



Regulations that apply to dog owners and dogs

Sentience

The laws of Malta recognise animals as sentient beings who can feel physical and emotional pain and therefore must be treated in a manner that reduces the amount and effect of pain and stress. The law recognises the 5 freedoms as guidelines to good animal welfare.

Identification of dogs

Microchipping is compulsory for all owned dogs over 4 months old. The cost is €20+VAT for intact dogs and €10+VAT for neutered and spayed dogs as established by law. A fine of €300 will be issued if a person is found to own a dog over 4 months that is not microchipped.

When a dog changes hands a transfer of ownership should be registered immediately.

Dogs are to wear a collar with an ID tag with the owner's contact details at all times in public spaces.

Reporting, missing pets and stray dogs.

An owner must report a **missing dog** to a police station within 24 hours of the dog being noticed missing. Failure to do so may result in being fined for abandonment.

Anyone who finds a **stray dog** must ensure to provide for medical attention if the dog is sick or injured, and return to the rightful owner if this can be identified through microchip or ID tag. If none is necessary or possible, then the dog may be delivered to the nearest police station, or to an animal shelter, or kept. The law allows a 7 day period for owners to claim their dog after it is found, following which the dog may be placed for adoption or adopted by the person who found it.

Leashing and public conduct

Dogs must be kept on leash in all public spaces, except in designated dog parks. Temperamental dogs should be muzzled at all time when in public.

Owners should clean up after their dogs and always carry poo bags (and spares) when walking their dogs. Failure to do so may result in a fine.

NOTE: A ban on permanent tethering is foreseen to be passed through parliament in the coming months, alongside a ban on metal chain collars (choke chains) and electric (shock) collars.

Breeding

The law required breeders to register with the Veterinary Department by application in which information about the premises, treating veterinary surgeon and other information will be collected.

Any person involved in the breeding of animals is held responsible by law for the anatomical, physiological and psychological characteristics of their animals which may result in a risk to the animals.

The sale of animals is regulated and licensed under the Minimum standards for petshop regulations which apply to any and all instances when an animal is exchanged for money by a real or virtual person.

Puppies may not be sold before 8 weeks of age.

Bitches may not be bred before the age of one year, or more than once in any 12 month period.

Boarding

Boarding kennels are regulated and licensed to operate under the Minimum standards for boarding kennels regulation.

Animal Sanctuaries

Shelters are regulated and licensed to operate under the Minimum standards for animal sanctuary regulations. MSPCA has applied and optioned license to run an animal sanctuary.

Nuisance Barking

Nuisance barking may result in legal action being taken against an owner if they do not attempt to resolve the issue. Besides the animal welfare implications of a dog barking incessantly, the civil code also applies in these situations. Owners are encouraged to seek advice on behaviour modification for their pets.

Surgical Alterations

It is illegal to declaw, crop ears and dock tails in Malta. Any known instance of such happening, whether by a surgeon or layman, should be reported to the Animal Welfare Department and Administrative Law Enforcement for investigation.

Beaches

Dogs are not allowed on sandy beaches unless these are designated dog friendly beaches. Dogs may be allowed on rocky beaches but may not swim inside bather zones outlined by red and yellow buoys.

Did we miss something? Let us know. Call 77711100.