

Chicago Toughens Dangerous Dog Penalties

Owners who refuse to turn over dogs could face stiff fines, jail time.

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The city of Chicago is toughening its penalties on owners of dangerous dogs, not only doubling fines, but also adding possible jail terms of up to six months if owners don't comply with orders to turn over their animal.

During its March 14 meeting, the City Council approved the revisions to the city's animal control ordinance.

Anyone failing to turn over a dangerous animal for impoundment when required would face up to six months in jail and a fine up to \$1,000. Owners participating in or hosting a dog fight can be fined up to \$5,000.

The new ordinance also adds stricter time limits to requirements for restraining and sterilizing dangerous animals, and such animals now must get an identifying microchip surgically implanted.

At the meeting, Chicago Mayor Richard Daley said it was a better idea than breed-specific bans — such as a ban on Pit Bulls that some aldermen have proposed.

"You have to go after the owner, because the owner owns the dog. You can't go after the dog alone," Daley said.