

Capital canines

A guide for dog owners



Absolutely Positively
Wellington City Council
Me Heke Ki Pōneke

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Contact us

Website wellington.govt.nz search dogs

Email dogs@wcc.govt.nz

Phone 04 499 4444

Mail Dogs, Wellington City Council,
PO Box 2199, Wellington 6140

In person Wellington City Council Service Centre,
12 Manners Street, Wellington

Responsibilities of a dog owner

Responsibilities at a glance:

- Register your dog
- Provide shelter, water, food
- Exercise your dog
- Keep on lead in public places (unless at a dog exercise area)
- Pick up your dog's poo
- Undertake training
- Get your dog desexed

Dog welfare

There are over 12,000 known dogs in Wellington City. Dog owners have a responsibility to provide for their welfare. To support dog owners and the welfare of dogs in Wellington City, the Council:

- provides exercise areas where dogs can exercise off-lead
- promotes Responsible Dog Ownership (RDO) status
- provides information for owners about the welfare of dogs and how to care for them.

When dogs have not received proper care and attention the Council will ensure that the appropriate action is taken and may:

- issue a warning or infringement notice
- impound an unregistered dog.

Obligations of a dog owner

The owner of any dog must:

- ensure that the dog receives proper care and attention and is supplied with proper and sufficient food, water and shelter
- ensure that the dog receives adequate exercise.

It is an offence to fail to provide care for your dog.

Training

Dog obedience training is a great way to spend time with your dog. We encourage you to put your dog through obedience training. It benefits you, your dog and other people who are around your dog. There are a number of dog training and obedience schools in the Wellington area.

Our website (wellington.govt.nz) has a list of approved trainers who can help you qualify for Responsible Dog Owner status and qualify for a discount on registration fees. You can find these by searching 'dog training.'

Exercising your dog

All dogs need exercise. How much exercise is required depends on the size and breed of the dog.

Exercising your dog gives you an excellent opportunity to:

- observe and monitor the general health of your dog
- build training and obedience skills
- play and socialise with your dog and other dogs.

Exercise areas

In Wellington there are 58 areas (plus eight beach areas) in the city where you can run your dog off lead. These areas are listed in the Wellington Dog Policy 2016. You can find the full list on our website - wellington.govt.nz - by searching 'dog exercise areas'. You will also find a handy interactive map of dog exercise areas. This map works well on your mobile device as well as your pc.

Four of our exercise areas are fenced and have become favourite destinations for dogs and owners to visit - by Cog Park in Evans Bay, Ian Galloway Park in Curtis Street, Northland, Taylor Park, Tawa and Mt Albert Park in Melrose. The Council is looking at other sites that might be suitable as fenced exercise areas.

Please note that some parks and bush areas have pest control measures in place from time to time. Dog owners should watch for signs about poison placed in the area. When poison is laid keep your dogs on lead to keep them safe.

Beaches

Dogs are welcome off-lead at some of our beaches all year round. Other beaches are prohibited places or restricted during summer months (1 December to 1 March) when the beaches are popular with children and other users.

Details of when you can take your dog to the beach are on our website - wellington.govt.nz. The interactive dog exercise area map includes details of beach exercise areas and restrictions as well as prohibited beaches.

Many of our beaches, including beach exercise areas, are home to penguins and other wildlife. You need to keep your dog under control at all times to help protect our precious wildlife.

Keep them on a lead

All public spaces are 'dog on lead' areas so you will need to keep your dog on a lead unless you are in a space that is designated as an off lead exercise area.

It's important that you know where you can and cannot take your dog. For more information, check the information on the dog exercise areas section of our website or phone us on 04 499 4444. Please remember that dog owners must always carry a lead in a public place. Even if you travel by car to one of our off-lead areas, you must still carry a lead.



Neutering or spaying your dog

Neutering or spaying your dog (desexing) benefits dog owners and the community in many ways. A desexed dog is less likely to roam, is often less aggressive and generally leads a healthier life. Desexed dogs help reduce the number of unwanted puppies. The Council encourages dog owners to get their animals desexed by a vet or by the SPCA and offer reduced registration fees for desexed dogs.

To get your dog desexed, contact your vet or ask about the low-cost operation offered by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) by phoning 04 389 8044.

