

Queen's Park Trust

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Dog Theft

Dog owners are increasingly concerned about their dogs being stolen from them. We are urging the public to keep their dogs **SECURE, IN SIGHT** and **SEARCHABLE**. DogLost, a UK charity that helps victims of dog theft, recorded a 170% increase in the crime, from 172 dogs reported stolen in 2019 to 465 dogs in 2020.

According to a survey conducted by Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner Katy Bourne in partnership with the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, 27,440 people (22% of the 124,729 people who responded) have had a dog stolen or knew someone who had over the last year.

79% of people to whom the question was applicable said they had grown more fearful of taking their dog for a walk during the day and an even greater number, 83%, have grown more fearful of taking their dog for a walk at night.

PROTECT YOUR POOCH
Keep them:

- 1. SECURE**
- 2. IN SIGHT**
- 3. SEARCHABLE**

**SHARE THESE 3 THINGS
WITH 3 FRIENDS**

Find out more ways to protect your pooch on
www.ourwatch.org.uk/ProtectYourPooch

Neighbourhood Watch Network is a charity registered
in England & Wales, CIO no: 173349

To help keep your dog safe we have pulled together some top tips on how to keep your dog SECURE, IN SIGHT AND SEARCHABLE and reduce your chances of becoming a victim of dog theft.

SECURE

- Pets are easily stolen from a garden when left unattended, even if for just a few minutes. Front gardens are very vulnerable. Fit a bell or gate alarm to any rear or side gates; the gates should be secured with British Standard locks, locking bolts or closed shackle padlocks.
- Secure your garden boundary to prevent your dog from escaping or a thief from reaching in and taking your dog out.
- As well as a lock, consider fitting a bell or small alarm to outside kennels to warn you of any tampering.
- Be particularly careful of sharing or publicly posting on social media details of where you live, the type of dog you have and where you walk.

IN SIGHT

- Never leave your dog unattended in a car – especially on warm days – as it is not just dangerous for their health but allows them to be easily targeted by thieves.
- Leaving your dog alone outside a shop is another easy opportunity for a thief, even if you are only away for a minute.
- It's important your dog will return when called; if it is not trained to do this, be very careful of allowing them off the lead, especially in unfamiliar areas. You may wish to keep them on an extending lead instead.
- Varying the times and routes you take when walking your dog.
- Be careful of strangers asking you a lot of questions when you are walking your dog – they could be distracting you to make it easy for them to steal your dog.
- If you need to use a dog walking service or kennels, make sure you check references carefully to ensure the offer is genuine or the company is trusted.

SEARCHABLE

- Make sure your dog is microchipped and the details are correct on any of the recognised pet registration databases. Your dog must be microchipped by the time it is eight weeks old. For further information about the process and potential databases visit the UK government webpage on microchipping your dog.

- Fit your dog with a collar; the collar or attached tag should have your surname and contact details - not the name of the dog.
- Make sure you take pictures of your dog from various angles, especially if they have distinctive markings or features. A further photo of you with your dog can help to prove ownership. Taking photos of your dog in various conditions can also help, such as with a groomed coat or an untidy one.

And what about the law?

At present, dog theft is not defined as a specific crime, with dogs classed as ‘property’ under the Theft Act 1968. If caught, the penalty for stealing pets is generally a small fine or suspended sentence, with the Pet Theft Reform campaign reporting that in recent years only 1% of dog theft crimes have led to a prosecution.

The Home Secretary, Priti Patel, has said in recent media interviews that she will review pet theft, with potentially tougher penalties for perpetrators.

But **what can you do** to help change the law?

- One thing you can do is sign a petition to make dog theft a **specific** criminal offence. To know what petitions are currently running visit:
- <https://petition.parliament.uk>
- Additionally, you could use The Kennel Clubs dog theft template letter to write to your parliamentary representative lending your support and letting them know how they can help.
- Finally, you could **raise awareness about the issue** amongst your community. By letting others know about the issue we have more opportunity to keep dogs safe all across the country.

What to do if your dog is stolen

There are a number of things you should do if your dog is stolen, all of which will increase your chances of recovering it.

1. Contact the police and **report your dog as stolen**, providing as many descriptive details as you can. Make a note of the crime reference number.

2. Contact your local council to make them aware, as many still have dog warden services that encounter stray dogs.
3. Contact the microchip database holding your dog's details and update them about the theft. Should the dog be recovered and checked, it will be possible to reunite you.
4. There are many websites for missing animals, so make sure you add details of your dog's loss to these, using the photos you have taken. Include the crime reference number.
5. Vets are also a good place to advertise the loss of any dog, as well as local animal rescue centres.
6. Noticeboards in local parks may also allow you to place missing dog details.

Be aware of scammers masquerading as pet thieves

Please be aware of scammers who see the missing dog posters and use this information to contact the owners and offer to return the dog for money - but of course they never had the dog in the first place and the owners are at risk of losing not only their pet but their money too. If anyone demands money for the safe return of your pet contact the police.

Puppy farming

In addition to dog theft, puppy smuggling and illegal breeding through puppy farming is also on the rise. During the pandemic, demand for puppies has been so high that buyers are looking further afield for puppies and dogs, and sellers are willing to take more of a risk for more profits. To find out more about puppy farming visit [Crimestoppers Dog Theft page](#)

If you have information about those behind organised dog theft, puppy smuggling or illegal breeding and wish to remain anonymous, you can contact the independent charity Crimestoppers on the phone or online – just call 0800 555 111 or using their online form on their website - you'll stay 100% anonymous.