



# HopeNews

Issue 3

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*Dogs Trust Hope Project - Helping dogs whose owners are homeless or in housing crisis*

## Dogs and the Law

When any dog goes missing, it's an extremely worrying time for both the owner and their dog. The owner's top priority is always getting their dog back safe and sound, no matter the cost. But for dog owners who are homeless or in housing crisis, the fees involved in reclaiming their dogs are often more than they can afford. That's why it's vital that all of our clients are aware of their responsibilities and the laws that apply to them as dog owners.

In April this year, Section 68 of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 came into force in England and Wales. The Act removed responsibility for stray dogs from the police, leaving all duty to the local authority. This means that stray dogs will now be collected by a dog warden.

Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, the local authority has the right to charge dog owners a fee for returning their dog. If the dog has been transported to and kept in kennels then further charges will apply. This Act also applies in Scotland.

The following fees will give you an example of how much owners may have to pay to get their dogs back.

Statutory stray dog fee	£25
Council administration fee	£20
Kennelling charge (first day)	£20
Kennelling charge (subsequent days)	£10

Dogs Trust Hope Project cannot help with the cost of any fees incurred if a dog is picked up as a stray. So it's very important

that our clients take every precaution to prevent this from happening.

Under the Control of Dogs Order 1992, every dog in a public place is required by law to wear a collar bearing the name and address of its owner on it or on a disc attached to it. If a dog is not wearing a collar and tag when out in public, it may be seized by the local authority and treated as a stray. The owner or person responsible for the dog may also be prosecuted and fined.

It is advisable that all dogs should be kept on a lead in public places and when they are around other animals. Dogs should only be let off-lead in safe areas. This should help to prevent dogs from running off or getting lost. It is an offence to have a dog on a designated road without it being held on a lead. Some local authorities may also make it an offence to have a dog off-lead in certain parks and communal areas.

Paul Robertson is the Environmental Protection Manager for Middlesbrough



Council and he is keen to reiterate this message:

"Dogs are required by law to wear a collar and identity tag at all times in a public place. It can help you to be reunited speedily with your dog if it escapes or gets lost. Dog Wardens will often return your dog directly to you if they can identify it, avoiding the need to pay kennelling fees and a stray dog fine."

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# Dogs and the Law continued from page 1

Aside from stray dogs, there are many other laws that apply to dog owners and it is important that your clients are aware of them. The main laws are summarised below:



Photo: FreeDigitalPhotos.net

- The Animal Welfare Act 2006 and the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 states that all pet owners have a duty of care to provide their pet with adequate food and fresh drinking water, somewhere suitable to live, proper exercise and access to veterinary treatment.
- The law states that a person in charge of a dog must properly dispose of any faeces passed by their dog in a public place. This may be enforced through by-laws in England and Wales or by the Dog Fouling (Scotland) Act 2003.
- Under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 it is an offence for anyone to own a Pit Bull Terrier, Japanese Tosa, Dogo Argentino or Fila Brasileiro. Anyone found in possession of one of these breeds could be imprisoned for up to 6 months and fined up to £5000. Their dog may also be destroyed.
- The Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 also states that all dogs must be kept under control at all times. Anyone who allows their dog to be dangerously out of control in a public place may be imprisoned for up to 6 months and fined up to £5000. Their dog may also be destroyed.

Dogs Trust has produced a series of factsheets on dogs and the law. To download them, please go to: [www.dogstrust.org.uk/information](http://www.dogstrust.org.uk/information)

## Lets with Pets

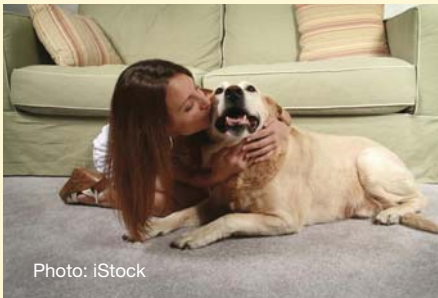


Photo: iStock

A survey recently commissioned by Dogs Trust has found that a shocking 75% of landlords ban dogs from their privately rented properties. Things are no better for other pets – 65% ban cats and 10% even ban fish!