If you decide not to desex your dog and are planning for it to have puppies, you will be responsible for the welfare of their puppies. It can be expensive to raise and care for them. You will also need to register them with the Council by three months old. If you plan to rehome them, it is your responsibility to find them good homes.

Education

Our Animal Services team offer an education programme free of charge to promote public safety and responsible dog ownership. The programme covers information on dog welfare, dog safety, how to handle your dog and the rights of the public. We also offer presentations to schools and community groups on dog behaviour and how to be safe around dogs. Contact us on 04 499 4444 if you want to find out more about the education programmes.

Adopt a dog

If you're interested in adopting a dog or puppy call us on 04 499 4444 to find out more about the adoption programme run by Animal Services. You can also check Animal Services Wellington & Hutt Valley on Facebook for updates about dogs available for adoption.

We support owners who adopt homeless dogs and puppies by providing a discounted registration fee for your first registration.

Registration



All puppies must be registered by the time they're three months old and all dogs must be re-registered by 1 July every year.

Dog registration fees due 1 July

All dog owners need to ensure that, if their dog is three months or older, it is registered. Dogs need to be re-registered every year. We send out re-registration invoices in May.

Payment options are listed on the back of the registration form and include:

- In person at the service centre, 12 Manners Street Monday to Friday 8am to 5pm
- In person at the Moa Point shelter Monday to Friday 3pm to 5pm and Saturday 10am to 12 midday
- Credit card payments on line
- Internet banking (if you're paying this way, please remember to return your signed registration form).

Please note that late fees will incur a 50 percent surcharge for dogs over three months old, so its important to make sure your dog is registered on time.

Registering a dog helps us find their owners. If your dog is registered and wearing its tag it is easy to contact you if it is lost or found roaming. Dog registration is also good for the public and for dog owners, because any dogs that are creating a nuisance can be identified and complaints can be dealt with.

Tags

You'll be given a metal tag which your dog will need to wear at all times. This tag is the only one you'll need while you and your dog live in Wellington. You'll still need to pay dog registration fees every year to keep the registration live but you'll keep using the same tag. The back of the tag is left blank so you can get your details engraved, if you want to. If you lose your dog's tag you can buy a replacement.

Microchipping

There is a legal requirement for puppies to be registered by the time they are three months old and microchipped within two months of being registered. A microchip identifies a dog and helps us to return it to you if your pet goes missing.

You must also have your dog microchipped if you have:

- a dog that is classified as dangerous and/or menacing
- had an unregistered dog impounded
- a registered dog impounded for a second time since 1 July 2006.

In these situations you must supply your vet's copy of the implantation certificate.

It is an offence if you don't get your dog microchipped and you could be fined if you don't do this.

For more information on microchipping, visit the Department of Internal Affairs' website dia.govt.nz (search for 'dogs').

Make sure your information is correct

You can update your details on the annual re-registration form or throughout the year if:

- your dog has died
- you have had it desexed
- you have moved (either within or out of the Wellington City area)
- the ownership of your dog has changed.

In each case, we need the owner's written authority so we can make changes to the dog register. This can be done by emailing dogs@wcc.govt.nz or completing the relevant section of the dog registration form available on our website.

The cost of failing to register a dog

Owners who don't pay registration fees for their dog on time will be charged a penalty. The penalty and the registration fee must be paid before the dog will be registered.

It is an offence to have an unregistered dog. Owners of unregistered dogs can be fined and their dogs can be impounded.

What are your registration fees used for?

Councils are legally required to maintain a dog registration system. This system is also important to protect the safety of the public and it helps to ensure that dogs are properly cared for. Registration fees are used for:

- Facilities and maintenance of dog exercise areas;
- signs and advertising about dog bylaws;
- education programmes and campaigns for schools, community groups and businesses;
- dog control including law enforcement and attending to complaints and incidents;
- administering the shelter at Moa Point; and
- administering the dog control programme.

The Council does not make any profit from dog registration fees. 75 percent of the cost of dog control activities are recovered through registration and other fees. Residential rates are used to meet the remaining 25 percent of dog-related costs.

Dog fees

Our fees are subject to change from year to year so please visit our website or phone 04 499 4444 to find out the correct fee.

