



# Ollie's Law Guidance for Pet Owners



In 2020, a 7-month-old labradoodle by the name of Ollie was severely mauled by other dogs at an unlicensed dog daycare facility. Ollie spent two months in a veterinary hospital before ultimately succumbing to his injuries. Ollie's death could have been prevented if proper oversight, care, and safety measures had been in place. Unfortunately, stories like Ollie's are not unique. It was clear to advocates that there was limited consumer protection with kennels, and legislative changes were necessary to help prevent tragedies like Ollie's.

On September 20th, 2024, an Act to Increase Kennel Safety (AKA Ollie's Law) was signed by Governor Maura Healey. The passing of Ollie's law required the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) to work with an appointed advisory committee to develop standards and then enact regulations for commercial boarding and training kennels, including dog daycares. Ollie's Law also clarifies existing kennel license requirements, requires municipalities to report kennel licenses to MDAR, requires kennels to report any injuries to the municipality, and establishes enforcement protocols for municipalities, and allows the state to assist when necessary.

MDAR urges all Commonwealth pet owners to stay informed about the changes brought by Ollie's Law. Before selecting a daycare or boarding facility, take action: thoroughly research providers, check for compliance with the new regulations, and ask about safety protocols. Your diligence will help protect your pet and ensure peace of mind.

## Types of Dog Watchers and Which Require a Kennel License.

Massachusetts pet owners have many options to consider if they need someone to watch their dog. We encourage owners to research anyone they hire before leaving their dog with them.

**Dog Walkers or Drop-in Dog Sitters:** A dog walker, or drop-in dog sitter, is someone who goes to the dog owner's home and cares for the dog(s) there, or walks the dog(s) in their own neighborhood. This type of activity may be regulated by local bylaws but it is not covered by the Mass General Laws (MGLs). These services do not require a kennel license since the dogs are being cared for in their own home or walked in public spaces.

**Commercial Boarding or Training Kennel:** This is a broad kennel category of dog watchers, defined in MGL Chapter 140 Sec. 136A. It includes any individual or establishment that holds a dog for compensation during its owner's absence. Large and small dog daycares, boarding facilities, individuals who watch other people's dogs in their own home (many Rovers, for example), and drop-off dog training services would all fall under this kennel category.

**When dropping off your dog to someone in this category, make sure they hold an active municipal kennel license. You must also be sure your dog has a current rabies vaccination and a current dog license. The rabies vaccination and town license tags, as well as copies of your vaccination and license certificates, are required for intake.**

## Kennel Licensing

### What it is and Why it is Important

Under MGL Chapter 140 Section 137A. (a) A person maintaining a kennel shall obtain a kennel license.

A valid kennel license indicates that the premises has been inspected annually by the local animal control officer (ACO) to help ensure that animals are kept in humane and sanitary conditions. Once a kennel passes the ACO inspection, a kennel license is issued by the local licensing authority (typically the town clerk), and the license must state the type of license, when it expires, and the maximum number of dogs allowed at the kennel. Ask to view the kennel license of any kennel you are considering. You can also check with the local town clerk that a kennel license is valid.

Under Ollie's law, if an injury occurs to an animal or person at a Commercial Boarding or Training Kennel the incident must be reported to the local licensing authority. The local licensing authority can then open or assign an investigation if needed. This information can be available to owners through a municipal public records request.

All Municipalities are required by Ollie's Law to annually submit a list of all currently licensed kennels to MDAR. You can see if your municipality is in compliance with this requirement by checking the list on the Department's website here: [Municipal Kennel Reporting Compliance Report](#)

## Commercial Boarding and Training Kennel Regulations

Under MGL Chapter 140 Section 174G, regulations for commercial boarding and training kennels needed to be promulgated by the state (MDAR) by June 2026.

**WATCH THIS SPACE FOR INFORMATION ON THE REGULATIONS WHEN THEY COME OUT.**



## Additional Considerations

Checking licensing is not the only factor when choosing someone to care for your dog. Find care that matches your dog's behavioral and physical needs.

While some dogs may thrive in free-range, group-type housing, others may do better with individual spaces that are calmer and quieter. Some kennels even offer evaluations or trial days to ensure their setup is the right fit for your dog.

Never leave your dog at a kennel that doesn't offer tours. Touring the facility and visiting the premises should be part of your selection process. Ask for a list of what is standard and what may be considered additional. For example, playtime, elevated beds, and treats are often upgrades and not available to every dog being cared for.

While touring, ask about emergency plans and safety protocols. Simple things like sudden weather changes can create major issues if a facility doesn't have plans in place. You can even inquire about staff training and veterinary partnerships (in case of injuries or illness).

Check references. Many places will provide you with references when asked, but you can also search for reviews online or check for complaints on the [Better Business Bureau](#) or the [MA Attorney General's Page](#).

## See Something. Say Something

Safety of the Commonwealth's animals is our top priority, so if something happened or you have a concern while looking for a kennel or while your dog was staying at a kennel, please report it.

Local issues should be reported to ACOs, but if you need more support you can reach out to the MDAR staff.

## Ollie's law Page

For up to date information about Ollie's Law and associated resources visit:

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/ollies-law-information>



## Find Your Local ACO

For up to date information about Ollie's Law changes and resources visit:

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/municipal-animal-control-officers-in-massachusetts>



Please reach out to MDAR if you have any questions about the Ollie Law changes!

## MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES CONTACT

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