

TOWN OF GRAFTON, VERMONT
ORDINANCE REGULATING DOGS AND WOLF-HYBRIDS

Adopted 11/20/23; Amended 2/18/25

SECTION 1: AUTHORITY

This ordinance is adopted by the Town of Grafton under the authority of 20 V.S.A §§ 2291 (10), (14), and (15), and 24 V.S.A. Chapter 59.

SECTION 2: PURPOSE

The purpose of this ordinance is to regulate the keeping of dogs and wolf hybrids and to provide for their leashing, muzzling, restraint, impoundment, and destruction, in order to protect the public health and safety of the Town of Grafton and preserve the quiet enjoyment of its residents' homes and properties.

SECTION 3: DEFINITIONS. For purposes of this ordinance, the following words and phrases shall apply:

- A. "Dog" shall mean any member of the canine species. For purposes of this ordinance, this term shall also include "wolf-hybrids" and "working farm dogs" except as otherwise stated.
- B. "Domestic animal" shall mean cattle, sheep, goats, equines, deer, American bison, swine, poultry, pheasant, Chukar partridge, Coturnix quail, psittacine birds, ferrets, camelids, ratites (ostriches, rheas, and emus), and water buffalo. The term shall include cultured fish propagated by commercial fish farms.
- C. "Domestic pet" or "pet" shall mean any domestic dog, domestic cat, or ferret,
- D. "Enforcement Officer" shall mean Town Constable, Police Officer, Animal Control Officer, Humane Officer, or any other person designated as an Enforcement Officer by the Selectboard.
- E. "Impoundment" shall mean being held by the Town at a place designated by the Selectboard. Such place may or may not be operated by the Town and may or may not be within Town limits.
- F. "Owner" shall mean any person who owns a domestic pet or wolf-hybrid and includes any person who has actual or constructive possession of the pet or wolf-hybrid. The term also includes those persons who provide feed or shelter to a domestic pet or wolf-hybrid. However, it is not the intent of the Town to require a person to be responsible under this ordinance for feral animals that take up residence in a building other than the person's home, even if the person occasionally provides feed to the animal.
- G. "Vicious Dog" shall mean a dog that bites a person, another domestic pet, or domestic animal and such bite requires medical treatment; causes material damage to personal or real property; chases a person; or causes any person to reasonably fear attack or bodily injury from such dog. This definition shall not apply if the dog was protecting or defending itself, its offspring, another domestic pet or animal, or a person from attack or assault or the person attacked or threatened by the dog was engaged in teasing, tormenting, battering, assaulting, injuring or otherwise provoking the dog.
- H. "Premises" shall mean the home or real property of the dog owner.

TOWN OF GRAFTON, VERMONT
ORDINANCE REGULATING DOGS AND WOLF-HYBRIDS

Adopted 11/20/23; Amended 2/18/25

- I. "Running at large" shall mean to move about without restraint, control, or limitation as to property lines or areas.
- a. A domestic pet or domestic animal on a public road within the Dog Control Area is considered restrained if it is on a leash.
 - b. A domestic pet or domestic animal on a public road outside the Dog Control Area is considered restrained if it is either (1) on a leash or (2) in the presence of a person and obedient to that person's commands and is not causing a danger or nuisance.
 - c. A wolf-hybrid is considered restrained if it is:
 - i. in a cage; or
 - ii. on a leash,and not causing a danger or nuisance.

(Exception: Nothing in this Ordinance shall be construed to require: (1) the restraint of cats, (2) the restraint of any domestic pet or domestic animal while on private property by permission of the property owner or while in a vehicle, or (3) to restrict the use of dogs for lawful hunting.)

- J. "Wolf hybrid" shall mean an animal that:
- a. is the progeny of a dog and a wolf (*Canis lupus* or *Canis rugus*); or
 - b. is advertised or otherwise described or represented to be a wolf hybrid; or
 - c. exhibits primary physical and/or behavioral wolf characteristics.
- K. "Working farm dog" shall mean a dog that:
- a. is bred or trained to herd or protect livestock or poultry or to protect crops; and
 - b. is used for those purposes; and
 - c. is registered as a working farm dog pursuant to State law.
- L. "Dog Control Area" shall mean the following public roads on which dogs being walked must be restrained on a leash:
- Main Street
 - Pleasant Street
 - Kidder Hill Road from intersection with Main Street to the covered bridge
 - School Street
 - Townshend Road from Village Center to the Grafton Trails & Outdoor Center
 - Route 121 East from Grafton Village Garage to Winnie Park
 - Route 121 West from Village Center to 94 Houghtonville Road
 - Middletown Road from Village Cemetery to intersection with Main Street
 - Fire Pond Road from Village Park walking trail entrance to intersection with Main St.
 - Chester Road from Village Center to the intersection with Wright Orchard Road
 - Grafton Improvement Association's Ballfield
 - All Town owned property including all Town parks and cemeteries

