

Responsible  
ownership  
of farm  
working  
dogs



This brochure outlines legal and health issues that owners of farm working dogs must be aware of. Advice on topics that apply to dog ownership in general, no matter whether you live in urban or rural areas, is covered in separate brochures. There are brochures about pet registration and identification, barking dogs, dog attack prevention, dangerous dogs, and general pet care guidelines.

Please contact your local council to obtain free copies of these publications. Your local veterinarian can also be a good source of information.



# Section 1 - Legal issues

**There are a number of legal issues that owners of farm working dogs in particular must be aware of to avoid prosecution.**

**Where the owner of a dog is under 18 years of age, their parent or guardian will be deemed the legal owner of the dog in the event of any penalties or prosecutions.**

## 1. Dogs on moving vehicles

Dogs can suffer terrible injuries if not secured properly while on moving vehicles. They can be hit by other cars or suffer strangulation when their leash has allowed them to fall over the vehicle's side.

It is a legal requirement to secure dogs on moving vehicles (e.g. utes, trays, and trailers) so they cannot fall or jump from, or be injured from the movement of, the vehicle.

Dogs on utes need extra care in the hot weather. If using a metal cage to transport dogs, ensure it has a roof to provide shade, and that the sides are well ventilated (e.g. meshed rather than solid material). It is also advisable to cover metal floors of cages (and if tethering, the tray floor) with a surface such as rubber, as metal can heat up quickly and burn dogs' paws.

This law does not apply to dogs when they are in the process of moving stock.

When securing dogs, ensure the restraint is long enough to allow the dog to stand, lie down and move about, but doesn't enable the dog's front or hind legs to reach the side of the tray when the dog is standing normally. Attach the restraint by a swivel to an anchor point against the vehicle cabin. Fix the other end of the chain to the dog's harness or leather collar with another swivel to stop the chain from tangling. There is a penalty for breaking this law under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986*.

**It is a legal requirement to secure dogs on moving vehicles (eg utes, trays, and trailers) so they cannot fall or jump from, or be injured from the movement of the vehicle.**

## 2. Registration

Under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, all dogs three months of age and over must be registered with the local council. Existing registrations must be renewed by 10 April each year. Dogs must wear their council identification marker when off the property. Check with your council to find out how many dogs you can keep before you need to get a permit for excess animals.

Registering and identifying dogs improves their chances of being returned to you if they become lost. Registration fees also provide a wide range of other important services. You are eligible for reduced registration fees if your dog meets the definition of a farm working dog under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*. To be eligible, you must be engaged in

primary production as your primary source of income. Your dog must herd, drive, protect, tend or work stock on land used solely or primarily for primary production.

Dogs registered with local council as farm working dogs do not count towards a property's fertile female dog breeding limit. If you keep farm working dogs entire, there is no requirement to register as a Domestic Animal Business (DAB) nor meet the Code of Practice for the Operation of Breeding and Rearing Businesses 2014 (revision 2018). However, if you keep more than three female dogs entire for the purpose of breeding, and they are not registered with council as farm working dogs, you must register as a breeding domestic animal business, regardless of the breed of dog.

Working dog breeds, such as border collies or kelpies, bred for the pet market that are not primarily kept or trained for the purpose of driving, protecting, tending, or working stock on a farm are not captured in the definition and cannot be registered as a farm working dog.

Please contact your local council for further details.

Dogs being registered for the first time must be microchipped prior to registration. This gives dogs a permanent means of identification, and ensures they can be returned to you if they become lost and lose their collar and tag identification. You can be fined if you fail to comply with registration requirements.

**It is an offence to knowingly register a non-farm working dog as a farm working dog.**

### 3. Housing

Ideally, dogs should be kept in securely fenced areas, or where adequate fencing is not available, in pens. The use of electronic collar containment systems does not constitute adequate fencing (the use of these collars is also regulated under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986*). Tethering should only be considered as a last resort and regulations that apply to tethered dogs are discussed in the next section. Regardless of how they are housed, dogs must always have ready access to a kennel, shed or other protection from the elements and for sleeping. Kennels should be of an appropriate size for the particular animal, have adequate ventilation, and if made of metal, should be kept out of direct sunlight or should be effectively insulated.

