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Factsheet: Companion Animals

The Companion Animals Act 1998 (NSW)

The aim of this act is to help ensure that owners of companion animals, such as cats and dogs, care for and manage them in an effective and responsible way. The requirements of the Act also aim to help protect native birds and animals.

The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979 (NSW)

This act requires owners to provide adequate food, water, shelter, exercise and healthcare for their animals.

If you own a companion animal, you are legally responsible for the following:

Compulsory identification and registration-animals must be micro-chipped from 12 weeks of age and before sale. Animals must also be registered with the local council from the age of 6 months.

Dogs

Legal Responsibilities for dog owners include:

- You must provide adequate food, clean drinking water and proper shelter for your dog.
- You must, where it is necessary, provide your dog with veterinary treatment.
- You must not confine your dog for more than 24 hours without a release period for adequate exercise.
- You must not confine your dog in a cage of which the height, length or breadth is insufficient to allow the animal a reasonable opportunity for adequate exercise.
- You must not tether your dog for an unreasonable length of time by means of a heavy or short tether.
- Your dog must be micro-chipped and wear a collar and tag, which must include the dog's name and address or telephone number.
- You must prevent your dog from escaping wherever it is being kept.
- When you take your dog into a public space you must keep it on a leash and effectively controlled. This means not more than 4 dogs on leash per person.
- Certain breeds, such as greyhounds, must be muzzled in public.
- You must prevent your dog from rushing at, attacking, biting, harassing or chasing any person or animal. If not, you may be found guilty of an offence, even if no injury is caused. You may also find your animal impounded in some circumstances.



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- School grounds
- Child care centres
- Shopping areas where dogs are banned
- Wildlife protection areas
- Outdoor dining areas in certain circumstances

- You must not encourage your dog to attack, bite, harass or chase any person or animal.
- If your dog leaves faeces in a public place, you must remove and properly dispose of it.
- Your dog must not be a nuisance (such as continually escaping, repeatedly defecating on other people's property, endangering the health of people or animals, constantly barking, or chasing people or animals).
- If your dog causes injury or death to a person or animal, or damage to personal property, you may be legally responsible.
- If you are found guilty of certain offences under the *Companion Animals Act*, you may be disqualified from owning or being in charge of a dog in public.

Dogs are banned in the following places:

- Children's play areas
- Food preparation /eating areas
- Recreation areas where dogs are banned (eg national parks)
- Public bathing areas where dogs are banned (eg public swimming pools)



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Cats

Legal Responsibilities for cat owners include:

- You must provide adequate food, clean drinking water and proper shelter for your cat.
- You must, where it is necessary, provide your cat with veterinary treatment.
- You must not confine your cat for more than 24 hours without a release period for adequate exercise.
- You must not confine your cat in a cage of which the height, length or breadth is insufficient to allow the animal a reasonable opportunity for adequate exercise.
- You must not tether your cat for an unreasonable length of time by means of a heavy or short tether.
- Your cat must either wear a tag identifying the cat's name and address or telephone number and / or be micro-chipped

- Your cat must not be a nuisance, such as constantly making noise or damaging property.

Cats are banned in the following places:

- Food preparation/ eating areas
- Wildlife protection areas

Offences and Penalties

If you are found guilty of offences under the *Companion Animals Act*, you may face fines, be imprisoned or even have your animal ordered to be destroyed. If your animal is impounded by the Local Council, you may have to pay a fee to have it released.

If you are found guilty of cruelty offences under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act*, penalties such as fines or imprisonment may be applied. You may also be banned from owning animals for a period of time.

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