# Dogs, Owners & Responsibility: Law in the Doghouse

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| **Locations** | Edgbaston Room, Lucas House |
| **Date(s)** | Tuesday 24th June 2014 (09:00-17:00) |
| **Contact** | **Workshop Leader: Professor Marie Fox (/staff/profiles/law/fox-marie.aspx)** |
| **Download** | **Add to Calendar (/research/activity/ias/workshops/2014/dogs.aspx?ical=true)** |

This workshop will explore the problematic relationship between humans and dogs, and law's role in its governance. The aim is to disseminate academic work on the dog/human nexus and how it is legally regulated to key stakeholders involved in the regulation of social problems attributable to dogs and anti-social behaviour, including local authorities, the police and a range of dog charities/rescues, both in Birmingham and nationally.

The past decade has revealed a crisis in human relationships with dogs – a relationship which is increasingly mediated by law. Dogs are celebrated in popular television shows such as "The Wonder of Dogs" and "The Secret Life of Dogs" and increasingly viewed as companion species more akin to family members than to legal property (albeit that this is a heavily commodified relationship with owners spending vast sums of money on accessories and vets are faced with the ethical problems posed by ever more extreme medical interventions to prolong their lives). Simultaneously, however, media headlines reveal a crisis in which the number of stray dogs has reached an all-time high, and dogs are depicted as out of control weapons and killers.

Thus, the 2013 annual Stray Dogs Survey by Dogs Trust, the UK's largest dog welfare charity, reveals a shocking 111,986 stray and abandoned dogs were picked up by Local Authorities across the UK over the last 12 months, equating to a staggering 307 stray dogs being found every day. [5] Significant numbers end up being euthanised. Media campaigns have fuelled the stigma attached to certain breeds making them - and their owners - particularly vulnerable to stigmatization and fuelling a particular crisis in bull breeds and so-called status dogs, [6] while making them perversely attractive to the 'wrong' sort of owners.

Against this backdrop the heavily criticized and largely ineffective Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, which has itself contributed to the issue with bull breeds, remains in force.

**Workshop format:**

The workshop will take place over a day at the University of Birmingham and consist of up to six presentations by academics, with responses by key stakeholders in the debate. In this way it is hoped that academic arguments can be disseminated to policy-makers, while their insights can, in turn, inform academic papers.



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