



You, your pet and us

Draft Animal Management Plan

Managing Dogs



Being a responsible dog owner

Managing Dogs



Being a responsible dog owner

There are five important areas you need to be aware of to be a responsible dog owner.

- Be aware of your responsibilities.
- Ensure your dog has adequate food, shelter and water at all times.
- Meet the ongoing costs in caring for your dog such as vaccinations, maintenance of health and welfare, desexing, microchipping and registration.
- Provide appropriate obedience training which will help meet your dog's emotional and social needs.
- Be aware of all relevant By-Laws and the penalties that apply to offences.

Select a breed that suits your lifestyle

The breed of your dog will affect its size, energy levels and temperament. Select a breed to suit your lifestyle and the amount of time you can spend with your pet.

This will help you care for your pet's health and welfare, which includes exercise, training and food requirements.

Create a suitable home environment before bringing the dog home

Consider your home environment, including:

- the size of your yard
- the sections of the house or yard the pet will have access to fencing, and
- visual access to public areas such as thoroughfares, footpaths and local parks.

By spending a little time considering your pet's environment, you can avoid boredom and anxiety for your pet.

Key issues for owners to be aware of

There are many responsibilities that you, as a dog owner, need to be aware of. The most common issues and complaints that Regulatory Officers respond to include:

- registration
- nuisance barking
- dogs at large
- off-lead areas
- dog attacks
- dog defecation
- restricted areas for dogs.

These issues, and the associated By-Laws, are addressed in detail in this plan.

Please remember that this document is intended to be a guide only. Its application is subject to relevant legislation and Council policy and it will from time to time be amended accordingly.



Objective

That community members are aware of their responsibilities when owning a pet, especially when taking their pet into public access areas.

Registration and microchipping

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Registration

All dogs that are over three (3) months of age and have been in Darwin for one month must be registered.

There are many benefits to registration.

- It is your proof of ownership.
- Council can return lost pets to their owners quickly.
- You can be contacted easily if your pet is involved in an accident/incident and requires veterinary treatment.
- You have access to useful information, as owners receive an information package outlining their responsibilities when they register their pet.
- Fees provide a source of funds for Council's education and enforcement programs.

Conditions of registration

When you register your dog for the first time, you will receive an information package that outlines registration conditions and your responsibilities as a dog owner in Darwin.

To register your dog you must agree:

- to have your dog microchipped,
- to adequately contain your dog at all times, and
- to apply for a licence if you intend to keep more than two dogs.

Microchipping

All dogs living in Darwin must have an approved, permanent microchip (or electronic subcutaneous device) as a condition of registration.

Microchips allow Regulatory Officers, vets and RSPCA staff to quickly identify your dog by scanning them with a microchip reader. The microchip gives your dog a unique number, which can be matched on databases that store information about your dog and your contact details. This helps with the speedy return of dogs that are lost, at large or injured.

Licence requirements

Under the By-Laws, owners can keep two registered dogs on one property.

If you want to keep more than two dogs on your property, you will need to apply for a licence from Council. Each application attracts a fee. When Council assesses the application, they will search for any previous complaints against you (the owner), consult with neighbours and check that the premises is suitable and has adequate fencing.

When licences are granted, they may be approved with specific conditions.

Enforcement

Council employs a Regulatory Officer whose job is to enforce registration requirements. If your dog is not registered and microchipped or you do not have a licence if required, you will be fined in accordance with the By-Laws.

(63 (1) Keep unregistered cat or dog; 63A (1) fail to comply with condition of registration)



Objective

To ensure all current and new dog registrations are kept up to date.

Nuisance barking

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Nuisance dog barking can be a great source of irritation to some people in our community and can generate a lot of complaints. We all want to live in a community that is pleasant and congenial and one where dog owners take responsibility for their dog's behaviour.

Everyone has different levels of tolerance and sensitivity to dog barking. When Council is investigating a complaint, firstly the presence of a 'nuisance' is established, especially as dogs naturally bark. If possible evidence is gathered from multiple sources.

Council works with complainants and pet owners to investigate, substantiate and to find a resolution that works for everyone.

A referral to the Community Justice Centre is usually offered in the first instance of a complaint to try to arrange a mediation meeting between the dog owner and the complainant. This often prevents the need for Council to be involved.



Objectives

To provide education to pet owners regarding nuisance barking in the form of training and practical suggestions to reduce and redirect unwanted behaviour in their dogs.

To encourage long-term voluntary changes and owner responsibility in addressing nuisance barking, to improve the congenial living of residents.

To implement a public education campaign on nuisance barking.

Reporting nuisance barking

If a dog is making a noise, including barking, which is persistent and interferes with the peace, comfort and congenial living of a person on other premises, you can lodge a complaint with Council.