A graduated fee scale applies when registering a puppy for the first time, so please ensure you pay the correct fee. This scale also applies to imported dogs.

The Council rewards responsible dog ownership by offering reduced fees to owners who have had their dogs desexed or hold Responsible Dog Owner (RDO) status.

Reduced registration fees are also offered to people who adopt a dog through Animal Services, from the SPCA, Helping You Help Animals (HUHA) or Ellie's Canine Rescue.

Refunds

If your dog dies it's important to let us know as soon as possible. You can request a refund of part of the registration fee.

You need to request a refund by writing to us, explaining the situation and returning the dog's registration tag, or providing a vet certificate verifying that your dog has died. Your refund will be calculated from when you let us know your dog had died and you request a refund. If you let us know during the year you will be paid one twelfth of the fee for each full month left in the year. If you let us know before the start of the registration year, you will get the full fee back. You can request your refund to be sent to the SPCA.

Responsible Dog Owner (RDO) status

This scheme rewards responsible dog owners with cheaper fees.

To qualify for RDO status, you must meet the following requirements:

- You have attended and passed an approved Responsible Dog Owner education and obedience course, and
- You comply with the regulations set out in the Wellington Consolidated Bylaw about dogs, and
- The area of the property that the dog has free access to is fully contained eg fenced
- If kept outside, the dog is housed in a weatherproof and hygienic kennel.

You will not be considered for RDO status if you have:

- received a conviction under the Dog Control Act 1996 or Animal Welfare Act 1999 or been classified as a probationary or disqualified owner
- received an infringement notice in the previous year
- had a dog impounded in the previous year
- been the subject of a substantiated public complaint in the previous year.

Application forms are available from the Council Service Centre, from our website, or by phoning 04 499 4444.

You can find a list of approved training courses on our website. Please note that level 1 or puppy training is not an approved course.

The RDO application period runs from 1 September to 30 April every year. Applications must be **received and approved** by 30 April each year. Applications received and approved after the beginning of the registration year will not take effect until the next registration year.

RDO status can be removed if the owner is:

- convicted under the Dog Control Act 1996
- issued with an infringement notice
- has their dog impounded

- has a substantiated complaint about their dog
- Fails to pay dog registration fees by 31 July.

If the owner moves from the approved property, the RDO status will be withdrawn and they will need to reapply to have their new property assessed and approved.

Notes on registration

Anyone in possession of a dog is deemed to be the owner, except in a few cases, such as reuniting a lost dog with its owner.

Any dog not wearing a current registration tag is deemed to be an unregistered dog.

If your dog moves to another Council's area for one month or more you must let Wellington City Council and the Council in the area where the dog is staying know about this. You will need to tell both Councils, in writing, within six weeks of the move and provide the dog's new address. It is an offence not to do this.

Frequently asked questions

How do I register my dog?

Contact us at Wellington City Council on 04 499 4444 and we will guide you through the process. By asking you a few simple questions we can ensure that we bill you for the correct amount and give you the correct information.

My dog has died, what do I do?

If your dog dies it is important to let us know this sad news as soon as possible. You may qualify for a partial refund of your dog registration fees. You will need to request a refund and provide a certificate from the vet confirming that your dog has died.

If you're unable to provide a death certificate, please let us know about your dog using page 2 of the dog registration form and return your dog's tag.

Refunds are calculated from the date you let us know in writing about your dog's death. When you've let us know we'll remove your dog from our register.

My dog has been desexed, what do I do?

Let us know by writing to us and including a copy of the desexing certificate from the vet. This will reduce your registration fees in later years.

My dog has a new owner, what do I do?

Both you and the new owner must, within 14 days, give us written notice of the change of ownership and the residential address of the new owner at which the dog will be kept. You can use the registration form, available on our website, for this.

I have changed address, what do I do?

You need to let us know, in writing, within 14 days.

If you hold Responsible Dog Owner status you will need to reapply for approval of your new address. The form you need to complete to do this is available at the Council Service Centre and on our website. You can also phone us on 04 499 4444 to request a copy of this form.



Enforcement



Wellington City Council has contracted the Animal Services Team at Hutt City Council to provide animal control services in Wellington, including complaint investigation and enforcement.