The news could not come at a worse time as the country experiences an economic downturn which is forcing increasing numbers of people to live in privately rented accommodation. That's why Dogs Trust will soon be launching its Lets with Pets campaign to encourage more landlords to accept tenants with pets in their properties.

By providing landlords with information on the benefits of renting to pet owners, writing a pet policy and managing common pet issues, Dogs Trust hopes to show them that it makes good financial sense to open up their properties to pet owners. After all, pet owners make up 43% of the UK population so landlords are potentially missing out on a huge slice of the rental market!

Dogs Trust will also be providing tenants with information and advice to help them

find a suitable property that will accept them and their pets.

Our recent survey of 1400 pet owners also showed that:

- 78% of pet owners experienced difficulties finding privately rented accommodation that allowed pets
- 54% did not find anywhere suitable to live with their pets
- 8% of pet owners were forced to rehome their pets in order to find somewhere suitable to live

For more information on Dogs Trust's Lets with Pets campaign, please check our website [www.dogstrust.org.uk](http://www.dogstrust.org.uk) in early 2009.

## New Dog-friendly Directory

Dogs Trust Hope Project has worked for many years to help homelessness projects make an informed decision about accepting clients with dogs.

We currently work with more than 200 dog-friendly homelessness projects through our veterinary entitlement card scheme. But sadly the majority of homelessness organisations and housing providers in the UK still do not accept dogs.

You can download the directory from our website at [www.dogstrusthopeproject.org.uk](http://www.dogstrusthopeproject.org.uk)

That's why Dogs Trust has produced its new Directory of Dog-friendly Homelessness Services. The directory features a range of dog-friendly projects, from hostels and nightshelters to day centres and advice services. We hope that it will be a useful resource for homelessness organisations and clients looking for dog-friendly services in their area.



Directory of Dog-friendly Homelessness Services 2008



# Paula Clover

## Gypsy & Traveller Liaison Officer

Even though the Hope Project was initially set up to help dogs whose owners were rough sleeping, Dogs Trust will now also help anyone who is squatting, living in a hostel, night shelter, or in any form of temporary accommodation. In recent years we have also extended the service to travellers living on unauthorised travellers sites, as they face many of the same problems as our other clients.

Paula Clover, Gypsy & Traveller Liaison Officer for Dorset County Council, has been working with the Hope Project since May 2006 to ensure that basic veterinary healthcare is available to all dogs belonging to travellers in her charge.

Paula manages all the unauthorised sites in Dorset. She says "In Dorset we have around 14 unauthorised or illegal encampments all year round. These are mainly new age traveller encampments in the woods in Dorset. We have no permanent new age traveller sites in Dorset for the travellers to live on".

Here Paula tells us about what she does and how the Veterinary Entitlement Card Scheme has helped her clients:

### What challenges do you face as a Gypsy & Traveller Liaison Officer?

I am the middle person between the travellers and members of the public, councillors etc. I am constantly liaising between both parties to sort out problems on the illegal encampments and trying to strike a balance between the two.

### Do you feel the Hope Project Veterinary Entitlement Card Scheme has benefited your clients?

Yes, this is a fantastic scheme that has helped so many of the travellers' dogs. A lot of the people who live on the sites are on benefits or receive very low incomes and without the scheme I think the dogs would suffer. The Hope Project allows the dogs to be vaccinated, microchipped, treated for fleas, wormed and neutered for free. Now veterinary treatment is no longer out of their reach because of the cost, and the dogs are all benefiting.

### What problems would you have faced if this service was not available to your clients?

I think we would have seen more puppies on the sites and dogs not being regularly vaccinated and wormed. Also the



Paula with client Charlie and her dog Storm

dogs often go missing from the sites but now all the dogs in the scheme are microchipped so they can be returned easily.

### Do you find it difficult to implement the scheme amongst your clients?

It is always quite easy to get the travellers to join the scheme, but if they won't neuter their dogs they cannot re-join after the 4 month time limit so this becomes a problem for the dogs involved. I have had success in female neutering but I still find it difficult to persuade male travellers to castrate male dogs. I do agree that Dogs Trust has this rule because there are far too many unwanted dogs in rehoming centres.

