



responsible pet ownership in the ballina shire

Pets are much loved family members and it is very upsetting when a pet goes missing or gets lost.

There are a number of simple measures that will help make it easier to reunite an owner with their pet if it ever goes missing.

REGISTERING YOUR PETS

The NSW Companion Animals Act 1998 requires all dogs and cats in NSW to be microchipped by the age of 12 weeks and registered for life by six months of age.

COLLARS AND TAGS FOR PETS

All dogs and cats must wear a collar and have a tag that shows the name of the animal and address or telephone number of the owner of the animal.

While these requirements only apply whilst the animal is not on their owner's property, it is a good idea to make sure pets can always be easily identified.

PICK UP WHAT YOUR DOG DROPS

Are you the type of dog owner who carries a plastic bag and picks up their dog's poo?

Or are you the owner who turns the other way when their dog defecates...pretending not to notice...perhaps kicking sand over the mess so some unsuspecting beach-goer will end up with it oozing between their toes?

There are a lot of people who do not clean up after their dogs and this is a constant source of irritation for other members of the community.

Aside from being unsightly, there are health and environmental reasons for picking up your dog's droppings. It helps to decrease the amount of nutrients entering waterways and reduces the risk of diseases being spread from direct or indirect human contact with faeces.

All dog owners are required by law to clean up after their pets if they defecate in a public place. Failure to do so could mean a fine of \$275.

BARKING DOGS

Barking dogs are a common complaint made to Council. These matters are often very difficult to resolve because:

- Different people have different views about what is a noise nuisance. This varies from the location of the dog in relation to the person making the complaint; the noise tolerance level of the complainant; the type of barking and the time/length of the barking.
- Gathering evidence and completing a "barking dog" diary is time consuming and difficult.
- Council Rangers require the person making the complaint to be a witness in Court and provide evidence if the matter is to proceed.
- The owners are often unaware their dog is barking excessively.

Council encourages people to discuss their concerns regarding nuisance barking with the owner of the dog before lodging a complaint with Council. The dog owner may not be aware their dog is barking, particularly if it is only when they are out.

In most cases owners want to do the right thing and will cooperate.

DOG ATTACKS

Council Rangers have noticed an increase in the number of dog attacks being reported to and investigated by Council.

It is an offence for a dog to attack a person or animal (other than vermin). If a dog rushes at, attacks, bites, harasses or chases any person or animal (other than vermin), whether or not injury is caused to a person or animal, the owner of the dog or if the owner is not present at the time of the offence the person in charge of the dog at that time is guilty of an offence.

Fines may be issued by Council for a dog attack to the value of \$550 and if Court action is taken a maximum penalty of \$5500 may apply for a dog attack.

Following the recent dog attacks in NSW the Government has passed new legislation under the Companion Animals Act 1998, that give Councils the power to target dogs deemed “menacing”, even if they have never killed or caused injury. A dog that has tried to attack a person and/or animal, or has displayed “aggressive tendencies” may be considered menacing under the amendments to the Act. If Council declares a dog menacing an owner will be required to desex the dog, keep them muzzled and leashed, and in the control of a person over the age of 18 years every time they are out in the public.

LIABILITY FOR INJURY OR DEATH CAUSED BY A DOG

Dog owners need to be aware that as the owner of a dog that has attacked they are liable for bodily injury to a person and damage to the personal property of a person.

The owner of a dog is also liable for damages in respect of injury (whether or not fatal) to another animal (other than vermin) caused by the dog attacking or chasing it.

companion animals management plan

Ballina Shire Council has a Companion Animals Management Plan. The Plan acknowledges the importance of pets to many people and works with the community to promote responsible pet ownership, and to provide a healthy environment in which animals, their owners and the wider community can comfortably live.

The Management Plan not only outlines off-leash areas for dogs in the shire, it also defines where dogs are not allowed. One prohibited area is the Flat Rock Reef which is exposed at low tide. This reef is an important site for migratory and shore birds.

KEEP YOUR POOCH UNDER CONTROL & STOP ROAMING DOGS

Most dogs are generally well behaved but there are always exceptions. In the interests of public safety, State legislation mandates that Ballina Shire Council require all dogs in public places be on an adequate chain, cord or leash that is controlled by a competent person over 16 years of age.

If a person is found to allow their dog to be uncontrolled in a public place they may be issued with a fine exceeding \$330.

Rangers prefer not to issue fines but they do patrol the Ballina Shire and will fine people who are not responsible.

DOG PROHIBITED AREAS

Because of the popularity of some beaches and the presence of migratory and shore birds, dogs are not allowed on:

- ⊗ Shelly Beach
- ⊗ Lighthouse Beach
- ⊗ Seven Mile Beach, south of identified beach access track located just north of Lennox Head/Alstonville S.L.S.C., Lennox Head
- ⊗ Flat Rock Reef
- ⊗ The Serpentine
- ⊗ Sharpes Beach (northern end of Sharpes Beach during summer when the beach is patrolled)
- ⊗ Shaws Bay
- ⊗ Chickiba Lake (north-eastern corner surrounding the migratory and shore birds roosting area)
- ⊗ Lake Ainsworth & surrounding foreshore/reserve
- ⊗ Fire Trail, end Camp Drew Rd, Lennox Head
- ⊗ Areas as defined under section 14 of the Companion Animals Act 1998 (NSW).
- ⊗ Areas as indicated on Council signage in various areas.

If a person is found to allow their dog in a prohibited area they may be issued with a fine of up to \$330.

OFF-LEASH DOG EXERCISE AREAS

Council recognises the importance of dogs being allowed time to exercise unrestrained and there are six off-leash areas in the shire. Dogs can exercise, roam freely and socialise under the supervision of its owner or person in charge at the following designated off-leash areas:

- ✔ Bicentennial Gardens, the northern area of the reserve, Ballina
- ✔ Compton Drive, East Ballina
- ✔ Gap Road, Alstonville
- ✔ Seven Mile Beach, north of Lake Ainsworth, (old 4WD access point), Lennox Head
- ✔ Ballina Heights Estate, eastern reserve area, Ballina Heights
- ✔ Headlands Drive Drainage Reserve, Skennars Head
- ✔ The Spit, Ballina

Dog and cat owners are encouraged to view the Companion Animals Act 1998 (NSW) and the Companion Animals Regulation 2008 (NSW) for further information on effective and responsible care and management of companion animals. Visit www.legislation.nsw.gov.au.