Control of dogs

Under the Dog Control Act 1996 the owner of a dog must keep them under control at all times.

A dog is considered to be not under control:

- if it is found at large on private property without the consent of the occupier or owner of the land
- if it is found at large in any public place or in any private way in breach of any regulation or bylaw.

It is an offence to fail to have your dog under control. You could be issued an infringement fee or, if convicted, you could face a fine of up to \$3000.

Dogs are usually kept under control by confining them on a property or keeping them on a lead. Even when in an off lead area your dog needs to be under your control in sight and by using direct commands.

Barking dogs

Where a dog is causing a nuisance through persistent and loud barking or howling a dog control officer may issue the owner with a notice requiring them to stop the nuisance. The owner has seven days to comply or object to Animal Services. If the owner does not comply or there have been further complaints the dog can be removed from the property.

Roaming dogs

Your dog should not leave your property uncontrolled. Dogs can be unpredictable and you don't know what it could get up to. You are responsible for what your dog does even if it has left your home.

Dogs that roam may:

- intimidate other animals and people
- be a traffic hazard
- foul in public places
- scatter rubbish about
- form packs and injure or kill farm or household or wild animals
- spread disease
- produce unwanted puppies.

You can stop your dog from roaming by:

- fencing your property so that they can't escape
- tying your dog to a chain (it should be at least two metres long)
- keeping it in its kennel (remember to take it for regular walks)
- leaving your dog in the house.

Keeping dogs safe at home

Fencing is a good way to prevent your dog from roaming. Make sure your dog can't jump over the fence, or dig under it. Generally fences should be at least 1.2 metres high. Also check that there are no holes or weak points as your dog will find any potential escape routes.

To prevent your dog from being a nuisance to visitors to your property you should check that there is clear access from the street to your front door, without visitors encountering your dog. If you are buying or renting property, look at the fencing - is it suitable?

If you keep your dog outside, make sure it has adequate shelter. A dry draught-free kennel will achieve this. Position the kennel so that the door is protected from the wind, and so that there is no likelihood of flooding in the rain. Put it on a hard surface.



Lost or impounded dogs

More than 350 dogs are impounded in Wellington City each year. Most of these are reunited with their owners, or adopted by new owners. If your dog wanders, escapes or gets lost:

- Phone the Council on 04 499 4444. Give a description of the dog, the tag number, and date and where it was last seen eg address.
- Contact neighbours and put up photos and descriptions on local notice boards.
- Pets on the Net allow you to advertise a lost pet for free and social media sites, such as Neighbourly, can get your message out locally.

Impounded dogs

If your registered dog is found uncontrolled or roaming Animal Services will contact you. They will discuss arrangements for returning your dog to you, which could be collecting your dog from the animal shelters at Moa Point or Seaview.

Please note that your dog will not be released until any applicable charges are paid. These may include fees to recover the cost of caring for your dog and impound fees which help fund impound services.

Even if you don't claim your dog, you are still liable for any fees incurred. If your dog is not claimed after seven days, it becomes the property the Council and could be adopted or disposed of.

If your dog goes missing or is impounded you can phone us on 04 499 4444 to find out whether it has been picked up, where the dog is being held and when it can be collected.

Dog poo - fouling in public places

If your dog poos in a public place or on someone else's land or premises, you must immediately remove and dispose of the poo.

Poo contains bacteria and can be a risk to children who come into contact with it where they play.

It's also extremely unpleasant for anyone using our streets or parks to stand in.

If you are using a park, please place dog poo in the rubbish bins at the park entrance or exit. If there isn't a rubbish bin please dispose of it in the closest rubbish bin or at home. You can also wrap dog poo and put it out with your rubbish or bury it in the garden. However you dispose of it, you will need to ensure that your property is kept clean for your family and your dog.

Every time you take your dog off your property take a plastic bag with you. Specially designed poo bags can be purchased from the Council's Service Centre at 12 Manners Street and from some supermarkets, pet shops or other retail outlets. These bags fit into a pouch that can be attached to your lead.

No-go zones

Dogs are not allowed in certain areas. Prohibited areas include areas with children's play equipment, sports fields while they are in use and some beaches and coastal areas.

