

Education and Care Services References

National Quality Standard

Quality Area 2: Children's health and safety		
2.2	Safety	Each child is protected.
2.2.1	Supervision	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.
2.2.2	Incident and emergency management	Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practiced and implemented.

Quality Area 7: Governance and leadership		
7.1.2	Management Systems	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service that is child safe.

Children (Education and Care Services) National Law

104	Fencing
168	Education and care services must have policies and procedures

Policy Statement

There may be occasions when an uninvited dog manages to enter the Service playground. To ensure children are not placed at risk, all precautions will be taken to minimise the likelihood of this situation, and should it occur, all staff will respond immediately under this policy.

Purpose

We aim to ensure that all children, educators, families, and visitors remain safe from unexpected situations such as an uninvited dog entering the playground.

Scope

This policy applies to children, families, approved provider, nominated supervisor, students, visitors, management and staff of the Service.

Definitions

A companion animal is a dog, cat, or other animal prescribed by the regulations and includes pets, working dogs on rural properties, guard dogs, police dogs, and corrective services dog (Companion Animals Act 1998).

Approved animal welfare organisation means the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) and the Animal Welfare League.

Implementation

There are many reasons why an uninvited dog may enter a Service playground, whether a companion dog or a stray. It may be that the dog has been frightened by a thunderstorm and escaped his yard and somehow found his way into ours. It could be that a hungry stray has been attracted to the smell of food scraps, or it may be that a friendly but lonely neighbourhood dog has been attracted to the yard by the sounds of children playing. However, regardless of the cause, our Service will take immediate action to ensure the children's safety.

In Australia, dogs must be registered and micro-chipped. If a dog is then 'lost,' the dog and owner can be reunited by scanning and reading the microchip, which can be done by the local council, a vet, or an approved animal welfare organisation. However, the owner must legally notify the local council within 72 hours of the dog known to be missing so that it can be placed on a 'lost dog register'. It is therefore always best to make the local council the first point of contact should an uninvited dog make its way into a Service playground.

Note that some councils will ask you to bring the dog to them, but as it is illegal to have a dog at a childcare centre, they will come and collect him/her if made aware that you are calling from early education and care service.

Dog body language/signs that a dog may be scared or aggressive¹

- Shrill barking
- Teeth bared (may or may not be growling)
- Closed, tight mouth
- Stiff, rigid body with legs braced
- Tail held rigid in any position, between the legs, or a slow stiff wag
- Ears back against the head or flattened (ears pricked up or forward demonstrate an interest in something – continue to use caution)
- Hackles raised
- Staring directly at you
- Approaching you with head lowered

As a dog's intent and behaviour can change rapidly, it is always best to exercise caution when the safety of children is involved and treat all dogs as dangerous unless extremely obvious that it is friendly (loose body movements, tail wagging and held high, 'bounding' and 'jumping' on the spot, or not hesitating in enthusiastically approaching people).

The approved provider, management, nominated supervisor will ensure that:

- A risk assessment is completed to identify potential hazards and risks involving an unidentified dog entering the Service's environment (fencing, gates, communication with families).
- Daily checks are made of the outdoor learning environment to ensure fencing is intact, gates locked and there is no sign of an unidentified dog or animal on the premises.
- Any outdoor area that is used by children is enclosed by a fence that prevents the intrusion of unwanted dogs and/or other animals.

¹ Source: Best Friends Animal Society (2018); Dog's Home (2014); Pet Source (2010).

- Following the entry of an uninvited dog into the playground, immediate steps will be taken to secure the fencing to eliminate the possibility of this situation being repeated.
- The external rubbish bin is not filled to a point that the lid will not securely close, and all staff are aware to tightly bag all food scraps before placing them in the bin to avoid attracting hungry strays.
- Educators are proactive in ensuring all children use the playground rubbish bins if eating outside.
- All staff follow the policies and procedures of our Service.

