



Eaton Police Division

Pit Bull Information Sheet

(Updated February 22, 2012)



Ohio law change for Pit Bulls

On February 21, 2012 Ohio Governor John Kasich signed a bill that changed the laws of the State of Ohio in regards to Pit Bulls. The bill stated that Ohio shall no longer automatically label Pit Bulls as a vicious dog. This is great news for pit bulls owners and they will no longer be labeled simply because of their breed. Pit Bulls are now just like every other dog and must meet certain criteria before they're labeled vicious or dangerous. We will update this information sheet as new information becomes available to the changes in State law.

What laws do Pit Bull owners need to follow?

Until new law changes take effect on May 20, 2012, If you own, keep, or harbor (have at your residence) a "pit bull-type dog" in the state of Ohio, the Ohio Revised Code 955.22 mandates that you must comply with **ALL** of the laws listed in this document. Additionally, local municipalities, cities, and townships may have additional laws that Pit Bull owners must follow, or they may ban Pit Bulls completely. The City of Eaton has no restrictions specific to Pit Bulls.

What is a pit bull?

Ohio Revised Code states that Dog Wardens are the only authorities that can legally designate whether a dog is a pit bull-type dog. Breeds of dogs that fall under the classification of "pit bull" in Ohio include (but are not limited to):

- American Pit Bull Terrier
- American Staffordshire Terrier
- Staffordshire Bull Terrier
- Any other purebred or mixed breed dog whose appearance (looks or physical characteristics) are predominantly like the list of breeds above (or a combination of breeds from the above list)

What qualifies a dog to be a Vicious dog?

Until the new bill becomes a law on May 20, 2012, Pit Bulls will still be labeled as vicious. What this means is that until May 20, 2012, Pit Bull owners must still abide by stricter restraint laws than owners of other dogs. See the restrictions below in the next section, "**How do I need to restrain my Pit Bull type dog?**"

The Codified Ordinances of the City of Eaton address criminal violations and do not automatically label Pit Bulls as "Vicious" as far as the criteria for a criminal charge is concerned.

For the owner of a dog to be charged criminally for owning a "Vicious" dog in Eaton, it must meet the City's criteria of what a "Vicious" dog is.

In the City of Eaton, a "Vicious dog" is:

- (1) Any dog that, while off the premises of the owner, bites or causes physical harm to a human being or other domestic animal on one or more occasions; or
- (2) Any dog with a known propensity, tendency or disposition to attack, unprovoked, to cause injury to or otherwise endanger the safety of human beings or other domestic animals.

In the City of Eaton, Pit Bulls are not automatically labeled as "Vicious" as far as criminal law is concerned.

Do I need insurance for my Pit Bull-type dog?

Ohio law states that anyone who owns a Pit Bull-type dog must have at least \$100,000 in liability insurance that would provide coverage if your dog would cause damage to a person's body or a person's death.

Your existing homeowner's or renter's insurance may already cover this. Check with your insurance agent to see if your policy covers the breed of dog(s) you own.

If you do not have insurance or if your existing insurance does not cover your dog, switch to a company that does include coverage for Pit Bulls.

How do I need to restrain my Pit Bull-type dog?

When your Pit Bull is **on your property**, you must either:

- Keep your dog in a securely fenced yard (no gaps in the fence and no way for the dog to escape) with any gates locked (padlock or combination lock)
- Or, keep your dog in a locked (padlocked or otherwise secured) enclosure with a top (like a kennel or pen with a secure top)

When your Pit Bull is **off your property**, you must always:

- Keep your dog on a chain-link leash or tether that is 6 feet (or less) in length
- Additionally you must do one of the following three things:
 1. Be sure that the person holding the leash is an adult who is able to control the dog
 2. Attach the leash/tether securely to the ground or a stationary object **ONLY**

while an adult (who can control the dog) is right there

3. Muzzle the dog securely

What if one of the Pit Bulls laws stated above are violated?

The laws pertaining specifically to Pit Bulls in the State of Ohio ("Pit Bull laws") are not laws that are criminally enforceable alone. Rather, a general crime against an animal (regardless of breed) must be committed. This means that if you observe a Pit Bull owner in violation of one of these Pit Bull laws there isn't any action that local law enforcement can take based on the existence of the breed alone.

However, courts can enforce the Pit Bull laws mentioned above, but only after a crime involving the animal has been committed. You can also contact the local Dog Warden with any complaints specific to Pit Bulls.

Please keep in mind that the Eaton Police Division can take action on any of the primary animal control and care laws that apply to all animals, not just Pit Bulls. For a complete list of animal laws in the City of Eaton refer to section 505 of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Eaton, or click the link below:

<http://www.conwaygreene.com/Eaton/lpext.dll?f=templates&fn=main-h.htm&2.0>

