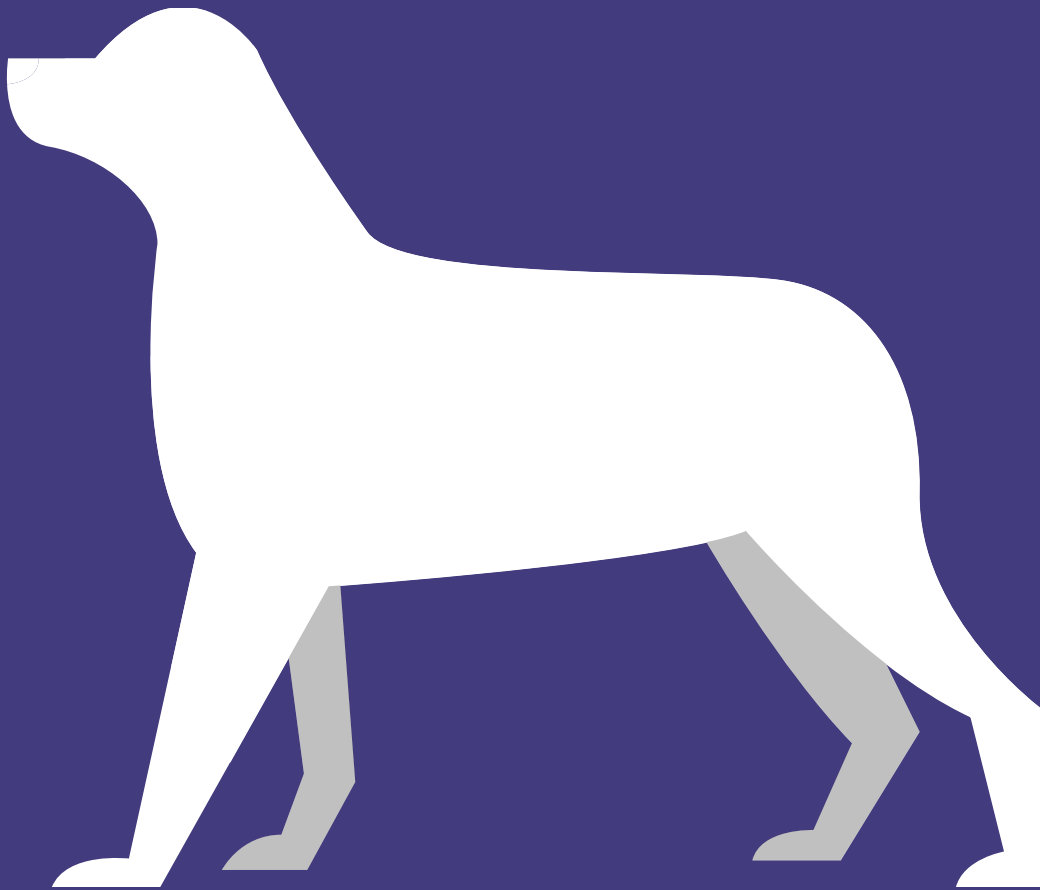


FINCHLEY DOG WALKER

# DOG THEFT PREVENTION TIPS



DEREK CHAMBERS

# ABOUT FINCHLEY DOG WALKER



My name is Del and I run Finchley Dog Walker and I started in 2011 after I was made redundant. In the beginning, I was walking with friends and neighbours' dogs whilst they were at work. A year later I took the company online and have never regretted it

I have always been around animals and as a child, I grew up with Hamsters, Gerbils, Fish, stick insects, mice and budgies. My parents owned a pub and had 2 German Shepherds, Tor and Beauty, who were failed police dogs (they wouldn't jump over even a small picket fence).





When I grew up, I got my own dogs.

The first was a rescue Heinz 57 called Prince who was quite a loner when we got him but over time came out of his shell and my neighbours were able to walk him when I couldn't and we even had doggy sleepovers.

He was a big part of my life and if possible, came everywhere with me. Prince was 14 when he developed cancer and sadly had to be put to sleep.

That day a big part of my heart was taken from me.

After Prince came another rescue called Missy who is now 10 and was shortly followed by Roxy also around 10.



# SOME GENERAL SECURITY TIPS



# DOORS AND WINDOWS



Ensure all external doors are equipped with locks to British Standard 3621. If you need to have locks changed/fitted, choose a locksmith who is accredited by the Master Locksmiths Association (MLA), as they will have been vetted and inspected. Fit key-operated locks to windows.

