



The law aims to protect animals from neglect and cruelty as well as protecting the community from animals becoming a nuisance or danger

Why should I Comply?

If you don't comply with legal requirements, such as microchipping, registration and confinement of dogs to your property, you can be fined by local authorities.



TIP

Local councils may also have additional laws around dog ownership. Visit your local council website to learn more.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

Under Australian Animal Cruelty legislation, if you mistreat or fail to properly care for your dog you can be prosecuted and face fines, jail or a ban on owning an animal.

The use of electronic collars (such as anti-bark, remote training and containment collars) is strictly regulated. It is also illegal to tail dock, ear crop or debark dogs. You can find out more by reading the information about prohibited procedures on dogs online. There are also laws regulating dogs on moving vehicles and the removal of dog faeces in public places.

Permits are required when there are more than a certain number of cats or dogs kept in a household. This number is set by your local council so you need to check with them on what the specific limit is.

Note: Where the owner of a dog is under the age of 18 years, the parent or guardian of that owner will be deemed the legal owner of the dog and subject to any penalties/prosecutions.

MICROCHIPPING AND REGISTRATION

Micro-chipping and registering pets greatly improves their chances of being returned to you if they become lost.

All dogs three months of age and over must be registered with the local council and existing registrations must be renewed by each year.

If being registered for the first time, dogs must be micro-chipped prior to registration.

Your dog's council registration tag should be attached to a collar, adjusted so you are able to fit two fingers comfortably between your dog's collar

and its neck.

Visit your local council's website for more information about registration in your area.

CONFINEMENT OF DOGS TO THE PROPERTY

Under the Domestic Animals Act 1994, all dog owners must securely confine dogs to the property. This means your yard must have a closed gate and an escape proof fence that your dog cannot jump over, get under or get through.

Visitors must also have safe access to your front door without being stopped by your dog. If your dog could get through your gates or fencing you can be fined even if he/she doesn't actually leave your property.

If securely confined your dog will be safe from traffic injuries or fights with other dogs. He/she will also be prevented from wandering and becoming lost.

Legally, visitors must also have safe access to your front door, without being stopped by your dog.

If your dog could get through your gates or fencing, you can be fined even if it doesn't actually leave your property.

Magistrates have the power to require owners of pets that have escaped to carry out works to ensure this does not happen again. To make sure your dog is properly confined, keep it in the backyard behind a locked gate.



LEGAL CONSEQUENCES IF YOUR DOG RUSHES AT OR CHASES SOMEONE

If your dog rushes at or chases someone, you could be fined and your local council can declare your dog to be a 'menacing dog'. This means you will have to microchip it and you may have to leash and muzzle it in public.

If you do not comply with these requirements, council can then declare your dog to be a 'dangerous dog'. There are very strict controls on the housing, exercise and ownership of dangerous dogs, and dangerous dogs must be desexed.

LEGAL CONSEQUENCES IN THE EVENT OF AN ATTACK ON A PERSON OR ANOTHER ANIMAL

You are liable if your dog attacks a person or animal outside your property, or someone trying to get to your front door. You are also liable if your dog attacks someone who has been invited onto your property.

An attack by your dog can lead to court action. If convicted, owners can face substantial fines. This is in addition to damages, which may add up to thousands of dollars. In such situations, dogs are often ordered to be destroyed or declared dangerous. Strict ownership controls are imposed on dangerous dogs for the rest of their lives.

Additional laws apply to owners of restricted breed, dangerous, guard, menacing or attack trained dogs. Owners of these types of dogs can be jailed for up to 10 years if their dog kills a person or for up to 5 years if their dog endangers someone's life.

DOGS ON MOVING VEHICLES

When travelling with dogs it is the owner or custodian's duty to ensure the animal is transported appropriately and provided with its essential needs, including food, water, protection from heat or cold and a safe position on the vehicle.

WHAT ARE THE LEGAL OBLIGATIONS OF TRAVELLING WITH DOGS IN CARS?

