

Preventing dog theft

With dog theft on the rise, we have put together some tips to help keep your dog safe:

- Keep garden fences secure to avoid your dog escaping and to prevent easy access to trespassers. Perhaps install a sensor light or bell gate to be alerted of trespassers?
- Always keep your dog in sight on walks and in your garden. When out walking your dog, make sure your dog is trained to respond to a recall command.
- Never leave a dog tied-up outside a shop or left alone in a car. If you're going in to a shop or to a café, for example, why not check if your dog is allowed inside? You may be surprised!
- Ensure your dog is microchipped, has up-to-date contact details, and is wearing a tag with YOUR name, phone number and address on it. All of these are legal requirements and will ensure your dog is easily returned, should they go missing.
- Have your dog [spayed/neutered](#). Not only does this mean your pet will be less likely to stray, it may also prevent theft for breeding purposes.
- If you plan to use services such as a dog walker, groomers, house sitter or a boarding kennel, do your research to ensure you are using a legitimate and reputable service.
- Do not advertise the fact you own dogs. Avoid placing dog ownership placards or notices on the front of your property.
- If you are a dog breeder, be careful about who you are inviting into your house for viewings.

Dog theft checklist

Carry out our below checklist to see whether you have taken the right precautions to prevent dog theft:

<u>Property</u>	
Is your garden safe and adequately fenced?	Yes / No
Are there any gaps / holes in the fence?	Yes / No
Do you have a bell gate or sensor light?	Yes / No
Do you have any placards up to indicate you own a dog?	Yes / No
<u>Dog</u>	
Are they microchipped?	Yes / No

Are the microchip details up to date with your correct address and contact number?	Yes / No
Is your dog wearing a collar and tag with YOUR surname, address and contact details on it?	Yes / No
Does your dog respond to a recall command?	Yes / No
Is your dog neutered/spayed?	Yes / No
Do you have recent photos of them?	Yes / No

If your dog is stolen

In the unfortunate case that your dog is stolen, follow our below advice:

- Report the theft to the police, ensuring you get a Crime Reference number and insist that your dog is recorded as **stolen** and **not missing**.
- Report your dog's disappearance to your [microchip provider](#) as they can notify you when your dog has been found.
- Report the theft of your dog to your [local authority dog warden](#). They will notify you should your dog turn up in their kennels.
- Report the theft to missing/stolen animal websites such as [DogLost](#), who help reunite missing pets with their owners by offering free advice and support.
- Be sure you have plenty of recent pictures of you with your dog. These can come in useful when proving ownership and also showing what your dog currently looks like (e.g. they may have had their hair cut).
- Social media is a great way to raise awareness of your stolen pet. Post details of the incidence and pictures of your dog, making sure your settings are on Public to reach as many people as possible.
- Monitor websites and places where thieves may try to sell on your dog (pet shops, notice boards) and notify the police immediately if you come across anything.
- Contact local animal centres, rescue charities, your local vet and any neighbouring practices, so that they are aware of the incident and can keep an eye out for your dog.
- Check with neighbours, fellow dog walkers and businesses and consider handing out flyers/posters.
- Approach your local media who could help publicise your missing dog. This may also be a good way to raise awareness about the issue and prevent further dogs being stolen.
- If you want to explore your legal options, the [Citizens Advice Bureau](#) may be able to assist.