



Dog Essentials

The things you need to consider



Shire of
Serpentine
Jarrahdale

Introduction

The Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale actively promotes responsible dog ownership practices and care. This document is provided to assist residents with sound and responsible dog ownership information.

For further advice, please contact Ranger Services on 9526 1136.

Is a dog for you?

The average lifespan of a dog is **10** years. This means dog owners need to be prepared to make a long-term commitment.

To be a responsible dog owner, you must first ask yourself whether a dog is suitable for you. Be honest about yourself and the changes you are able to make to look after a dog. The bigger the dog, the greater its demands will be.

A dog is for life!

Dogs require time for socialisation and training.

If you have children, you will need to spend extra time with the dog and your children to ensure your children understand how to 'read' the dog's behaviour. Remember, young children should never be left unattended with a dog of any age.

Can you afford a dog? Vets advise that the average cost of owning a dog is about \$1500 per year for routine care and feeding, particularly in the first year of life.

You should also carefully consider the breed, age and sex of the dog most suitable for you.

When choosing, you also need to be aware that some dogs are considered "restricted breed dogs" and are subject to special legislation and banned from being imported into Australia.

Restricted breeds include: dogo Argentino (Argentinean fighting dog); fila Brasileiro (Brazilian fighting dog); Japanese tosa; Perro de Presa Canario; American pit bull terrier and pit bull terrier cross breeds; and any dog of a mixed breed that visibly contains any of these breeds.



Choosing the right dog

Your family and friends may be able to provide you with information to help you select a suitable dog for your lifestyle.

You can also search on the Internet for information. Some sites, such as the Petcare Information and Advisory Service at www.petnet.com.au have a 'Selectapet' function to help you pick an appropriate breed.

You should try to ensure that you get your dog from someone who will be available to answer any future queries about your new pet.

You should be aware of the approximate cost involved in keeping a dog.

Remember, choosing the right dog is only half of the solution - YOU are the other.

Registering your dog

You are required by law to register your dog.

Dogs over the age of three months are required to be registered with a local government.

Even apart from the law, if you care for your dog, you should register your dog in case it strays and is hurt, sick and/or lost to assist authorities in contacting you.

Registration tag

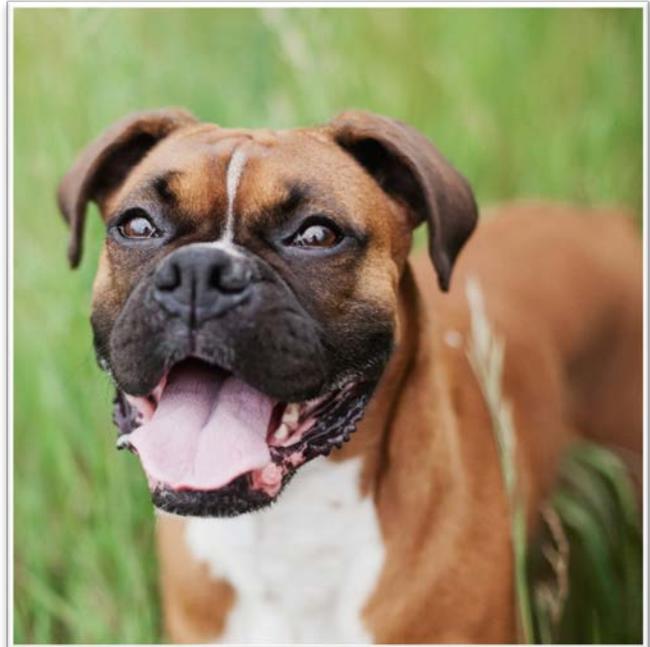
Your dog is required to wear a collar with your name and address attached, as well as a valid registration tag.

All dogs are required to wear a registration tag in public places.

It is an offence for your dog not to wear a collar with these attachments, and you can be given an on-the-spot fine of \$200.

Why register?

If your dog becomes lost and is impounded by the Ranger, you have a better chance of finding your dog if it is registered and wearing its tag.



What risks do I take if I do not register my dog?

The animal welfare industry advises that the majority of pets, including dogs, without proper identification are never reunited with their owners.

Rangers keep lost dogs at the pound for as long as possible, and often for longer than the required minimum three-day holding period. However, unregistered dogs cannot be kept indefinitely in pounds and local governments have no option but to dispose of uncollected dogs.

Penalties for non-registration

It is an offence to keep an unregistered dog over the age of three months. Currently, the maximum fine is \$500, with a modified penalty of \$200.

