

# Dog Owners' Handbook



Government  
of South Australia

Dog and Cat  
Management Board

2020 edition  
**Updated with  
new laws**

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Owning a dog can enrich your life in many ways, but it's a big commitment to your dog and the community. This is your guide to socially-responsible dog ownership.

**In the book you will find:**

- information on how to care for your dog
- strategies to prevent your dog causing public nuisance or injury
- information on the legal requirements for owning a dog in South Australia.

It is important to remember that your dog is dependent on you to provide its food, water, shelter and the activities necessary for its physical and mental health. This commitment to your dog could last for at least 15 years, so investing in the establishment of a great relationship from the very beginning will be rewarded by years of happiness together.

If you require any further information on any of the topics covered in this book, please refer to the list of resources on the inside back cover, or ask your vet.



**Good dogs have great owners.**

# The benefits of owning a dog

There are many reasons why people choose to own a dog.

People with dogs and other pets often live longer, healthier lives, with better cardiovascular health, lower blood pressure and lower levels of anxiety, than those without animal companions.

Having a dog in the family can help children to develop a sense of responsibility towards other living things as they learn to care for it. Looking after and exercising a dog also provides health benefits for both the dog and the child, when undertaken responsibly and safely.



Choosing the dog that is right for you, your family and your circumstances is a big responsibility. It is important that the decision is not made on impulse, and that you consider both your needs and those of the dog. A poor choice can lead to unhappiness for you, your family and your dog.

Factors to consider before choosing a dog:

- How big is your garden and what type of fencing and gates do you have?
- How much time can you spend at home with the dog?
- Can you afford the food, vet and registration costs?
- How much time can you commit to training, exercising and grooming your dog?
- Does your general lifestyle suit a dog?
- What will you do with your dog if you travel?
- What are the ages of any children living in the home?
- Will your dog be allowed inside or have to stay outside?

# Choosing your dog

While there are many issues to consider before getting a dog, you and your family should be able to find a dog to suit your lifestyle.

If you would like to see or interact with various breeds of dogs, you could attend a dog show (see [www.dogssa.com.au](http://www.dogssa.com.au) for a calendar of events) or visit your local dog training club.

Animal shelters such as the RSPCA or Animal Welfare League have many dogs in urgent need of loving homes and the details for these organisations can be found at the back of this book. Shelter staff can also offer valuable advice regarding which dog might be best suited to your family and lifestyle.



# Owning a dog

## Basic responsibilities

By law, you are required to provide your dog with the basic requirements to meet their welfare needs. That means your dog must have access to clean water, food, appropriate sleeping conditions, shade from the hot sun and enough exercise to be healthy and happy.

## Registration

All dogs over three months of age must be registered via the Dogs and Cats Online (DACO) website.

All registered dogs are issued with a permanent registration number on a grey disc following first registration. Owners must affix the issued disc, or one of their choice displaying the permanent registration number, to the dog's collar.

Registration expires 30 June and must be renewed on DACO by 31 August each year. The permanent registration number remains the same each year. Replacement discs may be purchased on DACO if required, or a metal disc may be used.

To register a dog, you must be over 16 years of age and you must inform your local council within 14 days if:

- you have a new dog
- your dog has moved to different premises (registration can be transferred between local councils)
- your dog is missing
- ownership of the dog has transferred to another person
- your dog dies.

Owners can do this by logging into DACO and updating their record.

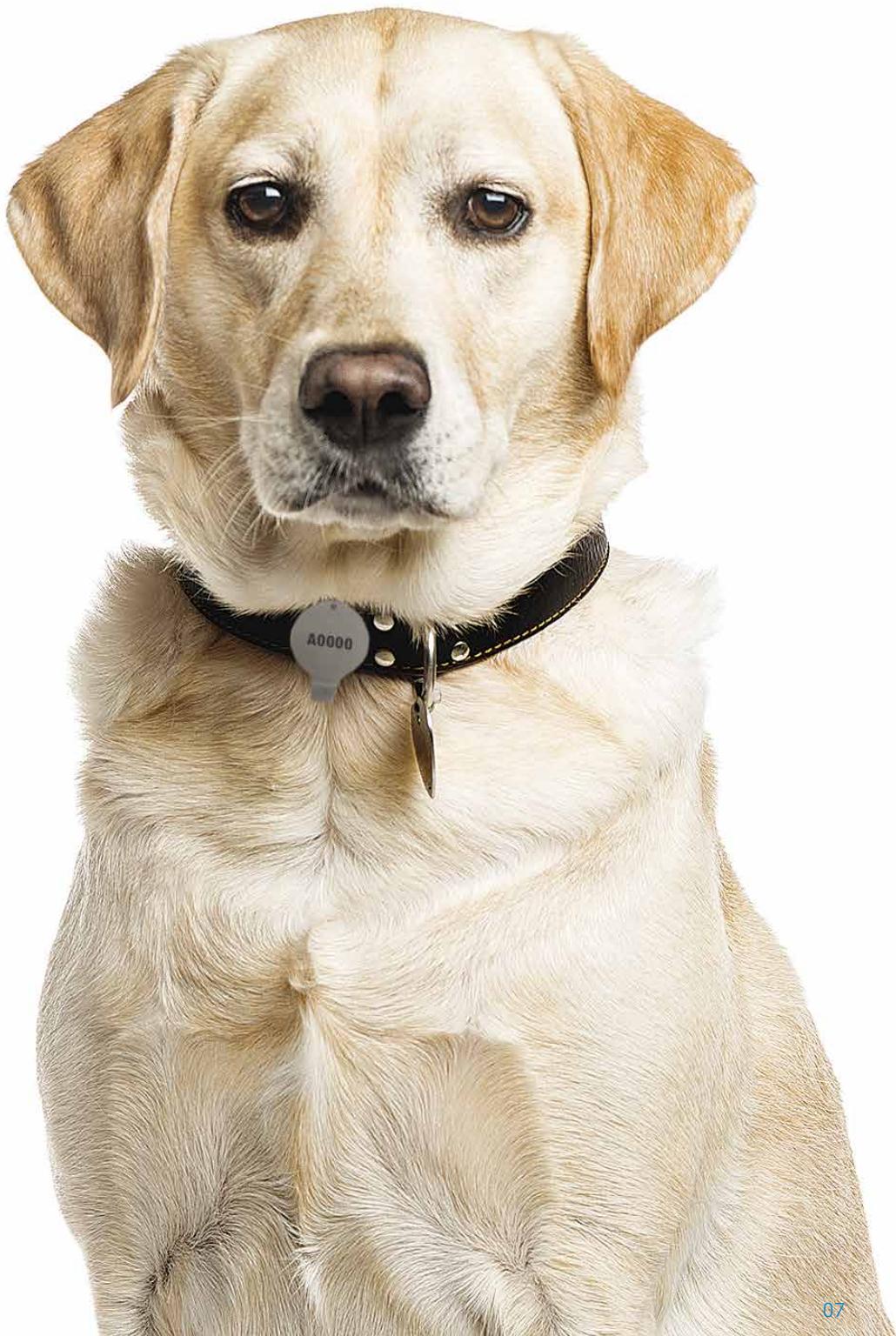
Dog registration fees are used by your council for the administration or enforcement of dog and cat management, including dog parks, animal management teams and pound facilities.

