

Responsible Pet Ownership - Dogs

Frequently Asked Questions



Introduction

The Central Coast has by far the highest number of registered dogs in NSW. The region is also known as one of the most dog friendly in the state with many visitors coming to the Coast to make use of our dog friendly beaches and parks. Owning a pet is highly rewarding.

Your dog is your responsibility

Many people enjoy having a dog for companionship, social interaction and a sense of security. And while dogs are a big part of our lives, owners must be aware of their responsibilities, not only to their dog, but to the wider community.

How many identified dogs are on the Central Coast?

The NSW Companion Animals Register (CAR) is a website database for dogs and cats microchipped and registered under the NSW Companion Animals Act 1998. In March 2021, there were approximately 140,000 dogs identified on the CAR as residing within the Central Coast LGA.

What should I be doing to look after my dog and be a good owner?

Owning a dog is highly rewarding, but it's important to remember **your dog is your responsibility**. If you are a dog owner you have a responsibility to:

- Ensure your dog does not pose a safety risk to people or other animals in the community.
- Microchip and lifetime register your dog, and attach a collar and

identification tag.

- Secure your dog safely on your property.
- **Desex your dog**, which prevents potential behavioural and health issues.
- Provide adequate exercise, training and socialisation.
- Provide adequate shelter, fresh clean water and nutritionally enriched food.
- When out in public – **keep your dog on a lead!**
- When out in public in a designated off-leash area, you must have **effective control** of your dog.
- Always clean up and properly dispose of your dog's faeces.

How can I stay safe around dogs?

Never approach a dog you do not know. Make sure you always get permission from an owner before patting a dog, and never pat a dog when the owner is not present.

Be aware of a dog's behaviour, and if a dog puts its ears back, curls its tail under its legs or has raised hair on the back, leave it alone.

Remember to always supervise children around dogs. For more information about safety around dogs, please visit the NSW [Office of Local Government website](#).

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How can I keep my dog safe around other dogs?

Make sure your dog is safely contained in your yard. Your dog should not be able to go over, under or through your fence or gate.

For your dog's safety and the safety of others, **keep your dog on a lead** and under the control of a competent person when out in public places.

If you are concerned about using open space off-leash areas, Council offers a number of enclosed dog parks across the Central Coast, including a designated small dog park at Tuggerah Dog Park. In addition, there are a number of dedicated dog-walking community groups which provide a great opportunity to socialise whilst exercising your dog.

What is Council doing to ensure the community is practising responsible pet ownership?

Some of the proactive measures in place to ensure the community is practising responsible pet ownership include:

- Development of a Central Coast Responsible Pet Ownership Policy.
- Annual responsible pet ownership education program, which includes free bi-annual microchipping events, subsidised desexing, safety around dogs preschool programs and workshops, and educational guides which are available to the community through Council's customer service centres, libraries and local veterinary practices.
- Regular direct communication with the

community on responsible pet ownership and their responsibilities both to their pet and the wider community.

- Annual inspection program for dogs declared Menacing, Restricted or Dangerous under the Companion Animal Act 1998, to ensure owners are complying with the control requirements.
- Regular routine patrols of beaches and reserves to address the issue of unleashed dogs.
- Signage at dog-friendly locations and known popular walking spots.
- Responding to complaints of roaming dogs and impounding unattended dogs.
- Swift investigation of nuisance dog behaviour reports and aggressive dog incidents and enforcement action where appropriate for breaches of the Companion Animal Act.

What is the Central Coast Responsible Dog Ownership Policy?

At its meeting of 27 April 2021, Council Administrator Mr Dick Persson resolved that Council would develop a Responsible Dog Ownership Policy which clearly sets community expectations of pet owners on the Central Coast.

The policy will include a zero-tolerance approach for dog attacks with mandatory penalties for dog attacks that result in the death of another dog.

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The Central Coast Responsible Dog Ownership Policy will go on public exhibition in the next few months.

What is a dog attack?

