

# HOW TO CHOOSE A SAFE DAYCARE, BOARDER, OR DOG WALKER IN SCOTLAND

Leaving your dog in someone else's care is a big decision. Whether it's daycare, home boarding, or a dog walker, there are laws and standards to keep dogs safe. This guide explains the law and gives clear tips on what to look for.

## What the law says in Scotland

- Daycare and Home Boarding
- Covered by the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (Scotland) Regulations 2021. Providers must hold a licence from their local council, and they are inspected against welfare standards.
- Read the law: [Body Legislation.gov.uk](#)
- Scottish Government guidance: [Scottish Government](#)
  - West Dunbartonshire publishes a list of licensed home boarders and daycares on its website, so you can check names directly.
  - [West Dunbartonshire Council](#)
  - Argyll and Bute has a live register of home boarding licences.
  - [Argyll and Bute Council](#)

## Dog Walkers

- In Scotland there is no national licensing of dog walkers. Local councils may set local conditions or expectations. Always check your council's position. [Scottish Government](#)
- Most insurance companies state 6 dogs per person is the max.

## What this means for you

- Using an unlicensed daycare or boarder is illegal and may invalidate your insurance if something goes wrong. Licensing brings inspections, minimum welfare standards, record keeping, and emergency planning. [Scottish Government](#)
- For dog walkers, standards vary because there's no national licence. Choose carefully and ask the right questions. (See below.)

## How to choose a safe provider

### For all providers

- Insurance: Public liability insurance that covers dogs in their care.
- First aid: Up-to-date canine first aid.
- Handling: Reward-based methods only. Avoid anyone who talks about harsh handling or dominance.
- Transparency: You can visit, ask questions, and see where your dog will be.
- References: Genuine recommendations from real clients.

## Daycare and home boarding

- Licence: Ask to see it, then verify on the council's register (links above). [West Dunbartonshire Council](#) [Argyll and Bute Council](#)
- Group size and ratios: How many dogs are taken at once and how many staff supervise?
- Supervision: Dogs should be supervised, not left to "sort it out."
- Environment: Clean, secure, with quiet rest areas as well as space for play.
- Trial/assessment: A proper compatibility check before full days or overnights.
- Routine: Sensible balance of play, rest, toilet breaks, enrichment, and calm time.

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## Dog walkers

- Local limits: There is no national limit in Scotland. Some councils cap numbers (often four to six). Check your council's position before booking. [Scottish Government](#)
- Group size: Ask the maximum per handler and how dogs are grouped by size, temperament, and energy.
- Transport: If a van is used, look for individual crates, good ventilation, and no overcrowding.
- Routes: Safe locations away from traffic and livestock unless under strict control.
- Contingency: What happens if a dog is ill, injured, or bolts?

## Hot weather: what good providers do

- Adapt or cancel walks in heat.
- Provide shade, water, and rest.
- Avoid hot vans and hot pavements.
- Swap long walks for short comfort breaks and indoor enrichment.

## How care affects behaviour at home

- Over-arousal and constant rough play at daycare can spill over into hyper, jumpy behaviour at home.
- Punitive handling by a walker can create fear and undo your training.
- Lack of rest leads to overtired, stressed, reactive dogs.
- Choose people whose handling and routines match your training values.

## Red flags

- No licence on display for daycare/boarding or unwilling to show it.
- Vague answers, "trust me," or reluctance to let you visit.
- Too many dogs per staff member or per walk.
- No emergency policy.
- Harsh handling.
- No changes for hot or extreme weather.

## Who to contact and how

- Check a licence:
  - West Dunbartonshire register: see "Animal boarding establishments" page and follow the "licence holders" list. [West Dunbartonshire Council](#)
  - Argyll and Bute register: "Home boarding licences." [Argyll and Bute Council](#)
- Report unlicensed boarding/daycare: Contact your council's licensing team with the business name and address (WDC or A&B). [West Dunbartonshire Council](#) [Argyll and Bute Council](#)
- Animal welfare concerns: Scottish SPCA 03000 999 999.
- Emergencies: Police Scotland on 999 (urgent) or 101.