If your dog is unregistered and subsequently impounded, you may be liable for additional fees. Some local governments may exercise their right to keep your dog in their pound until you pay both the registration fee and the pound fee.

How and where do I register my dog?

To register your dog, you will need to contact Council, complete and sign a registration form. Registration forms are available from Vetwest on South Western Highway, Armadale and the Shire's website <http://www.sjshire.wa.gov.au/assets/Uploads/Dog-Registration-Application-Form.pdf>.

**A person under the age of 18 years may not register a dog.*

Microchipping your dog

You are required by law to microchip your dog.

Dogs over the age of three months are required to be microchipped and registered with a national database, and, with your local government as a part of your dog registration requirements.

All dogs and pups are to be microchipped by the breeder or seller prior to the sale of the dog. It is the responsibility of the dog owner to ensure that a dog is registered and microchipped.

Even apart from the law, if you care for your dog, you should microchip your dog in case it strays and is hurt, sick and/or lost to assist authorities in contacting you.

Current registration term

All registrations are due on 1 November each year and can be renewed for either one or three years.

Current registration fees	1 year	3 years	Lifetime
Sterilised			
Standard	\$20.00	\$42.50	\$100.00
Pensioner concession	\$10.00	\$21.25	\$50.00
Unsterilised			
Standard	\$50.00	\$120.00	\$250.00
Pensioner concession	\$25.00	\$60.00	\$125.00

Registration concessions

- Pensioners who have approved concession cards are entitled to a reduction in fees.
- Only 50% of the registration fee is payable for registrations made from 31 May in any year.
- Proof of sterilisation is required to obtain a concession.

You should ask your local government

- If you qualify for a reduced registration fee, and
- If a rebate or subsidy applies (e.g. sterilisation subsidy). If so, your local government may require proof of your residency, and conditions may apply.

Rule of thumb

If your dog is older than three months, it is required to be registered. If you do not register your dog at the scheduled registration fee applicable to your dog, you risk incurring a modified penalty of up to \$200.

Guidelines for responsible dog ownership

Responsible dog owners have to consider many things in caring for their animals. Here's a basic checklist.

1. Regular flea and worm treatments, health checks, heartworm tablets and vaccinations
2. Regular baths and grooming
3. Basic obedience training so it can "sit", "stay", "come" and "heel" on command
4. Register the dog with local government
5. Sterilised if not to be used for breeding (reduced registration fees apply)
6. Adequately confined and is not allowed to stray or wander
7. Does not engage in nuisance barking
8. Does not attack people or other animals
9. Is properly exercised and involved in family activities
10. An owner who is prepared to learn how to care for its health and understand its behaviour

If you have any concerns, seek help as soon as possible.

If you are concerned about your dog, don't delay in finding help from a veterinarian, Ranger, dog trainer or other pet care professional.

Dogs in public places

Many people are frightened or annoyed by dogs that are not leashed in public areas. At no time should your dog become a nuisance or impede other people's enjoyment.

Local governments may declare a dog "dangerous" if it attacks, shows a tendency to attack or repeatedly rushes, threatens or chases people or animals.

Once your dog is declared dangerous, or if it is a restricted breed, you will have to put a muzzle on it at all times in a public place.

Roaming dogs

Dogs that roam are potentially a public safety risk to motorists, pedestrians and other animals. Irresponsible owners will be liable for any injuries or damage caused by their dog.

Dog attacks on adults are caused mostly by dogs roaming outside their owners' properties. Children who come into contact with roaming dogs at parks and other public places are more vulnerable to dog attacks.

Keep your dog adequately confined on your property and follow the rules of responsible pet ownership to help prevent your dog attacking someone.

Roaming dogs often approach and sometimes attack other dogs.

Everyone is entitled to walk in their neighbourhood without being harassed or attacked by uncontrolled and often quite frightening dogs.

Even if your dog is well behaved, it can be frightening to other people if it is roaming unattended. Although you may think your dog is unlikely to attack a person, roaming dogs often approach and sometimes attack other dogs. Responsible pet owners and their dogs are often targets of these attacks.

A dog attack is a very serious matter. If your dog attacks a person or another animal, you will be held responsible even if you are not there at the time.

You may have a defence if your dog is provoked, attacked or abused, or if someone enters your premises unlawfully, including a private residence or vehicle.

A dog attack includes a dog aggressively rushing at or attempting to attack a person or animal, as well as tearing clothing, biting or causing physical injury.

