

**HOUSE . . . . . No. 1977**

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**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

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**In the Year Two Thousand Nine**  
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An Act relative to at risk dogs..

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:*

1 Chapter 140 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after section 157 the  
2 following six sections:

3 Section 157A.

4 “At Risk Dog” means any of the following: --

5 Any dog, regardless of breed, breeding, type or appearance, which, when unprovoked,  
6 engages in any behavior that requires a defensive action by a human or domestic animal to  
7 prevent bodily injury.

8 Any dog that acts in a highly aggressive manner, when unprovoked, within a fenced yard  
9 or enclosure and appears to the Animal Control Officer (ACO) to be able to jump over or escape.  
10 Vocalization or barking, without more, shall not cause a dog to be deemed of a highly aggressive  
11 manner.

12 Any dog owned by a person cited more than once, in a 12-month period, for allowing  
13 said dog to run at large in any public streets or places in the City or upon the premises of anyone  
14 other than the owner or keeper without said owner's or occupant's permission.

15 "Dangerous Dog" means any of the following: --

16 Any dog, regardless of breed, breeding, type or appearance, which, when unprovoked,  
17 has killed, seriously bitten, inflicted serious injury upon a domestic animal.

18 Any dog, regardless of breed, breeding, type or appearance, which, when unprovoked, in  
19 an aggressive manner, inflicts severe injury on or kills a human being. Any dog previously  
20 determined to be and currently listed as an At Risk Dog which, after its owner or keeper has been  
21 notified of this determination, continues the behavior described in section 157A or is maintained  
22 in violation section 157E.

23 Section 157B. (a) No dog may be declared At Risk or Dangerous if any injury or damage  
24 is sustained by a person who, at the time the injury or damage was sustained, was committing a  
25 willful trespass or other tort upon, premises occupied by the owner or keeper of the dog, or was  
26 teasing, tormenting, abusing, or assaulting the dog, or was committing a crime. No dog may be  
27 declared At Risk or Dangerous if the dog was protecting or defending a person within the  
28 immediate vicinity of the dog from an unjustified attack or assault.

29 (b) No dog may be declared At Risk or Dangerous if: The injury or damage to a domestic  
30 animal was sustained while the dog was working as a hunting dog, herding dog, or predator  
31 control dog on the property of, or under the control of, its owner or keeper, and the damage or  
32 injury was to a species or type of domestic animal appropriate to the work of the dog. The  
33 actions of the dog under consideration occurred under official duties as a military, correctional,

34 law enforcement or protection sport dog. The actions of the dog under consideration (in the  
35 discretion of the Animal Control Officer and/or the Chief of Police or his/her designee) was in  
36 reaction to pain, injury or disease; or was protecting itself, its kennel or its offspring.

37 Section 157C. If there are no additional instances of the behavior described in section  
38 157A within a 24 month period from the date of designation as a At Risk Dog, the dog shall be  
39 removed from the list of At Risk Dogs. The dog may, but is not required to be, removed from  
40 the list of At Risk Dogs prior to the expiration of the 24 month period if the owner or keeper of  
41 the dog demonstrates to the animal control department that changes in circumstances or  
42 measures taken by the owner or keeper, such as training of the dog, have mitigated the risk to the  
43 public safety.

44 Section 157D. Nothing in this chapter shall be construed to prevent a city or county from  
45 adopting or enforcing its own program for the control of At Risk or Dangerous Dogs that may  
46 incorporate all, part, or none of this chapter, or that may punish a violation of this chapter as a  
47 misdemeanor or may impose a more restrictive program to control At Risk or Dangerous Dogs,  
48 provided that no program shall regulate these dogs in a manner that is specific as to breed.

49 Section 157E. Duties of Animal Control when dog is deemed At Risk. When a dog is  
50 deemed to be At Risk, the Chief of Police, or his/her designee may order the Owner to submit  
51 written verification and /or allow inspection to confirm any or all of the following:

52 Microchip identification, the mode of which shall be designated by the Animal Control  
53 Officer, if the animal if not already micro chipped.

54 Behavior training from an approved trainer, as determined by the Animal Control Officer  
55 and/or the Chief of Police or his designee. The costs of said training shall be borne by the  
56 Owner.

57 Rabies vaccination as required by Chapter 140 Section 145B of the General Laws, if the  
58 animal is not up to date on its vaccinations, as certified by a licensed veterinarian.

59 The owner provides adequate security to the premises where the At Risk Dog is kept, as  
60 specifically described in writing to the owner by the Animal Control Officer. Said owner must  
61 comply within twenty-one (21) days of receiving description. For good cause shown, the Chief  
62 of Police may extend this time for up to sixty (60) days.

63 No person under the age of 18 shall own, control or be responsible for an At Risk Dog.

64 After two (2) years of compliance and no additional infractions the dog will not be  
65 considered At Risk.

66 Section 157F. Duties of Animal Control when dog is deemed Dangerous. When a dog is  
67 deemed to be Dangerous, the Chief of Police, or his/her designee may order the Owner to submit  
68 written verification and/or allow inspection to confirm any or all of the following:

69 A dog may be spayed or neutered, if the animal is not already altered. The animal will be  
70 exempt from such an order if a veterinarian certifies in a written statement that the animal is unfit  
71 for alterations because of medical conditions.

72 Microchip identification, the mode of which shall be designated by the Animal Control  
73 Officer, if the animal is not already micro chipped.

74 Behavior training from an approved trainer, as determined by the Animal Control Officer  
75 and/or the Chief of Police or his designee. The costs of said training shall be borne by the  
76 Owner.

77 Rabies vaccination as required by Chapter 140 Section 145B of the General Laws, if the  
78 animal is not up to date on its vaccination, as certified by a licensed veterinarian.

79 The owner provides adequate security to the premises where the Dangerous dog is kept,  
80 as specifically described in writing to the owner by the Animal Control Officer. Said owner  
81 must comply within twenty-one (21) days of receiving description. For good cause shown, the  
82 Chief of Police may extend this time for up to sixty (60) days.

83 A Dangerous Dog may be off the owner's premises if it is muzzled and restrained by an  
84 approved lead not exceeding four (4) feet in length and is under the control of an adult, able-  
85 bodied person. The muzzle must be made in a manner that will not cause injury to the dog or  
86 interfere with its vision or cause injury to the dog or interfere with its vision or respiration, but  
87 must prevent it from biting any person or animal.

88 No person under the age of 18 shall own, control or be responsible for a Dangerous Dog.

89 Euthanasia