Complaint Process for Nuisance Barking

Council has an established process for dealing with complaints about nuisance barking. By following this process, Council intends to place more responsibility on the dog owner and help them with professional advice and guidance on dog behaviour patterns.

Follow this procedure to deal with nuisance barking.

- When you report a barking complaint, you will be invited to make the complaint in writing with details about the nuisance that is being caused.
- A referral to the Community Justice Centre is usually offered in the first instance to try to arrange a mediation meeting between the dog owner and yourself. This often prevents the need for Council to be involved.
- You will be asked to keep a log of the dog's nuisance barking over the next seven (7) days.
- After seven (7) days, the Regulatory Officer will contact you and seek feedback on the nuisance barking. If the nuisance has ceased, the dog owner will be provided with feedback and encouraged to continue with the action they have taken.
- After receiving the complaint, the Regulatory Officer will provide the dog owner with self help information and also offer the owner advice and assistance to help them reduce the nuisance.
- Should the nuisance barking complaint remain unresolved, the dog owner may be issued with a fine (or infringement notice) or prosecuted.

Enforcement

Should further barking complaints be received and found to be true, the dog owner may receive a 'show cause' letter on the dog's registration. A 'show cause' letter requests information from the owner on reasons why the dog's registration should not be cancelled.

If the dog's registration is cancelled, the dog owner will then have 24 hours to remove the dog from the Darwin municipality and if they fail to do so, Council may acquire a warrant from the courts to remove the nuisance dog.

If Council removes the dog with a warrant, it will be impounded and held for four (4) days. If the owner makes no attempt to contact Council or find an alternate property outside the Darwin municipality, the dog may be destroyed or otherwise disposed of. (71 Dog causing nuisance)

Dogs at large

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Unfortunately, some pet owners do not recognise the need for dogs to be exercised and socialised outside their own backyard.

However, it is natural for dogs to want to explore different environments. As such, dogs that are not regularly exercised tend to roam, making them vulnerable to many dangers.

Dogs that roam outside their yards usually have a shorter life span – they often become lost, injured, killed or are stolen while roaming unattended in the street.

When is a dog at large?

According to the By-Laws, a dog is at large if it is:

- not properly contained in the owner's property
- not under effective control by the owner or
- any part of its body is protruding from a vehicle.

To help prevent your dog from wandering you should ensure it is properly contained, it receives the right amount of exercise and your yard is appropriately fenced.

You must have your dog on a lead or enclosed in a suitable container whenever you exit your property.

When you are in an off-lead area, you must still ensure that your dog is under effective control and you must have a lead with you. Effective control is described in the off-lead areas section of this document.

Enforcement

When a roaming dog is reported to Council, an officer will attend, locate the dog and look for identification such as tags.

If the owner's address can be identified, the dog is secured in the rear cage of a Council vehicle and taken home. The problem is addressed with the owner and a fine (or infringement notice) is issued. *(67 (1) Dog or cat at large)*

If Council can't identify the owner, the dog is impounded and a photo is placed on Council's website. Impounded dogs are kept for four (4) working days. If the dog has not been claimed after four days, Council may dispose of it accordingly.

If you have lost your dog, please notify Council and check the website regularly. When you collect your dog from the pound, you will be required to pay pound fees and any fines associated with your dog being found at large.



Objectives

Darwin City Council requires all properties in the Darwin municipality to have adequate fencing to contain their dog.

Educating the community on safe practices when walking their dog in public areas.

Council requires all dogs to be registered and microchipped to enable safe return of pets to their owners.

Off-lead areas

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We recognise that pet owners need suitable areas to exercise their dogs safely. Equally, others must be able to use our wonderful open spaces without fear of harassment by uncontrolled dogs.

All public parks and beaches controlled by Darwin City Council are dog off-lead areas.

If you have your dog off a lead in these areas, you must maintain effective control of your dog and be carrying a lead.

What is effective control?

Council requires you, the owner, to have effective control of your dog in an off-lead area by ensuring:

- your dog is responsive to your command and is close to you,
- you can see your dog,
- your dog is on a lead when it exits the exercise area,
- you do not allow your dog to fight with other dogs,
- you do not allow your dog to rush up to other park or beach users, and
- you do not allow your dog to chase bike riders.

Bicycle and walking paths

In Darwin we have a lengthy and well maintained network of cycle and pedestrian paths. Most of these paths are for shared use, with many people using these facilities with their dogs.

You can walk your pet on the path if you are in control and it is on a lead. If your pet is not on a lead, it must be clear of the path.

Enforcement

Council's Regulatory Officers routinely patrol off-lead areas.

If your dog is not under effective control in an off-lead area, you may be issued with a notice or fined \$110.