Don't leave keys in door/window locks but keep them nearby just in case of emergency. If you are looking to replace any doors/windows in your home, make sure they meet PAS 24 standard. Ask your supplier/fitter to show you the certification documents!



## INTERNAL DOORS



If you have solid internal doors, then getting chub locks fitted to the internal doors (5 levers are ideal, but 2 levers work just fine) is worth considering.

This means that if someone does break in, they are limited to that room.

# COAL CHUTE



If you live in an old house, especially victorian, then you may have a coal chute.

These often lead to the cellar and make an easy entry point.

Fix some iron bars over the coal chute and ensure that the internal door to the cellar has a suitable chub lock.

## EXTERNAL LIGHTING



Installing dawn to dusk lighting by the front and back door will help deter thieves. It is also essential to install dawn to dusk lighting in any other dark spots such as side alleys.

By installing this type of lighting, it makes it hard for people to hide the shadows.

Many people have PIR type of lighting. However, as they can be tampered with fairly easy and the PIR knocked out with stones etc.

Due to this, they are not recommended, and dawn to dusk lights should be used



# DOG THEFT FROM GARDENS AND PREVENTION TIPS





Dog owners who have a garden are some of the luckiest out there. Your dog has a natural environment where they can play and run, and you can let them out at any time of day, and they're getting lots of physical exercises!

However, the COVID-19 pandemic has had an unfortunate side effect. Since people want to get a puppy to make quarantine more bearable, thieves are taking advantage and stealing dogs from their homes to sell them at high prices.

The police urge dog owners to take extra precautions, especially when their pets are out in the garden.

That's because, according to the Pet Theft Census, most dog theft cases in the UK (52%) occur in the owner's garden.



Should I stop my dog from playing in the garden?

No, not at all!

Forcing your dog to suddenly spend all day indoors and depriving them of playtime in nature can be bad for their physical and mental health, not to mention that they can become destructive when bored.

However, you do need to take a few measures to turn the garden into a safe space.

Here are the most important ones:



# FENCES



Having a strong and secure fence is important. Back garden fences should be 6ft or 1.8 metres. This is generally the highest allowed without planning permission.

A high fence makes it hard to lure the dog over the fence or grab small dogs and pull them over.

As well as the 1.8 metre fence, you could put some garden trellis on top. This makes the fence harder to climb as it will collapse under any weight.

It is also good to grow thorny plants such as climbing roses along the trellis to help deter thieves.

# FENCES

Check for holes in gates and fences where dogs can be pulled through.

When the gates are closed, thieves can still get your dog by pulling them through a hole in or under the fence. This is especially the case for small, friendly dogs, which are also the most stolen ones.

Even without the danger of dog thefts, it's still a good idea to cover any holes because dogs can get curious, run away from there, and get lost.

Placing large rocks at the bottom of the fence is a safe and inexpensive way to discourage them from digging holes.





# GARDEN GATES



It is important to make sure the gate is the same height as the fence (1.8m) with either trellis or Prikka strip on top.

If your garden gate is off the wrought iron gate / Tall metal scroll type, then you may need to consider perspex.

These gates are easy to climb, so I would suggest screwing a sheet of acrylic/perspex to provide a smooth surface, so it is harder to climb

