



Regulating Dangerous Dogs and Public Nuisance Animals

What is a Dangerous Dog?

A Dangerous Dog is one that has:

- attacked or bitten two people engaged in lawful activity within a 48-month period.
- attacked or bitten a person engaged in lawful activity causing a substantial injury or death to the person.

A dog bite means the dog's teeth caused a break in the skin, no matter how small.

An attack is any action by a dog that puts a person in reasonable fear for their safety.

If a dog was declared "Vicious" or "Dangerous" in another jurisdiction, it can be designated a Dangerous Dog in our area.



What is a Public Nuisance Animal?

A dog may be declared a public nuisance if it:

- injured or killed another animal.
- cannot be controlled by its owner or custodian.
- if local or state laws (including excessive noise or property damage) are repeatedly violated.

A Public Nuisance Animal does not have to bite or attack someone to earn this declaration.

The hearing process is the same for a Public Nuisance Animal as it is for a Dangerous Dog.

Can a person be declared a Public Nuisance?

Yes, a person who allows multiple dogs to run loose or who hoards multiple animals may be declared a Public Nuisance Owner.

- Restrictions may be placed on animal ownership (none to few).
- The declaration may last up to five years.

The hearing process is the same as the one for Public Nuisance Animals or Dangerous Dogs.

How do you designate a Dangerous Dog?

Typically the process begins with a complaint made to County Animal Services and an investigation is conducted by an Animal Control Officer – including witness statements and evidence collection.

The results are presented to an Animal Control Lieutenant who determines whether to send the case to the Dangerous Dog Task Force (DDTF).

The case is reviewed again and if there is sufficient cause, the dog's owner is notified in writing of the Department's intent to declare the dog to be a Dangerous Dog.

The owner is advised of the case details and the potential terms that may be imposed.

The dog's owner may request a hearing to contest that designation.

How is the hearing conducted?

- Usually a hearing is scheduled within 30 days.
- A senior manager who has had no involvement in the case acts as the hearing officer.
- This is an informal hearing and does not need to comply with the normal rules of court evidence. However, the hearing is recorded and the witnesses are sworn in before their testimony.
- Witnesses must appear in person.
- Upon completion, the hearing officer will determine whether there is sufficient evidence to declare the animal a Dangerous Dog.
- The owner will be notified in writing of the hearing officer's decision.

What if the owner does not agree with the hearing officer?

The owner has the right to contest the hearing officer's determination through an administrative review, and ultimately through the court system.

What sorts of conditions may be imposed upon the owner of a Dangerous Dog?

The owner may have to:

- Obtain/maintain liability insurance.
- Procure specified fencing.
- Adhere to a specific location for the dog's residence.
- Use specific types of restraint/muzzling.
- Have microchip & photo identification.
- Alter the dog.
- Acquire special registration.

In certain cases, the Department may seek the destruction of the animal.

What happens if the owner doesn't comply with these conditions?

The dog owner may be:

- issued a misdemeanor citation.
- assessed financial penalties.
- give up the animal to be impounded and euthanized.

Who pays for any damages caused by the dog?

Any damage the animal may have caused is a civil matter that may be pursued through the court system.



**For emergencies call
619-236-2341**

For more information,
call: 619-767-2675
email: DASInfo@sdcounty.ca.gov
or go to
www.sddac.com



County Animal Services Shelters

North Shelter

2481 Palomar Airport Road
Carlsbad, CA 92011

South Shelter

5821 Sweetwater Road
Bonita, CA 91902

Shelter Hours:

Tuesday through Sunday
9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Closed Mondays and County holidays

Service Areas:

San Diego County unincorporated areas