If your pet is on a path and it is not on a lead, you may be issued with a notice or fined under the By-Laws. *(67 (1) Dog or cat at large)*



Objectives

Exercising your dog can help alleviate dog behaviour problems such as excessive barking and some forms of aggression.

Darwin City Council encourages the use of parks and beaches throughout the Darwin municipality as exercise areas.



Any attack or harassment by a dog can cause fear or serious injury and is of great concern, particularly if it involves a young child or an elderly person.

Council relies on members of the public to report all dog attacks especially those that have occurred on private property. Reporting all incidents helps Council address problems appropriately and identify emerging issues.

What is a dog attack? *(55A Attack by dogs)*

Council has established and defined two (2) levels of dog attack.

Level One: The dog bites, or holds a person or animal in its mouth, whether or not the holding is accompanied by biting, shaking, pulling or pushing or the person or animal suffers an injury, physical or otherwise.

Level Two: The dog approaches, chases, menaces, harasses or rushes at a person or animal in a manner endangering or causing fear, alarm or distress to the person or animal. This may include cases where a dog rushes a fence as pedestrians go by and the pedestrian feels fear of an attack.

Reporting a dog attack

If you are attacked by a dog on private or public property please report it to Council as soon as possible on (08) 8930 0600. This will help Council to respond quickly and effectively. You will need to give Council certain details about the event, including date, time, location and a sequence of events. The Regulatory Officer will talk you through the appropriate complaint process.

Enforcement *(Section 69 Dog attack)*

If your dog has attacked, you are guilty of an offence and Council has at its disposal a range of options.

As the owner, you may be fined (up to a maximum of \$11,000 for an individual or \$110,000 for a business) or prosecuted and jailed. Council may also destroy your dog. All dogs that have committed an attack are placed on the declared dog register as a category one dog or category two dog. In the event of a level one attack the Council will prosecute the owner of the dog, seek appropriate fines and the destruction of the dog.

Declared dogs register

Council maintains a declared dog register which records the details of dogs that have committed certain acts, including attacks. Their owner's details are also recorded. If your dog is placed on the declared dog register, extra conditions are placed on your dog's registration. These conditions relate to the dog's care and control.

The conditions may include:

- Placing signage at premises where your dog is usually kept. The words 'Warning Dangerous Dog' must be clearly legible and visible from all boundaries of the property.
- Only allowing your dog in public places when it is in the care of a person over the age of 17 and that person can control the dog.
- Registering the dog as a declared dog and paying the appropriate fees.
- Microchipping the dog.
- Placing a muzzle on the dog every time it is outside the premises where it is usually kept.

You will also be required to comply with any other conditions imposed by Council. *(55B Declared dog category 1; 55C Declared dog category 2)*

Prescribed breeds

Council may decide a particular breed of dog to be a prescribed breed. If a dog is entered onto the prescribed breeds register, it will automatically be added to the declared dog register.



Objectives

To provide a safe environment for all members of the public.

To keep accurate records of substantiated dog attacks and put in place measures to prevent any further incidents.

To educate dog owners that no matter what the size or breed of dog, all dogs have the ability to bite.

Dog defecation

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We all want to enjoy our public places and waterways and protect our natural environment.

Dog faeces are an environmental and health issue as they result in unnecessary pollutants in our waterways and public places. In particular, stepping in dog faeces is unacceptable to us all.

The owner's responsibility

As a dog owner, you are responsible for picking up after your own dog and getting rid of the faeces so that you do not cause offence to anyone else.

When you are on public land, you are required to carry an appropriate container or bag to collect your dog's faeces. Council provides bins to help pet owners clean up after their dogs in parks and popular walking areas.

Enforcement

As part of their job, Regulatory Officers are responsible for enforcing this By-Law. (70A Dog defecating)

If an officer observes an owner breaching the By-Laws, they may be issued a notice or fine.



Objectives

To maintain a hygienic environment for all members of the community.

Owner education plays a major role in the prevention of designated parks, beaches and waterways being free of pollutants caused by undisposed dog faeces.

Restricted areas for dogs

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There are some areas in Darwin where you cannot take your dog. There are a number of reasons why Council may declare an area to be restricted, including concerns for public health and safety and environmental protection.

These areas are well signed and it is your responsibility to be aware of them.

Market areas

These market areas include Mindil Beach Markets, Parap Markets, Rapid Creek Markets and Nightcliff Markets.

Household pets are forbidden at all times to be in any areas at these markets while they are trading and where food is being served at social functions.

East Point Reserve

East Point Reserve is a recognised nature reserve and is home to many species of native wildlife including Agile Wallabies and Frilled Neck Lizards.

All household animals are prohibited at all times to be in the area that is bounded by the entry gateway and Lake Alexander perimeter fencing, including the beach area.