TOWN OF GRAFTON, VERMONT
ORDINANCE REGULATING DOGS AND WOLF-HYBRIDS

Adopted 11/20/23; Amended 2/18/25

SECTION 4: NUISANCES.

- A. Prohibitions. An owner of a dog shall not allow, permit, or suffer such dog to create a nuisance. The following activities shall be deemed nuisances:

Nuisance One: Lack of current license and/or rabies tab.

A dog without a collar or harness with the current license and/or valid rabies tag securely attached.

Nuisance Two: Running at-large.

A dog running at-large in the Town of Grafton.

Nuisance Three: Failure to remove waste.

A dog that defecates in any public area or on the private premises of another person and whose owner does not immediately remove the fecal material and disposes of it in a sanitary manner.

Nuisance Four: Unconfined dog in heat.

A female dog in heat not confined to a building or other secured enclosure, except while under the direct control of the owner.

Nuisance Five: Disturbing the Peace.

A dog that disturbs the quiet, comfort, and response of others by barking, whining, calling, or howling for a continuous period of cumulatively more than 2 hours within a 24-hour period.

Nuisance Six: Vicious Dog.

A dog that bites a person, attacks another domestic pet or domestic animal; causes damage to personal or real property; chases a person; or causes any person to reasonably fear attack or bodily injury from such dog. If the dog was protecting or defending itself, its offspring, another domestic pet or animal, or a person from attack or assault or the person attacked or threatened by the dog was engaged in teasing, tormenting, battering, assaulting, injuring or otherwise provoking the dog, then the dog is not considered a vicious dog and the actions shall not be considered a nuisance.

- B. Exemptions for Working Dogs. The provisions of the sections pertaining to running at-large and disturbing the peace shall not apply to working farm dogs if the working farm dog is:
- a. Barking in order to herd or protect livestock or poultry or to protect crops; or
 - b. Running at-large in order to herd or protect livestock or poultry or to protect crops.

SECTION 5: COLLAR AND LICENSE.

Each dog shall be licensed according to the laws of this State and shall wear a collar or harness with the current license attached. A dog that is visiting from out of State must wear a collar or harness with a

TOWN OF GRAFTON, VERMONT
ORDINANCE REGULATING DOGS AND WOLF-HYBRIDS

Adopted 11/20/23; Amended 2/18/25

current license from its home state attached. A dog that is found without a collar or harness and license shall be in violation of this Ordinance and may be immediately impounded.

SECTION 6: ENFORCEMENT.

A violation of this Ordinance shall be a civil matter enforced and subject to a civil penalty of up to \$800.00, which may be enforced in the Vermont Judicial Bureau or in the Windham County Superior Court, at the election of the Selectboard.

Violations enforced in the Judicial Bureau shall be in accordance with the provisions of 24 V.S.A. §§ 1974a and 1977 et seq. For purposes of enforcement in the Judicial Bureau, any Enforcement Officer shall have the authority to issue tickets and represent the Town at any hearing.

Violations enforced in the Superior Court shall be in accordance with the Vermont Rules of Civil Procedure. The Town may pursue all appropriate injunctive relief.

SECTION 7: PENALTIES AND COSTS.

