

**TOWN OF CHELSEA, VERMONT**  
**ORDINANCE REGULATING DOGS AND WOLF-HYBRIDS**

**SECTION 1. AUTHORITY.** This ordinance is adopted by the Selectboard of the Town of Chelsea, Vermont under authority of 20 V.S.A. § 3549, 20 V.S.A. § 3581, 24 V.S.A. §§ 2291 (10), (14), and (15), and 24 V.S.A. Chapter 59.

**SECTION 2. PURPOSE.** It is the purpose of this ordinance to regulate the keeping of dogs and wolf hybrids and to provide for their leashing, muzzling, restraint, impoundment and destruction, and their running at large, so as to protect the public health and safety of the Town and the quiet enjoyment of its residents' homes and properties.

**SECTION 3. DEFINITIONS.** For purposes of this ordinance, the following words and/or phrases shall apply:

- A. "Domestic animal" means cattle, sheep, goats, equines, deer, American bison, swine, poultry, pheasant, Chukar partridge, Coturnix quail, psittacine birds, ferrets, camelids, ratites (ostriches, rheas, and emus), and water buffalo. The term shall include cultured trout propagated by commercial trout farms.
- B. "Domestic pet" or "pet" means any domestic dog, domestic cat, or ferret.
- C. "Dog" means any member of the canine species. For purposes of this ordinance, this term, wherever used, shall also include "wolf-hybrids" and "working farm dogs" except where specifically exempted.
- D. "Enforcement Officer" means any Town Constable, Police Officer, Animal Control Officer, Humane Officer, or any other person designated as an Enforcement Officer by the Selectboard.
- E. "Owner" means any person who has actual or constructive possession of a dog. The term also includes those persons who provide food and shelter to a dog.
- F. "Vicious Dog" means a dog that (1) bites a person; and (2) that the bite takes place off of the premises of the dog's owner; and (3) the person who is bitten requires medical attention (per 20 V.S.A. § 3581).
- G. "Potentially vicious dog" means a dog running at large that inflicts minor injuries on a person not necessitating medical attention; chases, threatens to attack or attacks another domestic pet or domestic animal; causes damage to personal property; chases a person; or causes any person to reasonably fear attack or bodily injury from such dog. This definition shall not apply if the dog was protecting or defending itself, its offspring, another domestic pet or animal or a person from attack or assault or the person attacked or threatened by the dog was engaged in teasing, tormenting, battering, assaulting, injuring or otherwise provoking the dog.
- H. "Running at large" means that a dog is not:
  - 1. on a leash;
  - 2. in a vehicle;
  - 3. on the owner's premises;
  - 4. on the premises of another person with that person's permission;
  - 5. clearly under the verbal or non-verbal control of the owner; or
  - 6. hunting with the owner.
- I. "Wolf hybrid" means:
  - 1. An animal that is the progeny of a dog and a wolf (*Canis lupus* or *Canis rufus*);
  - 2. An animal that is advertised or otherwise described or represented to be a wolf hybrid; or
  - 3. An animal that exhibits primary physical and/or behavioral wolf characteristics.

J. "Working farm dog" means a dog that is bred or trained to herd or protect livestock or poultry or to protect crops and that is used for those purposes and that is registered as a working farm dog pursuant to State law.

#### **SECTION 4. NUISANCES.**

A. **Prohibitions.** An owner of a dog shall not allow, permit, or suffer such dog to create a nuisance. The following activities shall be deemed nuisances:

**Nuisance One: Lack of current license and/or rabies tag**

A dog off the premises of the owner without a collar or harness with the current license and/or valid rabies tag securely attached.

**Nuisance Two: Running at large**

A dog running at large in the Town.

**Nuisance Three: Failure to remove waste**

A dog that defecates in any public area or on the private premises of another person and whose owner does not immediately remove the fecal material and dispose of it in a sanitary manner.

**Nuisance Four: Unconfined dog in heat**

A female dog in heat not confined to a building or other secured enclosure, except while under the direct control of the owner.

**Nuisance Five: Disturbing the Peace**

A dog that disturbs the quiet, comfort and repose of others by barking, whining, calling, or howling for a continuous period of 30 minutes or more. This regulation shall not apply to dogs in a kennel/boarding facility which has received a zoning permit under the Town's Zoning Regulations. The zoning permit will govern the use of the kennel / boarding facility.

B. **Exemptions for Working Dogs.** The provisions of this section pertaining to running at large and disturbing the quiet, comfort and repose of others shall not apply to working farm dogs if:

1. The working farm dog is barking in order to herd or protect livestock or poultry or to protect crops; or
2. The working farm dog is running at large in order to herd or protect livestock or poultry or to protect crops.