Local governments may seek a court order for a dog to be destroyed if it has attacked and caused injury or damage.

The dog's owner is also liable for any injury or damage resulting from a dog attack. A person who has been attacked may take private legal action for any injury or damage.

Preventing dog attacks

To reduce the potential for dog attacks, dog owners should:

- Limit the risky genetics (select an appropriate breed)
- Understand the animal
- Train the animal
- Limit the risky circumstances (restrain the animal in potential attack situations)

When dogs need to be on a leash

In urban areas, your dog must always be on a leash in public, except at designated dog exercise areas. As the owner, you can be given an on-the-spot fine of \$200 for not having your dog on a leash or for allowing it to roam. Check with your local government for the location of dog exercise areas in your local area. Even in dog exercise areas, dog owners should still carry a leash at all times, and ensure the dog remains in reasonable proximity. If a local government declares your dog a "dangerous dog" or it is a restricted breed, then it must be kept on a leash in public places at all times even if it is in a dog exercise area.

Dog excreta

When exercising your dog in a public place, you should always clean up after it. Most local governments have local laws that require the person in charge of a dog in a public place to remove their dog's excreta and dispose of it. There are penalties for not doing so. Some local governments provide "plastic poo bags" and animal waste bins so that you can keep the environment clean for the enjoyment of others. Dog excreta in the garden should also be removed daily to reduce fly and health related problems.

Sterilising your dog

Why sterilise your dog?

- Dogs are able to start having pups at a very young age, and can potentially deliver many litters.
- Surveys indicate that dogs that are not sterilised have an increased risk of being abandoned or surrendered.

- In Perth, hundreds of dogs are put down each week and about 20,000-30,000 dogs are destroyed each year. Many more are dumped in areas where their likely fate is death by accident, starvation, disease, or from predators. The numbers escalate over the Christmas and Easter periods.
- It is reported that the biggest behavioural effect of sterilisation is the huge reduction in roaming, especially of male dogs. Any reduction in straying dogs has a significant public benefit.
- Reduce registration fees – owners of sterilised dogs are eligible for reduced registration fees.

What about aggression?

The effect of sterilisation on aggression will depend on the type of aggressive behaviour involved. For example, sterilisation will reduce dominance-based aggression, but it will have little effect if the aggression is based on fear. Whatever the cause, sterilising aggressive dogs will at least ensure that aggressive genes are not passed on.

Nuisance barking dogs

All dogs bark but some barking dogs become a nuisance. Excessive barking is one of the most disruptive neighbourhood issues and requires immediate attention.

Why do dogs bark?

Try to determine why your dog is barking. Dogs may bark because they are:

- Hungry, thirsty, cold, hot, in need of exercise, or perhaps sick or injured
- Bored
- Seeking attention
- Threatened or protecting their territory

Check to see if your dog:

- Has access to clean fresh water and adequate shelter
- Has daily exercise and is not sick or injured
- Is provided with marrow/brisket bones to chew several times a week

Boredom

Excessive barking is more common with some breeds than others. Some breeds – such as cattle dogs, Kelpies, Border Collies and German Shepherds – were originally bred to work on farms and may have problems adjusting to a suburban backyard. You should carefully select a breed that is suitable for your lifestyle. Long walks on a lead may not be enough to keep some dogs occupied. They may become barkers through boredom and frustration.

To help ensure your dog does not become bored, make sure it has plenty to do when left alone. For example:

- If your dog likes water, place water in a child's pool, or garden pool, so the dog can play in it.
- Use old drink bottles or milk containers that are half filled with water or stones so your dog can roll them like a toy. These containers also make a good chew toy if left empty.
- Give your dog a bone when you leave the house, this will teach your dog to look forward to receiving something nice and create a positive, rather than negative, reaction when you leave the house.
- Provide a variety of toys (balls, chew toys, something to climb on, food reward toys).
- Leave a radio playing or a television on where the dog can hear it.

Attention seeking behaviour

Dogs are social animals and may use inappropriate behaviour or cause a nuisance, such as continually barking, to seek attention. Ensure you spend time each day communicating and playing with your dog. If possible, allow your dog to rest beside you as you work at home.

Protecting its property

Most dogs will bark if a person or an animal is near their territory. To help prevent your dog barking at things it can see beyond the fence, you may like to:

- Cover the fence or gate to a suitable height with material which obstructs its vision
- Prevent the dog having access to the area on your premises where the dog tends to bark (i.e. by blocking access down the side of a house or to the front yard)

What if my dog is a nuisance barker?

