

Wandering Dogs

Never pat any dog without its owners permission.

Councils manage dogs that are wandering in public

Dogs that wander on the streets, without an owner present, are referred to as dogs "wandering at large." These dogs are a potential risk to the community and the local council is responsible for their management. In most instances if the dog is registered, it will be returned to its owner. Dog Management Officers can refer to a database of registered dogs to determine where the dog lives. It is more efficient, cheaper and much better for the dog to be returned to its owner than taken to the pound. In most cases, the dog is distressed by being lost and the owner is distressed by losing their dog. By far the best option for all concerned is the speedy return of the dog to its home and family.

If the dog has to be impounded

If a dog is found wandering and the council cannot identify or locate the owner, the dog is taken to the council pound.

The Dog and Cat Management Act 1995 requires the local council to place a notice in a prominent place at the Council Chambers describing the type of dog, colouring, sex and the time and place at which it was collected. In addition, many councils now list impounded dogs on their website. As soon as a person realises that their dog is missing, they should call their local council.

If the dog is not claimed by its owner within 72 hours of the notice being placed by the council, the dog legally becomes the property of the council. Most councils will re-home the dog if it is good natured and healthy, or give the dog to an animal shelter for re-homing. If the dog is not fit for re-homing due to poor health or poor temperament, it may be humanely euthanased.

Dogs wandering "at large" cause a nuisance, and may attack or harass people or other animals. In some cases they cause road accidents resulting in injury to both vehicle occupants and the dog and cause property damage.

If you find a stray dog

It is important that any person who finds a wandering dog notifies the council as soon as possible. If it is not reported, the council cannot reunite the dog with its owner. Some people mistakenly consider that the dog is better off in their home than the pound. However, this makes it all the more difficult for the owner to find their pet. If a person keeps a stray dog and fails to notify the council, they may be guilty of "theft by finding" which is a serious criminal offence.

Dog pounds and shelters are encouraged to meet the standards determined by the Dog and Cat Management Board. Although they are often not as comfortable as the home to which the dog is accustomed, they do offer adequate and appropriate facilities for the short term holding of dogs.

If you lose your dog

Immediately call:

- your local council
- your local veterinary clinic
- your local after hours veterinary clinic
- the RSPCA
- the Animal Welfare League.

You may also consider conducting a letter box drop in your area, telling your neighbours, putting a notice in the local shop window or placing an advertisement in the Lost and Found section of the local paper.