

28th January 2022

Dog Thefts

The purpose of this months newsletter is to raise awareness of Dog Thefts. From the first Covid lockdown up to the present, there has been a sharp rise in dog thefts. The reason being is the price of dogs has increased dramatically as the demand for dogs skyrocketed; this meant criminals could make lots of money.

The increase in demand is due to:

1. People feeling lonely and isolated, so wanted a dog
2. People need an incentive to get outside and exercise; dogs need regular walks several times a day
3. More people are now working from home instead of spending long days in an office, so can now get and train a puppy.

This means that more people wanted dogs, so demand outstripped supply, thus prices soared. A dog costing between £500-£1,000 pre-lockdown, is now selling for between £2,000-£4,000.

Criminal gangs therefore started steal dogs during burglaries, from gardens, from cars and also in parks. The stolen dogs are then either sold on or used for breeding.

A dog is not like a car or any other valuable item, they are a member of the family and when they are stolen, it causes a lot of distress to their owners.

In order to try and prevent such dog thefts, the Dogs Trust developed specific advice preventing dog theft and what to do if your dog gets stolen?

The Dogs Trust advice is shown on the next few pages for your information.



If you have any information about possible organised crime, victims of such crime or vulnerable people subject of exploitation, please inform Essex Police or CrimeStoppers on 0800 555111

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How to prevent dog theft and keep your pet safe at home

Keep thieves away from your home and your pup by making sure you have done all of the below.

- Ensure your house and property boundaries are secure – keeping your dog in and intruders out.
- Install a sensor light and fit sturdy locks to garden gates. This will prevent trespassers gaining easy access to your property.
- Join your local Neighbourhood Watch scheme.
- Report any suspicious activity to the police.
- Do you post pictures of your dog on social media? Then regularly review your privacy settings and make sure your address can't be identified from your posts.
- 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.



Keep your dog spottable at all times

Always knowing where your dog is, means thieves won't have a chance to get hold of them. Here are a few things to keep in mind when you're outside with your pooch.

- Keep an eye on your dog when they are in the garden and never leave them unsupervised.



Keep your dog safe from theft



- Keep your dog's microchip up to date**
Make sure they wear a collar and tag with your details in public
- Secure your home and garden**

- Never leave your dog alone in public or in a car**

- Walk in well-lit areas, vary your routes and stay vigilant**

- Keep your dog in sight when they're off the lead and refresh your recall training**

- Walk with your dog on a shorter lead, and away from roadside**




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- When exercising your dog off-lead, always keep them in sight and pay attention to what they are doing.
- Make sure your dog [comes back when you call them](#), regardless of where they are.
- Never leave your dog unattended in a public place - even if it's just for a minute. 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!
- Likewise, never leave your dog alone in a car. As well as the risk of being stolen, [they can also easily overheat](#).
- Keep up-to-date, clear photos of your dog, making sure to show any distinctive features.



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.



Reuniting dogs with their owners

www.doglost.co.uk

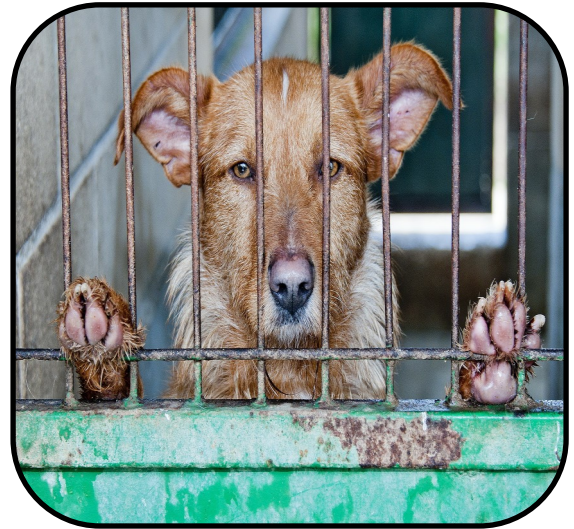


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- Post on all the platforms you can and ask your friends and family to do the same.
- Ask your followers to share your posts.
- Search social media platforms. If someone finds your dog, they may have posted about it themselves. So, search for identifying features and the location your dog was lost. For example, you could try 'dog found in Essex' or 'brown Labrador found.'
- Tag animal charities, vets, microchip database providers and local businesses. Ask them to share your posts.
- 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.



How to report possible offences, concerns or to give information?

If you are a victim of, or have any information about any of the above offences, please report this via one of the below methods.

Essex Police via 999 for offences being committed at that time or via 101 or online at www.essex.police.uk

CrimeStoppers in order to give information anonymously — 0800 555 111



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