## Microchipping

Microchipping is an extremely reliable method of identification which greatly increases the chance of your dog being returned to you if it becomes lost. A small microchip, about the size of a grain of rice, is implanted under your dog's skin by a vet or other qualified person. Each microchip has its own unique number.

Your dog's microchip details are required to be recorded on DACO which can be accessed by councils, vets, animal welfare groups and dog shelters.

All dogs in South Australia must be microchipped. A dog must be microchipped before it is sold or before 12 weeks of age or within 28 days after taking possession of the dog. Microchipping is not a substitute for council registration.



# Owning a dog

## Desexing

There are many good reasons to desex your dog. It reduces the risk of certain cancers, stops unwanted litters and makes it less likely your dog will roam.

Desexing your dog is compulsory in South Australia. Dogs born after 1 July 2018 must be desexed by six months of age. There are exemptions for working livestock dogs, racing greyhounds, dogs belonging to breeders registered with the Dog and Cat Management Board, or on medical grounds (i.e. unacceptable anaesthesia risk).

Mandatory desexing has been introduced to help reduce the number of unwanted dogs in the community.

## Socialisation

Research has shown that a puppy's experiences in its first 12 weeks of life will strongly influence how it reacts to the world as an adult dog. Failure to expose a young puppy to a wide variety of situations can result in it being fearful of particular circumstances, people or animals for the rest of its life. It is vital that your puppy's socialisation is approached with a plan that provides a range of positive experiences.

These experiences may include safely exposing your puppy to:

- men and women
- children of different ages
- people with loud voices
- quiet and busy places
- street sounds
- other animals
- normal household sounds such as a vacuum cleaner
- music
- different smells.

It is important to ensure that any form of socialisation is a positive experience for your puppy and that constant supervision, reassurance and encouragement are provided. By keeping your puppy's favourite treats on hand, any new experience and situation can be reinforced as a positive association.

It is also important to seek advice from your vet regarding situations that should be avoided until your puppy is fully immunised. Many clinics offer puppy parties or socialisation classes. These can be a great way for your puppy to meet other dogs in a supervised environment where the risk of illness can be minimised.



# Dog training

Dog training is an important part of building a happy, healthy relationship with your dog. It sets consistent boundaries and provides your dog with a clear understanding of what is expected.

Dog training can be undertaken with your dog at any age, unlike social exposure training which must be done before your puppy is 12 weeks old. There are numerous ways to train your dog. You can:

- teach your dog at home
- join classes at a local dog training club
- engage the services of a private dog trainer.

If you choose to use a dog training club, your local council, RSPCA or a quick internet search for positive reinforcement dog training will help you find a club in your local area.

It's a good idea to teach the basic commands of 'sit', 'stay', 'come', 'drop' and 'heel'. Whilst there are many other commands you may wish to teach your dog, these five basic ones will give you a level of control and trust in your dog's behaviour.

## General training tips

- Try to make training a positive experience for both you and your dog.
- Training should be performed in short sessions (of five to ten minutes) several times a week, so the dog does not become bored.
- Always end the training session on a positive note and demonstrate to your dog that you are happy with it.

- Food treats can be used to reward dogs during training sessions. Dogs love them, so they can be a very effective training tool.
- Try to minimise distractions when you are training your dog. The dog must be focused on you. The local park with excited children running around is not an ideal place for training.

### Sit

'Sit' is commonly the first command that young dogs learn and is an important method of basic training.

#### Training tips:

- Hold a piece of food (or a dog treat) between your thumb and forefinger.
- Position the food just above the dog's nose.
- Slowly move the food up and back over the dog's head towards its tail.
- The dog should automatically look up in the direction of the food and move back into the sitting position, with its bottom on the ground.
- As your dog is moving into the sitting position, say the word "sit" once or twice, to create an association between the action and the word.
- Once the dog is in position give it the reward and praise it in a positive tone of voice. If the dog has to jump up to get the reward, you are holding the treat too high.

### Stay

'Stay' is another important command to teach your dog. This command is very important for your dog's safety.