Dogs also require daily exercise appropriate to the age, health, working status and breed of the individual animal. Tethered dogs should be allowed off for a minimum of two hours daily.

Pens should provide enough space for each dog to comfortably move about and lie down, and provide areas for urinating and defecating that are well away from feeding and sleeping areas. Pens need to be drained appropriately to allow water to run off, and kept hygienic with regular cleaning (it may also be necessary to seal the surface of pens). A separate pen should be used for any whelping bitches.

You can be fined under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* if your dog is not securely confined to your property.



Regardless of how they are housed, dogs must always have ready access to a kennel, shed or other protection from the elements and for sleeping.

## 4. Tethering of farm working dogs

While tethering is not recommended, where it is unavoidable, the "Code of practice for the tethering of animals" (call 136 186 for a free copy) sets out a number of safety requirements, as follows:

- A suitable tethering site should be chosen that is reasonably flat, free of obstructions (including rocks), and not be situated in a waterlogged or flood prone area.
- Dogs must not be tethered adjacent to a fence or other obstacle in a manner that places them at danger of death by hanging.
- The site must provide a minimum tether radius of three metres allowing six metres of run.
- A suitable kennel must be provided for shelter from the elements and for sleeping.
- Dogs must be able to easily reach their kennel and water supply.
- The location of the kennel must not cause a threat of entanglement.
- The acceptable material for a tether is metal chain.
- Fixed and running tethers require the fitting of an appropriate collar, with a swivel to which the tether is attached. Fixed tethers must be fixed to an anchor point (preferably with another swivel) that allows 360 degrees of

movement at ground level, and allows the dog to cover the area without tangling. Running tethers must have a strong wire that is secured at either end to trees, fences or posts, but must have stops at either end to ensure the tether cannot become entangled or injure the dog.

- As a duty of care you are legally responsible for the welfare and supervision of any dogs that you have tethered. Tethered dogs must be inspected regularly (e.g. at least twice during daylight hours in each 24 hour period, and increased to three times or more in very hot weather).

All tethered dogs should be let off tethers at least two hours per day during daylight hours.

- Collars, tether chains, swivels, wires and anchor points must be regularly inspected for signs of wear.
- Dogs must not be tied closely together unless under very close supervision.
- Dogs less than four months old should not be tethered.
- Dogs must be closely monitored when tethered for the first time, until it is certain they have adapted to tethering.
- Bitches in season must not be tethered where entire males may have access.
- Bitches about to give birth must not be tethered.

## 5. Health

You are responsible for providing an adequate level of health care for dogs in your possession to avoid prosecution under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986*. There are requirements for adequate nutrition and health care standards.

Within these legal obligations you are required to attend promptly to issues of animal welfare. This legal obligation includes providing appropriate pain relief and veterinary care to injured dogs.

See the next section in this booklet for detailed information about health issues that can affect farm working dogs.

## 6. Attacks on stock

Under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, you can face substantial fines and claims for damages if your dog attacks a person or animal. Dogs found guilty of an attack can also be humanely destroyed or declared dangerous (resulting in very strict controls on the dog's housing, exercise and ownership). In addition, the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* allows, under certain conditions, the owner of livestock to immediately destroy dogs found at large near livestock (i.e. in the place where livestock are confined or in the vicinity in which they are tethered).

Even friendly domestic dogs or farm working dogs that would never attack a person can still attack stock if allowed to wander unsupervised. There are a number of things you can do to prevent dog attacks:

- Ensure your dogs are always securely confined when not working (see "Housing" section for details).
- Never allow dogs to play with livestock (during play dogs learn the hunting skills for later attacks).
- Don't encourage other dogs to visit your property (even if they belong to a neighbour).
- Check your property boundaries regularly, keeping fences repaired and gates closed. Attacking dogs could enter via open gates and through, over or under the weakest parts of fences.
- Listen for signs of attacks – don't ignore disturbances during the night (for instance, the sound of stock running or prolonged barking by your own dogs may indicate an attack).

You will need to be on alert for several weeks after an attack, as dogs will often return to an attack site.

- Check your livestock regularly – count them each morning and look for minor injuries or behaviour changes (for instance, huddling in small groups, staying close to the house, or avoiding certain parts of the paddock).
- You can use other animals (e.g. horses, donkeys, cattle, alpacas and Maremma flock protector dogs) as protection for livestock such as sheep and goats, if kept in the same paddock with them.

