



## Michigan Dog Bite Law: What You Need to Know

*A dog bite case is a type of personal injury claim where someone is injured by a dog attack. The physical injuries can be terrible, frequently leaving scarring and disability. Dog attacks also often leave emotional scars that cannot be seen.*

### Elements of a Dog Bite Case

Michigan is a **strict liability state** when it comes to dog bites. This means that the dog's owner is liable if their dog bites someone, regardless of whether the dog has bitten before or shown aggression. There are two important common law defenses. If the victim provoked the dog, even accidentally, the claim would fail. Also, if the victim was trespassing, the claim would fail. Read more: **MCL 287.351**.

### Damages

Victims can pursue compensation for:

- Medical bills (emergency care, stitches, surgery, rabies shots, etc.)
- Lost wages if injuries prevent working
- Pain and suffering
- Disfigurement or scarring
- Emotional trauma (fear of dogs, PTSD)

### Critical Considerations

- **Leash Laws:** Michigan has a statewide leash law. A violation of leash laws can strengthen a victim's claim.
- **Landlord Liability:** Landlords are generally not liable unless they had direct knowledge of a dangerous dog and control over the property.
- **Statute of Limitations:** In Michigan, victims generally have 3 years from the date of the attack to file a lawsuit.

### Statewide Leash Law

Michigan's statewide leash law requires that dogs be properly leashed when off their owner's property, and when on their owner's property, they must still be kept under reasonable control - such as being fenced, tied, or otherwise restrained. Violating the leash law can be used as evidence of negligence in a civil case. If a dog was running loose in public when it bit someone, the violation of the statewide leash law strengthens the victim's claim. Even though Michigan's dog bite statute is **strict liability** - meaning the owner is liable regardless of negligence - a leash law violation can undercut defenses (such as claiming provocation) or support related negligence claims (for injuries other than bites, or if the dog knocked someone over).

**Disclaimer:** *The outcome of a particular matter can depend on a variety of factors—including the specific factual and legal circumstance that may come to light during initial investigation.*