# Dog training

## Training tips:

- You should begin training with your dog on a lead.
- Start with your dog in a sitting position at your left-hand side.
- Place your open hand in front of the dog's face, and say "stay" in an authoritative tone.
- Step in front of your dog, wait momentarily, then say "stay, good dog" and reward the dog with a treat.
- Repeat this process, slowly increasing the length of time your dog needs to wait before being rewarded.
- As your dog becomes better at holding the stay position, start taking steps backwards until you are at the end of the lead.
- If training at home, or within a safe fenced area, you can practise off-lead stays once the on-lead version has been mastered.
- The stay command can also be practised with the dog in a standing or lying position.

## Come

Teaching your dog to come to you on command is important if you wish to have effective control over it.

The number one rule when teaching your dog to come is that there must be a positive outcome when it comes to you. If you call your dog to you in order to punish or discipline it, it will quickly become discouraged from responding to this command.

## Training tips:

- Hold your dog's lead in your left hand and a treat in your right hand.
- Take a few steps backwards, calling your

- dog's name followed by "come". Make sure you use a positive tone of voice.
- Gradually increase the number of steps taken while calling the dog's name and the command.
- Praise or reward your dog when it responds to your command.
- If training at home, or within a safe fenced area, you can progress to off-lead training once your dog is consistently achieving the on-lead version.
- You should be confident of your dog's ability to come when called before attempting this at an off-lead dog park.

## Walking on a loose lead

When exercising your dog in public, by law, it must be on a lead of no more than two metres, unless you're in a designated off-leash area. Teaching your dog to walk safely by your side on a loose lead will make your walks much more enjoyable.

## Training tips:

- Normally, dogs are walked on the left-hand side of the handler and this is how you should commence training.
- The correct position for your dog when walking on a loose lead is for its head/shoulder to be in line with your left leg. The lead should make a letter 'J' from your hand to the dog's collar.
- Whilst the dog is in the correct position tell it "heel, good dog" in a positive tone of voice and reward it with a treat.
- In the early stages of learning this new skill, your dog should receive a small treat every few steps. Increase the number of steps between treats as your dog

becomes better at loose lead walking.

- If your dog walks out in front of you, or lags behind you, slow down dramatically or even stop. When your dog realises that you have stopped, encourage it to return to the starting position at your left side. When it is beside you again, resume walking at normal pace.
- Remember to praise and reward your dog when it is doing the right thing.
- Your dog will learn quickly that when it pulls in front of you, or lags behind you, its walk slows down or stops, but when it is in the correct position the walk continues and it receives praise and treats.
- Be prepared for slow walks the first few times that you take your dog for loose lead training. It may take an hour to go on a ten-minute route, but the dog will learn quickly that the more it pulls in front or behind, the less quickly the walk progresses.

## Reprimanding your dog

If your dog does something inappropriate, or that you do not like, reprimanding will only work if it is done immediately. A dog will not understand why it is in trouble if it is disciplined hours, or even just minutes, after an incident and will become confused. This can lead to your dog becoming cautious around you until trust is rebuilt.

## House manners

It is a good idea to set boundaries for your dog when it first comes to your home. It is important for your dog to have its own area within your home. This should be away from the busiest parts of the home so that it can provide a retreat for your dog when it needs some quiet time. The area should have a food bowl, a water bowl and comfortable bedding. If it is outside, it should be well shaded and sheltered from sun, wind and rain.



# Dog training

## Sleeping

Dogs enjoy having their own bed and will retreat to this when in need of a space of their own. Many owners establish their dog's bed in the laundry or family room in a quiet corner, away from the hustle and bustle and direct access by unsupervised children.

## Kitchen and eating areas

It is advisable to train your dog to be on its bed while meals are being prepared, or the family is eating. It is unwise to feed your dog from the table as dogs can quickly learn to become scavengers. All treats should be given on your terms, not on the dog's demand.

## Visitors

You want guests to feel comfortable when visiting your home, so it is important to teach your dog good manners.

Jumping up on people is a very common problem which can be discouraged with practice and training with family members at home. Quietly turn your body away from the dog, do not make eye contact and keep your arms still at your side. As soon as your dog has four paws on the ground, reward it. With consistency from everyone who comes into contact with your dog, the problem of jumping up should quickly be resolved.

## Gardening

Some dogs are enthusiastic gardeners, creating large holes in your garden beds, lawns or even hoses. Dogs dig for a variety of reasons, including boredom and lack of exercise, and some breeds have more of a tendency towards this behaviour than others.

Digging incidents can be decreased, or even eliminated, by ensuring that your dog has a variety of toys to keep it occupied. Rubber toys stuffed with treats will provide entertainment for a time, as can balls, plastic bottles, chew toys, squeaky toys and rawhides.

If your dog continues to dig in your garden, one possible solution is to set up its own area for digging. Provide your dog with its own patch of garden, or even a sandpit, and encourage it to dig there by burying bones or toys in that location.

## Behavioural issues

Dogs can easily develop undesirable behavioural issues. Owners often unknowingly reward negative behaviour such as jumping up. If your dog develops a habit or behaviour which is affecting your lifestyle and you are unable to find a solution, you should seek professional help from your vet or a qualified dog behaviourist or trainer.



# Dog training

## Chewing

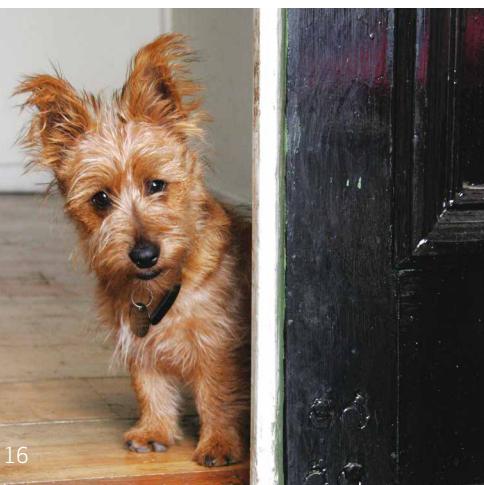
Some dogs, particularly puppies who may be teething, can be quite destructive with their chewing. It is important that the puppy learns what is acceptable to chew, and what is not. There are many toys available, such as hard rubber balls, rawhide chews and squeaky toys, on which your puppy can chew. They are designed to be hardy and to facilitate the transition from baby to adult teeth.

