

# Dog Owners Handbook



Government  
of South Australia

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The Dog and Cat  
Management Board

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# If you are already a dog owner, or are thinking about getting a dog, 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.



*An initiative of the Dog and Cat Management Board and your local council.*

**Good dogs have  
great owners.**

# The benefits of owning a dog

There are many reasons why people choose to own a dog. Not only do they make a great family pet, but they can guard homes, control vermin, help with farming duties and assist people with hearing, sight or mobility impairments. Dogs also play vital detection and rescue roles in the community by assisting the Police, Customs and Defence, using their extraordinarily acute sense of smell.

The health benefits of pet ownership are well documented. 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 your dog

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?

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

A good way to start the process of selecting the right dog for you is to use an interactive program such as **Select-An-Owner** (available at [www.goodownersa.com](http://www.goodownersa.com)). 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 obedience 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

There are many aspects of socially-responsible dog ownership. The basic welfare requirements for owning a dog (as stated by the Animal Welfare Act 1985), are the provision of appropriate and adequate food, water, living conditions and exercise.

## Registration

The Dog and Cat Management Act 1995 requires that all dogs over three months of age be registered with their local council. The local council will provide a registration disc to be attached to the dog's collar. The unique number on the disc is linked to a registry database containing the address and ownership details of the dog. This allows for quick and easy identification of your dog should it escape and become lost or injured.

The person registering the dog must be over 16 years of age and the local council must be notified within 14 days if:

- the dog has just been acquired
- the dog is moved to different premises (registration can be transferred between local councils)
- the dog is missing
- ownership of the dog is transferred to another person
- the dog dies.

## 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 details are recorded against this number on a central registry database which can be accessed by councils, vets, animal welfare groups and dog shelters.

Please note: Microchipping is NOT a substitute for council registration, but does provide a rebate against the full registration cost.

## Veterinary care

A relationship with a local vet is essential to the health of your dog. To initiate this relationship book your dog into the clinic for an overall health check when you first bring it home. 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.



# Owning a dog

## Desexing

There are many advantages of desexing your dog. For both males and females it can reduce the risk of a range of health and safety issues such as cancer, urinary and reproductive tract infections and territoriality. Desexing usually reduces aggression in dogs, promoting better social interactions.

The desexing operation, also called spaying, neutering or castrating, can be performed from a fairly young age and should be undertaken before the dog reaches puberty (6-8 months of age) and can breed. Your vet can advise you what age would be best for desexing your dog.

A discount on your council registration fees is available upon presentation of an official desexing certificate or voucher issued by your vet.

## Socialisation

If your new dog is less than six months old, it is critical that you consider the social training you will provide for your new family member. Socialisation is the process during which your puppy is exposed to a wide variety of environments, situations, animals and people, with you guiding and supporting it through each new experience.

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 experiences.

These experiences may include exposing your puppy to:

- men and women
- children of different ages
- people with loud voices
- places which are quiet and busy
- 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.



# Obedience training

Obedience training is an essential 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. You need to set boundaries for your dog because otherwise it may think that it can make its own rules. As you train your dog it will learn to respect you as the 'pack leader' and become a more acceptable member of canine (and human) society.

Obedience 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 obedience club
- engage the services of a private dog trainer.

If you choose to use an obedience club, your local council, DogsSA (see details at the end of this book), or the locality guide at [www.gooddogsa.com](http://www.gooddogsa.com) can provide details of a club in your area.

Your dog should learn 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.

Below are some general training tips:

- Training should be 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.

Listed below are tips on how to train your dog in the basic commands of 'sit', 'stay' and 'come', and how to walk on a loose lead.

## Sit

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

### 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.



# Obedience training

## Stay

'Stay' is the next command your dog should learn. This command is very important for your dog's safety.

### 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 essential 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

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 wind and rain.



# Obedience 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. If you choose to allow your dog to sleep on your bed, it should be at your invitation only, as it can lead to discipline issues.

## 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.



# Obedience 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.

If your dog does go missing, it is important that you act quickly. Steps to take include:

- contacting your local council as soon as possible, as they may have impounded your dog, especially if it is identified with a collar, ID tag, council disc or is microchipped
- contacting local vets in case your dog has been injured and a member of the public has taken it to the closest vet

- contacting the RSPCA and the Animal Welfare League
- contacting neighbours in your immediate area
- organising a letter box drop, preferably with a picture of your dog and your contact details
- putting a 'lost dog' sign up in schools, community and shopping centres, post offices or similar facilities.

