

# Pets and animals

**Owning a pet can be lots of fun and very rewarding, however there are also many responsibilities that come with the job, so knowing the rules and laws around pet ownership is important.**

## Number of pets

There are restrictions on the number of animals you can keep on your property. If you have more, or would like more pets than the restricted amount, you will need to contact Council to obtain a permit.

You will require a Council permit if you wish to keep more than:

- two cats
- two dogs
- five poultry (excluding roosters)
- five mice, rats, ferrets, guinea pigs, rabbits or hamsters
- 10 birds (including budgerigars, canaries, finches and pigeons).

There are some animals that are not allowed to be kept in Darebin. These animals include roosters, horses and donkeys, and other farm animals like cattle, sheep, goats and pigs. These animals are only permitted in exceptional circumstances, with a permit from Council.

## Cats and dogs

The majority of rules and laws around owning a pet involves looking after cats and dogs. These rules are covered under State Legislation, The Domestic Animals Act 1994, and Council's local law (Local Law No.1).

The following information provides an overview of the important rules and laws you need to know to be a responsible owner of a cat or dog. For more comprehensive information visit the Pets and Animals section of Council's website or contact our Local Laws team.

## Registration and microchipping

Registering and microchipping your dog or cat greatly improves their chances of being returned to you if they are lost or injured.

All cats and dogs over the age of three months must be microchipped and registered with Council.

To register your cat or dog for the first time:

- complete the Pet Registration Form (available on Council's website or from one of our Customer Service Centres)
- supply proof of desexing and/or microchipping along with your form
- return the form with your fee payment to Council in the mail or in person.

When you register your pet, you will receive a registration tag. Registration renewals are due 10 April each year. Council provides a discount registration for pets that are desexed. Talk to your vet about desexing for more information.

## Dogs on lead

Darebin has so many great parks and reserves where you can walk your dog, both on and off leash. There are some important rules you need to remember when walking your dog.

- Your dog must be kept on a leash at all times when in public places, unless it is in a designated off-leash park.
- Your dog must be kept under control at all times, whether they are on or off-leash.
- You must ensure your dog does not threaten or rush at any person or animal.
- Your dog must be wearing its registration tag at all times when out for a walk.

For more information about where you can walk your dog including off-leash parks visit Council's website.

## Dog poo

When you are out with your dog in public, you must clean up after them. You must carry bags with you at all times when you take your dog for a walk. Council officers regularly patrol parks to ensure people are picking up after their pets.

## Barking dogs

Dogs that bark excessively often become a major problem. If barking is an issue, first speak to your neighbour as they may not even be aware of the issue.

Should initial talks fail, the Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria offers a free and confidential mediation service. For more information visit [www.disputes.vic.gov.au](http://www.disputes.vic.gov.au) or call 1300 372 888.

If you still can't resolve the issue then contact Council. Before lodging your complaint, you will need to keep a seven-day noise log. These logs are available on Council's website.

Council will then make contact with the dog owner and investigate. If satisfied that a breach of the local law exists, Council will take action including issuing Notices to Comply and possible fines.

Dogs can bark excessively for many reasons. Some of the things you can do to help reduce the barking includes:

- taking your dog for regular walks
- making sure your dog has plenty of water to drink and shelter from hot and cold weather
- providing your dog with toys to play with.

You may also want to talk to your vet about excessive barking issues.

For more information on noise issues visit the Public Health and Safety section on Council's website or contact our Local Laws team.



## Confining your pet

It is really important for the safety of the community to make sure your dog is securely confined within your property.

In fact you are legally liable if your dog is not securely confined, which includes having a closed gate and escape proof fencing.

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

Cats also need to be safely confined as they are not allowed to trespass onto other properties.

Confining cats, especially overnight, can help protect them and native wildlife, reduce dog barking and potential issues with neighbours.

More information about cat enclosures and tips and hints to encourage your cat not to wander at night can be found on the Department of Agriculture's website at [www.agriculture.vic.gov.au](http://www.agriculture.vic.gov.au).

## Dog attacks

A dog attack is a serious issue and can lead to court action with substantial fines, financial damages and in some cases even jail time.

For the dogs involved, Council can declare them to be menacing or dangerous and in worst case situations they can be ordered to be destroyed.

If you or your animal have been attacked by a dog, you can report the issue by contacting Council. It is important to write down all the details of the incident as early as possible, when the matter is fresh in your mind, to help the investigation process and if the matter proceeds to court.

## Dangerous dogs

Both Council and the State Government take the issue of dangerous dogs very seriously. Dogs are declared to be dangerous if they have:

- caused serious injury to a person or another animal
- been trained to attack or guard a non-residential premises
- already been declared dangerous by another Council.

There are specific laws for owning dogs that have been declared dangerous. Rules around owning a dangerous dog include:

- using a specific collar, muzzle and lead
- putting up signage on your property
- using special caged enclosures.

A dog can also be declared 'menacing' if it rushes at or chases someone.

## Restricted breed dogs

The State Government introduced legislation in relation to owning and keeping 'Restricted Breed Dogs'. The following breeds are included in this category:

- American Pit Bull Terrier
- Dogo Argentino
- Fila Brasileiro
- Japanese Tosa
- Perro de Presa Canario
- Pit Bull Terrier.

Dogs declared a restricted breed must be identified by an implanted microchip, registered with Council and previously registered with the State Government prior to 1 September 2010. There are specific laws related to keeping these types of dogs.

For more information about the laws governing menacing, dangerous and restricted dog breeds and owner requirements, visit the Department of Agriculture's website at [www.agriculture.vic.gov.au](http://www.agriculture.vic.gov.au).

## Lost and found animals

If you have lost your pet make sure you:

- register their details and a photo on our Darebin Lost Pets Facebook page
- call local animal shelters and vets
- call Council on 8470 8888.

If you have found a stray animal or wish to report a stray or wandering animal, contact Council and advise where the stray or wandering animal is and provide a description. Council will arrange for the animal to be collected and taken to the animal shelter so that it can be reunited with its owner.



## Possible penalties

Although our first priority is to work with the community, State Legislation and the local law enables Council to take further action if required, which includes issuing fines or in more serious cases talking court action.

**Some of the fines that Council can issue for pet related offences include:**

- \$ failure to register or microchip a dog or cat**
- \$ keeping too many animals without a permit**
- \$ a dog escaping from your property**
- \$ failure to have a dog on lead**
- \$ dog attacks**
- \$ not picking up after your dog or carrying dog poo bags**
- \$ failure to have control over your dog in a public place**
- \$ allowing your dog or cat to be a nuisance**

Fines vary depending on the offence committed.

## Animal shelters and enclosures

Council has included in its local law (Local Law No.1) specific rules around building animal shelters or structures.

These rules state that an animal shelter must be:

- at least 6 metres from a dwelling or habitable room on adjoining land
- at least 1.5 metres from the boundary of any adjoining land
- is not higher than 2 metres.

Structures for animals must also have adequate roofing, flooring and drainage and be well maintained, clean and hygienic.

**For more information contact our Local Laws team:**

 **8470 8888**

 **[www.darebin.vic.gov.au](http://www.darebin.vic.gov.au)**

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#### National Relay Service

**TTY** dial 133 677 or  
**Speak & Listen**  
1300 555 727  
or **[iprelay.com.au](http://iprelay.com.au)**  
then enter  
03 8470 8888



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