Being a responsible dog owner

For more information: phone 09 301 0101 or visit www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz
1. Introduction

Auckland Council has produced this booklet to help ensure all dog owners comply with the Dog Control Act 1996 and existing dog control bylaws, and to assist dog owners in obtaining a Responsible Dog Owner Licence from Auckland Council.

The ownership of a dog in today’s society brings with it a 24-hour responsibility to other people, their animals, their property and of course, to the dog itself.

The council believes a dog owner who acts responsibly and cares for their dog so it is content, healthy and does not cause a nuisance to others in the community should be recognised and rewarded. The council does this by promoting responsible dog ownership.

Your dog is a social animal with instincts that need managing correctly. Its overall behaviour is usually the result of your approach to the training and management of your dog.

The council hopes this booklet will provide valuable information to assist you in being a responsible dog owner.

If you have any comments on animal management matters please contact:

Auckland Council
Private Bag 92300
Auckland 1142

2. Responsible Dog Owner Licence criteria

The following qualifying criteria applies to obtaining a Responsible Dog Owner Licence from Auckland Council.

- You must have been a registered dog owner within NZ for at least 12 months prior to application.
- Your dog must be registered.
- You must not have had any abatements, seizures or infringements under the Dog Control Act 1996 within the preceding 12 month period.
- Your dog must not have been the subject of a substantiated complaint or impoundment under the Dog Control Act 1996 within the preceding 12 months.
- You must pass a basic written test to determine your level of dog ownership knowledge.
- The property where the dog will be mainly kept must pass inspection by an animal management officer.

In general terms properties must have:

- a fully fenced containment area (not necessarily a fully fenced garden/yard) suitable to the size of the dog;
- a suitable, secure and properly gated entrance;
- more than a running wire;
- suitable shade and shelter available, along with access to fresh water.
- a sonic barrier is not sufficient.
3. Dog owner obligations

Under the Dog Control Act 1996 all dog owners are required to:
• ensure their dog is registered;
• ensure the council is advised of any change of address or change of ownership of the dog within 14 days;
• ensure the dog is kept under control at all times;
• ensure the dog receives proper care and attention and is supplied with sufficient food, water and shelter;
• ensure the dog receives adequate exercise;
• take all reasonable steps to ensure the dog does not cause a nuisance to any other person;
• take all reasonable steps to ensure the dog does not injure, endanger, intimidate or otherwise cause distress to any person;
• take all reasonable steps to ensure the dog does not injure, endanger or cause distress to any stock, poultry, domestic animal or protected wildlife;
• take all reasonable steps to ensure the dog does not damage or endanger any property belonging to any other person;
• comply with the requirements of the Dog Control Act 1996 and all regulations and bylaws made under it.

If you fail to register your dog on time, you will be required to pay the late payment fee in addition to being liable for an infringement fine of $300. You also run the risk of your dog being seized and impounded and the loss of your Responsible Dog Owner Licence.

5. Microchipping your dog

Having a microchip implanted in your dog greatly increases the chances of reuniting you and your dog if it goes missing. It also assists the council’s animal management officers in identifying roaming dogs and dealing with their owners.

Microchipping also helps animal management officers keep track of dangerous or menacing dogs as they move around the country.

Which dogs need to be microchipped?
• All dogs registered for the first time in New Zealand after 1 July 2006.
• Any dog never registered in New Zealand.
• Any unregistered and impounded dog.

4. Dog registration

• All dogs must be registered. It is the dog owner’s responsibility to ensure they are.
• The dog registration year runs from 1 July to 30 June the following year.
• All dogs must be registered before they reach three months of age.
• Any registered dog impounded twice since 1 July 2006.
• Any dog classified as dangerous or menacing on or after 1 December 2003.

Working dogs kept solely or principally for the purpose of herding or driving stock are exempt from microchipping.

Note: Registration and microchipping are two different processes. Dogs need to be registered each year by 1 July but only microchipped once. You can be fined up to $300 for failing to implant a microchip in your dog.

When a dog has been microchipped, it is the dog owner’s responsibility to forward a copy of the microchip certificate to the council. If your dog is found the microchip will contain a number identifying both your dog and your contact details.

6. Control of your dog

In public places
The council has set aside a number of reserves and open spaces for the exercise and recreational needs of dogs and their owners. Dogs can be exercised in these areas off leash if kept under control by their owners.

Prohibited areas
There are a number of areas within Auckland where dogs are prohibited at all times. These are often in areas where wildlife needs special protection. Please refer to existing dog control bylaws.

7. Control of dogs on the dog owner’s property

When a dog is on the dog owner’s property, the owner must ensure either:
(a) the dog is under the direct control of a person over 16 years of age or;
(b) the dog is confined in such a manner it cannot freely leave the property.

Section (b) means the dog is controlled by way of a fence, pen, cage, chain or similar and not just a sonic barrier.

If a dog can freely leave the dog owner’s property, it can be seized and removed from the property and/or the dog owner may receive a fine of $200.

Remember, dogs must be kept under adequate control at all times. Dogs wandering in the community cause a number of problems for others including acting aggressively, fouling and ripping open rubbish bags, which could result in the owner receiving a fine of $300. In addition, wandering dogs may be hit by vehicles or cause accidents.

A dog’s aggression towards another person may be the result of:
• Previous experiences the dog has had with people;
• The situation at the time;
• The way the person is behaving at the time;
• If the dog feels either they or their owner are under threat.

