



WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ACT MEMO

2015 Wisconsin Act 112
[2015 Senate Bill 286]

**Liability for Damages Caused By
Dogs**

Under Wisconsin law, the owner of a dog is liable for the full amount of damages caused by the dog injuring or causing injury to a person, domestic animal, or property. Under prior law, the dog owner was liable for double damages caused by the dog if the owner was notified or knew that the dog previously injured or caused injury to a person, domestic animal, or property. Additionally, the state or a municipality may commence a civil action to obtain a judgment from a court ordering an officer to kill a dog if the dog caused serious injury to a person or domestic animal on two separate occasions off the owner's property, without reasonable cause, and the owner of the dog was notified or knew prior to the second injury that the dog caused the first injury.

2015 Wisconsin Act 112 provides that a dog owner is liable for double damages only in instances in which the dog bites a person with sufficient force to break the skin and cause permanent physical scarring or disfigurement and the owner was notified or knew that the dog had previously, without provocation, bitten a person with sufficient force to break the skin and cause permanent physical scarring or disfigurement. Act 112 also specifies that, in addition to the state or a municipality, an action to obtain an order to kill a dog may be commenced by a person who is injured by a dog, whose minor child was injured by a dog, or whose domestic animal is injured by a dog. Finally, Act 112 raises the amount of the maximum forfeiture that may be assessed against the owner of a dog who causes injury to a person, domestic animal, property, deer, game bird, or the nests or eggs of game birds.

Effective date: November 13, 2015

Prepared by: David Moore, Staff Attorney

December 8, 2015

DM:mcm;ksm

This memo provides a brief description of the Act. For more detailed information, consult the text of the law and related legislative documents at the Legislature's Web site at: <http://www.legis.wisconsin.gov>.