



Pet Ownership Guide for Residents of West Windsor



West Windsor Health Department
Serving West Windsor, Robbinsville, and Hightstown
(609) 936-8400



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

This booklet serves as a guide for pet owners living in West Windsor Township. Within the booklet, you'll find information on pet licensing, pet-related laws, and other resources you may find useful as a dog or cat owner.

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PET LICENSING

Pet licensing: Dogs 7 months or older must be licensed and renewed annually every January. Proof of rabies vaccination is required and must be valid through October of the licensing year. Cats in West Windsor are licensed/renewed in April. Proof of rabies vaccination is required. For pet licensing, contact West Windsor Township Health Department at (609) 936-8400.



Annual Renewal. Owners are required to renew each pet license once a year.

- Dog licenses expire **January 31** of each year.
- Cat licenses expire **April 30** of each year.

Rabies Certification

- **Dogs.** The expiration date on the rabies vaccination certificate for a dog license application shall be no later than November 1 of the licensing year. This requirement is mandated by regulations established by the State of New Jersey.
- **Cats.** The expiration on the rabies vaccination certificate for cats must be valid at the time of licensing. It is strongly recommended that the owner ensure the rabies vaccination is valid throughout the remainder of the licensing year.



New Residents/New Pets. New residents, owners of newly acquired pets and pets that recently attained licensing age must apply for a pet license with 10 days of establishing residence, acquisition of the pet or age attainment.

Altered Pets. In order to license a pet as altered, documentation from a licensed veterinarian stating the pet has been spayed or neutered shall be submitted at the time of initial licensure with the Township.

Fees and directions are listed on the license application.

Pet License Application Forms:

- [Dog License Application](#)
- [Cat License Application](#)

For more information, please visit the [West Windsor Health Department Animal Licensing page](#).

GENERAL DUTIES OF THE ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER (WEST WINDSOR)

Animal Control Officer duties include:

- Enforcement of West Windsor codes and state laws that pertain to domestic, as well as wild animals
- Assist in investigation of animal cruelty complaints alongside
- Investigation of dog attacks or bites to humans and animals
- Response to emergencies involving sick or seriously injured domestic or wild animals, including potential human exposure to the rabies virus
- Removal of stray dogs and cats from streets and other public areas
- Animal Control Officers enforce the dog license code

What to report and how to make a report: Call the West Windsor Police non-emergency dispatch number at (609) 799-1222 to report:

- Dog bites
- Lost or found pets
- Animal cruelty or neglect
- Sick or injured wildlife
- Human exposure/encounters with potentially rabid wildlife

West Windsor Animal Control Officer will respond to the following wildlife encounters/emergencies:

- In a home or business that poses a threat to humans or pets
- Between humans or domestic animals that could result in rabies exposures
 - When wildlife shows signs and symptoms of rabies
 - The first symptoms of rabies may be nonspecific and include lethargy, fever, vomiting, and anorexia. Signs progress within days to cerebral dysfunction, cranial nerve dysfunction, ataxia, weakness, paralysis, seizures, difficulty breathing, difficulty swallowing, excessive salivation, abnormal behavior, aggression, and/or self-mutilation.
- When wildlife poses a threat to humans or pets
- When wildlife appear sick or injured
- Where wildlife is damaging property

West Windsor Animal Control Officer does NOT respond to the following:

- Calls reporting wildlife nuisances
 - When wildlife poses no real threat to humans, pets or property:
 - Wild animals living under decks, storage sheds, porches
 - Wild animals living in populated areas
 - Wild animals in attics, basements, detached garages and sheds
 - Wildlife has damaged gardens, flower beds or shrubs

PET OWNER RESPONSIBILITIES

Please see below for “Guidelines for Responsible Pet Ownership” from the American Veterinary Medical Association.

Owning a pet is a privilege and should result in a mutually beneficial relationship. The benefits of pet ownership come with responsibilities. These include:

- Lifelong care of the pet. This means committing to the relationship for your pet's entire life.
- Selecting a pet that is suited to your home and lifestyle and avoiding impulsive decisions.
- Recognizing that owning a pet(s) requires an investment of time and money.
- Keeping only the type and number of pets for which you can provide an appropriate and safe environment. This includes appropriate food, water, shelter, health care and companionship.
- Animals that spend extended periods of time outside require habitats that protect their health, safety, and welfare. Outdoor confinement of an animal should include provisions to minimize distress or discomfort to the animal, and assure access to appropriate food, water, and shelter from extreme weather conditions.
- Ensuring pets are properly identified (i.e., tags, microchips, or tattoos) and that their registration information in associated databases is kept up to date.
- Adhering to local ordinances, including licensing and leash requirements.
- Helping to manage overpopulation by controlling your pet(s)' reproduction through managed breeding, containment, or spay/neuter. Establishing and maintaining a veterinarian-client-patient relationship.
- Providing preventive (e.g., vaccinations, parasite control) and therapeutic health care for the life of your pet(s) in consultation with, and as recommended by, your veterinarian.
- Socialization and appropriate training for your pet(s) to facilitate their wellbeing and the wellbeing of other animals and people.
- Preventing your pet(s) from negatively impacting other people, animals and the environment. This includes proper waste disposal, noise control, and not allowing pet(s) to stray or become feral.
- Providing exercise and mental stimulation appropriate to your pet(s)' age, breed, and health status.
- Include your pets in your planning for an emergency or disaster, including assembling an evacuation kit.
- Making arrangements for the care of your pet when or if you are unable to do so.
- Recognizing declines in your pet(s)' quality of life and making decisions in consultation with your veterinarian regarding appropriate end-of-life care (e.g., palliative care, hospice, euthanasia).