It is not advisable to give your dog old shoes to chew, as it will not understand the difference between old shoes and a brand-new pair.

If you find your puppy (or dog) chewing on something undesirable, take the item away and replace it immediately with an 'approved' toy.

## Toilet training

Whether you have acquired a puppy or an older dog, some form of toilet training will be required.



Puppies need intensive toilet training to condition them to communicate to you when they need to go. They must also learn which areas of the garden are acceptable places to go to the toilet.

An older dog, who may already be toilet trained, will still need to be taught where the acceptable toileting areas of its new home are located.

It is important that you, as the owner of the dog, set the boundaries about which areas of your garden your dog can use as a toilet.

There are times when a puppy is most likely to need to go to the toilet and your initial training should be based around an awareness of these times. They include:

- when your puppy has just woken up
- when your puppy has had a drink
- when your puppy has eaten
- after an extended period of play.

Another sign that your dog or puppy might need to go to the toilet is if it starts circling and sniffing the ground.

You should be watching and waiting in order to take advantage of your dog's natural desire to go to the toilet at these times. Make sure that you reward your dog for a successful toilet trip.

If your dog is taken outside every time it needs to go to the toilet, it will begin to make the association that it must go outside to go to the toilet. Eventually, your dog will go to the door when it needs to go to the toilet. When your dog is toileting you can give a command such as "go toilet, good dog" and reward it with a treat or pat.

# Safety

As a dog owner, it is your responsibility to ensure that your dog is safely contained on your property. Your fencing or other containment measures must be secure enough to keep your dog in and other animals out.

If your dog is in a public or private place without the consent of the owner and is not under the effective control of someone, it is considered to be 'wandering at large'. This is an offence under the *Dog and Cat Management Act 1995* and, as such, the registered owner is liable for expiation fees or a fine.

## Lost dog?

- Log in to DACO and check your contact details are up to date. Update your dog's status to 'lost' and set a public message.
- Contact your council, the RSPCA and Animal Welfare League and local vets as soon as possible – your dog may have been collected and taken to a shelter.
- Post current pictures and descriptions including the time/place last seen to social media or community notice boards.

If you find a wandering dog, contact your council. They have trained staff on hand to collect lost dogs and keep them safe until the dog can be returned to the registered owner.

Members of the public can look up the dog's registration number on DACO to contact the council the dog is registered with or the owner if a 'lost' message has been set.

**Please note:** An impounded dog is only required to be held by councils for a period of 72 hours, after which time, if the dog remains unclaimed, the council can dispose of the dog or transfer ownership to a third party (*Dog and Cat Management Act 1995*).



# Caring for your dog

## Veterinary care

A relationship with a local vet is important to the care of your dog. As soon as you get your dog, you should book them in for their first vet check up, just to be sure they're healthy and happy. Your vet can provide advice on both health and behaviour-related issues, and is there to help you look after your dog, so do not be afraid to ask questions.

## Diet

Protein, calcium, minerals, vitamins and carbohydrates all play an important part in maintaining the health of your dog. Whether you choose to buy commercial food, or make your own, it must contain a balance of all these nutrients.

At each stage of life your dog will have different dietary requirements. An active puppy will have greater calorific needs than an older dog and will require more frequent meals.

It can be difficult to decide the type and amount of food to feed your dog. Consulting your vet, other dog owners, breeders or DogsSA will provide more information. If you purchased your dog from a breeder, they will certainly be able to give you advice on feeding. Remember that the cheapest diet options may not be the most suitable for your dog and could lead to health problems resulting from inadequate nutrition.

**Please note:** Dogs should never be fed cooked bones as they splinter easily and can cause life-threatening constipation or intestinal damage. Raw meaty bones are suitable for most dogs and have the added benefit of helping to keep your dog's teeth clean. There are also dry foods and chew treats made specifically for the purpose of improving your dog's dental health. Your vet or breeder will be able to advise on which might be suitable for your dog.

## Weight Control

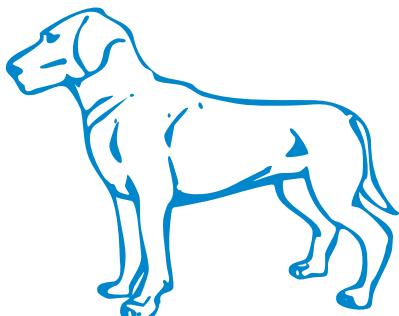
Weight control is not just a human problem; dogs can also become overweight. Excess weight places a strain on your dog's joints and organs, affects its general wellbeing and can lead to life-shortening conditions, such as diabetes.

A healthy dog will have a light covering of flesh over its ribs and torso and when viewed from above, will have a defined waist. If your dog is at its correct weight, you should be able to feel its ribs and backbone with a small amount of pressure.

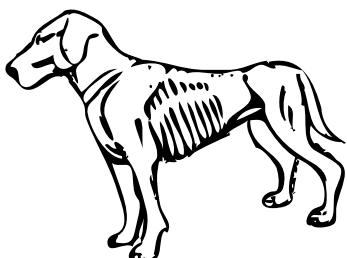
**The diagrams and explanations to the left will assist you in managing your dog's weight and keeping it in optimal condition.**

You can monitor your dog's weight with regular weighing. For small dogs you can use your household scales, but for a larger dog you will need to use the scales available at vet clinics. Remember that keeping your dog's weight within a healthy range will not only be good for your dog, but will also avoid unnecessary visits to the vet for treatment of preventable, weight-related conditions.

