

# Section 123

## Dangerous dogs

Agriculture & Markets (AGM)

1. Any person who witnesses an attack or threatened attack, or in the case of a minor, an adult acting on behalf of such minor, may make a complaint of an attack or threatened attack upon a person, companion animal as defined in section three hundred fifty of this chapter, farm animal as defined in such section three hundred fifty, or a domestic animal as defined in subdivision seven of section one hundred eight of this article to a dog control officer or police officer of the appropriate municipality. Such officer shall immediately inform the complainant of his or her right to commence a proceeding as provided in subdivision two of this section and, if there is reason to believe the dog is a dangerous dog, the officer shall forthwith commence such proceeding himself or herself.

2. Any person who witnesses an attack or threatened attack, or in the case of a minor, an adult acting on behalf of such minor, may, and any dog control officer or police officer as provided in subdivision one of this section shall, make a complaint under oath or affirmation to any municipal judge or justice of such attack or threatened attack. Thereupon, the judge or justice shall immediately determine if there is probable cause to believe the dog is a dangerous dog and, if so, shall issue an order to any dog control officer, peace officer, acting pursuant to his or her special duties, or police officer directing such officer to immediately seize such dog and hold the same pending judicial determination as provided in this section. Whether or not the judge or justice finds there is probable cause for such seizure, he or she shall, within five days and upon written notice of not less than two days to the owner of the dog, hold a hearing on the complaint. The petitioner shall have the burden at such hearing to prove the dog is a "dangerous dog" by clear and convincing evidence. If satisfied that the dog is a dangerous dog, the judge or justice shall then order neutering or spaying of the dog, microchipping of the dog and one or more of the following as deemed appropriate under the circumstances and as deemed necessary for the

protection of the public:

(a) evaluation of the dog by a certified applied behaviorist, a board certified veterinary behaviorist, or another recognized expert in the field and completion of training or other treatment as deemed appropriate by such expert. The owner of the dog shall be responsible for all costs associated with evaluations and training ordered under this section;

(b) secure, humane confinement of the dog for a period of time and in a manner deemed appropriate by the court but in all instances in a manner designed to: (1) prevent escape of the dog, (2) protect the public from unauthorized contact with the dog, and (3) to protect the dog from the elements pursuant to section three hundred fifty-three-b of this chapter. Such confinement shall not include lengthy periods of tying or chaining;

(c) restraint of the dog on a leash by an adult of at least twenty-one years of age whenever the dog is on public premises;

(d) muzzling the dog whenever it is on public premises in a manner that will prevent it from biting any person or animal, but that shall not injure the dog or interfere with its vision or respiration; or

(e) maintenance of a liability insurance policy in an amount determined by the court, but in no event in excess of one hundred thousand dollars for personal injury or death resulting from an attack by such dangerous dog.

3. Upon a finding that a dog is dangerous, the judge or justice may order humane euthanasia or permanent confinement of the dog if one of the following aggravating circumstances is established at the judicial hearing held pursuant to subdivision two of this section:

(a) the dog, without justification, attacked a person causing serious physical injury or death; or

(b) the dog has a known vicious propensity as evidenced by a previous

unjustified attack on a person, which caused serious physical injury or death; or

(c) the dog, without justification, caused serious physical injury or death to a companion animal, farm animal or domestic animal, and has, in the past two years, caused unjustified physical injury or death to a companion or farm animal as evidenced by a "dangerous dog" finding pursuant to the provisions of this section. An order of humane euthanasia shall not be carried out until expiration of the thirty day period provided for in subdivision five of this section for filing a notice of appeal, unless the owner of the dog has indicated to the judge in writing, his or her intention to waive his or her right to appeal. Upon filing of a notice of appeal, the order shall be automatically stayed pending the outcome of the appeal.