It is illegal to put dogs in the boot of a sedan type car. Dogs can travel in the cabin of the car or behind a cargo barrier in the back of wagon / SUV type vehicles. If on the back of a ute or trailer they must be appropriately tethered or caged.

When travelling, dogs must be provided with adequate ventilation. Containers must have multiple ventilation holes on at least three sides of the container.

CAN DOGS SUFFER FROM HEAT STRESS?

Yes, dogs in vehicles and on the back of vehicles can suffer from heat stress and exhaustion during the warmer months of the year. Dogs can dehydrate or even die from heat stress. The interior of vehicles can heat up quickly causing heat stress and potential death to dogs. Dogs must not be left unattended in cars, even with the windows open. [See our factsheet on Heat Stress And Your Pet.](#)

Dogs on utes need extra care in the hot weather. If using a metal cage to transport dogs, ensure it has a roof to provide shade, and that the sides are well ventilated (meshed rather than solid material). It is also advisable to cover metal floors of cages (and if tethering, the tray floor) with a surface such as rubber as metal can heat up quickly and burn dogs' paws. In addition, ensure the cage is the right size to prevent cramping and overcrowding. And of course, when stationary, the vehicle should be parked in the shade, dogs should not be left in the cabin of the ute, and they should have plenty of water.

TRAVELLING WITH DOGS ON THE BACK OF VEHICLES

The law in Victoria requires that dogs on utes are restrained either via a tether or cage, so that the dog cannot fall off or be injured when the vehicle moves. The only exception is for dogs that are actively working livestock.

WHAT ARE THE DANGERS OF TRAVELLING WITH DOGS ON UTES?

Many dogs nation-wide are killed or injured from travelling on the back of open and moving vehicles each year.

Common causes of injury are:

- dogs falling off the vehicle whilst it is moving
- dogs being struck by oncoming or passing vehicles
- dogs being dragged alongside moving vehicles
- dogs attempting to jump from moving vehicles

TRAVELLING SAFELY WITH DOGS INSIDE VEHICLES

For best practice, it is recommended that dogs travel in the cabin of the vehicle and are kept either on the backseat in a restraining device or in the open cargo area of a wagon type vehicle behind a cargo barrier.

Dogs need to be adequately restrained when travelling inside a vehicle for the safety of both the dog and human passengers. Unrestrained dogs can cause accidents and should never be allowed in the vicinity of the driver. In the case of an accident, an unrestrained dog may become a projectile and can damage itself and / or the occupants of the vehicle.

DOG WASTE

It is generally accepted that cleaning up after dogs is part of being a responsible pet owner. Most councils require dog owners to remove and dispose of their dog's waste when in public places. Some councils also require dog owners to carry an appropriate receptacle (e.g. bag or scoop) to remove dog waste whenever they are walking their dog in a public place. You can be fined for not complying.

Research has shown that the more people experience nuisance issues associated with pets in public places, such as dog waste, the worse their opinion of pet owners overall, and the more they support legislative controls on pet ownership. Unremoved dog waste can often be one reason influencing decisions to ban dogs from certain parks or beaches.

HOW TO CLEAN UP AFTER YOUR DOG

Cleaning up after your dog is easy. You can use plastic (preferably fully biodegradable) bags, trowels or pooper scoopers. Products are available that attach to your dog's leash to store plastic bags for use during walks.

Keep your bags/pouches/pooper scoop products with your leash, as a reminder to take them with you.

If using the plastic bag method, simply put your hand inside the bag, pick up the dog poo, turn the bag inside out, then seal. You can tie the bag to your leash or carry it until you get to an appropriate disposal site.

Disposal methods include council provided dog litter bins, or domestic landfill and waste collection, worm farms or composting units.

For more information on responsible pet ownership, contact your local council.



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Since our official opening in 1913, we have been a voice for animals without owners caring for thousands of cats and dogs each year. Pioneers for fair animal laws, we continue to work on the front line to reduce the number of lost, abandoned and stray cats and dogs.

We rely on public support to run services and programs, including: proactive adoption, foster care, behaviour rehabilitation, low cost desexing and microchipping, and the promotion of better pet ownership through education.