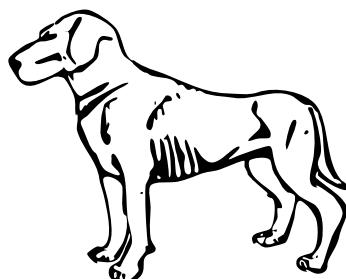
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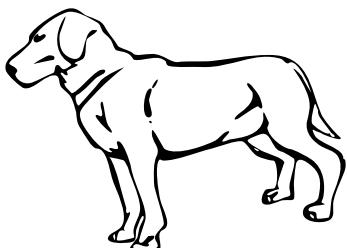
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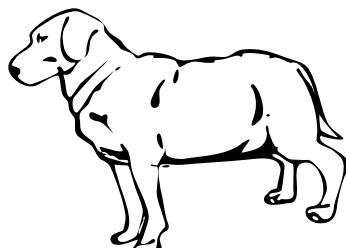
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OVERWEIGHT



OBESE



# Caring for your dog

## Poisons

There are a number of foods, plants and chemicals that are toxic to your dog. Some may only give them an upset stomach, but others can have far more serious consequences and could even cause death. If you have any concerns about something that your dog has eaten, you should immediately contact your vet for advice.

The list below provides the names of some common foods, plants and other substances that should be avoided. There are many more, so your own research should supplement this list.

Toxic foods and substances that should be avoided:

- alcoholic drinks
- chocolate
- garlic
- grapes and raisins
- products containing caffeine
- mushrooms
- hops
- onions
- tobacco
- potato.

Toxic plants that should be avoided:

- Lily of the Valley
- Tulips
- Chrysanthemum
- Rhubarb (leaves)
- Bulbs of hyacinth or daffodil
- Azalea
- English Ivy

- Wisteria
- Narcissus
- Cyclamen
- Lantana.

Household chemicals can also be harmful to your dog. Insecticides, household cleaners, snail/slugs baits, rodent baits, fertilisers, and even human medications, can all have serious effects on your dog if ingested, inhaled or absorbed. These items must be stored in an area which cannot be accessed by your dog. If you need to use chemicals in an area that your dog frequents, such as the garden, research carefully beforehand to ensure that you do not accidentally harm your dog.

The internet is a useful resource for researching toxic plants, foods and substances, but if you require further information contact your vet.

## Vaccination and worming

### Vaccination

There are three canine vaccines that are considered 'core' vaccines and all dogs should have these administered. They are:

- Canine Distemper Virus
- Canine Adenovirus
- Canine Parvovirus.

Other non-core vaccines may be considered appropriate for your dog. A kennel cough vaccine might be required if your dog is going to be in close proximity to large numbers of other dogs, such as at dog training classes, boarding facilities, or dog parks. Many non-core vaccines require annual administration.

Puppies have a specific vaccination schedule that is designed to give them maximum protection against disease. This schedule means they will receive two or three vaccinations, with the last one being at approximately 16 weeks of age. When purchasing a puppy, ensure that you are given an up-to-date vaccination certificate. A breeder must provide you with this and if you are purchasing a puppy, it must also be accompanied by a current vaccination certificate (South Australian Standards and Guidelines for Breeding and Trading Companion Animals).

If you have any questions or wish to discuss your dog's vaccination requirements, speak to your vet.

## **Worming**

There are five main types of worm that can affect your dog: roundworm, hookworm, tapeworm, whipworm and heartworm. These cause varying degrees of complications, with heartworm being the most serious. Heartworm is spread by mosquitoes and if left untreated, can be fatal for your dog. It is easy to avoid worm infestations by regularly using preventative medications.

Speak to your vet about the best worming regime for your dog. Your vet can advise you on which worms are most prevalent in your area, which medication you should use and how often it should be administered. Regular worming also minimises the chance of parasite transmission to humans. To further reduce this risk, always wash your hands after handling animals.

## **Flea control**

Fleas are tiny, black, blood-sucking parasites that can make your dog extremely uncomfortable and ill. They are commonly found in all areas of South Australia.

If your dog has fleas, it may exhibit the following symptoms:

- frequent scratching
- small red marks (bites) on the skin
- black gritty material in the coat.

Close inspection of your dog's skin can reveal the fleas themselves, which are usually concentrated around the lower back or base of the tail.

Some dogs are allergic to fleas and, once bitten, can develop flea allergy dermatitis which can have serious consequences, such as severe itching or self harm due to intense irritation.

Flea treatment and prevention can take the form of topical applications, sprays, shampoos or collars. When treating your dog for fleas, you must also consider other items or areas that your dog uses. This includes its bed and bedding, as well as soft furnishings, carpets and rugs. Vacuuming, washing, mopping, spraying and the use of flea bombs may be required. If using chemicals, you will need to consider their suitability for animals and any family members with allergies.

Further advice regarding the control of fleas can be obtained from your vet.

# Caring for your dog

## Bathing

All dogs need to be bathed regularly, regardless of the length of their coat. Bathing encourages the shedding of hair, allowing for new growth and will keep your dog's coat and skin clean and prevent it from becoming smelly. You can bathe your dog yourself, take it to a grooming salon, or use a mobile dog groomer who will come to your home.

When bathing your dog, it is important to use a shampoo that is specifically designed for dogs. Human shampoo is not suitable for dogs as they have a different skin pH level from us. Using an inappropriate shampoo can result in major skin irritation and discomfort for your dog.

