



Dog Theft (Scotland) Act 2026

2026 asp 2

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Dog Theft (Scotland) Act 2026

2026 asp 2

The Bill for this Act of the Scottish Parliament was passed by the Parliament on 16th December 2025 and received Royal Assent on 10th February 2026

An Act of the Scottish Parliament to create an offence of dog theft; to provide for a statutory aggravation of that offence; to provide for publication of information relating to that offence; and for connected purposes.

The offence of dog theft

1 Dog theft

- (1) A person (A) commits the offence of dog theft if they—
 - (a) take a dog so as to remove it from the lawful control of any person, or
 - (b) keep a dog so as to keep it from the lawful control of any person who is entitled to have lawful control of it.
- (2) The offence of dog theft is not committed if—
 - (a) at any time before the taking or keeping of the dog, the following lived together in the same household—
 - (i) the person (A) who took or kept the dog,
 - (ii) a person (B) from whose lawful control it was taken or kept, and
 - (iii) the dog,
 - (b) A and B had been living together before the dog began to live with them,
 - (c) A and B subsequently ceased to live together, and
 - (d) A took or kept the dog at or after the time when A and B ceased to live together.
- (3) It is a defence for a person charged with the offence of dog theft to show that the person had lawful authority or a reasonable excuse for taking or keeping the dog.
- (4) It is a defence for a person charged with the offence of dog theft by virtue of subsection (1)(b) to show that the person—
 - (a) believed that the dog was stray, lost or abandoned,

- (b) took all reasonable steps to comply with section 150(1) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (delivery of stray dogs to owner or officer of local authority), and
 - (c) did not keep the dog for more than 96 hours (disregarding any period during which it is kept by virtue of section 150(2)(a) of that Act).
- (5) A person is taken to have shown a fact mentioned in subsection (3) or (4) if—
 - (a) sufficient evidence of the fact is adduced to raise an issue with respect to it, and
 - (b) the contrary is not proved beyond reasonable doubt.
- (6) A person who commits the offence of dog theft is liable—
 - (a) on summary conviction, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months or to a fine not exceeding the prescribed sum (or both),
 - (b) on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 5 years or to a fine (or both).
- (7) In subsection (6), the “prescribed sum” has the meaning given by section 225(8) of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995.
- (8) In this section—
 - (a) references to a person taking a dog include the person—
 - (i) causing or inducing the dog to accompany the person or anyone else, or
 - (ii) causing the dog to be taken,
 - (b) references to a person keeping a dog include the person—
 - (i) causing or inducing the dog to remain with the person or anyone else, or
 - (ii) causing the dog to be kept.

2 Theft of helper dogs

- (1) An offence of dog theft is aggravated if a dog which is taken or kept is a helper dog.
- (2) For the purpose of this section, the term “helper dog” means—
 - (a) an assistance dog, as defined by section 173(1) (interpretation) of the Equality Act 2010, or
 - (b) a dog of a category prescribed by regulations made by the Scottish Ministers.
- (3) Evidence from a single source is sufficient to prove that a dog is a helper dog.
- (4) Subsection (5) applies where it is—
 - (a) libelled in an indictment, or specified in a complaint, that an offence is aggravated by a dog which is taken or kept being a helper dog, and
 - (b) proved that the offence is so aggravated.
- (5) The court must—
 - (a) state on conviction that the offence is aggravated by a dog which is taken or kept being a helper dog,
 - (b) record the conviction in a way that shows that the offence is so aggravated,
 - (c) take the aggravation into account in determining the appropriate sentence, and

- (d) state—
 - (i) where the sentence in respect of the offence is different from that which the court would have imposed if the offence were not so aggravated, the extent of and the reasons for that difference, or
 - (ii) otherwise, the reasons for there being no such difference.
- (6) Regulations made under subsection (2)(b) are subject to the negative procedure.

Reporting

3 Report on operation of this Act

- (1) The Scottish Ministers must, as soon as reasonably practicable after the end of the reporting period—
 - (a) prepare and publish a report on the operation of this Act, and
 - (b) lay the report before the Scottish Parliament.
- (2) The report must include the following information in respect of the reporting period—
 - (a) the number of records made by the Police Service of Scotland of cases categorised by the Police Service as offences under section 1,
 - (b) the number of persons prosecuted for an offence under section 1,
 - (c) the number of persons convicted of an offence under section 1,
 - (d) the nature of each sentence imposed after conviction for an offence under section 1 of this Act, including—
 - (i) whether an aggravation applied,
 - (ii) length of sentence of imprisonment or detention, and
 - (iii) level of fine.
- (3) The report may include such other information as the Scottish Ministers consider appropriate.
- (4) A relevant person holding information mentioned in subsection (2) must provide that information to the Scottish Ministers—
 - (a) in such form and manner as the Scottish Ministers may require, and
 - (b) by such time as the Scottish Ministers may require.
- (5) The relevant persons mentioned in subsection (4) are—
 - (a) the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service,
 - (b) the Lord Advocate, and
 - (c) the chief constable of the Police Service of Scotland.
- (6) In this section, “reporting period” is the period of 3 years beginning with the day on which section 1 comes into force.

Final provisions

4 Ancillary provision

- (1) The Scottish Ministers may by regulations make any incidental, supplementary, consequential, transitional, transitory or saving provision they consider appropriate for

the purposes of, in connection with or for giving full effect to this Act or any provision made under it.

- (2) Regulations made under subsection (1) may—
 - (a) modify any enactment (including this Act),
 - (b) make different provision for different purposes.
- (3) Subject to subsection (4), regulations made under this section are subject to the negative procedure.
- (4) Any regulation which adds to, replaces or omits any part of the text of an Act is subject to the affirmative procedure.

5 Commencement

- (1) This section and sections 4 and 6 come into force on the day after Royal Assent.
- (2) The other provisions of this Act come into force on such day as the Scottish Ministers may by regulations appoint.
- (3) Regulations under subsection (2) may—
 - (a) include transitional, transitory or saving provision,
 - (b) make different provision for different purposes.

6 Short title

The short title of this Act is the Dog Theft (Scotland) Act 2026.



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