The Wellington Dog Policy, available on our website, has full details of areas dogs are not allowed and any exemptions that may apply.

Children's play areas

Children's play areas are prohibited public places for dogs. Children can often approach dogs and dogs can react unpredictably to this. For this reason, dogs are banned from play areas. The only time dog owners can move through a play area with their dog is if there is no alternative route.

Sports fields

Dogs on a lead under control are allowed at sports grounds except artificial turf. The dog must not go on to the playing surface, when it is in use

Central City

Dogs are allowed in the central city area as long as they are on lead. Dogs cannot be left unattended.

Prohibited public places - at a glance

- Wellington Zoo
- Karori Wildlife Sanctuary - Zealandia
- Wellington Airport
- Children's play areas
- Sports fields (artificial surfaces and marked sports surfaces in use)
- Balaena beach
- Freyberg beach
- Island Bay beach
- Lyall Bay beach (western end from the children's playground)
- Palmer Head (penguin nests need protection)
- Princess Bay beach
- Scorching Bay beach
- Tarakena Bay beach
- Sinclair Head and South Coast seal 'haul out' areas.

Attacks

A number of dog attacks are reported every year in Wellington City. Any dog is capable of attacking no matter how friendly or well behaved it seems.

Where dogs act in a dangerous or menacing way the Council can:

- issue a warning or infringement notice
- prosecute where the offence or effects are significant
- classify the owner as probationary or disqualified
- classify the dog as dangerous or menacing
- seize the attacking dog and keep it in custody
- impound dogs in the shelter pending a court decision.

Dogs may attack if they feel threatened or to protect themselves or their family (which they think of as their pack).

To prevent an attack

- Stand still and let the dog approach you.
- Don't run up to, or away from, a strange dog.
- Move slowly and carefully.
- Don't look directly into the dog's eyes or lean over them (these are dominant behaviours to a dog).
- Don't yell or scream or wave your arms about.
- If a dog appears threatening, back slowly away and, if possible, keep something between you. This is for defence; do not use it as a weapon.

If an attack occurs

If skin has been broken, or if the wound seems reasonably serious, seek medical advice immediately. Then call the Council to report the attack.

Tell us quickly about a dog attack

It is important to report an incident as soon as possible; it can be difficult to recall facts at a later time. We're available 24 hours a day, seven days a week on 499 4444 for serious incidents such as dog attacks or when a dog has been menacing or challenging.

We investigate and often seize dogs following reports of aggressive or attacking behaviour. We need detailed and accurate information to take enforcement action. We also use this information to monitor animal control in Wellington City.

After a dog attack we need statements from the people involved, vet or medical reports and receipts and, if possible, identification of the attacking dog or its owner (dog registration and description or vehicle registration). If there are any witnesses to the incident it is best to get their details at the time as it can be very difficult to find them later.

Wellington City Council bylaws and policy

Wellington City's rules governing dogs are covered in our Dog Policy and under the Wellington Consolidated Bylaw. Both are available on the Dogs section of our website wellington.govt.nz.

Dog Policy 2016

The main objective of the policy is to ensure that all dog owners comply with their obligations under the Dog Control Act 1996.

This includes ensuring that their dog is registered, kept under control, is well cared for, receives adequate exercise and does not cause injury or endanger any person, stock or wildlife. It also aims to ensure that Wellington dog owners are able to enjoy the city with their dogs.

The policy lists the areas where dogs can and cannot go in the city.

All dog owners should have or have read a copy of the Wellington Dog Policy. If you don't have a copy, you can find it on our website or call us on 04 499 4444 for a printed copy.

Wellington Consolidated Bylaw 2016: Part 2 - Animals

The Wellington Consolidated Bylaw gives the Council the authority to enforce our Dog Policy, to protect the public from nuisance and promote public health and safety and the welfare of animals.

It also provides rules around the conditions for keeping animals, dog nuisance, feeding and housing dogs, keeping more than three dogs, dog-exercise areas and offences. Some activities require written permission from the Council, such as keeping more than three dogs.

The bylaw also identifies public places where dogs must be:

- controlled (allowed on a lead)
- allowed to be exercised (off a lead)
- prohibited (not allowed).

