

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2025

H.B. 852
Apr 9, 2025
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:

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

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

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

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

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

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

SECTION 1.(a) G.S. 67-1 reads as rewritten:
"§ 67-1. Liability for injury to ~~livestock or fowls~~ livestock, fowls, domestic animals, or
persons; definition of at large.

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

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

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



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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.