys, parks and recreation areas, or onto other public or private ways, and attack another animal or fowl.

- 9) It shall be in violation of this chapter if, when a dog or cat deposits fecal matter on public ways or private property, the owner of the animal does not promptly remove such waste and deposit it in a sanitary manner. This requirement is applicable whether or not the animal is on a leash and/or under voice control.
- 10) Cats or dogs to crawl upon, sleep on, scratch or otherwise soil furniture, porches, automobiles or other tangible property of a neighbor or person other than the owner.

Section 5-12. Cruelty to animal and failure to aid injured animals

It shall be unlawful for any person, willfully and cruelly, to injure or kill any animal by any mode or means causing it unnecessary fright or pain, and it shall further be unlawful for any person, by neglect or otherwise, to cause or allow any animal to endure pain, suffering or injury. Acts violating this section shall include but are not limited to:

- 1) Failure to provide adequate shelter from inclement weather, especially for puppies and kittens.
- 2) Failure to provide animals food for a period of more than twenty-four (24) hours and/or water or care for more than eighteen (18) hours.
- 3) Abandoning any animal on private or public property.
- 4) Failure on the part of the driver of a motor vehicle to stop or call the police or other agencies for assistance after striking or injuring an animal by the motor vehicle.
- 5) Leaving or exposing any poisonous substance, food or drink, for man, animal or fowl or to aid or abet any person in so doing, except insect or rodent poison when used for control of insects, mice or rodent.
- 6) It shall be unlawful for any person to bait, to attack with violence, to provoke, or to harass an animal or human, for the purpose of training such an animal for, or to cause or to sponsor or to promote such an animal to engage in fights, wrestling or similar contests with or among other animals or between animals and humans. Nothing in the foregoing sentence, however, shall prevent the lawful training of guard dogs or other animals, provided the same in no way conflicts with other provisions of this Code or state law.

Section 5-15. Private/hobby kennels (non-commercial)

- a) Any person who maintains within or adjoining his property a combined total of six (6) or more dogs and/or cats over six (6) months of age as personal or family pets, or for

recreational use, or for exhibition, breeding, and where sale of offspring is not the primary function shall be required to have a private/hobby kennel permit.

- b) Private/hobby (non-commercial) permits shall be issued by the chief of animal control and enforcement division. Such permits will be valid for one (1) calendar year and shall be valid from January 1 through December 31 of the year in which issued. Permits shall be renewed each year between January 1 and February 28. Applications received after February 28 shall be considered delinquent.
- c) Locations of private/hobby kennels shall comply with the zoning ordinance of Columbus, and before a private/hobby kennel permit will be issued, the applicant must obtain a certificate of occupancy from the code enforcement officer authorizing the private/hobby kennel at the address specified in the application.
- d) There shall be a twenty-five (25) dollar inspection and permit fee for each private/hobby kennel permit.
- e) The chief of animal control and enforcement division shall have the authority to revoke private/hobby kennel permits when sanitation standards prescribed by this chapter and other ordinances are not maintained.

Section 5-19. Guard dogs

- a) **General.** Control and identification of guard dogs in the interest of protection of law-abiding citizens from attack from such dogs is of paramount importance.
- b) Registration of guard dogs required:
 - 1) Individuals, firms, companies, or corporations who own, rent, lease, or otherwise provide dogs for the purpose of guarding property or establishments within the city limits of Columbus are required to register each guard dog with the animal control and enforcement division. This registration shall be required even if the guard dog(s) are trained or housed outside of Columbus while not actually guarding premises or property.
 - 2) In addition to the requirements for rabies vaccination, section 5-8, and city registration tag, section 5-9, each guard dog residing in or rented, leased, or used for guarding in Columbus shall be required to wear a distinctive red collar with a numbered identification tag fastened thereon.
 - 3) The distinctive guard dog collars shall be available at the animal control and enforcement division at a cost of twenty-five (25) dollars.

NOTE: All violations of animal control ordinances are subject to fines of \$1,000, or imprisonment of 90 days or both. State law violations are subject to more severe penalty.