

**OFFICIAL: POLICE ONLY**



## Recorded Theft of Dogs in Scotland April 2019 – March 2021

Produced By: APU Dalmarnock  
Produced On: 14/06/2021

**OFFICIAL: POLICE ONLY**

## **OFFICIAL: POLICE ONLY**

**Aim:** Police Scotland have received a number of enquiries relating to the theft of dogs following perceived increases in crimes reported in news and social media. This briefing paper will compare the recorded thefts of dogs in Scotland in financial year 2020/2021 to the previous year to highlight changes in the nature of offending.

**Methodology:**

Divisional analysts interrogated local crime management systems for acquisitive crimes where a dog/puppy was recorded as stolen. These returns were then collated and analysed to provide this overview.

Variations in local recording systems and human error in data input/retrieval may result in omissions from the dataset.

Open source research was also conducted for additional contextual information.

## OFFICIAL: POLICE ONLY

### Introduction

The demand for dogs has increased during lockdown in the UK. With increased demand, some breeds have seen large increases in the cost of puppies. This increase in cost and demand has given rise to an environment where theft and re-sale of dogs could be lucrative.

The summary below provides headline information around the issue in Scotland in 2019/20 and 2020/21.

### Dog Thefts in Scotland

Between 2019/20 and 2020/21 there was a 42% increase in crimes where dogs are stolen or attempts were made to steal dogs. It should be noted that the small numbers involved mean that small changes in volumes can lead to large percentage change year on year.

	2019/20	2020/21	Difference vs. Previous Year	% Change vs. Previous Year
Crimes involving theft of dogs (inc. attempts).	62	88	26	42%

This increase is not uniform throughout divisions. 'E', 'G', 'L', 'N' and 'V' Divisions saw a reduction in 2020/21 while there were increases recorded in 'A', 'C', 'D', 'J', 'P'. 'Q' and 'U' Divisions recorded increases while there was no change in 'K' Division.

The greatest increase in number of crimes was recorded in 'D' Division increasing from 7 crimes in the previous year to 19 in 2020/21. The greatest decrease in number was recorded in both 'E' and 'G' Divisions both decreasing from 9 crimes to 5 over the period.

The greatest percentage increase was observed in 'A' Division (700%), however, only one crime was recorded in this division in 2019/20.

Division	2019/20	2020/21	Difference vs. Previous Year	% Change vs. Previous Year
A	1	8	7	700%
C	7	9	2	29%
D	7	19	12	171%
E	9	5	-4	-44%
G	9	5	-4	-44%
J	6	7	1	17%
K	2	2	0	0%
L	3	2	-1	-33%
N	2	1	-1	-50%
P	2	5	3	150%
Q	5	13	8	160%
U	6	11	5	83%
V	3	1	-2	-67%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>42%</b>

Just under half (71 crimes) are detected at time of writing.

## OFFICIAL: POLICE ONLY

### Ownership Disputes / Domestic Incidents

It was highlighted by divisional analysts that a number of the recorded crimes related to domestic issues or ownership disputes regarding the dog and as such do not reflect the same intent as a theft for financial gain or other motive.

A review of the data supplied highlighted that 42 of the 150 (32%) crimes related to these issues. If these were to be excluded, this will impact on the stats presented above.

	2019/20	2020/21	Difference vs. Previous Year	% Change vs. Previous Year
Theft of Dogs (excluding ownership disputes etc.)	48	60	12	25%

Under these conditions, the increase in theft of dogs in 2020/21 is 25% compared to the previous year.

### Crime Types

Theft not elsewhere classified is the most commonly recorded crime type across both years, followed by housebreaking and robbery. Theft NEC accounts for almost two thirds of all dog thefts.

Crime Type	2019/20	2020/21	Grand Total
Att. Robbery	3	1	4
Att. Theft	2	4	6
Fraud		1	1
Housebreaking	10	10	20
Robbery	10	7	17
Theft NEC	36	63	99
Theft OLP		2	2
Vehicle Theft	1		1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>150</b>

### Locus Type

Residential premises account for just over half (n=78) of all crimes, where dogs are stolen from within houses, flats etc. In addition, a further 16 crimes were recorded with a residential – external locus such as dogs being stolen from a garden or outside kennel.

Just over one in five (n=35) crimes occurred in open space such as footpath, park or street.

Dogs stolen from outside business premises such as a shop or public house account for only seven of the 150 crimes.

Locus Type	2019/20	2020/21	Grand Total
Business premises	5	7	12
N/A	1		1
Outside business pre	5	2	7
Public space	14	21	35
Residential - External	3	13	16
Residential premises	34	44	78
Vehicle		1	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>150</b>

## OFFICIAL: POLICE ONLY

### Temporal Analysis

Crimes occurred throughout both years with little variation month to month. However, in 2019/20, there were higher numbers of thefts recorded in May and June whereas in 2020/21 the peak months were April and October.

During 2019/20 peak days for thefts were Sunday (29%) and Tuesday (16%). In 2020/21, peak days were Saturday (20%) and Sunday (17%).

Across the review period, there is little variation in the proportion of crime by day, with the exception of fewer crimes being recorded on a Friday.

Proportion of crimes by day	2019/20	2020/21	Grand Total
Monday	11.3%	11.4%	11.3%
Tuesday	16.1%	14.8%	15.3%
Wednesday	9.7%	21.6%	16.7%
Thursday	14.5%	9.1%	11.3%
Friday	6.5%	9.1%	8.0%
Saturday	12.9%	25.0%	20.0%
Sunday	29.0%	9.1%	17.3%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

### Crimes of Note

As highlighted above, a number of crimes relate to ownership disputes or the late return of a dog to the owner. In the majority of cases the dog is recovered. However, review of the MO summary in the data provided highlighted some crimes of note.

While there are opportunistic dog thefts captured in the data, for example theft where the dog is tied up outside a shop or unsupervised in a garden, there are indications of more organised criminality. For example:

In J Division, [REDACTED] describes the theft of eight Border Collie puppies from a farm outbuilding. Having suitable transportation available for this number of dogs will have required some prior awareness of the situation.

In P Division, [REDACTED] relates to the theft of one bitch and 9 puppies from locked cages in an external kennel at a dog breeder's home. The estimated value of the loss is £27,500. Again, prior knowledge and planning will have enabled this crime.

Another concern is the use of threats, violence and weapons in the theft of dogs. This may have a psychological impact on the victim, leaving them less confident in taking their dogs on the usual walking routes:

In G Division one victim was walking their dog when the accused shouted at them for kicking his dog. The accused then pulled a knife and struck the victim six times to the head with the knife handle before stealing the dog and making off in a van.

Again, in G Division one complainer had a knife held to their neck while the suspect demanded they hand over their dog. While the theft of the dog was unsuccessful, the suspect made off with a handbag containing 300pounds.

A possible emerging trend is exploiting the increase in the online market for dogs. There were reports of stolen dog's being advertised for sale on Gumtree. Additionally, there were reports from L and U divisions of suspects replying to

OFFICIAL: POLICE ONLY

**OFFICIAL: POLICE ONLY**

advertises on Gumtree and on viewing the dog, take same without payment. In one case the suspect threatened to report the complainer to SSPCA.

██████████

Criminal Intelligence Analyst

17<sup>th</sup> June 2021

**OFFICIAL: POLICE ONLY**