If other dogs attacking your own livestock are a problem, there are a number of things you can do:

- Firstly, notify your local council. Your council can send out an officer to collect the dogs and will be able to inform you about where you stand legally with respect to this threat to your stock.
- Try to give an accurate description of the attacking dog or dogs. If safe to do so, you may be able to catch friendly dogs (some dogs involved in stock attacks may be quite safe when around humans).
- Immediately treat injured livestock – few animals are killed outright by dogs, but they can suffer serious injuries that may require veterinary treatment or may have to be destroyed humanely.

- If the dogs cannot be identified and caught or destroyed, you will need to be on alert for several weeks after an attack, as dogs will often return to an attack site. If you have small numbers of stock, you may be able to confine them in a pen or secure area, or alternatively keep animals close to the house.

**In the event of a suspected attack or if you have incurred stock injury or loss, the local council needs to be notified immediately.**

The issue of wild dog attacks on stock is not covered here – for more information on this issue, contact the department Customer Service Centre on 136 186.

Compared to children in urban areas, children in rural areas have a higher rate of injury due to dog bites. Children are often attacked by a dog they know (either in their own home or that of a friend or neighbour), and injuries can be severe. Visit [www.vic.gov.au/pets](http://www.vic.gov.au/pets) for information on dog attack prevention or call your local council for more information.

# Section 2 - Health care

Historically the health and welfare of farm working dogs has been overlooked and yet they are unmistakably an integral part of the working staff in the farm workplace. Your farm working dog contributes many hours of labour so care should be taken to ensure the dog can work to the best of its ability.

Farm working dogs require the same routine care as any other dog would. For instance, adequate nutrition, vaccinations, regular worm control (including heartworm prevention), control of fleas, and desexing if they are not intended to be used for breeding. These issues are discussed in further detail over the following pages.

## 1. Desexing

Today it is commonplace for pups to be desexed as they leave the litter. This means that your farm dogs can be desexed by your veterinarian as pups. The procedure is usually brief (involving only one day at the vets) and the recovery period short (10-14 days). With early age desexing, you can better train and manage your farm dogs, preventing the distraction of bitches coming on heat and male dogs roaming.

Desexing before sexual maturity also ensures that diseases later in the dog's life, such as mammary cancer, uterine pyometra and prostate disease, are unlikely to occur. Bitches begin cycling

at six months but should not be bred until after their second heat (ie. 18 months of age). Male dogs are generally fertile from seven months (some at a much younger age).

## 2. Vaccination

Vaccination is the only prevention for dogs against fatal diseases such as parvovirus, distemper and hepatitis. Talk to your veterinarian regarding appropriate vaccination schedules.

Viruses can spread within the dog population as quickly as the human cold spreads from person to person. Wild dogs and foxes can spread viruses to your farm working dog. Isolation on the farm is no protection. Spread may be by flies, car tyres, or the clothes and shoes of people. Some fatal viruses persist in the environment for many years.

Dogs can be vaccinated from six weeks of age for protection against:

**Parvovirus** This disease is common in farm working dogs, is highly contagious and in more than 80% of cases, fatal. This virus attacks the intestines, causing blood-stained diarrhoea, vomiting with severe abdominal pain and weakness. Immediate veterinary attention is required as the disease can progress extremely quickly (i.e. in the space of 24 hours) and is usually fatal unless treated aggressively early in the course of this disease. In very young puppies, the virus can invade the heart muscles, causing difficulties in breathing and death within a few hours.

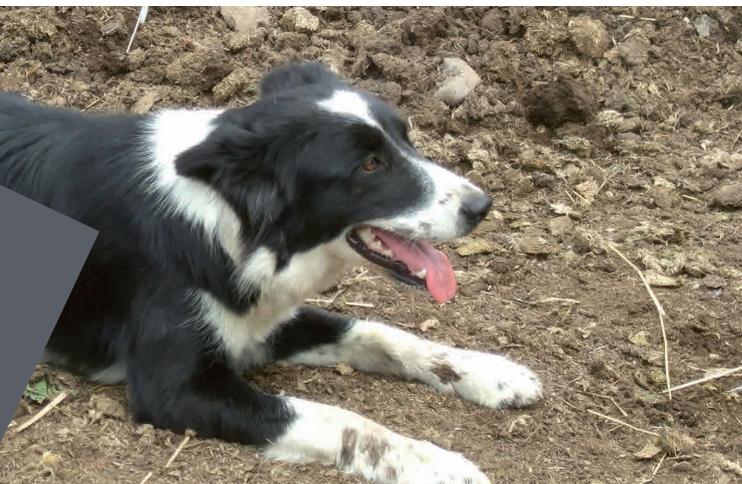
It is not necessary to have contact with other dogs for this disease to spread to your dogs. This virus is so persistent in the ground over many years that the environment around an infected dog needs to be cleaned with potent disinfectants to prevent spread to other dogs. Outbreaks occur regularly throughout Australia – especially in summer.

