Resources to Combat Anti-Breeder Harassment & Retaliation

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www.akcgr.org/harassment
Breeders & Enthusiasts Have Been Targeted

• AKC mission: “...work to protect the rights of all dog owners...”

• Reports of harassment or suspected retaliation against breeders/enthusiasts participating in the political process

• AKC breeders and enthusiasts are dog experts and key resources for their communities that must not be silenced
AKC Task Force on Anti-Breeder Harassment and Retaliation

• Comprised of departments across AKC
• Collect reports of harassment and suspicious enforcement actions
• Centralized repository of reports
• Emily Holmes, HTF point of contact

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Perpetrators Persist When Protected by Victims’ Silence

• It’s about understanding animal rights extremists’ behavior
• Reporting helps build our knowledge & response tool kit
• Vitally important to develop a better, data-driven understanding of how extremists use harassment
• Study patterns of behavior & geographic hot spots
• Examples of possible harassment

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## AKC GR Observations

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<th>Observations</th>
<th>Impacts</th>
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<td>• 2017 HSUS assisted law enforcement with seizure of 77 dogs.</td>
<td>• Legislation filed requiring posting of bond upon making charges &amp; forfeiture of seized animals.</td>
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<td>• Private agreement with police dept.</td>
<td>• Wide spread anti-breeder sentiment promoted.</td>
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<td>• No recognition of animal hoarding disorder in law.</td>
<td>• HSUS fundraising via social media.</td>
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<td>• Criminal case on appeal to state Supreme Court.</td>
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### AKC GR Observations

**Observations**
- Seizure of 18 dogs during 2019 WKC BIS with charges dropped 3 months later.
- Seizure of 15 dogs during 2020 WKC BIS; case pending.

**Impacts**
- Anti-breeder media during legislative session.
- Legal expenses.
- Attack on AKC Breeders of merit reputation.
- AKC privileges on temporary referral.

[www.akcgr.org/harassment](http://www.akcgr.org/harassment)
AKC GR Observations

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<td>• AKC club members receiving suspicious phone calls.</td>
<td>• Confusion about AKC’s rules and role.</td>
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<td>• Harassment and threats on social media accounts.</td>
<td>• Requests for support and advice.</td>
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<td>• Suspicious drive-by of property.</td>
<td>• Requests for legal assistance.</td>
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<td>• Anonymous complaints to animal control.</td>
<td>• AKC awareness of benefits establishing a central repository for reports and provision of educational and guidance resources.</td>
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New Resources

Anti-Breeder Harassment & Retaliation Task Force

The American Kennel Club (AKC) works to protect the rights of dog owners and is very concerned about harassment or retaliation against dog breeders/enthusiasts, particularly in relation to instances where breeders/enthusiasts have participated in the political process to protect their rights and the wellbeing of dogs.

Examples of harassment/retaliation experiences may include:

- Suspicious phone inquiries or visits,
- Suspicious timing of anonymous complaints,
- Threatening communications or social media bullying,
- Suspicious inspections resulting in seizure of dogs with significant legal repercussions,
- And other tactics that may be intended as intimidation or retaliation.

To centralize reports of this nature, AKC has established the Anti-Breeder Harassment and Retaliation Task Force (HTF). Although it is not appropriate for AKC or its staff to serve as legal counsel in these instances, the taskforce intends to collect information about these harmful activities to learn more about how dog owners are being targeted.

Perpetrators persist when protected by silence. Sharing your experience with the taskforce can help establish patterns of behavior and hold those responsible accountable.

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Tips to Prevent & Stop Cyberbullying

Tips to Prevent & Stop Cyberbullying

Access to social networks is a valuable tool for sharing experience and advice among animal breeders. However, dog breeders and others who own and interact with animals are at risk of being targeted on social media by animal rights (AR) activists. AR activists typically oppose the breeding or use of animals. Some activists equate animal ownership to slavery. Their long-term goal is seeking an end to animal ownership and breeding.

What is Cyberbullying?

Bullying is not limited to school yards. Anonymous freedom of expression on social media can result in the use of digital technology to harass, threaten, or humiliate. Cyberbullying does not require face-to-face contact, physical power, or strength. When made online and in view of hundreds, attempts to humiliate, harass, or threaten a person with false accusations can happen anytime and follow you anywhere so that no place feels safe, not even your home.

For more information or to report harassment, please contact:
www.akcgr.org/harassment
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Avoid Nuisance Complaints: Barking Dogs are Easy Targets

Barking Dogs are Easy Targets

Barking is the most common complaint about dogs. The quiet enjoyment of one’s home is typically protected by nuisance laws. Although barking is not illegal and not all barking dogs are a nuisance, barking dogs can be a problem that quickly leads to more problems. Preventing any call to report a nuisance is the first step to avoiding further issues. When law enforcement or animal control visit, it’s natural they may look for other items of concern, leading to potentially more serious issues.

