Dog Bites

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Overview

Most dog bite victims in Massachusetts do not realize how strong their legal position is. Unlike many states, Massachusetts does not follow a “one free bite” rule. Under M.G.L. c. 140, § 155, a dog’s owner or keeper is strictly liable for bite injuries regardless of whether the animal has ever shown aggression before. The victim does not need to prove negligence, prior complaints, or a dangerous breed history. If the dog caused injury, the law places responsibility on its owner. That legal framework creates a powerful path to compensation for medical costs, permanent scarring, emotional trauma, and lost income. But a strong legal position does not enforce itself. Evidence deteriorates, insurance deadlines pass, and memories fade. As a dog attack attorney and animal bite lawyer serving Massachusetts and Rhode Island, Cohen Cleary builds claims that capture the full scope of harm before critical opportunities are lost.

How We Help After a Dog Attack

Cohen Cleary’s personal injury attorneys approach every dog bite case by identifying every source of recovery and documenting every category of harm. The specific damages depend on the severity of the attack, but our attorneys consistently pursue:

- Medical expenses and future treatment costs, including emergency care, surgical repair, and reconstructive procedures for scarring dog bite injuries
- Homeowners insurance dog bite coverage, which is frequently the primary source of compensation. Many dog owners are unaware that their homeowner’s or renter’s policy covers animal attack liability, and these policies often carry substantial limits.
- Psychological counseling and therapy for emotional trauma, particularly for children who develop lasting anxiety, nightmares, or fear of animals after an attack
- Pain and suffering, disfigurement, and loss of enjoyment of life, with particular attention to the long-term impact of facial scarring on children
- Lost wages for parents who miss work to care for injured children, or for adult victims unable to return to employment during recovery

We tell our clients that the visible wound is only part of the claim. An effective dog bite child lawyer documents not just what happened, but what will continue to happen: the future surgeries, the ongoing therapy, and the ways the injury reshapes daily life.

Why Clients Trust Cohen Cleary With Their Dog Bite Claims

At Cohen Cleary, our practice teams combine deep subject-matter experience with disciplined execution and responsive client service. We do not take a one-size-fits-all approach. Every matter is handled with careful preparation, clear communication, and a strategy tailored to the

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client's goals and the realities of the forum.

Clients choose Cohen Cleary because we deliver:

Practice-Focused Legal Experience

Our attorneys work in defined practice areas, allowing us to develop practical insight into the legal, procedural, and regulatory nuances that matter most in each case. This focus allows us to anticipate issues, avoid unnecessary delays, and position matters for efficient resolution.

Clear Guidance and Proactive Communication

We prioritize clarity at every stage. Clients receive straightforward explanations of their options, timely updates on developments, and practical advice grounded in real-world outcomes.

Strategic Advocacy with Trial Readiness

Whether a matter calls for negotiation, mediation, or litigation, our attorneys prepare every case with discipline and foresight. We pursue efficient resolution when possible and are fully prepared to advocate aggressively when necessary to protect our clients' interests.

Regional Knowledge and Local Presence

With offices throughout Massachusetts and experience across New England courts and agencies, we bring local insight and regional reach to every matter.

Client-Centered Service

We treat every matter with urgency and respect. Our clients rely on us for responsive service, sound judgment, and steady counsel through complex legal challenges.

In our personal injury work, this approach helps clients navigate dog bite claims with clarity, efficiency, and confidence.

Our Approach to Dog Owner Liability in Massachusetts

Dog owner liability under M.G.L. c. 140, § 155 is straightforward in principle but requires careful execution in practice. The statute permits only narrow defenses: that the victim was trespassing, teasing or tormenting the animal, or committing another tort at the time of the attack. For children under seven, even these defenses are presumed inapplicable, and the burden shifts to the owner to prove otherwise. Our attorneys use this statutory framework strategically, pairing it with early evidence preservation, insurance policy identification, and damage documentation that accounts for both the immediate and long-term consequences of the injury.

Serving Victims of Dog Bite Accidents Across New England

Cohen Cleary handles Massachusetts dog bite injury claims from offices in Taunton and Plymouth. Clients searching for a Taunton dog bite lawyer or Plymouth dog attack attorney will find a firm familiar with the procedural requirements, filing timelines, and discovery practices in Bristol County, Plymouth County, and Norfolk County courts. Our attorneys understand how personal injury litigation moves through southeastern Massachusetts courthouses, and that local familiarity translates directly into efficient case management and realistic timeline expectations. The firm also represents dog bite victims throughout Rhode Island, with the capacity to serve

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clients across New England.

Contact Cohen Cleary About Your Dog Bite Claim

If you or your child has been injured in a dog attack, the strength of your claim depends on prompt action and thorough documentation of all injuries, including scarring and emotional harm. Contact Cohen Cleary for a consultation to discuss your rights under Massachusetts strict liability law and the compensation available to your family.

Frequently Asked Questions About Dog Bite Accidents

Do I need to prove the dog was dangerous or had bitten someone before?

No. Massachusetts imposes strict liability for dog bites under M.G.L. c. 140, § 155. The owner or keeper is liable for bite injuries regardless of the dog's prior behavior. You do not need to show that the owner knew the dog was aggressive or that the animal had a history of biting.

Does homeowner's insurance cover dog bite injuries?

In most cases, yes. Homeowners' and renters' insurance policies typically include liability coverage that applies to dog bite claims. The dog owner's insurer is often the primary source of compensation, even when the owner is unaware that their policy covers animal attacks. Your attorney can identify applicable coverage early in the claims process.

Can I file a claim if my child was bitten, even if the dog owner says my child provoked the animal?

Massachusetts law provides strong protections for young children. For victims under the age of seven, the statute presumes the child was not at fault. The dog owner bears the burden of proving provocation, which is defined narrowly as teasing or tormenting the animal. Ordinary interaction with a dog does not constitute provocation under the statute.

Does the breed of dog affect my legal claim?

No. Massachusetts strict liability for dog bites applies to all breeds equally. A common misconception is that only owners of pit bulls or other "dangerous breeds" can be held liable, but the statute makes no distinction based on breed. Whether you need a pit bull attack attorney or representation after a bite from any other breed, the legal standard and the owner's liability are the same.

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