### What do you feel is the biggest problem amongst travellers as a result of pet ownership?

The biggest problem is the number of puppies that are born on the sites. But now we are neutering a lot of the female dogs this should change. Also we have problems with dogs fighting. I am hoping to persuade more of the travellers to get their male dogs castrated.

### You were a dog warden prior to this. Are there any barriers to reuniting a dog with its owner?

I was a dog warden five years ago. I still have a good working relationship with the dog wardens in Dorset. If a traveller's dog is found by the Dog Warden, they will ring Petlog who then inform Dogs Trust that they have one of the dogs on the Hope Project scheme. Dogs Trust can then ring me to try and trace the dog's owner. This has proven to work really well and many dogs have been reunited with their owners.

# Dogs Trust Freedom Project

**Dogs Trust Hope Project is part of the Outreach Projects department, which provides services to people who are homeless or in housing crisis. In this issue we would like to give you an insight into another of our outreach projects, the Dogs Trust Freedom Project.**

The Freedom Project is a dog fostering service for families fleeing domestic violence, which has been running for the last four years. The project is currently open to families fleeing domestic violence in Greater London and Yorkshire. In London the project can also provide help for cats by placing them with Cats Protection.

It's a sad fact that in some domestic violence situations perpetrators will use pets as a way to control, threaten and intimidate their victims and in some cases they will threaten to kill the pet if their partner tries to leave. As a result many women stay in violent situations because they are afraid to leave without knowing what will happen to their pets.

In most cases refuges are unable to take pets, so this service is essential in enabling women to flee a violent home and ensure their pets are safe. In several recent studies of women entering refuges for protection against domestic violence, nearly half reported that their pets had been threatened, injured, or killed by their partners.

To date the Freedom Project has helped over 400 pets. The project works closely with organisations such as Women's Aid and Refuge, as well as taking referrals from the police, social services and women direct.

Once a pet has been referred to the project they are matched with a suitable foster carer who they will stay with until their owner has found new housing and is ready to have them back.

Foster carers receive continuous support from the Freedom Project team during a foster placement. Clients are also frequently updated on the wellbeing of their pet. It's a free service to both clients and foster carers and all costs, such as pet



Photo: Andy Catterall

food and veterinary costs, are met by Dogs Trust.

The service is completely confidential; carers and clients are ensured anonymity, maintaining safety for both parties.

For further information on the Freedom Project, please go to: [www.dogstrustfreedomproject.org.uk](http://www.dogstrustfreedomproject.org.uk)



## New microchipping rule

We have always insisted that dogs registered on our Veterinary Entitlement Card Scheme are microchipped but from now on all dogs must be microchipped and registered to their owner before we can renew their veterinary entitlement card.

For dogs that are not already microchipped when they join the scheme, a microchip will be sent out to their owner along with their veterinary entitlement card. We urge our clients to have their dogs microchipped at the first available opportunity. We will then

register the microchip with Petlog. This means that if a dog is picked up by a dog warden, there is a good chance of it being reunited with its owner.

We can only stress the importance of all dogs having a permanent form of identification such as a microchip. Microchipping is a relatively simple but effective way of identifying a dog, although it is not a substitute for a collar and tag, which is required by law.

Microchipping a dog greatly reduces the risk of losing a much loved pet. Unfortunately there are a large number of our clients who have not had their dogs microchipped. To help us get this message across, we ask that participating homelessness organisations and veterinary surgeries remind our clients whenever possible about the importance of having this done.

We would also be grateful if our participating veterinary surgeries could inform us as soon

as possible that they have implanted a microchip for one of our client's dogs, by filling out a payment request form. We know that some of our vets do not charge us for microchip implantation, which we appreciate, but it is important that you still let us know that you have microchipped a Hope Project dog.

Microchipping is carried out free for all dogs registered on the Hope Project Veterinary Entitlement Card scheme.



**Contact us** If you have any feedback on Hope News, we'd love to hear from you. You can contact us by phone, email or post.

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