

**E**very city in the Florida Keys, plus the county, has its own dog law. Fortunately, they are pretty similar to one another. Briefly:

- All dogs must be licensed annually. Dogs, cats and ferrets older than six months must be licensed which requires showing proof of a rabies vaccination, license certificate and license tag for the dog's collar. They can be issued by the city or a licensed veterinarian. In Marathon, the pets must be licensed before they reach five months old and only a license issued in the city will be valid.

- In Monroe County, animals such as dogs, cats and rabbits must have an exemption license if they are not spayed or neutered by six months of age.

- New residents have 30 days to register their pets.

- Dogs in unfenced yards must be restrained so they cannot charge a pedestrian on the sidewalk. However, there are specific humane considerations for how a dog may be tethered.

- Dog feces must be picked up when deposited at any public park, ball field, beach or school ground, or on private property without the permission of the property owner. Dogs must be leashed when at any public park, ball field, beach or school ground.

- No animals are permitted to be loose in the back of a pickup truck.

- No animals may be left in vehicles without proper ventilation.

- No person may keep more than four domestic animals on any premises, unless the animals are six months or younger, without operating a duly licensed kennel or pet shop. However, exceptions to this requirement may be granted by city or county government, such as a larger number of domesticated birds.

- Domestic animals that have bitten a person, and are suspected of having rabies, may be quarantined. Wild animals that bite humans and are suspected of having rabies will be destroyed and then tested.

- Keys governments have the right to impound loose, dangerous or nuisance animals. It has the right to charge a reasonable fee for shelter. It can require a pet owner to have the animal properly vaccinated before it is released. If an animal is not claimed, the city can transfer the animal to another facility.

- It's unlawful to let a fierce, vicious or dangerous animal to run loose or for the owner to fail to secure it properly. It is also unlawful to let a female dog or cat in heat to run loose.

- It is against the law for any person to seize, molest or tease any animal.