**Hepatitis** A highly contagious disease which spreads to unvaccinated dogs of any age. However, canine hepatitis is more severe when dogs younger than two years become infected. Symptoms include high fever, depression and acute abdominal pain, and death can occur within 24-36 hours. Dogs that recover may develop long term liver and kidney problems and can act as carriers spreading this disease to other farm working dogs for many months. Ideally all dogs that come on or off your property should be fully vaccinated.

**Distemper** This disease is extremely contagious to all dogs of any age and often fatal. Symptoms can include coughing and sneezing, nasal and eye discharge and depression. Muscle tremors, fits and paralysis can occur later in this disease. As the virus attacks the nervous system the recovery rate even with treatment, can be low and recovered dogs may have permanent brain damage.

**Canine Cough** Caused by several highly infectious diseases, this illness is spread wherever dogs congregate such as dog trials, saleyards and boarding kennels. Affected dogs have a dry hacking cough that persists for weeks and can result in pneumonia. This presents a major problem for farm working dogs. Vaccines are available including those that are given intra-nasally and act to directly protect for this disease within a week. However, yearly boosters are required.

Viruses can spread within the dog population as quickly as the human cold spreads from person to person. Wild dogs and foxes can spread viruses to your farm working dog.



**Canine Leptospirosis** Not recognised as a disease risk in most areas of Victoria but relevant to droving dogs and farm working dogs that travel, this disease is spread by the urine of rats. This virus is usually transmitted to dogs by contaminated food and water or by rat bites so dogs travelling to at-risk areas require a yearly preventative vaccination. Lasting protection must include vaccination at or after 12 weeks of age, even if initial protection is given at six weeks. Leptospirosis is an animal disease that can be passed to humans.

In short, as a minimum guideline all farm working dogs should visit your local veterinarian once a year and the appropriate vaccine cover can be selected during a routine health check. Worming can be planned for the year along with other parasite protection.

### 3. Parasite protection

#### Worming

**Hydatids Tapeworm** Hydatid tapeworms pose a serious health risk to humans.

Hydatid Cysts can grow inside humans who accidentally swallow hydatid worm eggs from an infected dog's coat. Avoid situations that threaten to infect your farm working dogs with this tapeworm.

- Hydatid tapeworms are found in all areas of Australia where sheep, kangaroos or wild pigs (which all act as intermediate hosts) are in contact with dogs. While rodents and rabbits can act as intermediate hosts too, they are more important as intermediate hosts for other tapeworms that are likely to infect dogs ingesting them.
- After eating hydatid eggs from pastures contaminated by infected dogs, intermediate hosts can develop hydatid cysts. Farm working dogs become infected with the hydatid tapeworms after eating hydatid cysts from infected intermediate hosts (e.g. infected offal from sheep). For this reason, dogs should NOT be fed raw offal. Ensure offal is disposed of in an area where it can not be scavenged by dogs.

In short, as a minimum guideline all farm working dogs should visit your local veterinarian once a year and the appropriate vaccine cover can be selected during a routine health check.

- Dogs can also become infected with hydatids if they eat infected carcasses (sheep and kangaroo in particular) while scavenging on the farm. Ensure that all carcasses are picked up from paddocks.
- Alternatively, keep dogs securely housed when they are not working. This will prevent dogs from hunting rodents and rabbits which again can act as intermediate hydatids hosts. Use other methods for vermin control (e.g. rat and mice bait, rabbit poison).
- Base your farm working dog's diet on quality pet food.
- Dogs in Hydatids Tapeworm areas should be tapeworm treated every six weeks.

