

## LEICESTERSHIRE POLICE

We are experiencing an increase in dog theft reports and are asking the public to be wary of this new wave of crime across the county.

The demand for puppies has increased as people have been working from home and other social distractions are limited. This demand has created a surge in puppy thefts, as the price of dogs has almost doubled in some cases.

We want people to help to spread this safety message to prevent much loved pets being targeted by criminals.



### **DogDogBEFORE PURCHASING YOUR DOG OR PUPPY**

From 6 April 2016, all dogs must be microchipped and registered to an approved database by the time they are eight weeks old. Puppies can usually be microchipped from four weeks of age depending on their size, so breeders should ensure this is done as soon as possible. Be suspicious of any animal for sale that does not comply with this law.

Before purchasing your dog make sure you check the proof of ownership, health check and pedigree papers. Additionally, ask to see the puppy in its home environment with its mother. To discourage offenders please do not buy dogs from social media sites or from anyone who cannot provide appropriate documentation.

### **PREVENTION OF DOG THEFT**

Here is some advice on how you can prevent the theft of your dog.

- Keep an ID tag on your dog at all times (your surname rather than the dogs name, mobile number and address only) and if there's room, put 'microchipped' on the tag if your dog has a chip. It is now a legal requirement for a dog to wear a collar and an ID tag when in a public place.
- Make sure your dog is micro-chipped and their details are updated so that they can be returned if they are stolen and subsequently found. Ask your vet to check your dog's microchip every year to ensure your details are accurate and up-to-date.
- Keep all documentation relating to your dog(s) in a safe place. Take lots of photographs of your dog from different angles, pay particular attention to any distinguishing markings on your dog. This is to prove ownership if it's stolen,
- Never leave your dog in the garden unattended and make sure fences and gates are secure and in good repair
- Avoid leaving dogs in an outside kennel if possible. If not possible then make sure the kennels are alarmed – experience tells us padlocks alone will not stop thieves!
- Consider purchasing a driveway alarm or video doorbell so you are alerted to any intruders, these can also be used in rear gardens and yards, combine this with the use of monitored CCTV that will alert you via your phone or tablet instantly
- Secure gates using bolts at the top and bottom, along with a heavy-duty padlock and gate alarm so that no one can gain entry or pull your dog out.
- Don't let your dog sit at the window in view of passers-by
- Avoid leaving your dog alone in the car even for a few minutes
- Don't leave your dog tied up outside a shop
- Don't give details of your pets, your location or your favourite walking spots on social media and make sure your security settings are set to friends only
- You can also prevent theft on walks by varying walk times and locations and being suspicious of strangers who ask questions about your dog. Be vigilant and cautious of suspicious individuals, loitering vehicles or markings seen around addresses.

- Be wary of any cold callers and strangers approaching you whilst out dog walking or asking questions about your dog
- When out, always know where your dog is. Be mindful of anyone who may be trying to distract your attention from your dog or attract your dog's attention away from you
- Don't allow strangers to have their photograph taken with your dog.
- Train your dog not to go out of your sight on walks, to come back to you when called, or keep it on a lead if in doubt
- Be cautious when choosing someone who will care for your dog(s) while you are at work, in hospital or on holiday. Be clear about when the dog will be handed over and who will collect it.
- Use a registered boarding kennel or professional dog carer with certified documentation to prove they are genuine, unless you know someone who is trustworthy that will care for your dog in your absence.

### **WHAT TO DO IF YOUR DOG DOES GET STOLEN**

If the worst happens and your dog does get stolen, it's important to act quickly there are a few things you can do to try to recover it. Please check with any friends or family members who may have access to your dog to ensure they haven't taken the dog out.

Report the crime to Leicestershire police by visiting our online reporting system or calling 101, providing as much information as possible about:

- The description of your dog.
- Dates and times for when you last saw your dog.
- The circumstances around your dog's disappearance.
- Contact names and numbers of anyone you believe may have access to your dog.
- Descriptions of people or vehicles seen acting suspiciously in the area.

You should then try to contact your local animal warden and any rescue centres. If your pet escapes or is dumped, these are the places it will most likely be.

Animal Search UK is the leading search service for missing pets in Britain, specialising in helping to reunite owners with lost or stolen pets. Their website is free to use, provides local and nationwide coverage and lots including free help and advice for people who have lost or found a pet and are wondering what best to do. If you have pet insurance, contact your insurer because they may be able to offer advice to help find it and pay for a reward and posters. Notify your microchip database provider immediately and advise Doglost.co.uk either via their website or Facebook page who can offer help, support and advice. Finally, utilise social media. Post pictures of your pet on social networks like Facebook and Twitter and ask people to keep a lookout.

### **HOW TO SECURE YOUR HOME AGAINST BURGLARS**

There are some simple techniques you can use to better secure your home against any potential thieves:

Fit key-operated locks to all downstairs and easy-access windows. Lock all the doors and windows every time you leave the house – even when you're in the garden

- Hide all keys out of sight.
- Install a burglar alarm and install lighting outside
- Consider joining a Neighbourhood Watch scheme
- Consider replacing glass door panels with a stronger laminated glass

#### **Other methods of ensuring your pet's safety**

- Learn more about GPS pet trackers. They can be removed by a thief but some of them connect to your smartphone and allow you to see your pet's location on an app. They also allow you to set up 'safe zones'. If your pet leaves these zones you will receive a notification.

- Sign up to Neighbourhood Link to keep up to date with all the latest news from your Local Policing Team as well as news of any suspicious activity and pet/dog thefts in your area.  
[www.neighbourhoodlink.co.uk](http://www.neighbourhoodlink.co.uk)

#### USEFUL WEBSITES

[www.doglost.co.uk](http://www.doglost.co.uk)

[www.thekennelclub.org.uk](http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk)

[www.animalsearchuk.co.uk](http://www.animalsearchuk.co.uk)

<https://www.leicester.gov.uk/your-environment/pollution-and-pests/dog-control/>