



**WESTMEATH LOCAL AUTHORITIES  
POLICY ON**

# **RESPONSIBLE DOG OWNERSHIP**

**This policy sets out Westmeath County Council  
and Athlone Town Council's approach  
to encourage and enforce responsible dog ownership.**



## Objective 1: Increase compliance with licence requirements

### Legal requirements:

Section 2.1 Control of Dogs Act 1986: It is unlawful for any person to keep a dog unless he holds a dog licence for that dog.

### Steps to implement the policy:

- Conduct inspections throughout the county in relation to unlicensed dogs.
- Continue to actively target offenders and issue the appropriate fines and publicise progress in this area.
- Work with dog/community wardens and ISPCA/Athlone Animal Welfare to visit schools, local shopping centres, work with community groups, etc to highlight the benefits of Responsible Dog Ownership.
- Responsible Dog Ownership leaflet to issue with licence reminders to raise awareness of legal requirement to hold a licence.





## Objective 2: **Raise awareness and enforce legal requirements of dog control**

### **Legal requirements:**

Section 9 Control of Dogs Act 1986: The owner or any other person in charge of a dog shall not permit the dog to be in any place other than the premises of the owner, the premises of such other person in charge of the dog or the premises of any other person, with the consent of that person, unless such owner or such other person in charge of the dog accompanies it and keeps it under effectual control.

Section 5.1 & 5.2 Control of Dogs Regulations 1998: All dogs specified must be muzzled and be led by a sufficiently strong chain or leash, not exceeding two metres in length, by a person over the age of sixteen years who is capable of controlling the said dog within a public place.

*The dogs specified are:*

American Pit Bull Terrier, Bull Mastiff, Doberman Pinscher, English Bull Terrier, German Shepherd (Alsatian), Japanese Akita, Japanese Tosa, Rhodesian Ridgeback, Rottweiler, Staffordshire Bull Terrier, and to every dog of the type commonly known as a Ban Dog (or Bandog), and to every other strain or cross of every breed or type of dog described in this article.

### **Steps to implement the policy:**

- Introduce policy that bye-laws will be introduced that dogs must be on leashes in specified public places in urban areas.
- Promote the benefits of: neutering/spaying to the animal/micro chipping dogs/dog obedience classes/vaccinations.
- Responsible Dog Ownership leaflet to be circulated to groups/residents associations to raise awareness of the breeds of dogs that must be leashed and muzzled when in a public place and the requirement of the handler's age and capability.
- Publicise the costs associated with having a dog and carry out seasonal promotions e.g., not giving a puppy for Christmas, pet safety at Halloween.
- Develop section on website for "Responsible Dog Ownership".
- Print branded/recognisable posters and leaflets with information on Responsible Dog Ownership and circulate to homes, community groups, veterinary surgeries, pet shops.
- Issue regular press releases/photo calls to all forms of media on Responsible Dog Ownership.
- Continue to actively target offenders and issue the appropriate fines and publicise progress in this area.
- Work with dog/community wardens and ISPCA/animal shelters to visit schools, local shopping centres, work with community groups, etc to highlight the benefits of Responsible Dog Ownership.



## **Objective 3: Raise awareness of dog identification requirements and enforce same**

### **Legal requirements:**

Section 6.1 Control of Dogs Regulations 1998 states that the owner or other person in charge of a dog shall ensure that such dog shall at all times wear a collar bearing the name and address of the owner inscribed thereon, or on a plate, badge or disc attached thereto.

### **Steps to implement the policy:**

- Raise awareness of legal requirement by circulating the Responsible Dog Ownership leaflet.
- Enforcement of fines.
- Work with dog/community wardens and ISPCA/animal shelters to visit schools, local shopping centres, work with community groups, etc to highlight the benefits of Responsible Dog Ownership.





## **Objective 4: Improve clean up of dog littering in public places**

### **Legal requirements:**

Section 22.1 Litter Pollution Act 1997: Where faeces has been deposited by a dog the person in charge of the dog shall immediately remove the faeces and shall ensure that it is properly disposed of in a suitable sanitary manner.

### **Steps to implement the policy:**

- Undertaking an extensive awareness campaign around the policy of “Any Bag, Any Bin” that will include placing a sticker on all bins with the message “Any Bag, Any Bin”, stencils on footpaths etc.
- Hold schools competition to promote “Any Bag, Any Bin” policy and raise awareness throughout the schools
- Engage and encourage at a national level to involve dog food companies & Veterinary Ireland and Dogs Trust in sponsorship of awareness campaigns on dog fouling, neutering/spaying etc and support any national anti dog fouling initiatives/promotions
- Continue to actively target offenders and issue the appropriate fines and publicise progress in this area.
- Work with dog/community wardens and ISPCA/animal shelters to visit schools, local shopping centres, work with community groups, etc to highlight the benefits of Responsible Dog Ownership.
- Implementation of “Any Bag, Any Bin” - to encourage cleaning up after your dog fouls and to dispose of it appropriately.
- Correspond with dog licence holders/community groups/residents associations informing them of this policy and circulate information leaflet. Request that they circulate leaflet within their estate/group.
- Continue to distribute free “Pooper Scooper” bags at swimming pool, Area Offices, Library.
- Continue to supply “No dog fouling” signs to residents associations/community groups by the Council’s Area Offices.
- Identify “hotspots” for dog littering and target awareness campaign in the area including increased visibility of dog/community warden.
- Continue to clean dog littering from streets and parks.
- Dog/community wardens to hand a bag to anyone out walking their dog.
- Target well known estates that have been identified as places where dogs are let out to roam loose and litter on.



## **Objective 5: Raise awareness of associated health risk when in contact with dog faeces or contaminated soil**

### **Steps to implement the policy:**

- Raise awareness on the need to worm your pet and the health risks of coming infected from contaminated faeces/soil by carrying out school talks/community talks/shopping centre stands and distribute information leaflet/posters.
- Responsible Dog Ownership leaflet to issue with licence reminders featuring a section on the benefits of worming your pet and the associated risks of coming in contact with faeces/contaminated soil.
- Work with dog/community wardens and ISPCA/animal shelters to visit schools, local shopping centres, work with community groups, etc to highlight the benefits of Responsible Dog Ownership.

**Westmeath Local Authorities aim to raise awareness of the responsibilities of owning a dog and the requirements of what it takes to be a good dog owner.**

**This policy will be implemented throughout the county and will need the co-operation of the public to make it a success.**

**A successful implementation of this policy will result in an increased awareness of the responsibilities of a dog owner which will lead to a better quality of life for dogs, dog owners and neighbours of dog owners.**



[www.westmeathcoco.ie](http://www.westmeathcoco.ie)