**Roundworm, Whipworm, Hookworm and Common Flea Tapeworm** Around 80% of Australian dogs carry intestinal worms. This is not surprising because some adult worms can produce 20,000 eggs a day and some eggs can survive up to five years on the ground. Dogs are infected via uncooked meat, rodents and also through the skin, from larvae on grass (whipworm), or from fleas. Even ingestion of material in contact with the ground can be enough to cause infection. Intestinal worms can infest people too, particularly children in close contact with dogs. Dogs with worms may show tell-tale signs – poor or dull coat, anaemia (e.g. pale gums), diarrhoea, pot-bellied appearance, weight loss and tail skidding. You may see white segments or worms in the droppings.

Fortunately, you can stop worms cycling in your dogs with regular worm treatments.

Suggestions to keep worm burdens down in your farm working dogs involve:

- Controlling fleas – veterinary “spot on” prevention in summer is the most effective – see the following section.
- Cleaning kennels and sleeping areas regularly.
- Controlling intermediate hosts of worms such as mice and rats.
- Removing faeces from dog yards and around kennel areas.
- Worming and flea treating farm cats.
- Washing hands before eating – especially after touching farm dogs and cats.
- Ensuring dogs and cats are fed quality pet foods and do not rely on hunting and vermin for nutrition.

In summary, all farm working dogs need regular worming. Pups should be wormed according to their bodyweight every two weeks from birth. Then from three months of age monthly worming is advised until the pup is six months old. All dogs older than six months of age require three monthly worming with a product that removes all worms including the Hydatid Tapeworm. Consult your vet for advice including product, dog weight and worming intervals.

## Flea control

Although fleas breed rapidly in warmer months, fleas on farm working dogs can be a problem all year. Farm working dogs can commonly get allergic skin disease from fleas.

Fleas can be killed and reinfestation prevented for a month with “spot on” treatments that are applied to all farm working dogs, pet dogs and cats on the property. Fleas are a continual threat so continuous control measures are necessary. Veterinarians can help you with effective, safe and affordable flea control programs.

## Ticks

The paralysis tick is found on the eastern seaboard reaching from North Queensland to Northern Victoria (e.g. Bairnsdale and the coastal East Gippsland region), and can live on a wide range of animals, including humans and dogs. Native animals cause spread of different life stages

of the ticks as can any people travelling to the area during the mid-summer tick peak.

The paralysis tick is grey in appearance like the common bush tick. It affects the dog by injecting a deadly toxin which causes paralysis of the legs (i.e. weakness and losing strength in the hind limbs) and eventually progresses to respiratory and heart failure. Signs of paralysis are seen from three to six days after the tick has attached itself to the dog.

Recovery rates depend on how quickly you recognise the signs of tick paralysis displayed by your dog and seek veterinary help. Symptoms to watch out for are loss of co-ordination of the hind limbs (drunken appearance), change in voice or sound of bark, retching, coughing or vomiting and difficulty breathing. Progressive paralysis spreads to the forelegs. Some dogs can die very early in the progress of paralysis so seek veterinary help early.



Help prevent ticks attaching to your dog by using veterinary insecticidal washes weekly, tick-collars, “spot on” treatments, sprays and tablets.

- Help prevent ticks attaching to your dog by using veterinary insecticidal washes weekly, tick-collars, “spot on” treatments, sprays and tablets. These may be used in combination under veterinary advice. No single prevention is 100% effective and there is no substitute for regularly examining your dogs at risk.
- Avoid taking your dogs to the tick habitat during the tick season.
- In areas of tick infestation at the height of the summer tick season, dogs should be checked for new ticks at least every day, by looking in the ears, under the collar and around the lower neck area, between the dog’s toes and around the tail. More commonly ticks are found on the lower areas of the front half of the dog’s body under the forelegs, ears and neck. Ticks can be hard to see, although after two to three days of sucking the dog’s blood, the tick will be about the size of a pea, with a flattened oval shape.
- Remove ticks immediately once found and save it to show the vet. Ticks do not have a head – only mouth parts and the toxin is contained in the body. To remove the tick, simply scrape the tick off from the skin with a sharp blade. Spraying a tick (e.g. with methylated spirits) before attempting removal may make the process easier but is not essential and causes delays. Alternatively, you could use a loop of cotton pulled tight around the tick at skin level, and flick the tick out with a sudden movement. It is important to remove the source of paralysis as leaving the mouthparts in the dog acts only as a splinter – nothing more.
- Immediate veterinary attention will be required if the dog has difficulty standing. Do not wait to “see how it goes” as your dog will not recover without treatment if the toxins have damaged the dog’s heart. Do not offer food or water as your pet may not swallow properly. Seek veterinary help urgently. Paralysis tick antiserums are available.