# LOCK THE GATES



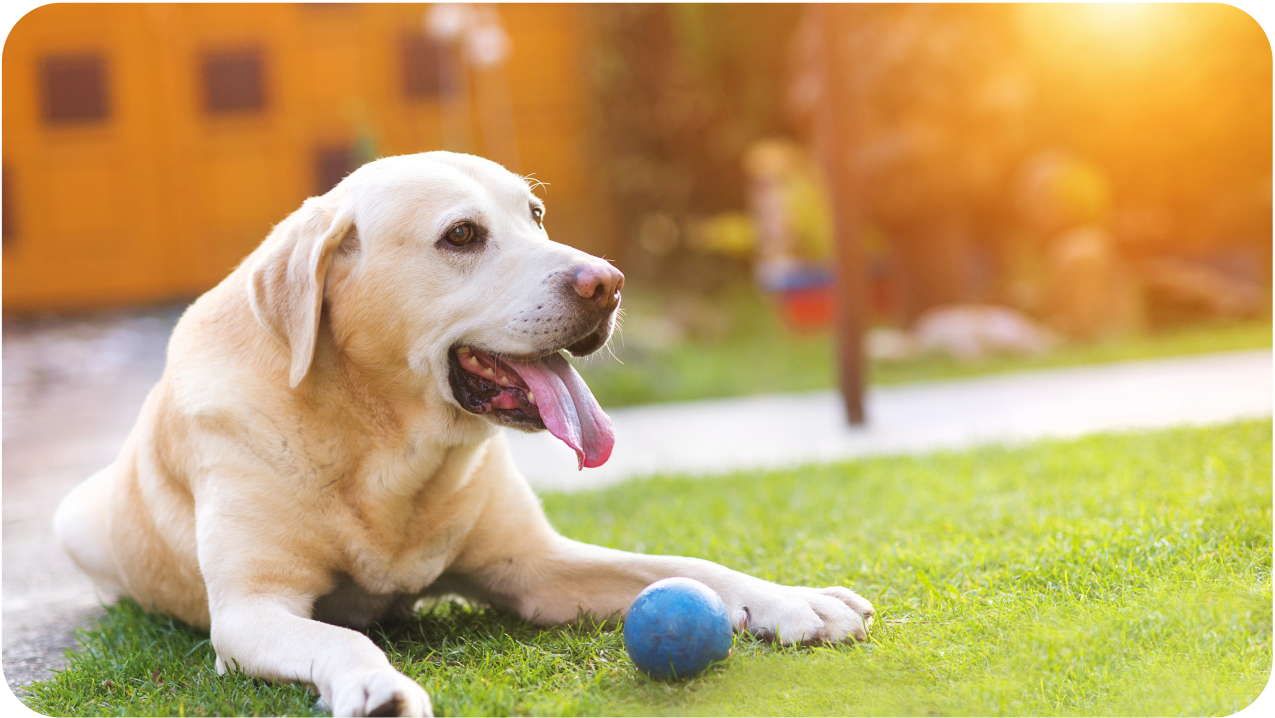
Even if you live in a safe neighbourhood and haven't had any issues with leaving the gates open, it's best if you keep them under lock and key. with a high-quality weatherproof lock and shackle fitted with security bolts

Unlocked garden doors are an invitation for thieves to come in. In general, they look for the easiest target, so they quit and move on to the next one when they see that the garden door is locked.

For added safety, fit a bell or gate alarm so you can hear anyone trying to come in.



## NEVER LEAVE YOUR DOG UNATTENDED



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# DOG THEFT PREVENTION TIPS

Even if your dog is well-behaved and doesn't try to run away or dig out the flower bed, don't leave things to chance and supervise them while they're out in the garden.

It only takes 45 seconds for a thief to steal your dog, and finding them can be difficult.



# DOG THEFT FROM SHOPS







Many dog owners combine dog walking with grocery runs: if you're out with your puppy for the evening walk, why not pop into the store to grab some bread while you're at it?

But while this might be convenient and time-saving, it's highly unsafe for your dog.

Dog theft cases have been on the rise lately, and thieves have been taking advantage of this innocent habit.

It only takes an experienced thief 45 seconds to steal a dog, so here's how you can prevent your four-legged friend from becoming a sitting target.

# DON'T LEAVE YOUR DOG UNATTENDED IN THE CAR



If you're driving with your dog, don't leave them inside the car while you run errands.

This is good advice in general because dogs can suffer heatstroke and even die if left unattended in a closed space for a long time.

Even more so these days, when thieves are using every opportunity they can to steal dogs.

Thieves don't see your dog as a soul; they see them as an expensive object. So, for them, a dog left unattended inside the car is the same as a laptop, phone, or jewellery item.



# PLEASE DON'T LEAVE THEM TIED UP OUTSIDE A SHOP



Even if you live in a safe neighbourhood, don't leave your dog tied up outside while you go inside the shop to buy something.

You can't supervise them from inside the shop, and thieves only need a few seconds to untie them. So, unless the shop has a pet-friendly policy and they let you in with the dog, it's best to take the dog home first and come back later for groceries.

Yes, it will take longer, but it's better to be safe than sorry.

# REFUSE HELP FROM STRANGERS



What happens if someone offers to look after your dog while you're shopping?

Well, unless you know them well and you're certain they're trustworthy, don't accept.

It doesn't matter if they look friendly or they tell you that they have the same dog breed at home.



# FIND OUT WHICH LOCAL STORES ARE DOG FRIENDLY



Having a list of all nearby pet-friendly stores comes in handy. If you ever need to buy something while you're walking your dog, you already know how to plan your route, and you can go shopping without worrying about someone wanting to take advantage of your absence. However, keep in mind that most stores only allow dogs if they're secured with a lead and muzzle, so always carry those with you.