- A. The Enforcement Officer is authorized to recover waiver fees, in lieu of civil penalties, in the following amounts, for any person who declines to contest a written warning and pays the waiver fee:

Failure to remove waste

- 1st Offense: warning or \$25.00 fine
- 2nd Offense: \$50.00 fine
- 3rd & Subsequent Offense: \$75.00 fine

Disturbing the peace

- 1st Offense: warning or \$25.00 fine
- 2nd Offense: \$50.00 fine
- 3rd & Subsequent Offense: \$75.00 fine and/or impoundment

Unconfined Dog in Heat

- 1st Offense: warning or \$25.00 fine
- 2nd Offense: \$50.00 fine
- 3rd & Subsequent Offense: \$75.00 fine and/or impoundment

Lack of current license and/or rabies tag

- 1st Offense: warning or \$25.00 fine
- 2nd Offense: \$50.00 fine
- 3rd & Subsequent Offense: \$75.00 fine and/or impoundment

Running at large

- 1st Offense: warning or impoundment and/or \$75.00 fine
- 2nd Offense: impoundment and/or \$150.00 fine
- 3rd & Subsequent impoundment and/or \$300.00 fine

TOWN OF GRAFTON, VERMONT
ORDINANCE REGULATING DOGS AND WOLF-HYBRIDS

Adopted 11/20/23; Amended 2/18/25

Vicious Dog

1st Offense: warning or impoundment and/or \$150.00 fine

2nd Offense: impoundment and/or \$300.00 fine

3rd Offense: impoundment and/or \$600.00 fine

- B. Determining the sequences of offenses for violations of this Ordinance shall be as follows: a subsequent violation that is identical to, and that occurs within 12 months of, a previous violation shall be considered a higher offense (i.e., second, third, or subsequent offense). Any subsequent identical violation that occurs after 12 months of a previous identical violation shall be considered a new first offense.

SECTION 8: IMPOUNDMENT.

- A. Grounds for Impoundment. Any dog may be immediately impounded if the dog:
- a. has been determined by an Enforcement Officer to be a “vicious dog,” which presents an imminent danger to people or other animals;
 - b. has reportedly bitten a person off or on the premises of its owner;
 - c. is in violation of State licensing law;
 - d. has an unknown rabies vaccination history or is suspected of having been exposed to rabies;
 - e. is running at large;
 - f. is an unconfined dog in heat; or
 - g. is found without a collar or harness and license.
- B. Notice of Impoundment. The officer who impounds a dog shall, within twenty-four (24) hours, give notice to the owner thereof either personally, by telephone call, or by regular mail, postage prepaid at the owner’s last known address. Such notice shall inform the owner of the nature of the violations, the dog’s location, and the necessary steps to have it returned to the owner.

If the owner of the dog is unknown, the officer who impounds a dog shall, within twenty-four (24) hours of impoundment, post a public notice. Notification shall be posted in the town clerk’s office and other usual places for public notice for a ten (10) calendar day period. The public notice shall include a description of the dog, including any significant marks of identification, and when and where it was impounded or found by the person placing the dog in the town’s custody. The public notice must also declare that, unless the owner 1) claims the dog, 2) pays all expenses incurred by the town for treatment, boarding and care of the dog, and any applicable penalties, and 3) takes all necessary remedial action within ten (1) calendar days following posting, the town may place the dog in an adoptive home or transfer it to a humane society or rescue organization. If the dog cannot be placed in an adoptive home or transferred to a humane society or rescue organization, it may be destroyed in a humane way.

TOWN OF GRAFTON, VERMONT
ORDINANCE REGULATING DOGS AND WOLF-HYBRIDS

Adopted 11/20/23; Amended 2/18/25

- C. Release from Impoundment. Impounded dogs shall be released to the owner only after payment of all penalties and impoundment fees (including, but not limited to, boarding, food, and veterinary expenses), the final disposition of a potentially vicious dog or vicious dog hearing if applicable, and after all necessary remedial action, as determined by the enforcement officer in consideration of the violation committed, is taken by the owner. Remedial action shall included, but is not limited to, such actions as providing a collar and current license; verification of certification of current vaccination against rabies; payment of all applicable fines or waiver fees; and proof of satisfactory successful completion of a program designed to improve the owner's understanding and execution of dog ownership responsibilities.

If the owner of a dog impounded under the provision of this ordinance refuses to take the remedial action necessary to secure the dog's release within ten (10) calendar days following notice of impoundment or gives notice either personally, by telephone call, or in writing to the town of forfeiture of ownership before that time, the dog may be placed in an adoptive home, transferred to a humane society or rescue organization; or, if the town is unable to transfer the dog, it may be humanely destroyed. The owner of a dog transferred or humanely destroyed shall remain liable for all expenses incurred by the Town for treatment, boarding and care of the dog for the duration of its impoundment, and any expenses associated with its transfer or humane disposal.