**SECTION 5. COLLAR AND LICENSE.** Each dog, 6 months and older, shall be licensed annually, on or before April 1<sup>st</sup> of each year, and according to the laws of this State and shall wear a collar or harness with the current license attached. Mailed licensing requests must be postmarked on or before April 1<sup>st</sup>. A dog that is visiting from out of state must wear a collar or harness with a current license from its home state attached. A dog that is found without a collar or harness and license shall be in violation of this Ordinance and may be immediately impounded.

**SECTION 6. ENFORCEMENT.** The violation of this ordinance shall be a civil matter which may be enforced in the Vermont Judicial Bureau or in the Orange County Superior Court, at the election of the Selectboard and/or Enforcement Officer.

Violations enforced in the Judicial Bureau shall be in accordance with the provisions of 24 V.S.A. §§ 1974a and 1977 et seq. For purposes of enforcement in the Judicial Bureau, any Selectboard Member and/or Enforcement Officer shall have authority to issue tickets and represent the Town at any hearing.

Violations enforced in the Superior Court shall be in accordance with the Vermont Rules of Civil Procedure. The Town of Chelsea may pursue all appropriate injunctive relief.

**SECTION 7. PENALTIES AND COSTS.**

A. The Enforcement Officer is authorized to recover civil penalties for violations of this Ordinance in the following amounts for each violation:

**Lack of current license and/or rabies tag**

1st Offense: warning or \$50 fine	Waiver Fee: \$25
2nd Offense: impoundment and \$100 fine	Waiver Fee: \$50
3rd & Subsequent Offense: impoundment and \$200 fine.	Waiver Fee: \$100

**Running at large**

1st Offense: warning or impoundment and \$200 fine	Waiver Fee: \$100
2nd Offense: impoundment and \$400 fine	Waiver Fee: \$200
3rd & Subsequent Offense: impoundment and \$600 fine	Waiver Fee: \$300

**Failure to remove waste**

1st Offense: warning or \$50 fine	Waiver Fee: \$25
2nd Offense: impoundment and \$100 fine	Waiver Fee: \$50
3rd & Subsequent Offense: impoundment and \$200 fine	Waiver Fee: \$100

**Unconfined Dog in Heat**

1st Offense: warning or impoundment and \$200 fine	Waiver Fee: \$100
2nd Offense: impoundment and \$400 fine	Waiver Fee: \$200
3rd & Subsequent Offense: impoundment and \$600 fine	Waiver Fee: \$300

**Disturbing the peace**

1st Offense: warning or \$100 fine	Waiver Fee: \$50
2nd Offense: \$200 fine	Waiver Fee: \$100
3rd & Subsequent Offense: \$300 fine	Waiver Fee: \$150

B. The Enforcement Officer is authorized to recover a waiver fee, in lieu of a civil penalty, in the stated amount, for any person who declines to contest a municipal complaint and pays the waiver fee.

C. For purposes of determining the sequence of offenses, second and third offenses shall be those that occur within the 12-month period of the anniversary day of the first offense. Any offense occurring after this 12-month period shall be considered a new first offense.

D. For purposes of calculating the sequence of offenses, offenses shall be counted against the owner.

**SECTION 8. IMPOUNDMENT.**

A. **Grounds for Impoundment.** Any dog may be immediately impounded if the dog:

1. has been determined by an Enforcement Officer to be a "vicious dog" or "potentially vicious dog," or which presents an imminent danger to people or other animals;
2. has reportedly bitten a person off the premises of its owner; or
3. is in violation of State licensing law or 20 V.S.A. § 3806 may be immediately impounded.

B. **Notice of Impoundment.** The officer who impounds a dog shall, within twenty-four (24) hours, give notice to the owner thereof, either personally, by telephone call, or by written notice at the owner's dwelling. Such notice shall inform the owner of the nature of the violations, the location of the dog and the steps that are necessary to have it returned to the owner.

If the owner of the dog is unknown, the officer who impounds a dog shall, within twenty-four (24) hours of impoundment post a public notice. Notification shall be posted in the town clerk's office and other usual places for public notice for a ten (10) day period. The public notice shall include a description of the dog, including any significant marks of identification, when and where it was impounded or found by the person placing the dog in the town's custody, and declare that unless the owner claims the dog and pays all expenses incurred by the town for treatment, boarding and care of the dog, any applicable penalties and takes all necessary remedial action within ten (10) days following posting, the town may place the dog in an adoptive home, transfer it to a humane society or rescue organization. If the dog cannot be placed in an adoptive home or transferred to a humane society or rescue organization, it may be destroyed in a humane way.

- C. **Release from Impoundment.** Impounded dogs shall be released to the owner only after payment of all penalties and impoundment fees (including but not limited to boarding, food, and veterinary expenses), the final disposition of a potentially vicious dog or vicious dog hearing if applicable, and after all necessary remedial action is taken by the owner. Remedial action shall include, but is not limited to, such actions as providing a collar and current license, and verification of certification of current vaccination against rabies.

