

This fact sheet sets out your **main responsibilities** as the keeper of a dog in the ACT.

For information on **dog attacks**, please refer to our brochure *Dog attacks and dogs 'declared dangerous'*.

Serious penalties can apply if your dog attacks or harasses a person or other animal. Your dog may be declared 'dangerous' for life or put down. Fines and compensation for any injury or property damage may also apply.

Some defences can apply to a dog attack scenario, such as if the dog is provoked or if the dog comes to the aid of his or her keeper.

More information

For more information about the law relating to dogs in the ACT, get in touch with us at contact@ado.org.au

DISCLAIMER

While all care has been taken in preparing the information on this fact sheet, it is not a substitute for legal advice. For any specific questions we recommend you seek legal advice. The Animal Defenders Office accepts no responsibility for any loss or damage suffered by people relying on the information on this fact sheet.

About us

The Animal Defenders Office (ADO) is a nationally accredited community legal centre that specialises in animal law.

Our mission is to use the law to protect animals, which includes:

- providing free advice about animals and the law;
- increasing public awareness of how the law affects animals;
- working to reform the law to improve protection for animals.

How to help

The ADO relies solely on the generosity of the public to stay in operation. We do not receive any government assistance, and all our lawyers and staff are volunteers.

If you would like to support us, you can find out how on our website at www.ado.org.au.

Thank you.

ANIMAL DEFENDERS OFFICE Inc. (ADO)

Phone: 0428 416 857

Email: contact@ado.org.au

Web: www.ado.org.au

ABN: 12837355070

Member: Community Legal Centres Australia Inc.

DOGS and the LAW in the ACT



Animal Defenders
Office

Using the law to protect animals



R* & G* – two dogs helped by the ADO

Dogs and the law in the ACT

The main law that covers dogs in the ACT is the *Domestic Animals Act 2000* ('the Act'). It sets out rules about keeping dogs, such as:

- Registering and microchipping your dog;
- Desexing your dog;
- Keeping your dog under control in public places;
- Ensuring that your dog is not a 'nuisance';
- Ensuring that your dog does not attack or harass others.

The Act is administered by DAS. If you breach the Act you could be fined or be charged with offences and prosecuted in court, and your dog could be seized.

The *Animal Welfare (Welfare of Dogs in the ACT) Code of Practice 2010* contains guidelines for issues such as responsible ownership, housing, exercise, lost and unwanted dogs, etc.

Registration

All dogs over 8 weeks old must be registered in the ACT, even if registered in another State or Territory.

Dogs must be registered every 12 months in the ACT. You may be fined if you don't register your dog or if you fail to comply with a reminder notice asking you to confirm the information about you and your dog on the ACT dog register.

If you have had your dog in the ACT, or you have been living here, for less than 28 days, then your dog does not have to be registered in the ACT.

Microchipping

All dogs in the ACT **must** be microchipped from the time they are 12 weeks old. Dogs can be microchipped by DAS or a veterinarian.

Desexing

All dogs in the ACT must be desexed, unless:

- the dog is less than 6 months old; or
- the dog was born before 21 June 2001; or
- you have a permit from DAS to keep a dog who is not desexed.

Anyone who breeds a litter from a dog needs a breeding **licence** (not just breeders). It is an offence to breed a litter from a dog without a licence.

Public places

If your dog is in a public place, you must:

- keep your dog on a leash except in designated off-leash areas;
- have your dog under 'effective control', at all times, even in off-leash areas;
- remove your dog's droppings;
- carry appropriate equipment to pick up your dog's droppings;
- not leave your dog unattended in public;
- not take your dog within 10 metres of a playground with children in it, or a public BBQ, or certain swimming areas; and
- not take a female dog who is on heat into a public place.

Greyhounds in the ACT do not have to wear a muzzle when in public.

Under the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code, food businesses can allow any pet dog in **outdoor dining areas** (Standard 3.2.2, 24(3)).

Multiple dogs

Up to 3 dogs can be kept in a private residence without a licence. To keep 4 or more dogs in the one home, a resident will need to apply to DAS for a 'multiple dog licence'.

Noise complaints

If your dog causes excessive disturbance to another person as a result of barking, this can be considered 'animal nuisance'.

The barking has to be excessive (i.e. more than occasional barking), and the behaviour should occur over a prolonged period (usually more than 3 weeks). Nuisance complaints are made to DAS, who will investigate the complaint and take appropriate action.

- **For keepers:** Excessive barking can be the result of underlying behavioural issues (eg anxiety, boredom or loneliness) or issues related to the dog's care (eg not getting enough exercise). Keepers should seek help for dogs who exhibit this behavior.
- **For others:** If you are thinking about making a complaint about another person's dog, you should first try to speak to the dog's keeper. You may also wish to contact the Conflict Resolution Service (<http://www.crs.org.au/>) to receive free dispute management advice.

Terminology

Carer: in relation to a dog, means a person over 14 years of age who is in charge of the dog at a particular time.

DAS: means the Domestic Animal Services, run by the ACT Government.

Keeper: in relation to a dog, means either a registered keeper of a dog or the owner of an unregistered dog.