In some places, barking dogs are addressed by a specific state or local ordinance that describes circumstances when barking is excessive and unreasonable and therefore amount to a significant interference. Examples include barking for prolonged periods, frequent excessive barking, and barking at unreasonable hours such as early morning or late at night. Keeping a dog whose barking is a nuisance may even be a minor criminal offense.

If there is no law aimed specifically at dogs, a general nuisance or noise ordinance may still hold a dog owner responsible. For instance, local law may limit loud noise after 10 p.m. Someone who allows a dog to bark, after numerous warnings, may be arrested or receive a citation for disturbing the peace.

Investigations of dog nuisance complaints and enforcement actions are typically performed by animal control officers. Depending on what local and state governments require, animal control officers’ education and training varies greatly. However, in all states the law explicitly authorizes the seizing of any and all animals they believe appear neglected or abused before their owner is convicted on animal cruelty charges. In addition to being a good neighbor, preventing nuisance complaints and complaint-based visits from animal control should be regarded as a high priority for responsible dog owners and petured breeders.

- Comply with your local and state laws. Research how they describe what constitutes a nuisance and the process used to both make and investigate a complaint. Go online or to a law library and check the state statutes and city, county or town ordinance yourself by searching for “noise,” “dogs,” “animals,” or “nuisance.” If you need help, contact AKC’s Government Relations Department at doglaw@akc.org.
- Some dog owners may be genuinely unaware that their dog(s) are causing a disturbance when left alone. Speaking with your neighbors about the potential and sharing your contact information may be the quickest and most effective means of avoiding trouble.
- Identifying the cause of the behavior is key to solving barking dog problems. AKC’s expert advice articles may be a helpful resource.

Web Resources:
- Held My Dog Won’t Stop Barking While Home Alone
- How to Stop Nuisance Day Barking
- Ask Our Trainers: How Can I Train My Dog from Barking at the Neighbors?
- Learning to Speak Dog: The Meaning of Your Dog’s Barks

For more information or to report harassment, please contact: www.akc.org/harassment | 1-800-AKC-HELP | 1-800-221-4357

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Why Legal Compliance Matters

STATE & LOCAL AUTHORITY

In the United States, state police power comes from the Tenth Amendment to the Constitution, which effectively limits the federal government’s power by giving states the rights and powers “not delegated to the United States.” States are therefore recognized as having the power to establish and enforce laws protecting the welfare, safety, and health of the public. From these powers, considered “police powers,” local governments may enact direct authority under a state’s constitution, laws, or regulations to impose their own rules and restrictions. Local laws, known as ordinances or by-laws, are almost universally deemed a valid exercise of police power and can cover several areas related to dogs.

AUTHORITY OVER DOGS

Each of the 50 states has its own set of laws that define crimes involving animals and consequences. Many prohibit dog fighting, cruelty, and animal abandonment or neglect. Sometimes these describe minimum care and conditions necessary to avoid allegations of neglect or cruelty such as an effort to eradicate shelter or how long a dog can be left outside. On the local level, in addition to requiring rabies vaccinations for annual dog license, there may be city and municipal conditions on the ownership of dogs. Examples include restrictions on dogs on leashes and keeping of nocturnal dogs as potential threats to public safety. Local laws may also dictate the number of dogs one may keep at any one time, or the ownership of certain breeds requiring a permit to purchase or own the breed.

CONSEQUENCES OF NON-COMPLIANCE:

Failing to comply with state and local dog laws can result in serious consequences. If you maintain multiple dogs or your breeding program as if you were a commercial breeder, your residence may or be properly licensed allowing that activity to continue. When you are out of compliance with existing laws, it is hard to be recognized as a breeder if new, more restrictive laws are proposed. Although failure to renew a dog license on time may only carry a small monetary fine, and officers may not check on the number of animals you have if officers become aware of violations, this may lead to an inquiry by an animal control or law enforcement officer checking for additional state or local violations. Officers’ expertise and training in animal husbandry practices varies greatly. In all states, the law explicitly authorizes the seizing of any animal and all animals suspected to be neglected or abandoned by their owner in violation of animal cruelty charges.

Change of animal cruelty or neglect can severely damage your reputation and trigger an AKC investigation. Legal defense can result in significant attorney fees. Many state laws require an owner to post a bond covering the cost of caring for seized animals throughout the legal proceedings, which may take a very long time. A shelter with custody of an animal during legal proceedings may incur expenses for veterinary care they deem necessary; possibly including spaying or neutering in medical circumstances. If an owner is unable to post bond, they may be forced to forfeit ownership and allow the animal’s transfer to a permanent home. The emotional and financial toll of enduring these types of allegations persists, even if the charges are later dropped.

HOW TO FIND YOUR RULES:

To get started, first check the maps of the 50 states and cruelty law, provided by the Michigan State University College of Law. Keep an eye on any amendments or potential changes. Some states do not place severe anti-cruelty laws in the criminal code but instead under sections relating to agriculture or animals. Other states have requirements in multiple sections. Therefore, sources of state departments of agriculture and public health websites regarding “animal” and “dogs” are also necessary. Also, go to your city or town’s government website and search for animal ordinances or by-laws.

