

## **Paw & Order**

### **A Brief History of Pet Laws In Urban Spaces**

Laws in American metropolitan areas regarding pets have evolved in a fairly clear and straightforward fashion. The oldest of these laws generally governed livestock and only incidentally involved dogs and cats (and these laws rarely actually mention cats, since before the invention of cat litter in the 1950s cats were generally outdoor animals). But there is a clear pattern that can be drawn from the evolution of these laws.

The first laws regarding pets were designed to protect human health and property rights. The next wave of laws regarding pets tended to protect human convenience. The third wave of these laws are largely concerned with protecting the health and well-being of pets.

Among the laws protecting human health and property rights are:

- Leash laws (which arose very early)
- Licensing laws
- Laws authorizing a “pound” for vagrant animals
- Laws creating animal control departments
- Hold periods for impounded animals

Among the laws geared toward human convenience are:

- Spay/Neuter Laws
- Pet waste removal laws
- Laws permitting scientific testing on animals

Among the laws geared toward protecting pets are:

- Mandatory microchipping laws
- Bans on de-clawing cats
- Laws requiring pet stores source from shelters
- Laws directing judges to consider the best interest of pets in custody disputes
- Laws against animal abuse and neglect