If possible, your dog should be bathed on a warm day. If you are washing your dog on a cooler day, you should towel dry the dog thoroughly and allow it to dry completely before going outside. A professional groomer will use a dryer to ensure that your dog is completely dry before it leaves their salon, or the groomer departs from your house.

As your dog is drying, gently brush its coat to remove loose hair and move excess water to the end of the hair, making the drying process easier.

## Grooming

Grooming covers many aspects of caring for your dog, including brushing, coat clipping, ear cleaning, teeth cleaning and nail clipping.

How often you brush your dog's coat will be determined by the type of coat it has. Short, harsh-textured coats generally need less brushing than long, silky or curly ones. However, all dogs need to be brushed as it helps to remove loose hair and dirt.

For a dog with a higher-maintenance coat, brushing prevents tangles and mats, making your dog more comfortable and reducing the need for frequent clipping or trimming.

Basic clipping and trimming can be done at home, while more complex grooming should be left to a professional. Again, it depends on your dog's coat type and the amount of time you can dedicate to grooming your dog.

Nails can also be cleaned or trimmed, or teeth and ears cleaned, by a groomer, or at home. If you wish to learn how to do this, ask your vet for more information.





# Caring for your dog

## Travelling

If you are planning to take your dog in the car, whether for a short trip to a friend's house or on a road trip around Australia, you need to consider the following:

- Dogs should never be left unattended in a car. Even on a cool overcast day, the temperature inside a locked car can increase very quickly. Dogs can begin to suffer the effects of heat stress within a few minutes and death can follow shortly thereafter. The owner or person in charge of a dog who suffers ill effects after being left in a car can be fined under the *Animal Welfare Act 1985*.
- When in a car, your dog should be secured behind a cargo barrier, in a travel crate, or harnessed to a seat belt. This is important for the dog's safety as well as that of others. In the event of an accident an unsecured dog can become a projectile inside the car, causing injury to the dog or other occupants in the vehicle.
- By law, dogs traveling on the back of a utility or truck need to be physically restrained (exemptions apply to working livestock dogs being transported around a property as part of their work). The dog can be transported in an enclosure or crate attached to the vehicle, or be securely tethered to the vehicle so that it cannot fall or escape. Please note: If your dog is traveling on the back of a utility or truck, you should provide sufficient protection from the weather.
- Dogs can become car sick. It is important to gradually introduce them to travelling in the car. Lifting them in and out of the car while it is parked at your home is a simple, first training step. Young puppies should not be allowed to jump into, or out of, the car for welfare and safety reasons. Begin with short car trips with your dog and work your way up to longer ones as your dog becomes used to car travel.
- You should not feed your dog for two to three hours before travelling in the car.
- Dogs should not be allowed to travel with their head protruding out of an open car window. The dog may fall out of the car if you come to a sudden stop, or are involved in an accident. Your dog is also at risk of being injured by dirt or other airborne articles coming into contact with its eyes or extremities.
- Make sure your contact details are up to date by logging into DACO.



# Your dog and the public

## Barking dogs

Barking is perfectly natural behaviour for a dog. Barking can be an alert to a disturbance or a person entering your property, a demand for attention or contact, communication with other dogs, or just a response to being left alone. Even more seriously, your dog may be barking to let you know that it is in pain or discomfort.

Whilst barking is a natural behaviour, it may need to be controlled if:

- it continues for extended periods of time
- it occurs too frequently
- it occurs at inappropriate times of the day or night.

You may not be aware that your dog is causing a disturbance until your neighbours speak to you or you are notified that there has been a report lodged with your local council.

It is an offence under the *Dog and Cat Management Act 1995* for an owner or person responsible to allow their dog to create a noise, barking or otherwise, that interferes with the peace, comfort or convenience of another person.

The table below lists some common causes of excessive barking and offers possible solutions.

Possible Solutions to Barking Problem						
	Exercise	Training	Play toys/ other dogs	Hunting for hidden food	Change of Routine	Veterinary attention
Cause of Barking						
Boredom	X	X	X	X	X	
Separation anxiety	X		X	X	X	X
Disturbances	X	X	X	X	X	
Discomfort/ pain					X	X
Excitement	X			X		

## Exercise

Exercise is an essential component of a dog's life. If your dog is a highly energetic breed, it might not be getting enough exercise to keep it happy. You can increase your dog's physical activity by:

- taking it for longer walks
- taking it to an off-lead dog park for a run and to socialise with other dogs
- throwing a ball to your dog.

