

ANIMAL WELFARE BYLAW

(ATM – April 24, 2002 Art. 7)

Preamble

The animal welfare regulations are herein established for the purpose of promoting the health, safety, and general welfare of the Town of Amherst and its animals. This bylaw contains standards relating to the treatment, confinement and keeping of dogs; and cat regulations. The intent of this bylaw is to enhance the quality of life of citizens and animals in the Town of Amherst, and to protect the general public from damage that may be caused by unregulated animals.

1. Validity

This bylaw is not intended to derogate or limit any powers, rights, or obligations set forth in M.G.L. Chapter 140, but is in addition thereto.

2. License Requirement

Any owner/guardian or keeper of a dog six (6) months of age or older shall cause that dog to be licensed as required by M.G.L. Chapter 140, Section 137, commencing on April 1 of each year.

3. License Fee

The fee for every license shall be set by the Town Clerk in accordance with M.G.L. Chapter 40, Section 22F. The fee for a license for any dog that has been neutered or spayed and for which a certificate from a registered veterinarian has been presented to the Town Clerk, shall be set at no more than one-third (1/3) of the fee set by the Town Clerk in accordance with this section. The appropriate license fee, proof of rabies vaccination and neutering/spaying certificate, if any, must be presented to the Town Clerk at the time of application for a license, and, in addition, a stamped self-addressed envelope must accompany an application for a license by mail.

A. A penalty of thirty dollars (\$30.00) shall be imposed upon all owners/guardians or keepers of dogs failing to renew licenses before June 1 of each year. This penalty shall take effect on June 1 of each year.

B. No license fee shall be charged for specially trained service animals, provided one of the following: a doctor's prescription, a doctor's letter on office letterhead, a letter from a service animal training program, or a photo ID of said service animal is shown that such an animal is currently being/has been trained to assist an individual with a disability in accordance with M.G.L. Chapter 140, Section 139, the Americans with Disabilities Act and M.G.L. Chapter 272, Section 98a. Application shall be made for a license as provided in this bylaw, and license tags issued by the Town must be worn by any such service dog.

C. In accordance with M.G.L. Chapter 140, Section 138, the owner/guardian or keeper of any dog six months old or older who is a new resident of the Town of Amherst shall

register said dog within thirty days of taking up residence, subject to a late fine in accordance with Section 3.A.

D. No license fee will, or part thereof shall, be refunded because of subsequent death, loss, spaying, neutering, removal from the Town of Amherst, or other disposal of the dog for which the license has been issued, nor shall any fee for a license issued to a new resident be prorated.

4. Dog Regulations

A. It shall be a violation of this bylaw for which the owner/guardian or keeper shall be liable for a dog to:

- i. go beyond the confines of the owner/guardian's or keeper's property unless the dog is held firmly on a leash, or is under the control of its owner/guardian or keeper, subject to restrictions of Section 5.A.
- ii. disturb the peace or quiet or endanger the safety of any person or other animal, by biting, barking, howling, or in any other manner
- iii. be unrestrained in violation of any order of the Select Board or of the Animal Welfare Officer
- iv. frighten, kill, maim or otherwise injure another's fowl, livestock or domesticated animal
- v. chase another's vehicle on any way open to public travel
- vi. be unlicensed or untagged in violation of state law or of this bylaw.

Violation of this subsection may be subject to a penalty of fifty dollars (\$50.00) for each such violation.

B. Any person may make a complaint to the Animal Welfare Officer regarding an alleged violation of the preceding subsection. Upon receipt of such complaint, the officer shall investigate, and may issue a written order that the dog be temporarily restrained or muzzled, as the officer deems necessary. Within twenty-one days of the issuance of such a written order, the officer shall file a report requesting a Select Board hearing. On receipt of such report and after examination of the complaint, the Select Board may take actions it deems necessary. The owner/guardian or keeper of a dog subject to such an order of the Select Board may within ten days file an appeal in district court.

C. The Animal Welfare Officer may impound any dog determined by her/him to be involved in a violation of either of the two preceding subsections hereof. If the owner/guardian or keeper can be ascertained by some identification device on the dog, the Animal Welfare Officer shall immediately advise that person of the dog's impoundment, the procedures for reimbursing the animal holding facility, the right to redeem the dog, and licensing procedures if applicable. Any dog so impounded and unredeemed after 10 days may be disposed of as provided in Chapter 140, Section 151A of the Massachusetts General Laws.

5. Dogs Unleashed

A. No dog shall be permitted to be unleashed while in any public park, public playground, public building, or public recreational field or facility, or in any school yard or school recreational field during school hours or after-school hours when an athletic or other event is occurring on school grounds, or in the downtown business areas.

Notwithstanding the prohibitions contained in the preceding sentence, the Conservation Commission, Leisure Service and Supplemental Education Commission, Amherst and Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committees, Select Board or Town Manager may issue regulations which may permit dogs to be unleashed on land controlled by said Commission, Committee, Board or Town Manager. Violation of this subsection may be subject to a penalty of twenty-five dollars (\$25.00) for each such violation.

B. Any dog found to be unleashed while in any public park, public playground, public building, or public recreational field or facility, or in any school yard or school recreational field during school hours or after-school hours when an athletic or other event is occurring on school grounds, or in the downtown business areas of the Town of Amherst, except as allowed in Section 5.A., may be apprehended and confined by the Animal Welfare Officer and/or a Police Officer.

C. Any dog found to be unleashed while in any public park, public playground, public building, or public recreational field or facility, or in any school yard or school recreational field during school hours or after-school hours when an athletic or other event is occurring on school grounds, or in the downtown business areas of the Town of Amherst and not in the presence of its owner/guardian or keeper, except as allowed in Section 5.A., shall be apprehended and confined by the Animal Welfare Officer and/or a Police Officer. Upon impoundment of any dog in accordance with this subsection or the preceding subsection, the Animal Welfare Officer shall notify forthwith the licensed owner/guardian or keeper of said dog, giving the said owner/guardian or keeper a period of ten (10) days within which to recover the dog. For each and every dog picked up by the Animal Welfare Officer or her/his agent there shall be a pickup fee in increasing amounts for each occurrence, not to exceed fifty dollars (\$50.00). Fees, including the daily fee for the care of the dog, are payable by the owner/guardian or keeper before retrieval of the dog shall be allowed.

D. It shall be unlawful for any person to fasten, chain or tie a dog to a stationary object for a period of time in the downtown business area so as to create an unhealthy situation for the animal or a potentially dangerous situation for a pedestrian, as determined by the Animal Welfare Officer. Violation of this section may be subject to a penalty of twenty-five dollars (\$25.00) for each offense.

E. The Animal Welfare Officer of the Town of Amherst and/or any Police Officer of said town shall enforce the provisions of this section of the bylaw.

6. Prohibits Dog Waste Excretion on Public Ways

A. It shall be unlawful for the owner/guardian or keeper having care of a dog to permit such dog, either willfully or through failure to exercise due care or control of such animal, to excrete any solid waste upon any sidewalk, public street or public park, schoolyard or school recreational field, or public recreational areas, or upon any real property other than the real property owned or controlled by such owner/guardian or keeper. No violation of this section shall be deemed to have occurred if the owner/guardian or keeper of the offending animal promptly and voluntarily removes the animal waste.