## Mange

This is a skin disease caused by tiny parasitic mites, and can be common in farm working dogs. There are two forms of mange; sarcoptic mange (also known as ‘scabies’) and demodectic mange.

**Sarcoptic mites** are transmitted by dogs coming into close contact with infected dogs or wild animals such as foxes and wombats. They can also be transferred to humans. Mites prefer to live on lightly haired areas such as around the dog’s face, around the elbow, under the armpits and in the groin area. The mites burrow into the skin and cause an intense itch. Dogs will scratch and rub the infected skin until it becomes red and hair falls out. Continued scratching will cause skin to become thickened and crusty. Consult your veterinarian regarding treatment with insecticides, and prevent reinfection by ensuring all dogs on the property are treated at the same time. Simple topical “spot on” parasite control can be applied to eliminate this parasite.

**Demodectic mites** are found living inside the hair follicles of dogs. The skin of infected dogs will not be intensely itchy, and there will be few signs of infection other than hair loss resulting in large bald patches all over the dog. Veterinarians can provide appropriate "spot on" treatment that is highly effective in controlling this parasite and allows for the hair to regrow. Mild cases will generally clear up within four to six weeks. However, in the event of secondary bacterial or fungal infection, further veterinary treatment will be required.

## Heartworm

Heartworm is a very different disease from intestinal worms and is poorly understood by dog owners. Mosquitos spread this blood borne parasite so a dog can be infected without leaving the property. Heartworm is a parasite which attaches itself to arteries in the heart, causing heart and lung disease and eventually, death.

Heartworm is difficult and costly to treat. Wherever there are mosquitos there exists the possibility of heartworm disease for your dog. There are many different types of heartworm preventions ranging from daily tablets to monthly tablets or "spot ons" and yearly injections. Your local veterinarian will offer the most appropriate treatment for this parasite for dogs living in your region.



Heartworm is difficult and costly to treat. Wherever there are mosquitos there exists the possibility of heartworm disease for your dog.

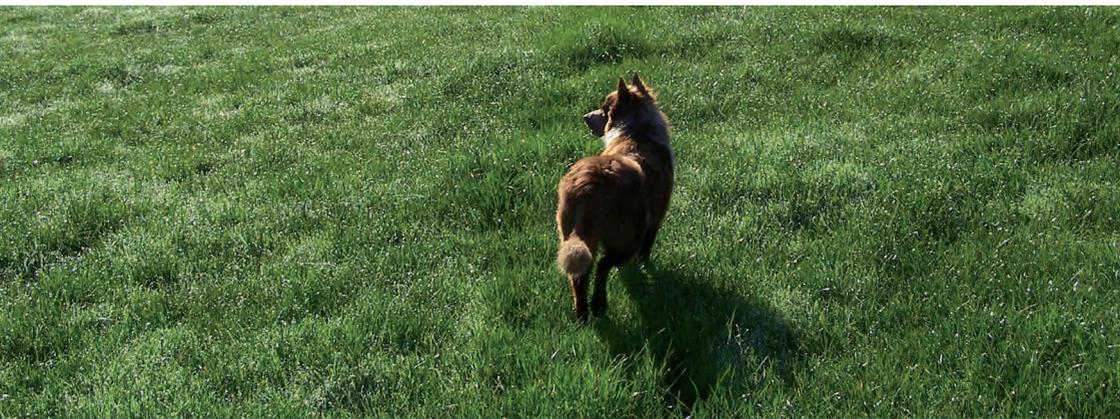
## 4. Grass seeds

These can cause problems by going down the dog's ear canal, up the nose, or penetrating through the skin (particularly between the toes). Grass seeds can also lodge below an eyelid or in hair mats on the coat (particularly in the groin and armpit areas). Seeds such as barley grass and spear grass (which have awns) cause the most problems.

