

Public Notice: Mandatory Dog Licensing in Adams County, Wisconsin

Attention All Residents of Adams County: A Call to Action for Community Safety and Responsible Pet Ownership

The purpose of this formal public notice is to inform all residents of Adams County, Wisconsin, about a critical and longstanding legal obligation: the mandatory licensing of all dogs residing within our county limits. This mandate is a matter of significant importance for public health, animal welfare, and community harmony.

The County understands that pet ownership is a cherished part of life for many families in Adams County. Dogs bring joy, companionship, and even security to our homes. However, with the profound privilege of pet ownership comes a set of inherent responsibilities, codified in both state statute and local ordinance. These laws exist not to burden owners, but to create a safer environment for everyone—pets and people alike. A licensed dog is a protected dog, ensuring that in the unfortunate event they become lost, they can be quickly identified and safely reunited with their rightful owners, minimizing stress for both the animal and the family.

The Foundation in Law: Wisconsin State Statute § 174.05

The requirement for dog licensing is not a new or arbitrary local rule. It is a mandate rooted firmly in Wisconsin state law, specifically outlined in Wisconsin Statutes Chapter 174, related to Dogs. Wisconsin Statute § 174.05 requires that every dog over five (5) months of age be licensed annually. Furthermore, this process is inextricably linked to another crucial public health mandate: rabies vaccination. All licenses require proof of a current rabies vaccination administered by a licensed veterinarian. This requirement is the single most effective measure the County has to prevent the spread of this deadly, entirely preventable disease, protecting the entire community ecosystem.

Adams County Code Enforcement: Enhanced Measures for Compliance Effective January 1, 2026

In the County's ongoing commitment to the health and safety of all Adams County residents and their pets, The County's Planning & Zoning Department (Code Enforcement) will be significantly enhancing the enforcement of these established ordinances. This enhanced measure means that animal control officers, local law enforcement, and designated code enforcement officials will be proactively verifying compliance throughout various townships and municipalities within the County.

What Enhanced Enforcement Entails:

- Proactive Verification: Officials will be conducting routine checks to confirm that dogs are properly licensed and wearing their tags.
- Issuance of Citations: Residents found to be non-compliant with the licensing and vaccination requirements will be subject to formal citations and associated fines as stipulated by Ordinances. These penalties are designed to encourage compliance and offset the costs associated with managing unlicensed and potentially unvaccinated stray animal populations.
- Community Welfare: The goal remains voluntary compliance, but enforcement is a necessary tool to ensure that every dog in our County is accounted for, vaccinated, and protected.

How to Easily Comply and Secure Your Dog's Future

Complying with these laws is a straightforward process and a vital step in being a responsible pet owner. Licenses are typically issued annually and require a certificate of current rabies vaccination.

Actionable Steps for Residents:

1. Visit Your Municipal Treasurer: Dog licenses are often purchased through your specific village, town, or city Treasurer's office within Adams County. The County encourages residents to contact their local municipal office directly to ascertain specific procedures, accepted payment methods, and office hours. Some municipalities have elected to have the County take over the duties of issuing licenses
2. Provide Vaccination Records: You will need to present a valid, unexpired rabies vaccination certificate from your veterinarian.
3. Pay the Nominal Fee: The licensing fees are minimal compared to the potential fines for non-compliance or the devastating consequences of an animal health crisis. In general, here are the basics:
 - a. \$8 dog license fee for neutered males or spayed females upon presentation of evidence of the neuter or spay.
 - b. \$13 dog license fee for an unneutered male or unspayed female.

Note: Special discount of fifty percent (50%) for dogs that became five (5) months of age after July 1st of the license year.

- c. \$35 dog license fee for multiple dogs of twelve (12) or fewer with an additional \$3 for each dog in excess of twelve (12).
- d. \$5 late fee for a dog five (5) months of age or over if the owner failed to obtain a license prior to April 1st each year.

A Final Plea for Collective Responsibility

Adams County urges all County dog owners to act immediately if their pet is currently unlicensed. Please take this opportunity to ensure you are in full compliance with state statute and County code. By licensing your dog, you are contributing to a safer, healthier, and more compassionate community for every single resident.

Adams County thanks you in advance for your cooperation and commitment to responsible pet ownership. Your immediate attention to this matter is greatly appreciated.

Published by the Adams County Administration

For specific questions regarding licensing fees or procedures, please contact your local city, town, or village Treasurer's office. For general information on Wisconsin dog statutes, refer to the Wisconsin official legislature website: legis.wisconsin.gov.