If the owner of a dog impounded under the provisions of this ordinance refuses to take the remedial action necessary to secure the dog's release within ten (10) days following notice of impoundment or gives notice either personally, by telephone call, or in writing to the town of forfeiture of ownership before that time, the dog may be placed in an adoptive home, transferred to a humane society or rescue organization, or if the town is unable to transfer the dog it may be humanely destroyed. The owner of a dog transferred or humanely destroyed shall remain liable for all expenses incurred by the Town for treatment, boarding and care of the dog for the duration of its impoundment and any expenses associated with its transfer or humane disposal.

- D. The procedures provided in this section shall only apply if the dog is not a rabies suspect. If an official designated by the Selectboard to enforce the provisions of this ordinance determines that the dog is a rabies suspect, the Selectboard shall immediately notify the Town Health Officer who shall proceed in accordance with the rules of the Vermont Department of Health.

## **SECTION 9. INVESTIGATION OF VICIOUS DOGS.**

- A. When a dog has bitten a person while the dog is off the premises of its owner or keeper, and the person bitten requires medical attention for the attack, such person may file a written complaint with the Selectboard of the municipality. The complaint shall contain the time, date and place where the attack occurred, the name and address of the victim or victims, and any other facts that may assist the Selectboard in conducting its investigation.
- B. The Selectboard, within seven (7) days from receipt of the complaint, shall investigate the charges and hold a hearing on the matter. If the owner of the dog which is the subject of the complaint can be ascertained with due diligence, said owner shall be provided with a written notice of the time, date and place of hearing and a copy of the complaint.
- C. If the dog is found to have bitten the victim without provocation, the Selectboard shall make such order for the protection of persons as the facts and circumstances of the case may require, including, without limitation that the dog is disposed of in a humane way, muzzled, chained, or confined. The order shall be sent by certified mail, return receipt requested to the owner. A person who, after receiving notice, fails to comply with the terms of the order shall be subject to the penalties provided in 20 V.S.A. § 3550.
- D. The procedures provided in this section shall only apply if the dog is not a rabies suspect. If a member of the Selectboard or a municipal official designated by the Selectboard determines that the dog is a rabies suspect, the provisions of Subchapter 5 of Title 20 Chapter 193 and the rules of the

Vermont Department of Health shall apply. If the dog is deemed healthy, the terms and conditions set forth in the Selectboard's order shall be enforced.

**SECTION 10. POTENTIALLY VICIOUS DOGS.**

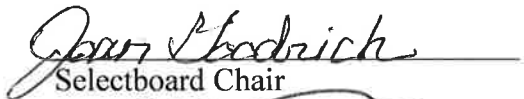
A person claiming a dog is a "potentially vicious dog" may file a written complaint with the Selectboard. The complaint shall contain the time, date and place where the alleged behavior occurred, an identification of the domestic pet or animal threatened or attacked, the name and address of any victim or victims, and any other facts that may assist the Selectboard in conducting its hearing. Upon receipt of a "potentially vicious dog" complaint" the Selectboard shall proceed as in the case of a "vicious dog" complaint with the exception that if the Selectboard determines that the behavior classifies the dog as "potentially vicious" the Selectboard may order any protective measures be taken absent the dog being humanely destroyed.


**SECTION 11 OTHER LAWS.** This ordinance is in addition to all other ordinances of the Town of Chelsea and all applicable laws of the State of Vermont. All ordinances or parts of ordinances, resolutions, regulations, or other documents inconsistent with the provisions of this ordinance are hereby repealed to the extent of such inconsistency.

**SECTION 12. SEVERABILITY.** If any section of this ordinance is held by a court of competent jurisdiction to be invalid, such finding shall not invalidate any other part of this ordinance.

**SECTION 13. EFFECTIVE DATE.** This ordinance shall become effective 60 days after its adoption by the Chelsea Selectboard. If a petition is filed under 24 V.S.A. § 1973, that statute shall govern the taking effect of this ordinance.

Adopted this 25<sup>th</sup> day of July, 2017.

  
Selectboard Chair

  
Selectboard Vice-Chair

  
Selectboard Member

  
Selectboard Member

  
Selectboard Member

**Adoption History**

1. Agenda item at regular Selectboard meeting held on July 25, 2017
2. Read and approved at regular/special Selectboard meeting on July 25, 2017 and entered in the minutes of that meeting which were approved on Aug 8, 2017
3. Posted in public places on July 27, 2017
4. Notice of adoption published in the Chilton Herald newspaper on Aug 3, 2017 with a notice of the right to petition.
5. Other actions [petitions, etc.]

I, Karen J. Lathrop, Town Clerk of the Town of Chelsea, on this 25<sup>th</sup> day of September 2017, do hereby certify that the attached document is a true and accurate copy of the Town of Chelsea, Vermont, Ordinance Regulating Dogs and Wolf-Hybrids.

Attest: Karen J. Lathrop, Town Clerk  
Karen J. Lathrop