A dog with a grass seed in its ear will shake its head, scratch its ear and often walk with its head tilted to the side. Seek prompt veterinary treatment in such situations. The dog ear canal is shaped as a downwards oriented hollow tube that is several centimetres long so a seed can become well embedded inside the dog's head and the dog may need sedation or general anaesthesia to retrieve it. To reduce problems caused by grass seeds, dogs with floppy ears should have the hair clipped short on the inside of the ear flap and at the entrance to the ear canal.

Dogs with grass seeds up their nose will have persistent sneezing, and the best treatment in this case is to get veterinary help to flush the seed into the back of the mouth where it will be swallowed or spat out.

Grass seeds through the skin often lodge between the toes, and are a particular problem for long haired dogs. During spring and summer, the hair on the paws should be clipped short to reduce the chance of grass seeds lodging there. Grass seeds beneath the skin must always be removed (this may have to be done by a vet) and the dog may also require treatment with antibiotics if the area becomes infected. Grass seeds ignored in the feet can be a permanent cause of lameness in the dog as they can embed deeply into the feet sinews and remain as an annoying, painful foreign body – much like a large annoying splinter.



## 5. Heat stroke

Heat stroke occurs when a dog's temperature rises out of control, because it cannot get rid of body heat fast enough. Dogs pant to reduce their body temperature so a dog puffing heavily in the heat is seriously working to reduce his core body temperature. Overheating typically occurs on days over 35°C especially when dogs are locked in vehicles or tied up in an area with limited shade and no water. Farm working dogs can also suffer heat stroke if already carrying a high body temperature (e.g. when unwell or carrying an infected wound).

Initial warning signs involve the dog panting rapidly with its mouth open and tongue hanging out, often with the dog reluctant to move or work. As the dog's body temperature rises, the dog will become weak, listless, and may have difficulty in breathing. Heat stroke dogs can drool excessively and may vomit or fit. If untreated, the dog will eventually collapse and die.

Dogs showing signs of heat stroke require urgent veterinary treatment. Immediate first aid involves wetting the dog all over (bucket or hose down) with water and moving the dog in distress to a well ventilated shady place with plenty of good quality drinking water.

Heat stroke dogs may require urgent veterinary attention.

To prevent heat stroke, ensure dogs always have access to water. Never leave them tied up in the sun, or in a vehicle (even when windows are wound down). Limit work and allow regular rest and/or swim breaks during extreme temperatures – if it is too hot for you to go out do not send the dog.

## 6. Arthritis

Dogs age faster than people. With the increased work load of farm working dogs causing joint wear and tear, working dogs in particular tend to suffer in silence. "Arthritis" of old age is seen as limping on and off with reduced activity and "stiffening up" in the farm working dog. Arthritis is manageable and many farm working dogs can return to full function with affordable veterinary treatments. Many can simply be added to your dog's daily meal.

## 7. Snake bites

Australia is home to many highly dangerous snakes. Dogs bitten by venomous snakes will initially be hyper-excitabile, may have dilated pupils, develop muscle twitches and may stagger, salivate or vomit. However, symptoms change quickly as the poisoning progresses so with known or suspected snake bite cases your dog should be taken immediately to your veterinarian. Snake antivenoms are available.

## 8. Poisoning

Farm working dogs can be accidentally poisoned. Dogs are particularly susceptible to 1080 poisoning (that no treatment exists for). Extra care should be taken to confine dogs and keep them away from areas where poisoning programs for pest animals are occurring.

Other poisonings include: sprays being applied to pasture, insect infestations, and sheep jetting insecticide fluids and dips. Also of danger are snail poisons and mice or rat poisons. Proper separation of the latter from dogs is essential.

## 9. Raising and training young dogs

New pups on the property need a full vaccination, worming and parasite control program before entering your farm. Contact your veterinarian before this new employee starts.

Young dogs need “puppy” formula food designed for optimum bone growth fed to them exclusively until they stop growing (between six and 12 months of age). Supermarkets, veterinarians and farm trade stores can supply specially formulated puppy food in bulk for on farm convenience.

Daily food needs to be split into two meals until the pup is six months old.

Adult farm working dogs should be fed a good quality, commercially prepared dog food.



