

Protect Your Dog From Being Stolen

Our dogs are members of our families and when a dog is stolen it is very distressing for both owner and pet. To try to reduce the risk of this happening follow the guidance and keep your dog safe.

Protect your dog against theft

Ensure rear garden gates are locked at top and bottom with a shoot bolt and padlock. Consider fitting a bell or gate alarm as well. Do the same to any outside kennels.

Make sure the garden boundary (fence, hedge etc) is secure so that no one can gain entry or pull your dog out or your dog cannot get out on its own, check your garden on a regular basis.

Consider driveway alarms to alert you of visitors or use monitored CCTV/Alarm systems to areas around any outside kennels. These will alert you if anyone is close by.

See the home security pages on the Essex Police website www.essex.police.uk/cp/crime-prevention/ for further advice.

Avoid leaving dogs in the garden or outside kennels if you are not home, and keep your dog in view whilst in the garden, don't leave him outside unsupervised.

Never leave your dog secured alone, outside a shop. This makes them vulnerable and a tempting target for opportunist thieves.

Avoid leaving dogs in cars alone and NEVER leave a dog in a car on a warm/hot day.

Your dog should be microchipped and registered with current information. Use a collar and dog tag displaying contact details (don't put your dog's name on the tag use your surname).

Take plenty of good, clear photographs of your pet so that it can be easily identified. Take photographs of your dog from various angles and update them regularly (i.e. with groomed coats and when not recently groomed). Make a note of any distinguishing features. Also take lots of photographs of yourself with your dog, to help you to prove ownership if needed.

Train your dog to come back when called and never let them off the lead if you are not sure they will come back to you. If in doubt, use an extending lead, especially if you are in an unfamiliar area where your dog may get easily lost.

Be aware of and report all suspicious vehicles or people to 101 or report online to the police. Ask your neighbours to do the same. There have been a few reports of dogs being called and dog owners being distracted by someone, whilst the thieves try to take the dogs.

Fake RSPCA Inspector? In the press there have been reports of fake RSPCA staff seizing dogs. RSPCA staff have no powers of entry or seizure to do so they must be accompanied by a police officer. See: www.rspca.org.uk/-/news-advice-to-the-public-after-people-impersonate-rspca-staff

Don't buy any dogs from social media sites or any person where appropriate documentation (ownership etc, pedigree papers etc) cannot be provided. This increases the demand for stolen pets. Report all suspicious dog sales to the police on 101 or Trading Standards.

Don't give details of your pets, your location or your walking locations out on your social media platforms.

Take care when choosing someone to care for your dog if you are going away from home or need a dog walker whilst you go to work. Use a reputable company or boarding kennels and check references for people who provide dog or house-sitting services.

If you breed puppies for sale, take details of anyone you are inviting in to view before they arrive, perhaps have a video chat? Try to have two people present from your home whilst viewing takes place and limit the numbers of people you allow in at a time. Show the puppies in one secure area, limit access to other areas of your house or property.

Safety while out walking your dog

Don't forget to take your mobile phone with you, but don't be distracted by calls, texting, or listening to music while walking your dog, pay attention to your surroundings.

If possible, walk with a friend.

Beware of strangers asking you questions about your dog.

Vary your times of walks and routes; to avoid dogs being targeted during walks.

If your dog is suspected stolen, it is important to act quickly.

If your dog is missing and you believe it has been stolen, report it to the police on 101 or online report a crime www.essex.police.uk/. Note the crime reference number provided, and also advise your local authority of the theft. **However, if a crime is in progress, don't hesitate dial 999.**

Notify the dog microchip database provider and report the theft to www.doglost.co.uk/ or their Facebook page. They coordinate thefts for each county and offer advice and support. There is no single national missing animal database to report lost dogs so to ensure a widespread appeal consider giving the same information to all of them.

Police do not take reports of lost or found dogs or those that have run off, these should be reported to the local authority and missing animal databases.

Visit places where dog walkers go such as local parks and public places and talk to people, asking them to keep an eye open for your dog

Make posters and display them in areas local to your home and also in relevant places such as vets, local parks etc. The poster should include a clear photograph and details of the circumstances.

Make sure local vets are aware in case someone takes your dog in for treatment.

Contact local animal shelters and rescue charities and send them posters to display.

Losing a pet due to theft or other reasons is a traumatic event. Blue Cross operates the national Pet Bereavement Support Service which can be contacted on 0800 096 6606 (8.30am – 8.30pm) or by email: pbssmail@bluecross.org.uk

Consider joining Dog Watch run by Essex Police via email stating your home district: -

essex.watch.liaison.officers@essex.police.uk

Or see: -

<https://www.essex.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/wsi/watch-schemes-initiatives/>

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