There is no quick fix or easy solution to problem barking. Don't yell at or hit the dog for barking, as this may cause other behaviour problems – instead;

- Consult your local veterinarian or a dog obedience club for advice on the best approach for your situation.
- Some dogs have behavioural problems such as separation anxiety, which requires specific treatment and behavioural modification.

Living near a dog that barks excessively – what can neighbours do?

Dog owners are often not aware of their own dog's excessive barking.

Firstly, the owner should be approached directly and have the problem explained to them. A tape recording of the dog barking may help to substantiate any complaint.

Secondly, if your neighbour is unapproachable or does not agree that the problem exists, then a complaint should be made to the Rangers at your local government.

Rangers can help with barking problems so that you do not have to suffer the nuisance caused by dogs that make too much noise.

Nuisance barking – penalties apply for non-compliance and false complaints

- Nuisance barking is an offence.
- Rangers will respond to reported barking problems. Initially, the owner may receive a letter from the Ranger to provide the owner with helpful advice.
- If the barking problem continues, and further complaints are lodged, the Ranger will investigate. Irresponsible owners who do not comply with the Ranger's recommendations may incur significant penalties. If taken to court, the fine could be up to \$2000 with a daily penalty of \$200 for each day the nuisance continues.
- Complainants who make false reports, for whatever reason, may incur civil court action for false declaration.

Children and Dogs

The majority of serious dog attacks requiring hospitalisation occur on children in private homes. Children, particularly those aged between one and nine, are at most risk of serious dog bites. Most dog bites occur at the dog's own home.

Helpful tips for parents or guardians

- Never leave your dog and young children alone together
- Show your child how to introduce him/herself to dogs
- Don't allow your children to tease your dog or handle it roughly
- Remove your dog from excitable environments – especially children's parties where it may become over excited or aggressive
- Keep children away from a sick or convalescing dog to let it recover without interruption
- Ensure your dog has the opportunity to socialise safely with children
- Choose a breed that has a good reputation with children
- Ensure your dog is under your control by properly training it to "sit", "stay", "drop" and "come"

Golden rules when dealing with dogs

Let dogs eat without interruption

Avoid cornering a dog – this can provoke a "fight or flight" response

Provide the dog with a bed that is separated from noisy, high activity areas

Don't cuddle dogs face to face – it may represent a threat

Do not wake a dog suddenly – this may give them a fright and prompt an aggressive response

Don't interfere with a mother's new litter of puppies, especially in the first couple of weeks and when her pups are feeding

How to behave around dogs

We all come into contact with dogs. Whether you own a dog or not, it is important that you and your family understand a dog's behaviour. The following tips can help children and others handle themselves in situations involving dogs and minimise the risk of injury.

Approaching Dogs

- Children and adults should never approach a dog they don't know.
- Never run towards a dog you don't know.
- In general, avoid patting dogs you don't know.
- Always get permission from the owner to pat his or her dog.
- Approach the dog on an angle, not from the front or rear.
- Slowly extend the back of the hand (not an open palm), curl the fingers, and allow the dog to sniff it.
- Stroke the dog gently on the side of the chest or under the chin (not on top of the head or shoulders).
- Don't continue patting the dog if it backs away or doesn't sniff the hand.

When approached by a strange dog

- Avoid eye contact with the dog.
- Never pat the dog.
- Don't run away or scream, but stand completely still.
- Don't kick at the dog, squeal or jump.
- Keep your hands firmly by your sides and don't wave them around.
- Slowly back away.
- When the dog wanders off, quietly walk away.

Reading a dog's behaviour

Dogs may bite when frightened or when they have been provoked to act aggressively. Leave dogs alone if they show any of the following warning signs. Sometimes dogs can be frightened and aggressive at the same time and show a combination of the following signs.

A frightened dog

- Has its ears back (watch out for raised hackles which will indicate it is aggressive even though frightened).
- Has its tail curled under its legs.
- Tries to minimise its size by hunching or lying down.

An aggressive dog

- Shows its teeth and/or snarls, growls or barks.
- Has its ears forward and pricked up.
- Has its tail raised.
- Tries to look bigger by raising its hackles and standing on the tips of its paws.
- Moves towards you.

For the benefit and safety of your family, the Community, and visitors to our Shire, it is essential that all dog owners take responsibility, care for their dogs and practice sound and responsible dog ownership principles.