Only cooked or frozen meats can be safely fed to adult dogs – raw meat/offal (especially kangaroo or deer) can be full of parasites. Feeding of these raw meats and offal to dogs can pass on diseases like Toxoplasmosis or Hydatids to humans on the farm.

Exercise must be restricted as the young dog's bones are forming and too much farm work (including jumping onto and off the ute tray) before the bones stop growing at one year of age can lead to poor conformation. Poor conformation can lead to early onset arthritis in farm working dogs and potentially limit their active working life.

Training needs to begin early in small regular short bursts. Positive reinforcement training will encourage the pup to co-operate and learn. Food treats, verbal rewards and training with a more experienced older dog will encourage desired learning over and above outcomes that are negative and result in some form of punishment. Dogs less than one year of age can have permanent imprinting from bad experiences. Socialise pups on the farm by allowing them to mix well with tolerant older dogs. Teaching the pups to accept tethering on run leads and penning at an early age will result in better farm routines and dog management practices from the start of the dog's career.

## 10. Bushfires and emergency evacuations

It is important to plan ahead for taking care of dogs during bushfires or other emergencies:

- Ensure all dogs are identified with a collar or tag as well as a microchip.
- Ensure that your details are correct in the microchip database.
- Ensure your dogs' vaccinations are up to date.
- Prepare a dog emergency/disaster kit and place it in a prominent place; include food, water, bowls, leads, blankets/bedding, medication, and a labelled travel cage where necessary.
- Identify where you will evacuate your dogs to. Check with your local council about evacuation options.

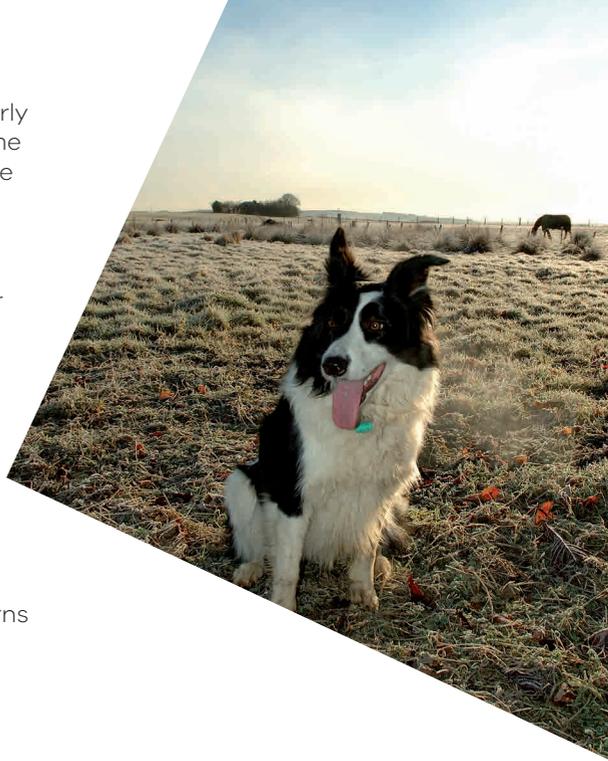
For more information about planning for your animals during the fire season visit [www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/animalemergency](http://www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/animalemergency)

- If your plan is to evacuate, do so early on the morning of Severe or Extreme fire danger days, or the night before a Code Red day.
- If you are unable to evacuate, determine the safest area for your animals on your property to shelter from the fire front, and move them there early.

## For more advice or information

Contact your local council if you have questions about your rights and responsibilities as a dog owner. Your council will also deal with concerns about wandering or nuisance pets.

For general information about responsible pet ownership, visit [www.vic.gov.au/pets](http://www.vic.gov.au/pets) or call 136 186 for the cost of a local call.



## Animal Welfare - it's your Duty to Care

If you would like to receive this information/publication in an accessible format (such as large print or audio) please call the Customer Service Centre on 136 186, TTY 1800 122 969, or email [customer.service@ecodev.vic.gov.au](mailto:customer.service@ecodev.vic.gov.au).

Published by the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions, Animal Welfare, January 2019.

© The State of Victoria 2019.

This publication is copyright. No part may be reproduced by any process except in accordance with the provisions of the *Copyright Act 1968*.

Authorised by the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions, 1 Spring Street, Melbourne 3000.

ISBN 978-1-74199-037-9

### Disclaimer

This publication may be of assistance to you but the State of Victoria and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.