LEASH LAW & REMOVAL OF PET WASTE

As outlined in West Windsor Township ordinances, **dogs must be kept on a leash when off their owner's property**. The leash must be no longer than six feet.



West Windsor Township also enforces an ordinance that requires **immediate and proper disposal of solid pet waste** deposited on any property not owned or possessed by the pet owner or keeper. This means discard into a regularly emptied trash receptacle, or disposal into a sewage system (i.e., toilet).



For animal-related ordinances in West Windsor Township, please visit the [West Windsor Township Code](#).

ANIMAL CRUELTY LAWS

To ensure all dog, pet and service animal owners and caretakers have a basic understanding of legal requirements, a brief, general description of the requirements and prohibitions and a guide to compliance is provided on the West Windsor Health Department website, on the [Animal Licensing page](#).

If you suspect animal cruelty or abuse, contact the West Windsor Police Department at (609) 799-1222.

LOST & FOUND PETS

There may be an occasion when a pet is lost or found by a resident. Report lost or found pets to the West Windsor Police Department at (609) 799-1222. Read on for tips to prevent lost pets, as well as what you can do if your pet is lost.

Tips to Prevent Lost Pets:

- Get a collar with dog ID tags and/or a QR code to scan for your contact information.
- Secure your yard and home with a fence in the front- and backyard.
- Spay or neuter your pets to keep them from wandering off in search of other pets.
- Teach your pet basic commands, such as “come” and “stay.”
- Microchip your pet.

Steps to Take if You Lose Your Pet:

- Inform West Windsor Police Department and ACOs in nearby communities.
- Call and visit local animal shelters to check for your pet.
- Use social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram) and community groups (e.g., NextDoor, Front Porch) to share missing pet information.
- Create pet photo poster and post in local stores, restaurants, post offices, veterinary offices, and pharmacies.
- Use private services dedicated to finding lost pets.
- Beware of scams.
 - If a stranger claims to have found your pet, ask them to describe your pet and send you a photo.
 - Be wary of anyone who asks for money before they'll return your pet.
 - Omit one identifying characteristic when advertising a lost pet and be skeptical of anyone who claims to have found your pet but can't describe this characteristic.

For more information on lost and found pets, visit the Animal Control page on the West Windsor Police Department website.

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Call the West Windsor Police non-emergency dispatch number at (609) 799-1222 to report:

- Dog bites
- Vicious dogs
- Animal cruelty or neglect
- Sick or injured wildlife
- Human exposure/encounters with potentially rabid wildlife
- Lost or found dog/cat



Call the West Windsor Health Department at (609) 936-8400 for questions/concerns about:

- Rabies or potential exposure to rabies
- Dog/cat licensing
- Rabies vaccination clinic

EMERGENCY PLAN FOR YOUR PET

In the event of an emergency, pet owners should have a plan of evacuation for themselves and their pets. Questions to ask yourself in preparation for an emergency include the following:

1. If I need to evacuate, where can I take my pet? List potential locations below:
(1) _____
(2) _____
(3) _____
2. Will I be able to bring my pet to a local emergency shelter? If so, where is the shelter located?
Local Emergency Shelter Name: _____
Address: _____
Phone Number: _____
3. Are there pet-friendly hotels in the area I am evacuating? If so, record name, location and contact for pet-friendly hotels.
(1) Hotel Name: _____
Hotel Address: _____
Hotel Phone Number: _____

(2) Hotel Name: _____
Hotel Address: _____
Hotel Phone Number: _____
4. If I become separated from my pet during an emergency, does my pet have adequate identification to re-connect with me/my family?
Collar with Phone Number Tag: Yes No
Microchip: Yes No
5. In the event of a medical emergency for my pet, do I have the contact number for veterinarian services?
Veterinarian Office: _____
Address: _____
Phone Number: _____

Alternative Veterinarian Office: _____
Address: _____
Phone Number: _____

Listed below is an emergency plan checklist to complete for each of your pets.

- Food, drinking water, bowls, cat litter/pan, and a manual can opener if your pet eats canned food.
- Sturdy leashes, harnesses and/or carriers to transport pets safely.
- Medications and copies of medical records stored in a waterproof container.
- A first aid kit.
- Current photos of you with your pet(s) in case they get lost.
- Information on feeding schedules, medical conditions, behavior problems, and the name and number of your veterinarian in case you have to foster or board your pets.
- Pet beds and toys, if easily transportable.
- Veterinarian name and contact number.



West Windsor Health Department thanks you for taking the time to review the information on pet ownership. We hope this serves as a convenient reference for the community. The Health Department welcomes feedback and suggestions for future issues.

"Pets are humanizing. They remind us we have an obligation and responsibility to preserve and nurture and care for all life." - James Cromwell