



MASSACHUSETTS DOG OWNERS FACE NEW TETHERING STANDARDS

The Issue:

[Massachusetts House Bill 2809](#) presents many new tethering requirements for outdoor dog owners. The bill provides time restrictions, tether make specifications, length requirements and more. HB 2809 also subjects outdoor pet owners to a number of standards of care and penalties for violators.

The Impact:

Tethering

HB 2809 bans dog owners from tethering a dog to a stationary object for longer than eight hours in a 24-hour period. And, no dog may be chained, tethered or confined outside between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. Outdoor dog keepers must adhere to the following tethering standards:

- Tethers must be designed solely for dogs. (**NOTE:** No logging chains and other lines or devices not for the purpose of tethering dogs may be used.)
- No chain or tether shall weigh more than one-eighth of the dog's body weight.
- No dog under the age of six months shall be tethered outside for any length of time.

Under this legislation, a person may only confine a dog outside by one of the following three methods:

- Inside a pen or secure enclosure that has adequate space for exercise and is at least 100 sq. feet. (**NOTE:** Commercial dog kennels with pens intended for the temporary boarding of dogs are exempt from this requirement.) The pen or secure enclosure must be constructed with chain link or other similar material as determined by the Building Inspector, with all four sides enclosed;
- A fully fenced, electronically fenced, or otherwise securely enclosed yard, in which the dog has the ability to run but is unable to leave the enclosed yard; or by
- A trolley system or a tether attached to a pulley in a cable run with the following restrictions:
 - Only one dog may be tethered to each cable run;
 - The tether must be attached to a properly fitting collar or harness worn by the dog, with enough room between the collar and the dog's throat through which two adult fingers may fit. (**NOTE:** Choke collars and pinch collars are prohibited for the purposes of tethering a dog to a cable run.);
 - There must be a swivel on at least one end of the tether to minimize tangling of the tether;
 - The tether and cable run must each be at least 10 feet in length;
 - The cable must be mounted at least four feet but not more than seven feet above ground level;
 - The length of the tether from the cable run to the dog's collar or harness must allow continuous access to clean water and appropriate shelter at all times; and
 - The trolley system or tether must be configured to prevent the trolley system or tether from extending over an object to an edge that could result in injury or strangulation of the dog, and to prevent the trolley system or tether from becoming tangled with other object or animals.

Care Requirements

HB 2809 requires any person owning or keeping a dog confined outside to provide the dog with access to clean water and provide appropriate shelter. (**NOTE:** The bill lists a number of shelter requirements that can be found in the text of the bill linked in this *PetAlert*).

Exemptions

Dogs used for shepherding, herding cattle or other livestock and in activities related to cultivating agricultural products are exempted from the tethering provisions provided in this bill, if the restraint is reasonably necessary for the safety of the dog.

Penalties

Penalties for violators of this bill are as follows:

- First offense = a written warning or may receive a fine of up to \$50;
- Second offense = a fine of up to \$100; and
- Third, and any subsequent offense = a fine of up to \$300, impoundment of the dog in a local shelter at the owner's or guardian's expense pending compliance with these requirements or possible loss of ownership of the dog.

PIJAC Position:

This *PetAlert* is for informational purposes. Outdoor dog owners in Massachusetts should read [HB 2809](#) carefully. Please take heed that with the requirement that a tether may not weigh more than one-eighth of the dog's body weight, owners will be required to change tethers as a dog gains or loses weight.

Recommended Action:

HB 2809 has been assigned to the [Joint Committee on the Judiciary](#) where it has yet to be set for a committee hearing. Anyone affected by this bill should contact the committee with questions or comments.

If you have any additional questions or concerns please contact PIJAC's Bambi Nicole Osborne at 202-452-1525, ext. 105 or via email at bambi@pijac.org.

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On behalf of pets, responsible pet owners, and the pet industry, we thank you!