

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2025

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HOUSE PRINCIPAL CLERK

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HOUSE BILL DRH40444-NM-45

Short Title: Safe Dogs, Safe Owners.

(Public)

Sponsors: Representative von Haefen.

Referred to:

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
2 AN ACT TO MANDATE STRICT CIVIL LIABILITY FOR DOG BITES WHEN A DOG
3 INJURES A PERSON OR DOMESTIC ANIMAL WHILE RUNNING UNLEASHED IN
4 PUBLIC AND TO ESTABLISH UNIFORM LEASHING LAWS.

5 Whereas, North Carolina's existing laws have resulted in a patchwork of county and
6 municipality leash and dog restraint laws that offer inconsistent levels of protection for North
7 Carolinians and their pets alike; and

8 Whereas, the patchwork nature of those local ordinances unduly inhibits and
9 complicates the ability of State and local police and animal control to assist the victims of bites
10 by at-large dogs; and

11 Whereas, that same patchwork creates an undue barrier to legal representation for the
12 victims of dog bites by at-large dogs, even when local ordinances would likely hold the at-large
13 dog owner liable; and

14 Whereas, off-leash dogs are known to cause reactivity when approaching on-leash
15 dogs; and

16 Whereas, every North Carolinian (and their dogs) ought to have the right to enjoy
17 public spaces without fear of attack by an at-large dog; Now, therefore,
18 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

19 SECTION 1.(a) G.S. 67-1 reads as rewritten:

20 "§ 67-1. Liability for injury to ~~livestock or fowls~~ livestock, fowls, domestic animals, or
21 persons; definition of at large.

22 (a) ~~If any dog, not being at the time on the premises of the owner or person having charge~~
23 ~~thereof, dog at large shall kill or injure any livestock or fowls, livestock, fowls, domestic animals,~~
24 ~~or persons, the owner or person having such dog in charge shall be liable for damages sustained~~
25 ~~by the injury, killing, or maiming of any livestock, livestock, fowl, domestic animals, or persons~~
26 ~~and costs of suit.~~

27 (b) As used in this Chapter, the term "at large" refers to a dog not under the reasonable,
28 physical control of an owner or some other person by the owner's permission, including, but not
29 limited to, instances of a dog escaping an inadequately built or maintained outdoor enclosure, a
30 dog wandering off the premises of an owner unaccompanied, a person walking a dog off leash in
31 public and relying on verbal commands, a person using a leash that is too long to allow for
32 sufficient control to prevent or end an attack, and a person walking a dog with a restraint system
33 that cannot be managed by the person having such dog in charge. This term "at large" shall not
34 apply to (i) a dog being used by a law enforcement officer to carry out the law enforcement
35 officer's official duties and (ii) a dog actively being used in a lawful hunt."

36 SECTION 1.(b) G.S. 67-12 reads as rewritten:



1 "§ 67-12. Permitting dogs to run at ~~large at night;~~ large; penalty; liability for damage.

2 No person shall allow his dog over six months old to run ~~at large in the nighttime~~
3 ~~unaccompanied by the owner or by some member of the owner's family, or some other person by~~
4 ~~the owner's permission.~~ at large. Any person intentionally, knowingly, and willfully violating
5 this section shall be guilty of a Class 3 misdemeanor, and shall also be liable in damages to any
6 person injured or suffering loss to his property or chattels."

7 **SECTION 2.** This act becomes effective December 1, 2025, and applies to actions
8 and proceedings brought or pending on or after that date.