

The Facts on Dog Bite Lawsuits

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While dogs may be our best friends, some dogs can become aggressive and bite someone. A dog bite falls under the law in the personal injury category. Each state has various laws regarding the liability of the dog's owner. Following are things you should do if you are bitten by a dog.

Dogs that bite can do it for a number of reasons. Perhaps the dog has always had an aggressive nature and perceives you as an unwanted stranger. Historically, there are certain breeds that have been known to harbor aggression. The Pit Bull breed is a common example.

The dog's breed is only one factor and doesn't always mean the dog will be aggressive and prone to biting. You might encounter a dog that has been healthy in the past and free from offensive behavior. However, now the dog has suffered from a health illness such as rabies. Rabies can cause dogs to become disoriented and lash out by biting people. A classic sign of rabies is drooling and foaming of the mouth.

If you are bitten it is imperative that you have your bite checked out at the hospital as soon as possible. Dogs can be a host to several bacterial and viral infections that you can contract such as ring worm. Make sure however, that you remember the type of breed to help a doctor assess the extent of the wound. Write down the contact information of the dog's owner should you need to file a lawsuit.

Dog bite lawsuits arise when the dog bite is serious enough to cause injury, mental aggravation, and hospital bills. It was beneficial that you wrote down the dog breed and the dog owner's contact information because you will need it when filing a dog bite lawsuit. Should you choose to file a dog bite lawsuit, you will need to contact an attorney to understand your rights and requirements for filing.

An attorney will explain the specific dog bite lawsuit laws in your state. It is good to know that the majority of states hold the dog's owner liable for any dog bites. It will also need to be determined if the owner had prior knowledge of the dog's aggression. This is termed "dangerous propensities". Did the owner know in advance that their dog was of a certain breed that is prone to biting? Did they provide the required safeguards to control this unwanted behavior in their dog?

Additionally, some states have enacted legislation that involves "strict liability". The owner is liable for their dog's actions whether they knew the dog was dangerous or not. Anytime their dog bites someone they are held liable no matter the situation or circumstances.

On the flip side of the coin is to view this from the dog owner's perspective. Let's say the dog owner had prior knowledge that their dog may be dangerous or may bite someone. The owner then took protective measures to keep his dog in a secure area. He also had placed "Beware of Dog" signs on his property and has warned others not to approach his dog as the dog may attack. The owner had done all this, but someone didn't listen or even provoked the dog on purpose.

If the owner has provided these safety precautions they are sometimes not liable due to "contributory negligence". "Contributory negligence" means that the person who was bitten understood the dangerousness of the animal, but proceeded to place themselves in the dog's environment anyway. This type of dog bite lawsuit often ends in favor of the dog owner.

If you do file a dog bite lawsuit you can sue for compensation regarding medical costs you will incur due to the dog bite, pain and suffering, property damage, and affected wages. A vicious dog bite can leave you unable to work for some time and you need a way to recoup your losses.

You can also be awarded punitive damages in some cases. Whether or not you are awarded punitive damages depends on the behavior of the dog's owner. Did the owner intentionally provoke their dog and put you in the line of fire? If so, the dog owner's behavior will be punished by granting you an additional punitive damages settlement.

If you suffer from a dog bite you can rest a little easier knowing that many health insurance plans cover costs associated with dog bites. Hopefully, you won't ever have to deal with a dog bite and dog bite lawsuit. Understand though that if you are bitten by a dog you do have legal claims. The extent and nature of the legal claims vary from state to state, but the basic guidelines have been discussed in this article. Consult an attorney that has worked on dog bite lawsuits in the past to figure out the best course of action. Visit the Dog Bite Lawsuits website to research dog breeds & get free tips on dog training, dog books, dog products & how to find dog sitters & dog walkers.