The majority of problems can be solved if every dog owner kept their dog under proper control.
8. Barking and howling

Most people accept a dog will bark from time to time. However, it is different if a dog barks, howls or whines for extended periods and creates a nuisance. The council receives a large number of dog barking complaints.

There are many different reasons why a dog barks. These include:
• boredom;
• loneliness (separation anxiety);
• territorial behaviour;
• pain;
• hunger.

It is important you spend time observing your dog and trying to identify the things that trigger barking. Dog owners often underestimate the effect their barking dog can have on neighbours as the barking often occurs when they are not present.

One way to prevent barking problems is not to leave your dog on its own for too long. Dogs are social animals and need to live in groups in order to feel safe and secure. If you go away on holiday, make sure your dog is either put into a good boarding kennel or housed with friends who will look after it as if it were their own.

Ways of reducing excessive barking include:
• Giving your dog toys, balls or bones to play with;
• Making sure you exercise your dog daily;
• Making sure your dog is comfortable;
• Making sure your dog is housed so it cannot see things to bark at;
• Keeping your dog occupied.

9. De-sexing your dog

The council advice is to have your dog de-sexed.

De-sexing female dogs will eliminate the risk of unwanted puppies and the problems caused by dogs in season.

A de-sexed male dog is far less likely to roam. De-sexing may also stop your dog from urinating in the house and in general be less aggressive and more manageable.

A vet will remove your dog’s reproductive organs while your dog is under anaesthetic. Usually, you will be able to take your dog home the same day and then take it back approximately 10 days later to have the stitches removed. The cost of de-sexing varies between vets. The one-off cost of de-sexing your dog will be money well spent over the life of the dog.

Note: If you have a good reason not to de-sex your female dog you should ensure she is securely confined when in season.

10. Exercise

All dogs need regular exercise. Walking or running your dog is a great way for both you and your dog to keep fit and gives your dog an opportunity to socialise with other dogs.

Auckland has a large coastline, wonderful beaches and a significant number of parks and reserves, a number of which are available for both you and your dog to exercise off leash.
The council’s website has details of the current on and off leash areas in your vicinity and the permitted times you can use these. This can be found on our website via www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/dogs.

11. Your dog’s health and veterinary care

Veterinarians can provide advice on flea and worm treatments for your dog along with suggestions for providing a good healthy diet for your dog.

All dogs should visit a veterinarian at least once a year for their vaccinations and a general assessment of their health. Regular veterinary visits allow for the early detection and treatment of health issues that could become serious or life threatening.

There are a number of serious, often fatal diseases that can be prevented by regular vaccinations. Vaccinations are used to prevent disease. They cannot help once your dog is sick. Some vaccines will now protect dogs against parovirus, distemper and infectious hepatitis for up to two years. Please consult with your veterinarian.

Dog diseases include:

**Canine Parovirus**
This is highly contagious among dogs and is often fatal, particularly in young puppies.

**Distemper**
A virus affecting the brain and nervous system. Dogs may initially have a cough and then suffer fits.

**Hepatitis**
A viral disease which damages the liver and can rapidly become fatal. Signs include fever and abdominal pain.

Kennel cough
A very contagious persistent hacking cough often associated with close contact with other dogs.

**Just follow these three easy steps to keep your dog healthy.**

- Have your dog fully vaccinated as a puppy and then follow up with annual health checks and vaccinations as required.
- Feed your dog a good diet, keeping your dog lean rather than overweight.
- Treat your dog for worms and fleas.

**Diet/nutrition**

You can prevent your dog from becoming obese by decreasing its food intake and increasing the amount of exercise you give it. Talk to your vet if you think your dog is overweight.

- **Puppies**
  Feed your puppy three times a day from six to 12 weeks, then twice a day until the dog is six to seven months old. At that stage, a dog can be fed once a day. Some commercial puppy foods on the market may provide a complete balanced diet for your puppy.

- **Adult dogs**
  From six to seven months of age, dogs can be fed once a day. Adult dog diets can consist of dried dog biscuits, tinned food and dog sausage. Meat and household scraps can be fed to your dog but should not exceed more than a quarter of the diet. Your local veterinary staff are trained in dog nutrition and can help make recommendations for your dog.
Older dogs may also have specific nutritional requirements and again, you should, consult your local vet.

*Please remember your dog is not allowed to eat any raw offal.*

**Worming**

Puppies are born infested with roundworms. These worms may cause diarrhoea and a lack of weight gain in pups. Puppies should be treated for roundworm at monthly intervals until six months of age. There are a number of effective products on the market that will control worms. Please consult your vet.

**Fleas**

It is recommended you de-flea your dog when you treat for tapeworms. The flea carries the main tapeworm in dogs and the dog is infected by eating the flea. It is important to regularly dose your dog for worms. Worms can be passed from animals to humans so it is particularly important to teach children to wash their hands after playing with a dog.

**Kennel/housing**

Whether you decide to keep your dog inside or outside you should ensure it is included in the family pack. As mentioned earlier, dogs are social animals and need to live in groups in order to feel safe and secure. If you do decide to keep your dog outside you should ensure its kennel / housing is:

- Draught free, on a hard surface and easy to clean;
- Exposed to the sun so the dog is kept warm;
- Kept clean;
- Well drained.

**12. Caring for your dog**

Fencing of Dogs information can be found on our website via [www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/dogs](http://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/dogs) under Looking after your dog.