If you find a dog 'wandering at large', only try to secure it if you are sure that your safety is not compromised. Ensure the dog is friendly and comes willingly to you. Remember, a scared dog can be as dangerous as an angry dog. If the dog is unidentified, call your local council to arrange for its collection. If you are unable to secure it, you should still notify the local council so an Animal Management Officer can investigate. If you take the dog home for its own safety, ensure you report the details of the dog and the exact location where you picked it up to the council responsible for the area in which the dog was found. It is an offence to keep any dog you find 'wandering at large'.

Please note: An impounded dog is only required to be held by councils for a period of 72 hours, after which time it can be destroyed if unclaimed (Dog and Cat Management Act 1995).



# Caring for your dog

## 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. For example, an active puppy will have greater calorific needs than an older dog and will require more frequent meals.

Commercial foods take the form of dry, semi-dry and wet foods. Dry foods are generally 'kibble' or 'biscuits', semi-dry are generally chewy 'biscuits' or 'kibble' and wet foods may be canned, or vacuum packed (such as a meatloaf from the supermarket).

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

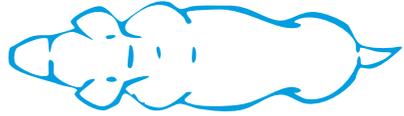
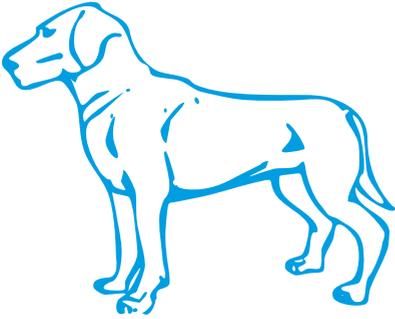
Weight control is not just a human problem; dogs can also become overweight. Excess weight places a strain on your dog's joints and organs, affects its general wellbeing and can lead to life-shortening conditions, such as diabetes.

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.

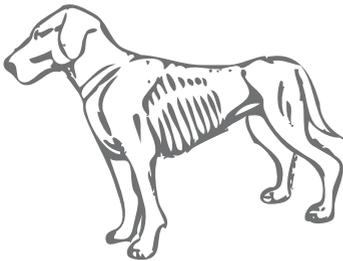
**The diagrams and explanations to the left will assist you in managing your dog's weight and keeping it in optimal condition.**

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.

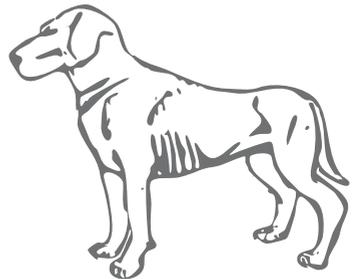
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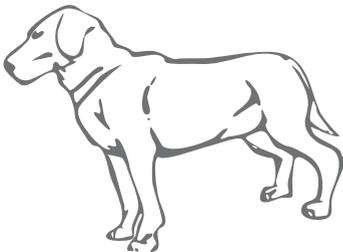
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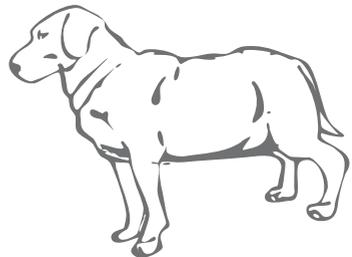
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OVERWEIGHT



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# 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/slug 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 an obedience school, boarding facility, or dog park. 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 shelter or reputable breeder will provide you with this and if you are purchasing a puppy through a retail outlet, it must also be accompanied by a current vaccination certificate (South Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Management of Animals in the Pet Trade).

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 bath 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. You can purchase a high-powered dog hairdryer which will assist in the drying process. 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:

- 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.
- Dogs travelling on the back of a utility or truck need to be physically restrained (Dog and Cat Management Act 1995). 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, risking injury, or even death. Please note: If your dog is travelling 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. If it does suffer from travel sickness, you will be glad that it does not have a full stomach!
- 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.
- 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.



# Your dog and the public

## Barking dogs\*

Barking is perfectly natural behaviour for a dog. Dogs bark to communicate, using different pitches to convey different emotions. 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.

There are many behavioural and environmental modifications that can be undertaken to address nuisance barking. The table below lists some common causes of excessive barking and offers possible solutions.

As indicated in the table, the following remedial measures should be undertaken to address nuisance barking.

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

\* Contact the Dog and Cat Management Board for more information on barking dogs or to order a copy of the Barking Book.

## 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 obedience 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

## Change of routine

Some dogs love and thrive on routine, but some find it boring, or even stressful. Changing your dog's routine could involve:

- varying the times at which you take your dog for a walk
- varying the route of your walks so your dog can explore new areas
- varying your dog's feeding times
- varying your dog's toys or the games you play together.

