

Restricted Dog Breeds and Legal Requirements in Ireland



Ireland has specific laws in place for certain dog breeds and their crosses. These rules are designed to promote responsible ownership, public safety, and animal welfare. If you own, or are considering owning, a restricted breed, it's important to understand your legal obligations.

Restricted Dog Breeds in Ireland

The following breeds are classed as restricted dog breeds under Irish law:

- American Pit Bull Terrier
- English Bull Terrier
- Staffordshire Bull Terrier
- Bull Mastiff
- Dobermann Pinscher
- German Shepherd (Alsatian)
- Rhodesian Ridgeback
- Rottweiler
- Japanese Akita
- Japanese Tosa
- Bandog, including any cross or strain of the above breeds

Important: Any dog that is a crossbreed or strain of one or more restricted breeds is also considered restricted under the law.

Rules for Owning a Restricted Dog

Owners of restricted breeds, or crosses of restricted breeds, must comply with the following legal requirements at all times.

When in Public, restricted dogs must be:

- Kept on a short, strong lead, held by a person aged 16 years or over who is capable of controlling the dog
- Muzzled in all public places
- Wearing a collar that clearly displays the name and address of the owner

Failure to follow these rules may result in fines, seizure of the dog, or further legal action.

XL Bully Dogs in Ireland

XL Bully dogs are a variant of the American Bully breed. They are typically larger in height and build than other American Bully types and are subject to additional legal controls.

Certificate of Exemption Requirement

Since 1 February 2025, owners of XL Bully type dogs must have one of the following:

- A Certificate of Exemption issued by their local authority, or
 - Proof that they have applied for a Certificate of Exemption
- After 1 February 2025, applications for a Certificate of Exemption are only accepted in exceptional circumstances.

Exceptional Circumstances for XL Bully Exemptions

An exemption may be granted in limited situations. One example is:

- If you previously lived in Ireland, moved abroad, and are now returning to Ireland with an XL Bully dog you owned before 1 October 2024
- In these cases, owners must be able to prove ownership of the dog before October 2024.

Acceptable Proof of Ownership Includes:

- A valid dog licence
- Microchipping records from another country
- Veterinary records
- A purchase receipt showing the date you acquired the dog

Without valid proof, an exemption is unlikely to be granted.

Responsible Ownership Matters

Restricted breed legislation does not mean these dogs are inherently dangerous. The law focuses on control, responsibility, and public safety. With proper training, socialisation, and compliance with legal requirements, restricted breeds can be loyal, well-behaved family companions.

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