

How Long Do You Have to File a Dog Bite Lawsuit in Washington?

Understanding Washington's Statute of Limitations for Dog Bite Claims

After a [dog attack](#), the injuries can last far longer than the initial shock. Victims often face medical bills, pain, scarring, rehabilitation, and emotional trauma — all while trying to understand their legal rights. One of the most important factors that can affect a dog bite case in Washington is time.

Under Washington law, you only have a limited window to file a lawsuit or claim for compensation after being bitten or attacked by a dog. This time limit is called the statute of limitations, and missing it can prevent you from ever recovering damages — no matter how strong your original claim may be.

At [The Scott Law Firm, PLLC](#), attorney Colin Scott helps dog bite victims in Vancouver and throughout Southwest Washington understand their rights under state law.

What Is the Statute of Limitations for Dog Bite Claims in Washington?

In most cases that involve adults who are bitten or attacked by a dog, Washington law gives three years from the date of the attack to file a personal injury lawsuit related to a dog bite. However, this statute may be shorter or longer depending on the unique facts of each case, which is why it is important that you consult with an attorney who can identify the applicable statute of limitations and take appropriate steps to protect your legal rights.

It's important to note that while an insurance company may handle some negotiations early on, only filing a lawsuit has the ability to formally preserve your right to pursue recovery before the statute of limitations expires.

Why Washington's Deadline Matters

The statute of limitations is more than just a technicality; it can make or break a case. Once the deadline passes, even a valid claim cannot move forward in court.

The statute of limitations exists to encourage timely action, ensure evidence remains available, and protect defendants from indefinite exposure to old claims. But for injured victims, it also means acting quickly to protect their rights.

Are There Exceptions to the Three-Year Rule?

While three years is the general rule, certain exceptions can extend or "toll" the statute of limitations, depending on who was injured and under what circumstances.

The most common exception applies when the victim is a minor child at the time of the dog attack. In these instances, a minor may have longer to pursue their claim. However, you should not be relying on information in an online article to make important legal decisions; you should

instead consult with a qualified attorney who can identify the applicable statute of limitations in your situation and advise you how to proceed.

Why It's Risky to Wait Until the Deadline Approaches

Even though it may seem like you have plenty of time, waiting to take action can seriously weaken a case. Over time:

- Witnesses move or forget key details.
- Medical testimony from your doctors may be harder to obtain.
- Photos and other evidence can be lost or destroyed.

Delays also make it more difficult for your attorney to investigate and document your claim fully. Dog bite cases often require coordination with animal control reports, private investigators, medical experts, and/or insurance carriers, and each of those steps takes time.

Contacting a lawyer early allows them to gather evidence while it's still fresh, determine insurance coverages, and make sure all legal filings are properly submitted before any deadlines have expired.

How a Dog Bite Lawyer Can Help Protect Your Rights

Understanding Washington's statute of limitations is just one part of protecting your right to compensation. Attorney Colin Scott helps victims:

- Determine the applicable statute of limitations and correct filing deadlines based on facts that are unique to each case.
- Preserve evidence by contacting witnesses, securing medical records, hiring private investigators when needed, and obtaining official reports.
- Ensure that all recoverable damages are properly documented.
- Identify all sources of potential recovery, such as homeowner's, renter's, or umbrella insurance policies.
- Negotiate with insurance companies to achieve fair settlements.
- File suit in court if a reasonable resolution cannot be reached.

Every case begins with understanding both the facts and the law. The sooner you get reliable legal advice, the stronger your position will be.

Talk to a Vancouver Dog Bite Lawyer About Your Deadline

Every dog bite case is different, and so are the deadlines that apply. The best way to protect your rights is to speak with an attorney who can review your situation and explain how Washington's laws apply to you.

At The Scott Law Firm, PLLC, [attorney Colin Scott](#) helps clients across Vancouver and Southwest Washington pursue justice after serious dog attacks. Whether you were bitten as an adult or

your child was injured, our firm can help you understand your options and take timely action before the statute expires.

[Contact The Scott Law Firm today](#) for a free consultation. We can review your case, help you determine applicable deadlines, and guide you through every step of the legal process.

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