For dogs with separation anxiety, varying your departure routine can be beneficial, as can making as little fuss as possible while you leave.

## 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.

If you require more information on, or help in, addressing nuisance barking, the Dog and Cat Management Board has assisted with the production of a booklet entitled 'barking! problems solved' which contains further practical solutions. For a copy of this booklet, contact your local council.

## 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. 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. A 'Pooch Pouch'™ can be attached to your dog's lead so you have a ready supply of bags. 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 and it is heart-warming to watch them interact. 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 child/ren.



# Dogs and children

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

They should never approach a dog that is:

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

Children should 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.

The Dog and Cat Management Board website at [www.gooddogsga.com](http://www.gooddogsga.com) has a section specifically for children. There are games and puzzles that will help teach children how to interact with dogs and become responsible pet owners. There is also a link to the 'We Are Family' program, which provides parents and carers of young children with great information on how to manage the child-pet relationship.



# 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**

Obedying 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.

## **Children do not belong 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 it is difficult to closely supervise both your dog and any children in your care. This can make your trip to the park a stressful one.

### **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

## **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.

## **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.

## **Behavioural issues**

Dogs can easily develop undesirable behavioural issues. Owners often unknowingly reward negative behaviour such as jumping up. Many healthy dogs are destroyed each year because their owners have not taken the time to understand their behaviour. In this case problems can escalate to a point where the owner can no longer deal with the dog. If your dog develops a habit or behaviour which is affecting your lifestyle and you are unable to find a solution, it is essential that you immediately seek professional help from your vet or a qualified dog behaviourist or trainer.



# Your dog and the law

## **The Dog and Cat Management Act 1995**

The Dog and Cat Management Act 1995 has three primary objectives:

- to encourage responsible dog and cat ownership
- to reduce public and environmental nuisance caused by dogs and cats
- to promote effective management of dogs and cats.

## **Wandering dogs**

A dog is considered to be 'wandering at large' if:

- it is in a public place, or a private place without the consent of the occupier and no person is exercising effective control of the dog by means of physical restraint, or
- it is in a park and no person is exercising effective control by means of a physical restraint or by command, with the dog in close proximity and visible at all times.

Exceptions to this are dogs tending stock, a dog in a vehicle, or a dog participating in certain activities such as racing, trialling or showing.

When you are taking your dog for a walk, it is a legal requirement that it be on a lead (of no more than two metres in length) at all times, unless in a lead-free park or beach, where it must be under effective verbal control.

Dogs wandering at large are usually reported to council by a concerned resident and can be seized by an animal management officer. The owner or person responsible for a dog found wandering at large can be liable for expiation fees or fines.

## **Restricted areas for dogs**

Under the Dog and Cat Management Act 1995 there are restrictions as to what are appropriate and acceptable areas for your dog. Guide dogs, hearing dogs and accredited disability dogs are exempt from these restrictions.

Without the permission of the person in charge, a dog must not be allowed to enter a shop, or the grounds of a school, kindergarten, pre-school or child care centre. Exceptions to this are pet shops, grooming parlours or veterinary clinics.

Expiation fees or fines may be applied where this offence has occurred.

Many restaurants and cafés across South Australia will allow your dog to sit with you in outdoor areas, but it is advisable to check with the establishment before arriving with your dog.

In addition to the Dog and Cat Management Act 1995, your local council may have by-laws regarding areas into which you cannot take your dog. It is your responsibility to verify these if you wish to take your dog to a specific place.

Holidaying in a National Park also has restrictions and these should be ascertained and understood before leaving home.



# Your dog and the law

## Barking

Barking dogs can create significant irritation and nuisance for neighbours if the issue is not addressed promptly. Barking dog issues which are not adequately addressed are considered an offence under the Dog and Cat Management Act 1995.

Expiation fees or fines may be applied where this has occurred.

## Removal of dog waste

There are health risks associated with dog faeces. If your dog defecates in public you, or the person responsible for your dog, must remove the faeces immediately and they must be disposed of in a lawful and suitable manner.

Expiation fees or fines may be applied where the owner or person responsible has failed to attend to the waste.

## Council destruction and control orders

Under the Dog and Cat Management Act 1995 a council, by its own initiative or by application, can make a control or destruction order on a dog.

The order may be:

- A Destruction Order - the dog must be destroyed within a specified time period. Until the dog is destroyed, it will be kept at a location named in the order.
- A Control Order (Dangerous Dog) - imposes strict requirements regarding desexing, confinement, muzzling, restraint, identification and signage. The dog and its owner, or the person responsible for the dog, must complete an approved training course specified by the order.
- A Control Order (Menacing Dog) - imposes strict requirements regarding

confinement, muzzling, restraint, identification and signage.

