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## Dog Attack Information Sheet

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### What is a dog attack?

According to the *Dog Act (1976)*, a dog attack may include any of the following behaviours towards another person or animal:

- Aggressively rushing towards, harassing, biting or other physical injury
- Causing damage to property, such as tearing clothing
- attempting to attack, or causing fear for personal safety

### Be a responsible dog owner

As a dog owner you are legally responsible for your dog. You can prevent your dog from causing an attack by:

- Ensuring your dog doesn't wander unsupervised
- Installing secure fencing with regular checks
- Exercising your dog on a lead

Dogs are permitted off the lead in designated dog exercise areas, however owners are still responsible for the control and behaviour of their animal.

### Preventing a dog attack

Should your dog become involved in an incident, having it on a lead will help you separate it from other animals. If your dog is approached by one that is off the lead, you may:

- Ask the dog's owner (if nearby) to restrain their animal
- Leave by backing away slowly
- Try to tell the threatening dog to stay or sit

Do not:

- Scream or shout
- Turn and run
- Approach or rush towards the aggressive dog
- Strike or kick the dog
- Look the dog in the eye
- Disturb a dog that is sleeping, eating, or caring for puppies
- Pat a dog without allowing it to see you and sniff you first

### Aggressive dogs

Understanding a dog's body language can help you avoid an attack. Some signs of aggression include:

- Growling, snarling or curling the upper lip
- A slow, stiff and upright approach towards people or dogs
- Tail horizontal or upright (can be wagging)
- A direct stare
- Raised hackles (the fur along the spine)

If your dog displays anxiety, tenseness or nervousness when it is touched, approached, when there is food around or its bed or toys are moved, you should seek professional help to overcome the early signs of aggression and avoid escalation of the issue.

### **If you are involved in a dog attack**

If you or your dog is involved in an incident, the immediate concern is for the safety of the effected people and animals. Once this has been confirmed, it is important to contact the Town of Claremont Ranger Services on 9285 4300. If this is outside office hours, you will be directed to a call centre and a message conveyed to the Senior Ranger. Please note all details of the incident, including any witnesses, their contact details, animal names and descriptions as this may be used as evidence in an investigation.

### **The role of the Town of Claremont in a dog attack**

The Town of Claremont is responsible for investigating dog attacks to ensure the safety of the community. In the event of an attack, staff will:

- Ensure the dog is not a threat to the community
- Ensure the victim is safe
- Contact the parties involved, including witnesses, to gather evidence
- Mediate an outcome for all involved parties

Depending on the circumstances of the attack, court action may be taken at the Town's discretion.

### **Fines and penalties**

If your dog is involved in an attack, you can be fined up to \$10,000.