Make sure you share these safety tips with everyone in the family. If children or elderly relatives walk the dog too, it's best to be on the same page and warn them of the potential dangers of leaving your puppy unattended in front of the store.

# MICROCHIP YOUR DOG



Microchip your dog so they can be easily identified when found, write your name and address on the dog's collar, and be wary of strangers who get too friendly around your dog.

If you have no option but to take the dog shopping, consider taking another family member with you.



# DOG THEFT WHILST OUT WALKING



# PROTECTING YOURSELF AND YOUR DOG



Cases of dog theft have unfortunately gone through the roof in the UK during the lockdown. Stuck at home in self-isolation, people want the company of dogs, which is why requests for adoption have never been higher.

But there's a darker side to this story: thieves were quick to capitalise on this need and started to steal the dogs from unsuspecting owners to later sell them to anyone who offered a high price.

It's a sad reality, and although there are high sanctions for those who commit crimes against pets, the wisest thing you can do these days is to protect yourself and your pet to avoid getting into this situation



# MICROCHIP YOUR DOG



If you haven't already microchip your dog. First of all, it's compulsory: if you don't microchip your dog by the time he or she is eight weeks old, you risk a fine of up to £500. And secondly, it's for their own safety. In the unfortunate event that someone does steal your puppy whilst out walking, at least you have a way of identifying them.

However, keep in mind that the microchip can be removed and doesn't offer real-time location tracking; for that, you need to invest in a GPS pet tracker.

Don't forget to include your phone number and address on the dog's tag, in case someone reads it, but leave out the dog's name.

If the thief approaches the dog with kindness and says their name, the dog is more likely to be obedient and not make any noise.

Finally, it is important to ensure that a vet regularly checks your microchip and that your details are to date.

## TAKE A FRIEND



When you go shopping, try and take a friend with you or walk-in groups.

This way, you can watch each other's backs and look out for anyone suspicious.

Networking with other dog owners is also worth doing as you can then help each other.



# DON'T TAKE THE SAME ROUTES WHEN DOG WALKING



Taking the same route every day is comfortable both for dogs and their owners, but it's not really safe.

Most dog theft cases are planned: the thief sees a person walking their dog every day, on the same route, at the same hour, so they know when to hit.

Add a little variety to your walks and alternate the routes from time to time.

Whenever possible, walk the dog with a friend or family member.

## BE SEEN AND BE HEARD



When Out on a walk, make sure you have a fully charged mobile phone so that you can phone for help if required.

A loud whistle of some kind such as the Fox-40 whistle, a bright torch (ideally one that strobes), and you may even consider some red dog spray.

Keep these items easy to hand, such as an outer pocket, so if someone snatches your dog and it is safe to do so, you make lots of noise and make sure you are seen.

Dog thieves like an easy target

# DON'T LET STRANGERS ASK TOO MANY QUESTIONS



Most of us love it when a passer-by stops to pet our dog while walking, but these days, it's not safe to assume that everyone has good intentions.

If they start asking too many questions, such as the dog's name, age, pedigree, or how long you've had them, it's best not to answer and be on your way.

Better yet, politely decline when they ask to pet your dog.

This could give them a window of opportunity to run with the puppy.



# KEEP UP TO DATE RECORDS



Just like other valuables, make sure that you keep up to date photos of your dog. Try and take the photos from different angles along with any unusual markings etc.

These will be required to report your dog lost or stolen to the local dog warden, the police, Dog Lost and other online resources.

It is also strongly advised that you also take photos of yourself with your dog. Have lots of photos of you together at different stages of their life and different angles. This will make proving ownership much easier should you have to.

## CONCLUSION



In conclusion, you can't be too careful when it comes to preventing dog theft.

However, we hope our Dog Theft Prevention Tips will help.

Pets are a very highly prized commodity among thieves because they are difficult to track.

They can fetch quite a bit of money when they're being sold to dogfighting rings or breeding farms. Never assume that just because your dog is outside in broad daylight, it is safe.

Trust me when I say it only takes a second, and you'll regret it for the rest of your life if they're taken.



It is important to remember that Finchley Dog Walker do not use cars and arrive in plain clothes.

During winter months, we can also draw curtains and turn lights on to make sure the place looks occupied and help with security.

If your dog does get lost or stolen, then our article on what to do if you lose your dog may be of help.

My thanks to Sara Giles for a valuable input as ex Crime prevention office. Sara's site can be found at [www.newportpetservices.co.uk](http://www.newportpetservices.co.uk)



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