

German Rules On Dangerous Dogs

A few years ago, all German states adopted strict rules regarding dangerous dogs. In the state of *Rheinland-Pfalz*, the following applies:

The local offices of public order (OPO) at city and county level are appointed to enforce the dangerous dog regulation. Dangerous dogs are defined as animals either

- known to be vicious
- having indicated inclinations to attack game or livestock
- having attacked persons
- having shown unusually aggressiveness

Automatically included are Pit Bull Terriers, American Staffordshire Terriers, and Staffordshire Bullterriers and other dogs descendant from one of these dogs.

Breeding, reproduction, and trade of dangerous dogs are prohibited. The responsible authority may order the dog to be neutered. Dogs may not be trained or bred to become dangerous dogs.

Permission by the local authority is required to keep a dangerous dog. The owner must justify the need to keep the dog, for example as a watch dog. Furthermore, the owner must be at least 18 years of age and personally qualified. Personal qualification requires passing an aptitude test administered by a person or office certified by the State Veterinarian Chamber. This test is only valid for 5 years and only connected to the dog that is tested together with the owner.

Certain criteria automatically disqualify persons to own dangerous dogs:

- final conviction for at least one crime committed with premeditation or twice for crimes committed while drunk within the last 5 years
- addiction to alcohol or drugs, or mental illness or impairment
- repeated violation of dangerous dog legal provisions

Dangerous dogs must be kept safely. They must be marked with an electronic chip applied by a veterinarian. The dog owner has to show proof thereof to the local authority. Furthermore, if the dog is lost or given into somebody else's custody for more than 4 weeks the owner must notify the local authority.

In public areas, including common areas in multi-family housing such as stairwells, dangerous dogs must be on a leash and wear a muzzle. Dog owners may ask for an exemption to wear a muzzle if the dog poses no danger to public security. Persons walking dogs in public must be 18 years or older, physically able to control the dog and not disqualified. A person may only walk one dog at a time.

In addition to the state rules, the German federal government adopted an **import ban** for the above mentioned breeds.