

Managing an Unidentified Dog

There may be occasions when an uninvited dog manages to enter the Service playground. To ensure children are not placed at risk, all precautions will be taken to minimise the likelihood of this situation, and should it occur, all staff will respond immediately in accordance with this policy.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARDS (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY		
2.2	Safety	Each child is protected.
2.2.1	Supervision	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.
2.2.2	Incident and emergency management	Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practiced and implemented.

QUALITY AREA 7: GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP		
7.1.2	Management Systems	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service.

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS

CHILDREN (EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES) NATIONAL LAW NSW	
104	Fencing
168	Education and care services must have policies and procedures

RELATED POLICIES

Child Safe Environment Policy Health and Safety Policy	Lockdown Policy
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PURPOSE

We aim to ensure that all children, educators, families, and visitors remain safe from unexpected situations such as an uninvited dog entering the playground.

SCOPE

This policy applies to management and staff of the Service.

DEFINITIONS

A **companion animal** is a dog, cat, or other animal prescribed by the regulations and includes pets, working dogs on rural properties, guard dogs, police dogs, and corrective services dog (*Companion Animals Act 1998*).

Approved animal welfare organisation means the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), and the Animal Welfare League.

IMPLEMENTATION

There are many reasons why an uninvited dog may enter a Service playground, whether a companion dog, or a stray. It may be that the dog has been frightened by a thunderstorm and escaped his yard and somehow found his way into ours. It could be that a hungry stray has been attracted to the smell of food scraps, or it may be that a friendly but lonely neighbourhood dog has been attracted to the yard by the sounds of children playing. However regardless of the cause, our Service will take immediate action to ensure the children's safety.

In Australia dogs must be registered and micro-chipped. If a dog is then 'lost', the dog and owner can be reunited by scanning and reading the microchip, which can be done by the local council, a vet, or an approved animal welfare organisation. However, the owner must legally notify the local council within 72 hours of its gone missing so that it can be placed on a 'lost dog register'. It is therefore always best to make the local council the first point of contact should an uninvited dog make its way into a Service playground.

Note that some councils will ask you to bring the dog to them, but as it is illegal to have an unidentified dog at a childcare centre, they will come and collect him/her if made aware that you are calling from a childcare service.

Dog body language: Signs that a dog may be scared or aggressive.

- Shrill barking.
- Teeth bared (may or may not be growling).
- Closed, tight mouth.
- Stiff, rigid body with legs braced.
- Tail held rigid in any position, between the legs, or a slow stiff wag.
- Ears back against the head or flattened (ears pricked up or forward demonstrate interest in something – continue to use caution).
- Hackles raised.
- Staring directly at you.
- Approaching you with head lowered.

As a dog's intent and behaviour can change rapidly, it is always best to exercise caution when the safety of children is involved and treat all dogs as dangerous unless extremely obvious that it is friendly (loose body movements, tail wagging and held high, 'bounding' and 'jumping' on the spot, or not hesitating in enthusiastically approaching people).

Source: Best Friends Animal Society (2018); Dog's Home (2014); Pet Source (2010).

Management will ensure that:

- Any outdoor area that is used by children is enclosed by a fence that prevents the intrusion of unwanted dogs and/or other animals.
- Following the entry of an uninvited dog into the playground, immediate steps will be taken to secure the fencing to eliminate the possibility of this situation being repeated.
- The external rubbish bin is not filled to a point that the lid will not securely close, and all staff are aware to tightly bag all food scraps before placing them in the bin to avoid attracting hungry strays.
- Educators are proactive in ensuring all children use the playground rubbish bins if eating outside.
- All staff follow the policies and procedures of our Service.

Nominated Supervisor / Educators will:

- Calmly guide children indoors by approaching groups of children and giving instruction to quietly move inside: Shouting to all children or using a bell could frighten the dog (If a dog has entered the yard during or just after a thunderstorm, the children will likely already be inside).

- If the position of the dog is preventing the children's re-entry to the building, children will be guided quietly via the emergency playground exit to enter the building from the front door.

For extremely friendly dogs only:

- A friendly dog will generally come running to you if you beckon: Stand still and speak softly to the dog and offer the back of your hand for him to sniff. Remain motionless while you allow the dog time to explore your hand. Always remain wary to ensure he continues to display signs of non-threatening behaviour.
- Check to see if the dog is wearing a collar and tag. If so, the owner can be contacted. Whilst waiting for the owner to collect the dog, secure it in a location away from the playground, ensuring it has shade and fresh drinking water. If the owner offers a reward, do not accept it: Part of belonging to a community is doing the 'right thing' without expectation of a reward for doing so.
- If the phone number on the tag is incorrect, or the owner does not answer the phone nor return your call within a reasonable time frame, call your local council and advise them of the situation.
- If the dog does not have a tag, call your local council and advise them of the situation.
- Do not allow the dog to be taken into the custody of any staff member or family with the intent of displaying 'found' posters in the community as this frequently attracts persons who dishonestly claim ownership of expensive breeds to then sell.

For all other dogs:

- Avoid confronting the dog: Do not try to chase it out of the playground or touch it.
- Contact the local council immediately and advise them of the situation. Ensure that you tell them the dog is in a childcare centre.
- Ensure the children remain inside until the dog has been collected.
- Provide support for children who are afraid of dogs.

Educators will:

- Discuss with the children how to behave with a dog or puppy (e.g. calmly, no aggressive patting, no pulling tails, use quiet voices, etc.) as part of the curriculum to minimise the risk of provoked dog attacks outside the Service.
- Develop children's understanding that the owner should always be asked before patting a dog.
- Teach children how to tell if a dog is happy, scared, or aggressive *but* ensure they know never to approach a strange dog.

DOG REGISTRATION AND MICROCHIPPING REQUIREMENTS

VICTORIA (VIC)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dogs must be registered with the local council by three months of age. • Section 10C of the <i>Domestic Animals Act 1994</i> requires dogs to be micro-chipped as a condition of registration.

Source: RSPCA Australia

Source

Best Friends Animal Society. (2018). *Dog body language*. <https://bestfriends.org/resources/dog-body-language>

Companion Animals Act 1998: http://www8.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdb/au/legis/nsw/consol_act/caa1998174/

RSPCA Australia: www.rspca.org.au

Dog’s Home. (2014). *Don’t pet that dog: 3 signs most people don’t know*. <https://www.dogshomepa.org/dont-pet-that-dog-3-signs-most-people-dont-know/>

NSW Government. Office of Local Government: <https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/public/dogs-and-cats/information-for-the-community/lost-and-found-cats-and-dogs>

Pet Source. (2010). *How to approach a strange dog*. <http://www.petsource.org/dog-behaviour/844-dog-behaviour.html>

Royal Society for the Protection of Animals NSW (RSPCA): www.rspcansw.org.au

Victoria State Government: *Stray cats and dogs*. <http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/pets/care-and-welfare/stray-and-unwanted-animals-in-society/found-a-lost,-stray-or-injured-animal>

REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED	January 2019	NEXT REVIEW DATE	January 2020
MODIFICATIONS	New policy created.		