- D. Rabies Suspect. The procedures provided in this section shall only apply if the dog is not a rabies suspect. If an official designated by the Selectboard to enforce the provisions of this ordinance determines that the dog is a rabies suspect, the Selectboard shall immediately notify the Town Health Officer who shall proceed in accordance with the Vermont Department of Health's rules.

SECTION 9: INVESTIGATION OF VICIOUS DOGS.

- A. Complaint. When a dog has bitten a person while the dog is off or on the premises of its owner or keeper, and the person bitten requires medical attention for the attack, such person may file a written complaint with the Selectboard of the municipality. The complaint shall contain the time, date, and place where the attack occurred, the name and address of the victim or victims, and any other facts that may assist the Selectboard in conducting its investigation.
- B. Investigation and Hearing. The Selectboard, within seven (7) calendar days from receipt of the complaint, shall investigate the charges and hold a hearing on the matter. If the owner of the dog which is the subject of the complaint can be ascertained with due diligence, said owner shall be provided with a written notice of the time, date, and place of the hearing and a copy of the complaint.
- C. Protective Order. If, after a hearing on the matter, the dog is found to have bitten the victim without provocation, the Selectboard shall make such order for the protection of persons as the facts and circumstances of the case may require, including, without limitation, that the dog is disposed of in

TOWN OF GRAFTON, VERMONT
ORDINANCE REGULATING DOGS AND WOLF-HYBRIDS

Adopted 11/20/23; Amended 2/18/25

a humane way, muzzled, chained, or confined. The order shall be sent by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the owner. A person who, after receiving notice, fails to comply with the terms of the order shall be subject to the penalties provided in 20 V.S.A. § 3550.

- D. Rabies suspect. The procedures provided in this section shall only apply if the dog is not a rabies suspect. If a member of the Selectboard or an Enforcement Officer determines that the dog is a rabies suspect, the Selectboard shall immediately notify the Town Health Officer who shall proceed in accordance with the Vermont Department of Health's rules. If the dog is deemed healthy, the terms and conditions set forth in the Selectboard's order shall be enforced.

SECTION 10: VICIOUS DOGS.

A person claiming a dog is a "vicious dog" may file a written complaint with the Selectboard. The complaint shall contain the time, date, and place where the alleged behavior occurred, an identification of the domestic pet or animal threatened or attacked, the name and address of any victim or victims, and any other facts that may assist the Selectboard in conducting its hearing. Upon receipt of a "potentially vicious dog" complaint, the Selectboard shall proceed as in the case of a "vicious dog" complaint using Section 9 B.-D. above.

SECTION 11: OTHER LAWS.

This ordinance is in addition to all other ordinances of the Town of Grafton and all applicable laws of the State of Vermont. All ordinances or parts of ordinances, resolutions, regulations, or other documents inconsistent with the provisions of this ordinance are hereby repealed to the extent of such inconsistency.

SECTION 12: SEVERABILITY.

If any section of this ordinance is held by a court of competent jurisdiction to be invalid, such finding shall not invalidate any other part of this ordinance.

SECTION 13: EFFECTIVE DATE.

This ordinance shall become effective 60 days after its adoption by the Selectboard. If a petition is filed under 24 V.S.A. § 1973, that statute shall govern the taking effect of this ordinance.

Adopted this 18th day of February 2025.

TOWN OF GRAFTON, VERMONT
ORDINANCE REGULATING DOGS AND WOLF-HYBRIDS

Adopted 11/20/23; Amended 2/18/25

Signatures:


_____, Joseph Pollio Jr., Selectboard Chair


_____, Cathy Siano-Goodwin, Selectboard Vice Chair


_____, John Gregory, Selectboard Member


_____, Stephen Sargent, Selectboard Member


_____, Anna Keegan, Selectboard Member

Adoption History

1. Agenda item at regular Selectboard meeting held on February 3, 2025.
2. Read and approved at regular/special Selectboard meeting on February 18, 2025, and entered in the minutes of that meeting which were approved on _____.
3. Posted in public places on Town Hall bulletin board, Town Clerk bulletin board, Grafton Public Library, Grafton Village Garage, and the Town of Grafton website.
4. Notice of adoption published in *The Grafton News* newspaper on _____ with a notice of the right to petition.
5. Other actions [petitions, etc.]