4. A dog shall not be declared dangerous if the court determines the conduct of the dog (a) was justified because the threat, injury or damage was sustained by a person who at the time was committing a crime or offense upon the owner or custodian of the dog or upon the property of the owner or custodian of the dog; (b) was justified because the injured, threatened or killed person was tormenting, abusing, assaulting or physically threatening the dog or its offspring, or has in the past tormented, abused, assaulted or physically threatened the dog or its offspring; (c) was justified because the dog was responding to pain or injury, or was protecting itself, its owner, custodian, or a member of its household, its kennels or its offspring; or was justified because the injured, threatened or killed companion animal, farm animal or domestic animal was attacking or threatening to attack the dog or its offspring. Testimony of a certified applied behaviorist, a board certified veterinary behaviorist, or another recognized expert shall be relevant to the court's determination as to whether the dog's behavior was justified pursuant to the provisions of this subdivision.

5. (a) The owner of a dog found to be a "dangerous dog" pursuant to this section may appeal such determination, and/or the court's order concerning disposition of the dog to the court having jurisdiction to hear

civil appeals in the county where the "dangerous dog" finding was made. The owner shall commence such appeal by filing a notice of appeal with the appropriate court within thirty days of the final order pursuant to this section. Court rules governing civil appeals in the appropriate jurisdiction shall govern the appeal of a determination under this section.

(b) Upon filing a notice of appeal from an order of humane euthanasia pursuant to this section, such order shall be automatically stayed pending final determination of any appeal. In all other circumstances, the owner of the dog may make application to the court to issue a stay of disposition pending determination of the appeal.

6. The owner of a dog who, through any act or omission, negligently permits his or her dog to bite a person, service dog, guide dog or hearing dog causing physical injury shall be subject to a civil penalty not to exceed four hundred dollars in addition to any other applicable penalties.

7. The owner of a dog who, through any act or omission, negligently permits his or her dog to bite a person causing serious physical injury shall be subject to a civil penalty not to exceed one thousand five hundred dollars in addition to any other applicable penalties. Any such penalty may be reduced by any amount which is paid as restitution by the owner of the dog to the person or persons suffering serious physical injury as compensation for unreimbursed medical expenses, lost earnings and other damages resulting from such injury.

8. The owner of a dog who, through any act or omission, negligently permits his or her dog, which had previously been determined to be dangerous pursuant to this article, to bite a person causing serious physical injury, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by a fine of not more than three thousand dollars, or by a period of imprisonment not to exceed ninety days, or by both such fine and imprisonment in addition to any other applicable penalties. Any such fine may be reduced by any amount which is paid as restitution by the owner of the dog to the

person or persons suffering serious physical injury as compensation for unreimbursed medical expenses, lost earnings and other damages resulting from such injury.

9. If any dog, which had previously been determined by a judge or justice to be a dangerous dog, as defined in section one hundred eight of this article, shall without justification kill or cause the death of any person who is peaceably conducting himself or herself in any place where he or she may lawfully be, regardless of whether such dog escapes without fault of the owner, the owner shall be guilty of a class A misdemeanor in addition to any other penalties.

10. The owner or lawful custodian of a dangerous dog shall, except in the circumstances enumerated in subdivisions four and eleven of this section, be strictly liable for medical costs resulting from injury caused by such dog to a person, companion animal, farm animal or domestic animal.

11. The owner shall not be liable pursuant to subdivision six, seven, eight, nine or ten of this section if the dog was coming to the aid or defense of a person during the commission or attempted commission of a murder, robbery, burglary, arson, rape in the first degree as defined in subdivision one or two of section 130.35 of the penal law, criminal sexual act in the first degree as defined in subdivision one or two of section 130.50 of the penal law or kidnapping within the dwelling or upon the real property of the owner of the dog and the dog injured or killed the person committing such criminal activity.

12. Nothing contained in this section shall limit or abrogate any claim or cause of action any person who is injured by a dog with a vicious disposition or a vicious propensity may have under common law or by statute. The provisions of this section shall be in addition to such common law and statutory remedies.

13. Nothing contained in this section shall restrict the rights and powers derived from the provisions of title four of article twenty-one of the

public health law relating to rabies and any rule and regulation adopted pursuant thereto.

14. Persons owning, possessing or harboring dangerous dogs shall report the presence of such dangerous dogs pursuant to section two hundred nine-cc of the general municipal law.