- A Control Order (Nuisance Dog) - imposes strict requirements regarding confinement and restraint.
- A Control Order (Barking Dog) - requires the owner of, or person responsible for, the dog to take all reasonable steps to prevent the circumstances that gave rise to the order being imposed.

Contravention of council-imposed destruction and control orders can incur penalties for the person who owns or is responsible for the dog concerned.

More information regarding destruction and control orders can be obtained from your local council.

## Dog attacks

Dog attacks, whether they are against humans, other dogs or animals owned by someone, are treated very seriously under the Dog and Cat Management Act 1995.

The owner or person responsible for a dog is guilty of an offence if:

- their dog is on premises and causes injury to a person, or to the property of a person, who is lawfully on those premises
- their dog attacks, harasses, chases or endangers the health of a person, animal or bird owned by another person. An actual injury does not need to have occurred for an offence to be committed
- their dog rushes at or chases a vehicle other than on premises of which the person is the owner/occupier.

Offences involving dog attacks can involve expiation fees, fines or even imprisonment.

# Your dog and the law

## Prescribed breeds of dog

There are no breeds of dog banned in South Australia, but there are five breeds of dog considered 'prescribed breeds'.

These are:

- American Pit Bull Terrier
- Fila Brasileiro
- Japanese Tosa
- Dogo Argentina
- Presa Canario.

The prescribed breeds are all Mastiff-type dogs that, at some stage in their history, were specifically bred for fighting. They are large, powerful dogs and usually have extraordinary courage. It is an offence under the Dog and Cat Management Act 1995 for any dogs of these breeds to be sold, given away or advertised for sale or giveaway.

All prescribed breed dogs must be:

- desexed
- effectively confined to the premises of the owner or person responsible for the dog
- muzzled and under the effective control of a person by means of physical restraint when not effectively confined to the premises of the owner or person responsible for the dog.

Failure to adhere to these requirements is considered an offence against the Dog and Cat Management Act 1995 and the

owner of, or person responsible for, the dog can be liable for expiation fees or fines.

Harsher penalties apply if a prescribed breed commits offences listed in the Dog and Cat Management Act 1995.

## Dogs on farmland

It is against the law to allow dogs to trespass onto farming lands. Whether the paddocks are empty, or occupied by livestock, you must not allow your dog onto the land unless you have the permission of the owner.

## Dogs in/on vehicles

The Dog and Cat Management Act 1995 provides a list of legal requirements that must be adhered to if your dog is travelling on the open tray of a utility, truck or similar vehicle.

The dog must be:

- physically restrained within a cage or similar enclosure, or
- securely tethered to the vehicle so that it cannot fall or escape from it.

Failure to ensure that your dog is securely restrained is an offence and the driver of the vehicle can be liable for expiation or a fine.

Other recommendations for travelling safely with your dog are listed in the 'Caring for your dog' section of this guide.



# 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 the White Pages for vets in your area or visit the locality guide at: [www.gooddogsa.com](http://www.gooddogsa.com)

## Dog and Cat Management Board

GPO Box 1047  
Adelaide SA 5001  
Telephone: (08) 8124 4962  
Fax: (08) 8124 4856  
[www.goodownersa.com](http://www.goodownersa.com)

## RSPCA

### Head Office

172 Morphett Street  
Adelaide SA 5000  
GPO Box 2122  
Adelaide SA 5001  
Telephone: (08) 8231 6931  
Fax (08) 8231 6201  
[www.rspcasa.asn.au](http://www.rspcasa.asn.au)

### Animal Shelter

25 Meyer Road  
Lonsdale SA 5160  
Telephone: (08) 8382 0888  
Fax: (08) 8326 2410

## Animal Welfare League

1-19 Cormack Road  
Wingfield SA 5013  
Telephone: (08) 8348 1300  
Fax: (08) 8268 9545  
[www.animalwelfare.com.au](http://www.animalwelfare.com.au)

## DogsSA

(formerly South Australian  
Canine Association)

Cromwell Road  
Kilburn SA 5084  
PO Box 844  
Prospect East SA 5082  
Telephone: (08) 8349 4797  
[www.dogsa.com.au](http://www.dogsa.com.au)

## Australian Veterinary Association

(South Australian Division)

PO Box 114  
Walkerville SA 5081  
Telephone: (08) 8344 6337  
Fax: (08) 8344 9227

## Statewide Neighbourhood Dispute Service

Community Mediation Services  
Telephone: 1300 850 650  
[www.scjc.com.au](http://www.scjc.com.au)

## Delta Dog Safe SA

[www.deltadogsafesa.org.au](http://www.deltadogsafesa.org.au)

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**Good dogs have  
great owners.**