Under the Companion Animals Act 1998, a dog attack is defined as a dog rushing at, attacking, biting, harassing or chasing any person or animal (other than vermin), whether or not any injury is caused to the person or animal. This means that even if a dog rushes at a person from behind a fence, it is classified and reported as a dog attack.

Why does the Central Coast keep topping the list for dog attacks in NSW?

The Central Coast currently has over 140,000 identified dogs, the largest dog population in NSW. This directly influences the overall total number of attacks.

However, if you look at the percentage of attacks compared to the overall dog population, the Central Coast region does not have the highest rate of dog attacks compared to other Local Government Areas, actually ranking equal 6th along with Lake Macquarie and Blacktown Councils (see Appendix A).

What should I do if there is a dog attack?

If you witness a dog attack, or you or your dog are attacked by a dog, report it to Council urgently on 1300 463 954.

You will be asked for:

1. Your contact information
2. Location of attack
3. Date and time of the attack
4. Details of the dog – breed, colour, size and

sex

5. Dog's address, if known
6. If there were any injuries as a result of the attack
7. Witnesses to attack and their details
8. If the dog is currently loose
9. Any photos of the dog or injuries sustained, if possible

A person reporting a dog attack may be required to make a formal statement to support their claim of the attack. Council may rely on this statement to proceed with formal action such as an infringement or a Dangerous Dog Order.

What is Council's role when a dog attack is reported?

All dog attacks reported to Council are considered very serious allegations. Council Officers thoroughly investigate reports of dog attacks on persons or animals in accordance with the provisions of the Companion Animal Act, 1998. If adequate evidence is obtained, then Council will proceed with appropriate enforcement action, which can include an on the spot **fine of \$1,320 for the attack**.

If a Dangerous, Menacing or Restricted Dog order is issued, it is Council's responsibility to ensure the dog owner complies with the control requirements. If the control requirements are not complied with, Council is authorised to seize the declared dog.

Am I legally liable if my dog attacks another animal or person?

Yes - As a dog owner, you are liable if your dog attacks a person or another animal.

While the *Companion Animals Act 1998* gives

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certain protection to an owner whose dog attacks as a result of a person or an animal trespassing onto the property on which the dog is kept, other forms of liability may still apply.

Remember your dog, is your responsibility.

What is the State Government's role in Responsible Pet Ownership around dogs and around dog attacks?

The NSW State Government is responsible for the legislation which governs companion animal management and dog attacks in NSW.

Council carries out all functions in accordance with NSW State Government legislation & regulations.

The Office of Local Government is also responsible for the officers who carry out the breed and temperament assessments for dogs that are declared a restricted breed.

What is a restricted breed and who decides what dog breeds are restricted?

In NSW, a restricted breed is one of the following:

- American Pitbull terrier or Pitbull terrier
- Japanese Tosa
- Dogo Argentino (Argentinean fighting dog)
- Fila Brasileiro (Brazilian fighting dog)
- Any other dog of a breed, kind or description, whose importation into Australia is prohibited by, or under, the Customs Act 1901 of the Commonwealth
- Any dog declared by an authorised officer of a council, under division 6 of the Companion Animals Act 1998, to be a restricted dog.

Are there different laws around keeping restricted dog breeds?

Yes - If you are the owner of a restricted dog, you must ensure that:

- your dog is microchipped and registered
- your dog is desexed
- you have a valid annual permit for the dog
- your dog is contained in an enclosure that complies with the requirements (you must also obtain a certificate of compliance from Council, certifying that the enclosure meets the requirements)
- you display dangerous dog warning signs
- your dog always wears a prescribed collar
- your dog wears a muzzle and is always securely leashed when outside the enclosure
- your dog is not left in the care of a person under 18 years of age
- you let Council know if: your dog has attacked or injured a person or animal (must notify within 24 hours of the attack or injury)
- your dog cannot be found (must notify within 24 hours of your dog's absence first being noticed)
- your dog has died (must notify as soon as practicable after the dog's death)
- your dog will no longer be kept in the same council area
- your dog will be kept at a different location in the same council area
- you do not breed from, or advertise as available for breeding, your dog prior to desexing
- you do not transfer ownership of your dog.

