

## Dog and Puppy Thefts up in 2008

**Purebred dog registry shares tips for protecting your beloved canines.**

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Pet thefts are on the rise, ranging from tiny puppies being stuffed into purses at pet stores to most recently, purebred dogs being snatched from cars in parking lots and animal shelters, according to the American Kennel Club.

In 2008, the AKC has tracked more than 65 pet thefts from news and customer reports, versus a handful for the previous year.

In Texas, Rep. Eddie Lucio, III (D-Brownsville) introduced a bill that would make it a state felony to steal a pet. The bill, HB 435, targets individuals who steal domesticated household pets including dogs and cats.

In addition, the bill seeks to amend the penal code by making pet theft a separate offense, and allowing a penalty of up to two years in jail. If passed, this act would take effect Sept. 1, 2009.

To safeguard against pet theft, the AKC offers the following tips:

### At Home

- \* Don't let dogs off leash or leave unattended in your yard. Keeping dogs near to you reduces the likelihood they will wander off and attract thieves. A Saint Bernard who wandered from his owner in Nebraska was snatched up off the road.
- \* Breeders should be vigilant during home visits by potential puppy buyers. From Yorkies in Los Angeles to Bulldogs in Connecticut, thieves posing as would be puppy buyers have visited breeder homes to take dogs, while other homes have been burglarized when the breeder was away.

### On the Road

- \* Never leave your dog in an unattended car, even if it's locked.
- \* Don't tie a dog outside a store. This popular practice among city-dwellers can be risky. Reports have surfaced of such thefts in Manhattan.
- \* Be vigilant. Always remain aware of your surroundings when entering or leaving dog-friendly establishments.

### Getting Him Back

- \* Protect your dogs with microchip identification. Collars and tags can be removed, so make sure dogs have permanent ID with a microchip. Keep contact information current.
- \* If you suspect pet theft, immediately call the police or animal control and pet shelters in the area where your dog was last seen.
- \* Have fliers with a recent photo ready to go if your dog goes missing. Keep pet photos handy to distribute immediately in case of a lost pet.