



# Animal Laws

## Building and Neighborhood Services

109 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue South

Franklin, TN 37064

615-794-7012 OFFICE 615-591-9066 FAX

The following is a list of actions a resident may take regarding animals in their neighborhood.

### **Definitions:**

“Leash” shall mean any cord, chain, rope, thong or other device affixed to a dog or cat and used by the owner to restrain the movement of the dog or cat, which cord, chain, rope, thong or other restraining device is no greater than fifteen (15) feet in length.

### **Dog(s) Running At Large: TCA 44-8-408**

It is Tennessee state law that dog owners are to make sure their dog(s) are confined to their property. This means that the dog(s) must remain on the dog owner’s property unless the dog is on a leash under the control of a person. If a resident sees a dog in their neighborhood *running at large* (RAL) they may contact Williamson County Animal Control (WCAC) at **(615) 786-0094** to report it and they will try to catch the dog and return it to the owner. If the dog has a rabies tag and the resident feels comfortable getting the number and year of the tag, they may call WCAC and they can trace the tag for the owner’s info and contact them. NOTE: Not all dogs are friendly. If the resident does not feel comfortable getting close to the dog, they should call WCAC.

If the resident knows where the dog’s owner lives, they may call WCAC to file a complaint. WCAC will visit the dog owners and educate them on the laws. Callers may remain anonymous.

If a dog is RAL the owner is legally responsible for any damages the animal does whether it is to a person, property, and/or other animal through civil action. In addition, they could also receive a citation with a minimum fine of \$326.00 or citation to appear in court.

### **Excessive Barking:**

Williamson County’s Resolution provides that it is unlawful for an individual to harbor a dog that by frequent barking, howling, or whining disturbs the peace of a number of individuals in the neighborhood. However, state law does not authorize county animal control officers to impound a dog or issue a citation solely for excessive barking.

Residents have civil remedies available. If the animal’s noise is so excessive as to constitute a nuisance (that is, a condition which unreasonably disturbs the use and occupation of your property) you have a right to file a civil action to abate the nuisance in the Williamson County Courts.



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### **Electronic or “Invisible” Fence:**

Electronic or invisible fences designed to keep a dog on the owner’s property are permitted. However, if the animal runs through the fence, the owner will be in violation of TCA 44-8-408, *Dog(s) Running at Large*.

### **Rabies Vaccinations:**

Tennessee State Law TCA 68-8-104 states a dog must be vaccinated for the rabies virus. The shots must be given by a veterinarian and the dog must wear the rabies tag that it is issued, per state law TCA 68-8-107

### **Dogs in Heat:**

Tennessee State Law TCA 44-8-410 states that all female dogs in heat must be confined indoors.

### **Dogs Kept Outside:**

Tennessee State Law TCA 39-14-202 states dogs kept outside for a period must have shelter, food, and water.

### **Dog Bites:**

If there is a dog bite, and the bite breaks the skin, state law requires this be reported to the local animal control. Animal control will complete a report and determine if the dog is current on its rabies shots. Animal Control will then facilitate a quarantine period of ten (10) days. This quarantine may be done at the WCAC facility, a veterinarian facility, or possibly at home.

### **Emergencies:**

WCAC provides an after-hours emergency officer. An emergency consists of, but not limited to, an injured animal, dog to person bite, or an aggressive dog running at large.