



Speaking up for cats: briefing Government guidance on dealing with irresponsible dog ownership October 2014

Police and local authorities now have new measures they can use to demand that dog owners take action to prevent a dog attack.

New measures have been introduced as part of legislation to address anti-social behaviour. The measures are designed to apply where there is concern within a local community that an individual is not controlling their dog(s) and that the dog(s) might or have attacked and/or injured or killed local cats. The new Government guidance contains specific reference to the use of these new measures to prevent a dog attacking a cat where the failure to control a dog or dogs is “having a detrimental effect of a persistent or continuing nature on the quality of life of those in the locality”. **Reference to cats has come about as a result of our advocacy work with the Government over the last 18 months during which we pointed out the dangers some out of control dogs can pose to a cat's safety.** Also, in cases where a dog does attack a cat it can denote a generally dangerous dog. There are reported cases where a dog has attacked a cat and then gone on to attack a person such as a child. These new measures are a step in the right direction and we hope they will be used to prevent harm to cats.

Community Protection Notices: Police officers, Police Community Support Officers, Local authority officers and registered social landlords can now issue Community Protection Notices (CPNs). A CPN can be issued to an individual over the age of 16 and after a written warning giving reasonable time for the anti-social behaviour to stop. This provides the opportunity for the dog owner to rectify the problem and allows officers to explain the consequences of non-compliance.

A CPN can require an individual to do any of the following:

- microchip/neuter/muzzle/keep dog on a lead
- attend dog training classes
- repair fencing to prevent the dog leaving the property
- put up signage

If a CPN is breached a prosecution can be brought. A new manual has been published by the Government to guide police forces, local authorities and others in the use of these new measures to prevent irresponsible dog ownership and dog attacks. It is aimed at dealing with dog-related incidents that are brought to the attention of the police in England and Wales. **Crucially one of the CPN tests in the manual highlights use of a CPN where a dog is not being controlled and is threatening to injure or attack a cat.**

Example 4: CPN test

In a residential street a person has two large dogs and persistently fails to control them, allowing the dogs to run loose on the estate. Neighbours are concerned at the distress and threat to safety of their cats. The neighbours do not think the chasing is playful (they have video footage) and fear the dogs will seriously injure or kill one or more cats soon. As a consequence, owners are keeping their cats indoors as much as possible. A verbal warning was issued to the dogs' owner after complaints from several of the neighbours but their failure to control the dogs has continued. The situation meets the CPN threshold and provides the swiftest and most cost effective solution to the circumstances of this case (rather than making a complaint to the Magistrates Court, for example under the Dogs Act 1871).

P.17 *Dealing with irresponsible dog ownership: Practitioners' manual* which is on the Department for the Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) website.

What you can do: If you are aware of a dog causing serious distress to cats or you know of a cat that is attacked by a dog, please report the incident to the police and/or local authority. Do remind them of the Practitioners' manual for dealing with irresponsible dog ownership published by DEFRA. Ask them about the possibility of a warning to the dog owner and potential use of CPNs. Unfortunately we are unable to intervene in the investigation of individual cases. The police will decide the best course of action always based on the local circumstances and the case may in some instances be referred to the local dog warden if there is one.

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