The Mall

The Mall is a prohibited area at all times for members of the public walking with their animals. However, guide dogs or care dogs are permitted.

Enforcement

Regulatory Officers frequently patrol these areas and part of their job is to enforce the By-Law if they find people with a dog in these areas. *(65(1) Keeping dog in dog restricted area)*



Objectives

To maintain safe and hygienic areas for the consumption of food.

To preserve and encourage growth of native flora and fauna within their natural environment.

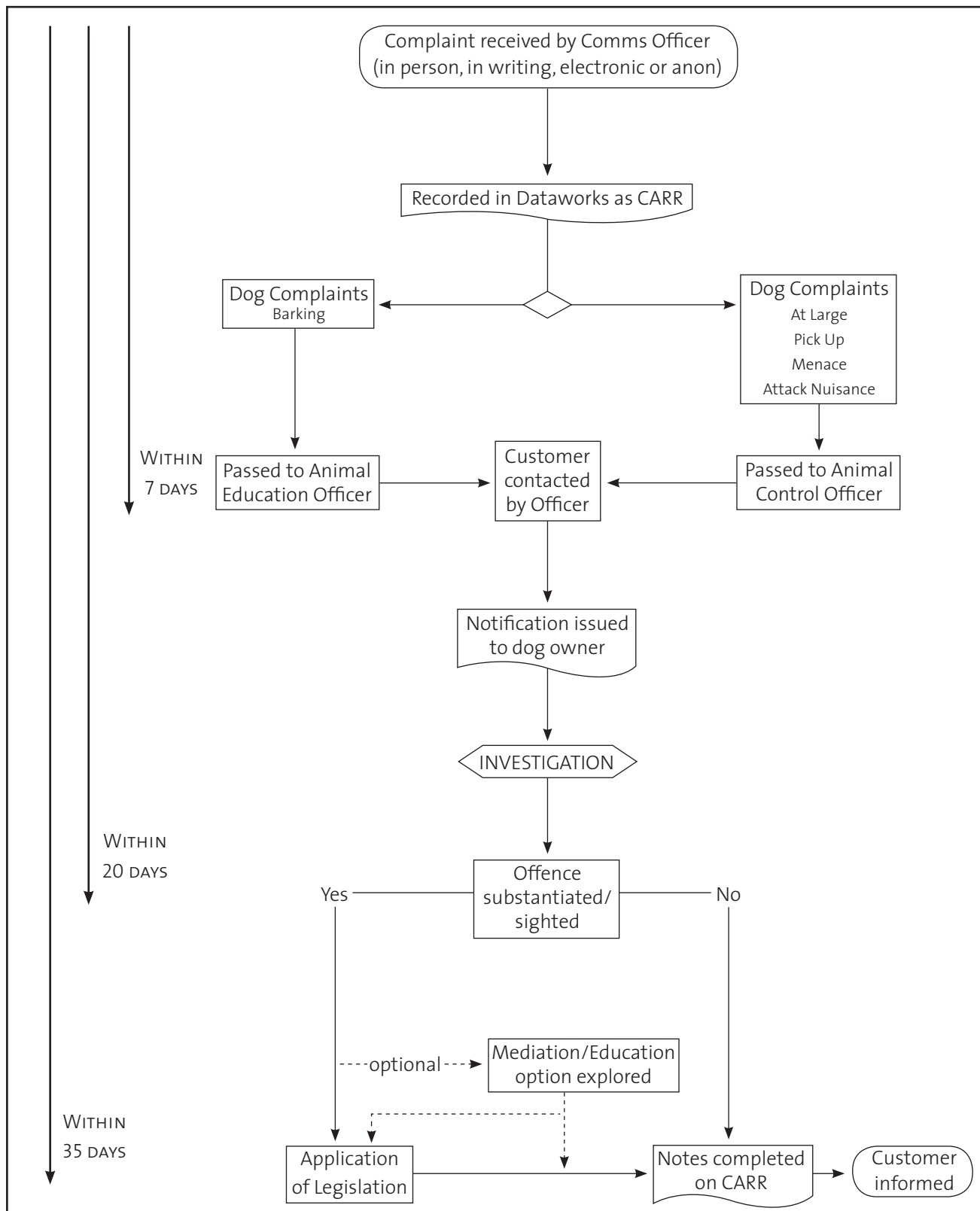
Complaints management process

🐾 Managing Dogs

Council has developed a process to manage complaints received about dogs. This process is outlined in the flow chart below.

If you make a complaint, or a complaint is made about your dog, Council will ensure you are informed throughout the resolution process.

If you require more information please contact (08) 8930 0606.





Enquiries 08 8930 0606

www.darwin.nt.gov.au