

# Why Should I License My Dog?

Aside from the obvious reason – the fact that it is the law – there are several important reasons for licensing your dog. When you license your dog you will receive an ID tag with the license number. You should then place that ID tag on your dog's collar so that he can be identified if he gets lost. The important thing to remember is that you must update your contact information with the licensing office if you move so that the information is kept current. Having a license also means that your pet is up to date with a rabies vaccination. You cannot get a license without proof of rabies vaccine. This helps prevent the spread of rabies which is a serious virus and often deadly.

The main reason to license your dog is so he will have a better chance of being reunited with his family if ever lost. Many dog owners wonder whether they still need to have their dogs licensed if they already carry a microchip. Microchips are injected under your dog's skin so they are not visible to the eye. If your pet is found they must take the dog to a shelter or vet to have the chip scanned. A dog license is a faster, easier way to find the contact information for the owner of a lost pet. It is also possible for microchips to go undetected.

Having your dog licensed is incredibly important, even if he never leaves your property. Though owning a dog requires you to fulfill many responsibilities, one of your most basic tasks is to have your dog vaccinated for rabies and to obtain a license.

Getting or renewing a dog license is a yearly requirement in many cities and towns in the United States, and more municipalities are requiring licenses for cats as well. But what is the purpose of the license, and what are the consequences of not renewing them each year?

Owning a dog and, in many cases, a cat is considered a "privilege" rather than a right. The difference between a privilege and a right can be best explained by using driving as an example. Because cars are both useful and potentially dangerous, governments regulate how they can be used and by whom. Drivers must follow rules on the road or lose their driving privileges.

The same principle applies to owning a pet. Most people live in relatively close proximity in cities, towns and suburbs, and pets can affect the health and well being of the community. So, for everyone's protection, local or county governments regulate pet ownership.

It is important to note that laws governing pet licenses can vary widely between cities, counties and states. You should also note the distinction between a rabies tag and a pet license. For instance, some rural areas may only require proof of rabies vaccination and not a pet license. (However, all licenses require proof of rabies vaccination.)

## Licensing Your Pet Has Several Benefits

- It ensures that animals receive vaccinations against diseases such as rabies, which is potentially fatal to humans and other animals
- It tells animal control officers that a dog or cat has an owner, helping to reunite the pet with his family
- Licenses also help municipalities keep track of how many pets a person owns. Some towns regulate the number of animals that can be kept in a dwelling for the health and safety of the community.

Most people associate a pet license with the tags around the collar. Tags may indicate proof of rabies vaccination and/or the pet's license registration. It is possible for a pet to have three separate tags: one for rabies, one for the license and one containing the owner's contact information.

A tattoo or microchip may also indicate that your pet is licensed. Again, check with your municipality's animal control department to find out what type of proof of license is required.

Licensing your pet is very important. If your dog or cat gets lost, a license may protect a lost pet from rapid euthanasia. Because of overpopulation, city shelters often must euthanize pets after a period of time.

A license tells animal control officers that there may be a family searching desperately for the pet and their contact information should be on file. Depending on your municipality, a license may provide other benefits. For instance, it may guarantee emergency treatment if your pet is found injured.

You can usually purchase a license and tag through your local animal control department or health department. The cost depends on the municipality, but fees are usually minimal, such as \$10 to \$20 each year. A municipality may charge more if your pet is not spayed or neutered – sometimes double the price. This is because overpopulation is a serious issue, so people who don't spay or neuter should pay more to help cover the cost of taking care of unwanted animals.

The fees usually go toward city or city-affiliated shelters, veterinary care, as well as to help pay the salaries of the animal control officers. The failure of obtaining a license can mean a fine and/or late fees.

A license must be renewed each year. In cities that require annual rabies vaccinations, the renewal date may correspond with the date of the rabies vaccination. For areas that allow rabies vaccination every 3 years, the license must be renewed annually with proof of when your dog was vaccinated.

Rabies vaccination can be given to any dog 4 months and older. The first vaccine is valid for one year and the second vaccine is usually a three year vaccine.