



Ohio Revised Code

Section 955.24 [Former R.C. 955.22, amended and renumbered by H.B. 247, 136th General Assembly, effective 03/20/2026] Vicious and dangerous dog ownership requirements.

Effective: March 20, 2026

Legislation: House Bill 247 - 136th General Assembly

(A) No owner, keeper, or harborer of a vicious or dangerous dog shall fail to do any of the following:

- (1) While that dog is outdoors, but on the premises of the owner, keeper, or harborer, securely confine the dog at all times in a locked pen that has a top, locked fenced yard with fencing that is sufficiently constructed to prevent escape, or other locked enclosure that has a top;
- (2) While that dog is inside a residential dwelling or other building on the premises of the owner, keeper, or harborer, and there is an invitee inside the dwelling or building, securely confine the dog at all times inside the dwelling or building so that there is no reasonable probability that the dog comes into contact with the invitee;
- (3) While that dog is off the premises of the owner, keeper, or harborer, keep that dog on a chain-link leash or tether that is not more than six feet in length and additionally do at least one of the following:
 - (a) Keep that dog in a locked pen that has a top, locked fenced yard with fencing that is sufficiently constructed to prevent escape, or other locked enclosure that has a top;
 - (b) Have the leash or tether controlled by a person who is of suitable age and discretion or securely attach, tie, or affix the leash or tether to the ground or a stationary object or fixture so that the dog is adequately restrained and station such a person in close enough proximity to that dog so as to prevent it from causing injury to any person;
 - (c) Muzzle that dog.

A violation of division (A) of this section is a strict liability offense and section 2901.20 of the



Revised Code does not apply.

(B) No owner, keeper, or harborer of a vicious or dangerous dog shall fail to do any of the following:

- (1) Obtain liability insurance in an amount, exclusive of interest and costs, that equals or exceeds one hundred thousand dollars, with an insurer authorized to write liability insurance in this state providing coverage in each occurrence because of damage or bodily injury to or death of a person caused by the vicious or dangerous dog;
- (2) Provide proof of that liability insurance upon request to any law enforcement officer, county dog warden, or public health official charged with enforcing this section;
- (3) Notify the local dog warden immediately if any of the following occurs:
 - (a) The dog is loose or unconfined.
 - (b) The dog bites a person, unless the dog is on the property of the owner of the dog, and the person who is bitten is unlawfully trespassing or committing a criminal act within the boundaries of that property.
 - (c) The dog attacks another animal while the dog is off the property of the owner of the dog.
- (4) If the dog is sold, given to another person, or dies, notify the county auditor and the dog warden within ten days of the sale, transfer, or death;
- (5) Prior to any training or veterinary care provided to the dog by a trainer or licensed veterinarian, disclose to the trainer or licensed veterinarian, as applicable, that the dog is a vicious or dangerous dog.

A violation of division (B) of this section is a strict liability offense and section 2901.20 of the Revised Code does not apply.

(C) No person shall recklessly do any of the following:



- (1) Debark or surgically silence a dog that the person knows or has reason to believe is a vicious or dangerous dog;
- (2) Possess a vicious or dangerous dog if the person knows or has reason to believe that the dog has been debarked or surgically silenced;
- (3) Falsely attest on a waiver form provided by the veterinarian that the person's dog is not a vicious or dangerous dog or otherwise provide false information on that written waiver form.

(D) Before a veterinarian debarks or surgically silences a dog, the veterinarian may give the owner of the dog a written waiver form that attests that the dog is not a vicious or dangerous dog. The written waiver form shall include all of the following:

- (1) The veterinarian's license number and current business address;
- (2) The number of the license of the dog if the dog is licensed;
- (3) A reasonable description of the age, coloring, and gender of the dog as well as any notable markings on the dog;
- (4) The signature of the owner of the dog attesting that the owner's dog is not a dangerous dog;
- (5) A statement that Ohio law prohibits any person from doing any of the following:
 - (a) Debarking or surgically silencing a dog that the person knows or has reason to believe is a vicious or dangerous dog;
 - (b) Possessing a vicious or dangerous dog if the person knows or has reason to believe that the dog has been debarked or surgically silenced;
 - (c) Falsely attesting on a waiver form provided by the veterinarian that the person's dog is not a vicious or dangerous dog or otherwise provide false information on that written waiver form.



(E) It is an affirmative defense to a charge of a violation of division (C) of this section that the veterinarian who is charged with the violation obtained, prior to debarking or surgically silencing the dog, a written waiver form that complies with this section and that attests that the dog is not a vicious or dangerous dog.

(F)(1) Whoever violates division (A) of this section is guilty of a misdemeanor of the fourth degree on a first offense and of a misdemeanor of the third degree on each subsequent offense. Additionally, the court may order the offender to do either or both of the following:

(a) Personally supervise the vicious or dangerous dog that the offender owns, keeps, or harbors;

(b) Cause the dog to complete dog obedience training.

(2) The court, in the alternative, may order the vicious or dangerous dog to be humanely destroyed by a licensed veterinarian or the county dog warden at the owner's expense.

(G)(1) Whoever violates division (B)(1) of this section is guilty of a minor misdemeanor on a first offense and a misdemeanor of the fourth degree on each subsequent offense.

(2) Whoever violates division (B)(2), (3), (4), or (5) of this section is guilty of a minor misdemeanor.

(H) Whoever violates division (C)(1), (2), or (3) of this section is guilty of a felony of the fourth degree. Additionally, the court shall order that the dog involved in the violation be humanely destroyed by a licensed veterinarian or the county dog warden. Until the court makes a final determination and during the pendency of any appeal of a violation of division (C)(1), (2), or (3) of this section and at the discretion of the dog warden, the dog shall be confined or restrained in accordance with the provisions of division (A) of this section or at the county dog pound at the owner's expense.

(I) Divisions (A) and (B) of this section do not apply to an animal shelter for dogs with respect to a dog that it keeps or harbors if both of the following apply:



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- (1) The animal shelter for dogs did not have knowledge and could not have reasonably ascertained that the dog is a dangerous or vicious dog.
- (2) Before taking possession of the dog, the animal shelter for dogs asked the following questions of the dog's previous owner, keeper, or harborer, if such person is known and if the dog was not impounded under section 959.132 of the Revised Code:
 - (a) "Has the dog ever chased or attempted to attack or bite a person? If yes, describe the incident(s) in which the behavior occurred."
 - (b) "Has the dog ever bitten a person? If yes, describe the incident(s) in which the behavior occurred."
 - (c) "Has the dog ever seriously injured or killed a person? If yes, describe the incident(s) in which the behavior occurred."
 - (d) "Has the dog previously been designated a nuisance, dangerous, or vicious dog? If yes, indicate the designation that was assigned, the date of designation, and in which county or city the designation was made."