## Training

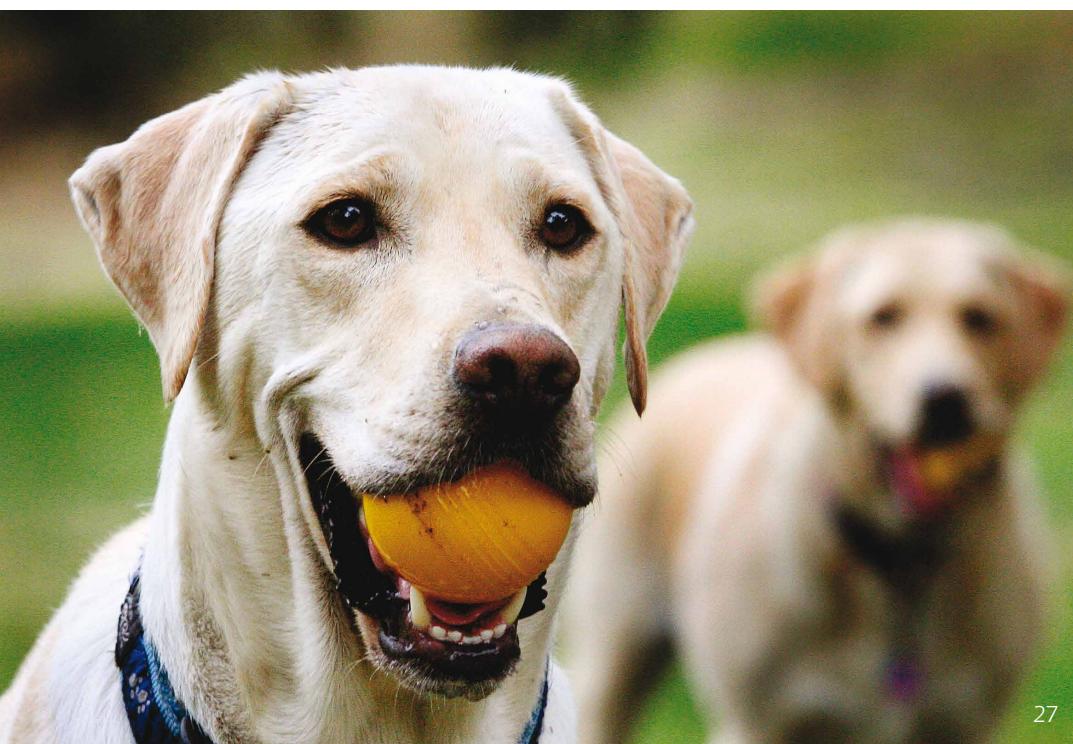
Dog training classes can boost your dog's confidence and satisfy its need for mental stimulation.

### Play with toys or other dogs

Dogs love toys and games! Ensuring that your dog has toys to play with and opportunities to play games can relieve stress related to being on its own and release some physical energy.

### Hunting for hidden food

Most dogs love food. You can purchase toys that release small amounts of food as your dog plays with them, or you could set up a game of food hide and seek. This involves hiding food before you leave home so that your dog is kept occupied while you are away. Dogs that suffer from separation anxiety particularly benefit from this game as it provides them with a distraction until you return.



# Your dog and the public

## Effective control

It is your responsibility to ensure that your dog is kept under "effective control" when in public.

This means you must keep your dog on a lead of no more than two metres when walking in public, unless in a designated off-lead area like a dog park or beach.

Even when in an appropriate off-lead area, your dog must still be under effective control. That means it will respond to voice commands and come when called.

Do not allow your dog to chase, harass or attack a person or an animal. This constitutes an offence under the *Dog and Cat Management Act 1995* and expiations and fines apply or could result in control orders or even a destruction order placed on your dog.

## Veterinary attention

Behavioural issues can have underlying physical causes. If your dog demonstrates a sudden or major behavioural change, you should consult your vet for advice. Sometimes excessive barking can be attributed to the advancing age of a dog,

or even to an injury that is affecting a regular activity. It is also possible for your vet to prescribe medication that will assist in modifying your dog's behaviour.

## Picking up after your dog

Dog faeces can be a major health issue, both in your own garden and in public places. It can spread disease and infection to other dogs and humans and pollute waterways. Leaving dog faeces in public areas such as footpaths or parks is unhygienic and disrespectful to others who use these areas.

Under the *Dog and Cat Management Act 1995* a dog's owner, or the person responsible for the dog, must immediately pick up and dispose of (in a lawful manner) that dog's faeces from a public place. Failure to do this constitutes an offence under the Act and expiations and fines apply. The issue is easy to manage by taking 'dog poop' bags with you when you are out with your dog. These bags are often available from dispensers in council-managed public areas, but you should always carry your own. Please note that dog faeces cannot be placed in public bins unless securely wrapped.



# Dogs and children

Pets and children can form a wonderful bond. Apart from the obvious companionship and affection, pets also teach children responsibility and how to care for another living being.

Unfortunately, not all childhood experiences with pets are positive and research clearly shows that children aged between birth and four years are at the greatest risk of hospitalisation from dog attack injuries. These injuries often occur because children do not know how to behave around dogs and dogs do not know how to behave around children.

Dogs often misinterpret human behaviour and this can lead to excitement, confusion, or even aggression. It is important that, from a very young age, children learn to be calm and not to make loud noises when they are around dogs.

It is essential that children under seven years of age are always supervised closely when around dogs. They should never be left alone with a dog, even if it is their own dog, or a dog with which they are familiar. Active supervision is essential to minimise the risk of an incident occurring, even if the dog has never shown signs of aggression.

If you cannot actively supervise, you must securely separate the dog from the children.



# Dogs and children

## Children should be taught a number of things about interacting with dogs.

Never approach a dog that is:

- sleeping
- eating
- injured or sick
- in its kennel, on its bed or in a car
- tied up.

Leave a dog alone if:

- it lifts its lips and shows its teeth
- the hair on its back or neck is standing up
- it is growling, snarling or barking
- it is crouching down low, has its ears flat against its head, or its tail tucked between its legs. This could mean that the dog is frightened and could be just as dangerous as an angry dog
- it is in the street or a park without its owner.

If approached by a dog a child should:

- stand very still and do not run, as the dog may chase the child
- be very quiet
- curl fingers and keep arms down by sides
- look away from the dog, not into its eyes
- wait for the dog to go away
- tell an adult about what happened
- if a child is knocked over by a dog, he or she should curl up into a ball and stay still and quiet. Once the dog has gone away the child can get up and walk slowly to find a responsible adult.  
Do not run. If the dog is still nearby, it may chase the child.

Children often want to say hello to dogs they see walking with their owners.

This is OK, but your child should follow the routine outlined below:

- 1 Ask his/her parent/caregiver if they can pat the dog.
- 2 Ask the owner if it is OK to pat the dog.
- 3 If the owner says yes, hold the back of your hand out with your fingers curled under.
- 4 Allow the dog to sniff your hand. If the dog backs away or is not interested in sniffing your hand, do not say hello.
- 5 If the dog sniffs your hand and does not back away or change its behaviour, pat it gently under the chin or on the chest. Do not pat the dog on the head.