In the event of an unidentified dog or other animal entering the premises, the responsible person and educators will:

- calmly guide children indoors by approaching groups of children and giving instruction to quietly move inside: Shouting to all children or using a bell could frighten the dog (If a dog has entered the yard during or just after a thunderstorm, the children will likely already be inside)
- if the position of the dog is preventing the children's re-entry to the building, children will be guided quietly via the emergency playground exit to enter the building from the front door
- implement Lockdown Policy and implement your Services own Lockdown Procedure
- contact local council for assistance

For extremely friendly dogs only:

- children will still need to return to inside the Service premises to ensure their safety following the Lockdown Policy and implement the Service's own Lockdown Procedure
- a friendly dog will generally come running to you if you beckon: Stand still and speak softly to the dog and offer the back of your hand for him to sniff. Remain motionless while you allow the dog time to explore your hand. Always remain wary to ensure he continues to display signs of non-threatening behaviour
- check to see if the dog is wearing a collar and tag. If so, the owner can be contacted. Whilst waiting for the owner to collect the dog, secure the dog in a location away from the playground, ensuring the dog has shade and fresh drinking water. If the owner offers a reward, do not accept it: Part of belonging to a community is doing the 'right thing' without expectation of a reward for doing so
- if the phone number on the tag is incorrect, or the owner does not answer the phone nor return your call within a reasonable time frame, call your local council and advise them of the situation
- if the dog does not have a tag, call your local council and advise them of the situation
- do not allow the dog to be taken into the custody of any staff member or family with the intent of displaying 'found' posters in the community as this frequently attracts persons who dishonestly claim ownership of expensive breeds to then sell.

For all other dogs:

- avoid confronting the dog: Do not try to chase it out of the playground or touch it
- contact the local council immediately and advise them of the situation. Ensure that you tell them the dog is in an early education and care service
- ensure the children remain inside until the dog has been collected
- provide support for children who are afraid of dogs.

Educators will:

- discuss with the children how to behave with a dog or puppy (e.g., calmly, no aggressive patting, no pulling tails, use quiet voices, etc.) as part of the curriculum to minimise the risk of provoked dog attacks outside the Service
- develop children's understanding that the owner should always be asked before patting a dog
- teach children how to tell if a dog is happy, scared, or aggressive but ensure they know never to approach a strange dog.

In the event of a dog attack on a child or adult

- contact emergency services 000 for assistance
- activate the Service Lockdown Procedure and ensure children and other adults are not in immediate danger
- stay as calm as possible, try not to scream, shout or be aggressive to the dog
- don't move or move slowly to avoid the dog from attacking further if possible
- try to stay as still as possible or curl into a ball, instruct the child or adult to stay as still as possible or to curl into a ball
- provide emergency first aid to the child or adult as soon as the danger from the dog attack is over (See Administration of First Aid Policy and Procedure)
- complete an Incident, Injury, Trauma or Illness Record and ensure parents/authorised nominee date and sign this record on arrival to collect their child
- the approved provider will contact the regulatory authority within 24 hours when there has been an emergency that has posed a risk to the safety and wellbeing of the children
- following any incident involving a dog bite/attack an Incident Injury Report Register will be completed to assist with a review of practices following an incident or injury at the Service, including an assessment of areas for improvement.

Related Policies

- Administration of First Aid Policy
- Child Safe Environment Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
- Lockdown Policy
- Supervision Policy

Policy Review

- The Service will review the Managing an Unidentified Dog Policy and related documents regularly or as current information arises.
- Families are encouraged to collaborate with the Service to review the Policies and Procedures.
- Educators and staff are essential stakeholders in the policy review process and will be encouraged to be actively involved.

Policy Version

Version	Version changes
1.0	New policy created
1.5	- Minor edits to the content. - Sources checked for currency. - Minor grammatical changes.
2.0	added <i>Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness</i> procedure to policy

Source Acknowledgments

- Consultation with management, educators, staff, and families
- Best Friends Animal Society. (2018). Dog body language.
<https://bestfriends.org/resources/dog-body-language>
- Companion Animals Act 1998: http://www8.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdb/au/legis/nsw/consol_act/caa1998174/
- RSPCA Australia: www.rspca.org.au
- Dog's Home. (2014). Don't pet that dog: 3 signs most people don't know.
<https://www.dogshomepa.org/dont-pet-that-dog-3-signs-most-people-dont-know/>
- NSW Government. Office of Local Government: <https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/public/dogs-and-cats/information-for-the-community/lost-and-found-cats-and-dogs>
- Royal Society for the Protection of Animals NSW (RSPCA): www.rspcansw.org.au