



Ohio Revised Code

Section 955.22 Vicious, dangerous, and nuisance dog acts.

Effective: March 20, 2026

Legislation: House Bill 247 - 136th General Assembly

(A) As used in this section and sections 955.11, 955.23, and 955.24 of the Revised Code:

(1) "Vicious dog act" means one of the following actions committed by a dog without provocation, other than by a police dog that is being used to assist one or more law enforcement officers in the performance of their official duties:

(a) The killing of any person;

(b) Causing serious injury to any person by physical contact;

(c) Engaging in a dangerous dog act after the dog has been designated as a dangerous dog under section 955.23 of the Revised Code.

(2) "Dangerous dog act" means one of the following actions committed by a dog without provocation, other than by a police dog that is being used to assist one or more law enforcement officers in the performance of their official duties:

(a) Causing injury by physical contact, other than killing or serious injury, to any person in either a menacing fashion or an apparent attitude of attack;

(b) Causing serious injury to any person without making physical contact in either a menacing fashion or an apparent attitude of attack;

(c) The killing of another dog;

(d) Causing serious injury to another dog that results in euthanasia of the dog by a person authorized to perform euthanasia under Ohio law.



(3) "Nuisance dog act" means one of the following actions committed by a dog without provocation and while off the premises of its owner, keeper, or harbinger, other than by a police dog that is being used to assist one or more law enforcement officers in the performance of their official duties:

- (a) Chasing or approaching a person in either a menacing fashion or an apparent attitude of attack;
- (b) Attempting to bite or otherwise endanger any person in either a menacing fashion or an apparent attitude of attack;
- (c) Causing injury to any person without making physical contact in either a menacing fashion or an apparent attitude of attack;
- (d) Chasing, threatening, harassing, or injuring another dog or livestock in either a menacing fashion or an apparent attitude of attack;
- (e) Having been the subject of a third or subsequent violation of section 955.21 of the Revised Code.

(4) "Injury" means any physical harm to a person, another dog, or livestock, as applicable, but does not include physical harm resulting from a situation where the dog behaves in a playful, nonaggressive, or age-appropriate manner.

(5) "Serious injury" means any of the following:

- (a) Any physical harm that carries a substantial risk of death;
- (b) Any physical harm that involves a permanent incapacity, whether partial or total, or a temporary, substantial incapacity;
- (c) Any physical harm that involves a permanent disfigurement or a temporary, serious disfigurement;
- (d) Any physical harm that involves acute pain of a duration that results in substantial suffering or any degree of prolonged or intractable pain.



"Serious injury" does not include physical harm resulting from a situation where the dog behaves in a playful, nonaggressive, or age-appropriate manner.

(6) "Without provocation" means either of the following, as applicable:

(a) That a dog was not teased, tormented, or abused by a person, or that the dog was not coming to the aid or the defense of a person who was not engaged in illegal or criminal activity and who was not using the dog as a means of carrying out such activity;

(b) That a dog was not attacked by another dog or livestock.

(7) "Animal shelter for dogs" has the same meaning as in section 956.01 of the Revised Code.

(8) "Livestock" does not include poultry.

(B)(1) No owner, keeper, or harbinger of a dog that is not an animal shelter for dogs shall negligently, and no animal shelter for dogs that keeps or harbors a dog shall recklessly, fail to prevent the dog from committing a vicious dog act. Whoever violates this division is guilty of a misdemeanor of the third degree on a first offense and a misdemeanor of the second degree on each subsequent offense.

(2) No owner, keeper, or harbinger of a dangerous or vicious dog, including an animal shelter for dogs, shall negligently fail to prevent the dog from committing a vicious dog act that involves injuring or killing a person. Whoever violates this division is guilty of a felony of the third degree.

(C)(1) No owner, keeper, or harbinger of a dog that is not an animal shelter for dogs shall negligently, and no animal shelter for dogs that keeps or harbors a dog shall recklessly, fail to prevent the dog from committing a dangerous dog act. Whoever violates this division is guilty of a misdemeanor of the fourth degree on a first offense and a misdemeanor of the third degree on each subsequent offense.

(2) No owner, keeper, or harbinger of a dangerous or vicious dog, including an animal shelter for dogs, shall negligently fail to prevent the dog from committing a dangerous dog act that involves



injuring a person. Whoever violates this division is guilty of a misdemeanor of the first degree.

(D) No owner, keeper, or harbinger of a dog that is not an animal shelter for dogs shall negligently, and no animal shelter for dogs that keeps or harbors a dog shall recklessly, fail to prevent the dog from committing a nuisance dog act. Whoever violates this division is guilty a minor misdemeanor on a first offense and a misdemeanor of the fourth degree on each subsequent offense.

(E) In addition to any other penalty described under this section, and except as provided in division (F) of this section, the court may order a dog that is the subject of an offense under this section to be humanely destroyed by a licensed veterinarian or the county dog warden at the owner's expense if the court finds that the dog did one of the following:

- (1) Committed a vicious dog act;
- (2) Committed a dangerous dog act;
- (3) Injured another dog;
- (4) Attempted to bite a person and such attempt resulted in the injury of the person.

(F) In addition to any other penalty described under this section, the court shall order the dog that is the subject of an offense under this section to be humanely destroyed by a licensed veterinarian or the county dog warden at the owner's expense if, as a result of the offense, the dog kills a person or causes serious injury to a person that results in one of the following:

- (1) Substantial risk of death;
- (2) Permanent incapacity;
- (3) Serious permanent disfigurement;
- (4) Acute pain of a duration that results in substantial suffering.