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Dog Tax in Germany — Registration, Costs and Rules

Everything about dog tax: where to register your dog, what the tax costs and what rules apply to dog owners.

Deutsche Begriffe: Hundesteuer | Hundemarke | Leinenpflicht | Kampfhund | Listenhund | Tierschutzgesetz

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What is Dog Tax (Hundesteuer)?

Hundesteuer (dog tax) is a municipal tax that every dog owner in Germany must pay. It is collected by the **city or municipality** and serves as a source of revenue for the local budget.

Dog tax is **not a service in return** — you receive no special service for it. It is a pure **expense tax** that taxes dog ownership. The amount varies greatly depending on the city and municipality.

Who Must Pay Dog Tax?

Anyone who **owns a dog** in Germany is required to register and pay dog tax:

• Also **foreigners** residing in Germany

• Even if you only **temporarily care for** the dog (in some municipalities from 2–3 months)

• For **each individual dog** — if you have multiple dogs, you pay for each one

Exemptions

In many municipalities, certain dogs are **tax-exempt** or **eligible for discounts**:

- **Guide dogs for the blind** and **assistance dogs** — usually tax-free
- **Service dogs** (police, customs, rescue) — tax-free
- **Dogs from shelters** — often tax-free or discounted for 1–2 years
- **Recipients of social benefits** — discount possible (upon application)

How High is the Dog Tax?

The tax **varies significantly** between cities:

City	1st Dog	2nd Dog	Kampfhund
Hamburg	€90/year	€90/year	€600/year
Berlin	€120/year	€120/year	€180/year
Munich	€100/year	€100/year	€800/year
Cologne	€156/year	€156/year	€672/year
Frankfurt	€102/year	€150/year	€900/year
Düsseldorf	€96/year	€150/year	€600/year
Stuttgart	€108/year	€108/year	€612/year

Important: For the **second and each additional dog**, the tax is often higher. For so-called **Kampfhunde** (listed dogs), the tax can be **5 to 10 times higher**!

How Do I Register My Dog?

Deadline

You must register your dog **within 1–4 weeks** of acquisition with the municipality (the exact deadline varies by city). For **puppies**, the obligation usually begins at an age of **3–4 months**.

Where to Register?

- Online through your city's **citizen portal** (often under "Hundesteuer")
- In person at your municipality's **tax office** or **citizen office**
- By **mail** or **fax** (registration form available on the city website)

What Do I Need?

• Your **ID card** or passport

• **Registration certificate** (registration with the resident registration office)

• Information about your **dog**: breed, name, age, gender, microchip number

• For **Kampfhunde**: temperament test, competence certificate, liability insurance

What Will I Receive?

After registration, you will receive:

• A **dog tax notice** (annual invoice)

• A **Hundemarke** (tax badge) — the dog must wear it on its collar!

Hundemarke — Mandatory!

The **Hundemarke** (tax badge) is proof that you pay dog tax. Rules:

• The dog must wear the badge **visibly on its collar**

• If lost: immediately request a **replacement badge** (fee: €5–15)

• During inspections by the **municipal authorities**, you must be able to present the badge

• Without a badge, you face a **fine** (€30–150)

Leash Requirement and Other Rules

Leash Requirement (Leinenpflicht)

The leash requirement is a **state matter** and varies significantly:

• **Hamburg** — general leash requirement throughout the city (since 2006)

• **Berlin** — leash requirement in shops, public buildings, playgrounds, at gatherings

• **Bavaria** — no general leash requirement, but municipalities may enact their own rules

• **NRW** — leash requirement on streets, paths, and public spaces within towns

Removing Dog Waste

In almost all cities, dog owners are required to **clean up dog waste**. Fines for violation: **€10–150** depending on the city.

Liability Insurance

In many states, **dog liability insurance** is mandatory:

• **Hamburg, Berlin, Lower Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, Schleswig-Holstein, Thuringia** — mandatory for all dogs

• **NRW, Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria** — only for certain breeds or above a certain size

• Costs: **€40–80/year** (depending on breed and coverage sum)

Listed Dogs / Kampfhunde

Certain dog breeds are classified as **Listenhunde** (colloquially "Kampfhunde"). The lists vary by state; typical breeds include:

• American Staffordshire Terrier

• Pitbull Terrier

• Bull Terrier

• Rottweiler (in some states)

• Dogo Argentino

Special Requirements

• **Higher dog tax** (up to €900/year)

• **Temperament test** — the dog must pass a behavioral test

• **Competence certificate** — the owner must prove their suitability

• **Holding permit** — approval from municipal authorities required

• **Leash requirement and muzzle requirement** — often generally mandated

• In some states: **keeping ban** for certain breeds

Fines for Violations

Violation	Fine
Dog not registered	**€50–1,000**
Hundemarke not carried	**€30–150**
Dog waste not removed	**€10–150**
Leash requirement violated	**€25–500**
Listed dog without permit	**€500–10,000**

Deregistration

If your dog **dies, is given away or sold**, or you **move**, you must deregister the dog within **2–4 weeks**. If you move to another city, you must **re-register** your dog there.

Tips

• **Register early** — avoid back payments and fines

• **Always keep Hundemarke on collar** — municipal authorities check!

• **Get insurance** — protects against high costs from bite incidents

• **Pet owner liability** — in Germany, you as the owner are liable for **any damage** your dog causes (§ 833 BGB), regardless of fault!

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