

How to Prevent your Dog from being Stolen

Discovering your dog has been stolen and never knowing what happened to him is a dog owner's worst nightmare. Sadly, there has been a huge increase in dog theft since lockdown as the demand for dogs has out-stripped supply. Breeds such as spaniels, bulldogs and small breed dogs are the most targeted, but no dog is safe. It is your responsibility to be vigilant and keep your dog safe at all times.

Dogs can be stolen for a number of reasons:

- Selling on – the internet makes this an easy, anonymous task
- Breeding – either as puppy farm stock or just to make money selling puppies
- To order – particularly pedigree dogs for breeding or for export
- Ransom – many owners will offer a reward with no questions asked
- Dog fighting – it is alleged that some dogs are taken as bait for dog fighting

How can you keep your dog safe?

- Over 50% of dogs are stolen from gardens. Make sure your garden is secure and no-one can enter without your knowledge. Don't leave your dog unsupervised in the garden, keep an eye on him at all times – it only takes seconds to lift a dog over the fence.
- 19% of dogs are taken from breaking into homes. If your dog is left at home, make sure your home security is good. Be aware if anyone has been watching you house and your movements.
- 16% of stolen dogs are taken from owners out walking their dogs. Vary the times you walk and the routes you take and beware of strangers asking you questions about or trying to play with your dog. Also, teach your dog to come back to you when called – dogs running off can become vulnerable to thieves. Your dog should never be out of your sight on a walk.
- 7% of dog thefts are dogs that have been tied up outside shops or other premises. They are an easy target for any opportunist thief.
- Dogs left in locked cars are also an easy target even if you leave the car for just a few minutes and 5% of all stolen dogs are taken from vehicles.
- Neutering your dog will reduce the risk of a dog being stolen for breeding purposes.
- Ensure your dog wears a collar and tag at all times, even in the house. This is a legal requirement in public places. Do not put your dog's name on the tag because a friendly dog could easily be enticed away if its name is called. Don't forget to keep your microchip contact details up-to date.

- Choose a dog walker, dog sitter or boarding kennels carefully. Ideally take recommendations from people you trust and do ask for and check any references. Check the security measures in place at any boarding kennel before your pet stays there.
- 50% of dogs stolen are puppies or young adults. Be extra vigilant if you have a pregnant bitch or a litter of puppies. Be especially careful if you have advertised the puppies for sale, thieves will stop at nothing to steal a whole litter to sell.

Statistics from: Pet Theft Census <http://news.morethan.com/pressrelease/view/1461>