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- you do not sell (sell includes giving away) your dog or advertise it for sale.

What is a temperament assessment, who conducts it and what does it mean?

A dog can be declared a Restricted Breed if an authorised Council Officer believes the dog to be one of the breeds or a crossbreed of one of the breeds on the restricted breed list.

A Notice of Intention (NOI) to declare the dog restricted will be sent to the dog's owner. At this time the option to have the dog's breed and temperament assessed is available.

A temperament assessment is conducted ONLY when a Breed Assessor has established that the dog concerned is a crossbreed of a restricted breed. A breed and temperament assessment can only be carried out by an Office of Local Government approved Assessor. Central Coast Council does not have any involvement with this process.

The temperament assessment process establishes whether a dog is a danger to the public and is likely, without provocation, to attack or bite any person or animal.

What power does Council have to intervene if a dog is declared a restricted breed?

An owner can be issued with a penalty notice for failure to comply with any control requirements, and a court can impose a maximum \$16,500 fine if a dangerous or restricted dog attacks or bites another person or if an incident is the result of the owner's failure to comply.

Can someone own a dog that is a crossbreed of a restricted breed?

Yes - if the dog has undergone a breed assessment that confirms it is a crossbreed AND the dog also successfully passes a temperament assessment carried out by an approved Assessor.

Any other questions or feedback?

Please contact Council on 1300 463 954 during business hours.

Related resources

State legislation and policy

- [NSW Companion Animals Act 1998](#)

Office of Local Government

- [The NSW Pet Registry](#)
- [Office of Local Government – Dog Attack Information](#)
- [Office of Local Government – Responsible Pet Ownership](#)

Central Coast Council

- [Responsible Pet Ownership – Cats and Dogs](#)
- [Pet Identification and Registration](#)
- [Neighbourhood concerns](#)
- [Animals Care Facilities](#)
- [Dog parks, beaches and off-leash locations](#)
- [Dangerous Dogs Factsheet](#)
- [Pets and protecting wildlife](#)

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Appendix A: Dog Statistics – Local Government Areas

Number of registered dogs	
Central Coast Council	134,845
Lake Macquarie Council	88,698
Blacktown City Council	88,300
Wollongong City Council	63,914
Northern Beaches Council	60,174
Newcastle City Council	54,316
Shoalhaven City Council	48,888
Maitland City Council	38,620
Cessnock City Council	38,536
City of Sydney Council	25,274
Ryde City Council	16,083

Total number of attacks	
Central Coast Council	292
Northern Beaches Council	232
Lake Macquarie Council	197
Blacktown City Council	193
Shoalhaven City Council	178
Wollongong City Council	160
City of Sydney Council	140
Maitland City Council	122
Newcastle City Council	81
Cessnock City Council	69
Ryde City Council	62

% of attacks per population	
City of Sydney Council	0.55%
Northern Beaches Council	0.39%
Ryde City Council	0.39%
Shoalhaven City Council	0.36%
Maitland City Council	0.32%
Wollongong City Council	0.25%
Central Coast Council	0.22%
Lake Macquarie Council	0.22%
Blacktown City Council	0.22%
Cessnock City Council	0.18%
Newcastle City Council	0.15%

Dog density per km ²	
City of Sydney Council	1011
Ryde City Council	392
Blacktown City Council	358
Newcastle City Council	290
Northern Beaches Council	237
Lake Macquarie Council	137
Maitland City Council	99
Wollongong City Council	93
Central Coast Council	80
Cessnock City Council	20
Shoalhaven City Council	11

LGA area km ²	
Shoalhaven City Council	4567
Cessnock City Council	1966
Central Coast Council	1681
Wollongong City Council	684
Lake Macquarie Council	648
Maitland City Council	392
Northern Beaches Council	254
Blacktown City Council	246.6
Newcastle City Council	187
Ryde City Council	41
City of Sydney Council	25