# Dog park etiquette

Council-designated 'off-lead' dog parks are a great way for your dog to burn off some excess energy and socialise with other dogs. A visit can be a social outing for owners too, providing opportunity to meet other people with the same interest in dogs.

The dog park experience can be fun for everyone if a few simple recommendations regarding the appropriate etiquette are followed.

## Follow the rules posted at the dog park

Obeying the rules is a condition of using a dog park. The rules might relate to safety, legal responsibilities, or respect for people living adjacent to the park. Regardless of your personal opinions of the rules, as a responsible dog owner you should adhere to them.

## Puppies under six months of age do not belong in dog parks

There are a number of reasons why puppies should not be taken to dog parks:

- Young puppies do not have fully-developed immune systems and this can leave them at risk of infection or disease.
- Puppies can be fragile. They may be physically unable to cope with the rough and tumble activity that can occur in dog parks, leaving them vulnerable to injury and even bullying by older dogs.
- Puppies should be socialised through structured puppy socialisation classes before being taken to dog parks.

## Adult supervision of children in dog parks

Children are the most vulnerable members of society when it comes to dog bite injuries. Even if your dog is familiar with children, you cannot be sure that the other



dogs in the park will be. With all the activity often happening in the park, children must remain under careful adult supervision.

### **Only healthy dogs should attend**

If you think your dog is sick or it has been diagnosed with an illness by your vet, leave it at home until it has recovered. Taking your sick dog to the park not only puts other dogs at risk, but your own dog is more susceptible to infections and bullying by other dogs while it is unwell.

### **Always clean up after your dog**

It is your responsibility to clean up after your dog. Many dog parks have 'poop bag' dispensers, but you should always take your own bags in case there is no dispenser or it is empty. If you notice someone not picking up their dog's waste, offer them a spare bag from your own supply as a gentle reminder. If you notice waste from

another dog that has been left at the park, be prepared to clean it up so the park is a more pleasant experience for everyone.

### **Only confident, social dogs should attend**

If your dog is fearful around other dogs, a trip to a dog park can be distressing. It could also lead to your dog reacting badly if approached or harassed by another dog. Similarly, a dog with aggressive tendencies can cause chaos and start fights when around other dogs. This is not a good situation for any of the owners or dogs involved. If your dog has behavioural issues around humans or other dogs, these should be addressed before taking a trip to the dog park. Remember that not all dogs are suited to playing in dog parks.



# Dog park etiquette

## It's OK not to go

If you don't like dog parks or your dog is not suited to this kind of off-leash play find other options such as:

- Organising doggie play dates or puppy classes
- Visiting the dog park when there are less dogs (off-peak times)
- Visiting other off-leash areas.

## You are responsible for your dog's behaviour

Off-lead dog parks are not an excuse to let your dog play unhindered! As the owner, you are responsible for closely supervising your dog's behaviour at all times. Your dog must not be allowed to harass, intimidate, attack, stalk, mount or body-slam any other dogs. If your dog is not acting in a sociable manner, remove it from the dog park. It only takes one dog to upset the balance at a dog park – do not let that dog be yours.

## Desexed dogs are more suited to a dog park environment

Disputes between dogs are often based on territorial and dominance issues. If your dog is desexed, these situations are less likely to occur. Some dog parks deny access to dogs that are not desexed.



# Where can I get advice?

## Local council

Visit [www.lga.sa.gov.au](http://www.lga.sa.gov.au) for contact information for all local councils.

## Your vet

Check online for vets in your area, or visit [www.ava.com.au/findavet](http://www.ava.com.au/findavet) to search by suburb.

## RSPCA

### Head Office

16 Nelson Street  
Stepney SA 5069  
Telephone: 1300 4 777 22  
Email: [info@rspcasa.org.au](mailto:info@rspcasa.org.au)  
[www.rspcasa.org.au](http://www.rspcasa.org.au)

## Animal Welfare League

1-19 Cormack Road  
Wingfield SA 5013  
Telephone: (08) 8348 1300  
[www.awl.org.au](http://www.awl.org.au)

## DogsSA

SACA Park  
Cromwell Road  
Kilburn SA 5084  
Telephone: (08) 8349 4797  
Fax (08) 8262 5751  
Email: [info@dogssa.com.au](mailto:info@dogssa.com.au)  
[www.dogssa.com.au](http://www.dogssa.com.au)

## Australian Veterinary Association

### (South Australian Division)

13/70 Walkerville Terrace  
Walkerville SA 5081  
Telephone: (08) 8344 6337  
Email [avasa@ava.com.au](mailto:avasa@ava.com.au)  
[www.ava.com.au/sadivision](http://www.ava.com.au/sadivision)

## Uniting Communities Law Centre

(Legal advice formerly provided by statewide neighbourhood dispute services)

10 Pitt St  
Adelaide SA 5000  
Telephone: (08) 8342 1800  
Country callers: 1300 886 220  
[www.unitingcommunities.org](http://www.unitingcommunities.org)

## Legal Services Commission

159 Gawler Place  
Adelaide SA 5000  
or  
Suite 2 Windsor Building  
1 Windsor Square  
Elizabeth Shopping Centre  
Telephone: 1300 3660 424  
[www.lsc.sa.gov.au](http://www.lsc.sa.gov.au)

## Dog and Cat Management Board

GPO Box 1047  
Adelaide SA 5001  
Telephone: (08) 8124 4962  
Email: [dcmb@sa.gov.au](mailto:dcmb@sa.gov.au)  
[www.gooddogsса.com.au](http://www.gooddogsса.com.au)

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