For more information or to report harassment, please contact:
www.akcgr.org/harassment | reportharassment@akc.org | 919-816-3720

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Understanding the Role of AKC When Breeder Harassment is Suspected

The American Kennel Club (AKC), founded in 1884, is a not-for-profit purebred dog registry and club of clubs dedicated to promoting the sport of purebred dogs and breeding of type and function, advocating for the purebred dog as a family companion, advancing canine health and well-being, working to protect the rights of all dog owners, and promoting responsible dog ownership.

The AKC Government Relations Department (AKC GR) works to protect the rights of dog owners, promote responsible dog ownership and ensure that laws governing dog ownership and breeding are reasonable, enforceable and nondiscriminatory. GR further identifies its mission as educating and informing responsible dog owners and breeders about the issues that impact them as well as monitoring and positively impacting legislation that affect them.

AKC is concerned about reports of the targeting of breeders and responsible dog owners; and has established a taskforce on breeder harassment. By collecting and analyzing reports of intimidation, property damage, or attack, the taskforce on breeder harassment will facilitate interdepartmental collaboration at AKC and develop educational materials, resources, and policy initiatives designed to prevent and end future harassment of breeders.

Club Member and Breeder Expectations When Harassment Is Suspected:

When harassment is suspected, a community’s natural reaction is to expect AKC GR’s help with an incident involving the government. However, AKC GR does not practice law; therefore, it is not appropriate for any AKC staff to provide counsel relative to incidents that may result in disciplinary investigation by the AKC.

AKC’s Responsibilities:

The AKC is committed to specific values, such as the proper care and treatment of dogs, and has zero tolerance for animal cruelty. Under AKC Bylaws, Article XII and XIV, the AKC is required to investigate whenever conduct is alleged to be harmful to the best interests of purebred dogs or purebred dog events. This is an administrative process adapted to protect dogs’ best interests. The AKC’s policies regarding the AKC’s responsibilities include definitions of offenses that constitute abuse, cruelty, improper treatment, and neglect, all of which warrant penalties, such as fines, temporary refusal, or suspension of AKC events or registration privileges.

Formal charges against an individual alleging abuse, cruelty, improper treatment, or neglect are treated by AKC as extremely serious. Upon receipt of information that a person has been charged or accused, or that a person’s dogs have been seized, the AKC will seek Convocation to hear the case in accordance with the AKC’s Convocation and Disqualification policy. If AKC determines that no violation has occurred and no action will be taken to cause a suspension of privileges, the temporary refusal is then removed, and all pending applications are reviewed and processed. Proof that no violation has occurred can be demonstrated by submitting to AKC court or administrative records evidencing the disposition of charges.

For more information or to report harassment, please contact:
www.akcgr.org/harassment | 919-816-3720
Police At Your Door? Here’s Some Information That Can Help

1. Immediately contact an experienced criminal defense attorney, no matter what time of day. Identifying an experienced attorney in your area in advance of any issue is a wise decision.

2. Ask for your copy of the search warrant and if you are not provided a copy, do not consent to a search without first contacting an attorney. (Anyone can search your house and property. If you agree. Do not let anyone in without a search warrant.)

3. Be courteous and professional. Request a short time to review the warrant and to obtain legal advice (though enforcement officials are not required to wait). Read the warrant carefully to determine five things from the document in advance of letting anyone inside:
   a. Confirm the address of the property listed as yours.
   b. The specific areas authorized by the court to be searched.
   c. The alleged offense(s) that are the subject of the warrant.
   d. Name and title of the person in possession of the warrant and whether those with him or her are authorized to aid in the execution of the search (get their names and titles too).
   e. Business cards are helpful.
   f. If the government attorney in charge of the investigation is not clear on the warrant, ask for their name and phone number.

For most dog breeders and owners, few things are as fear-inducing and stressful as when a police officer or an animal control officer unexpectedly knocks at your door. The American Kennel Club expects everyone who registers a dog with us to know, understand and obey the laws of their jurisdictions. Nevertheless, animal rights activists or anyone with a questionable motive may file a complaint with authorities, and allegations alone can result in warrants, citations, seizure, and even criminal charges.

At a recent AKC Legislative Conference, an attorney from a national law firm discussed some considerations when faced with a search warrant presented by a police or animal control officer. It is important to note that the attorney offered these considerations in a general discussion. He did not offer them as legal advice and they were not intended as legal advice, because legal advice is best obtained on the particular facts of each situation.
Key Points

• Know and comply with all applicable laws and regulations
• Not legal advice!
• Personal data in reports to remain anonymous, except pursuant to AKC rules and regulations and Terms of Use
• Task Force will regularly meet to discuss findings
• Geographic alerts may be issued upon substantiation of pattern of harassment
Q & A
Thank you for joining us!

Website:  [www.akcgr/harassment](http://www.akcgr/harassment)

Email:  [reportharassment@akc.org](mailto:reportharassment@akc.org)

Phone:  919-816-3720