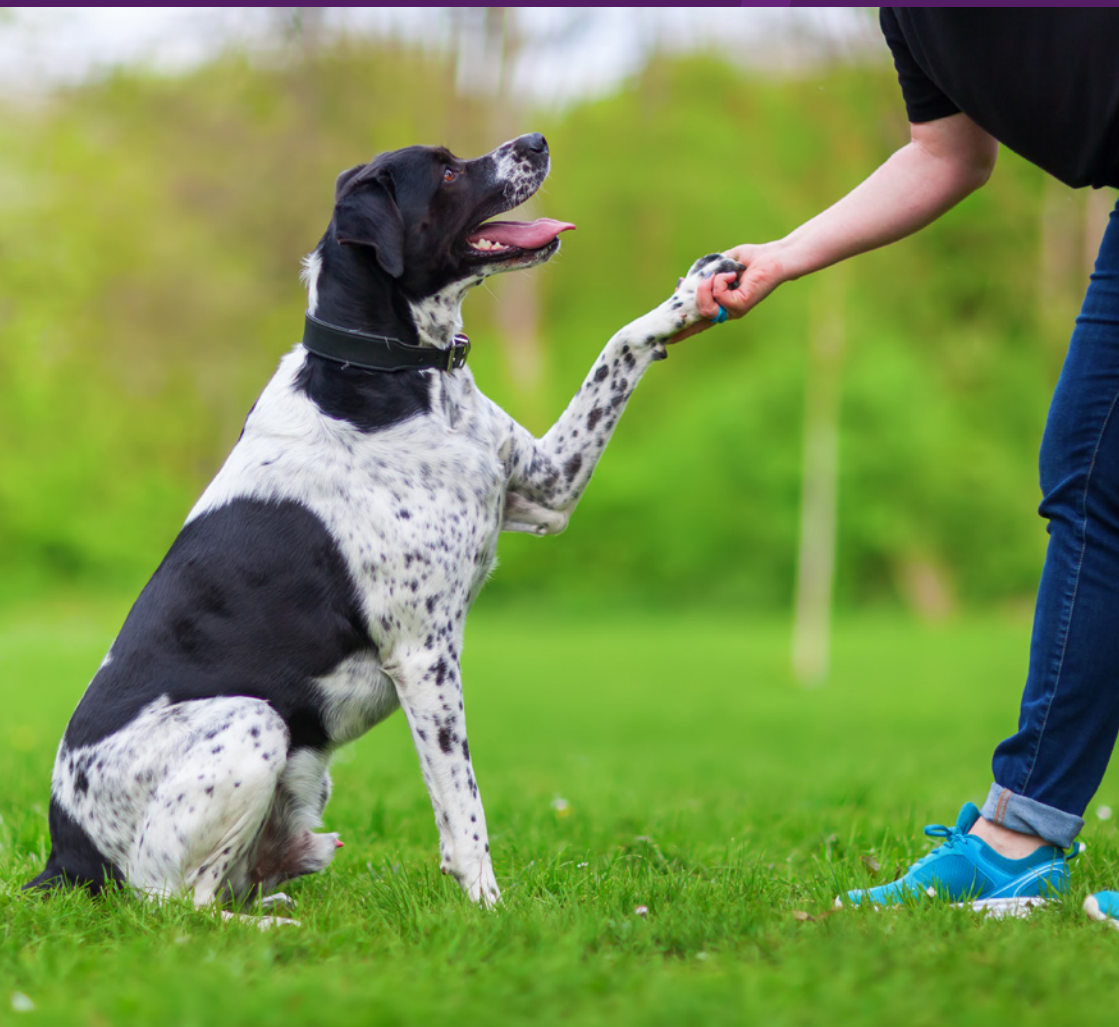




Dog attack reporting and prevention

A guide for dog owners and residents



City of Port Phillip

99a Carlisle Street
St Kilda, VIC 3182

If you require a large
print version contact
ASSIST on **03 9209 6777**.



Language assistance

廣東話 9679 9810 Ελληνικά 9679 9811
普通話 9679 9858 Русский 9679 9813
Polska 9679 9812 Other 9679 9814

National Relay Service

If you are deaf or have a hearing
or speech impairment, you can
phone us through the National
Relay Service (NRS):

- TTY users dial **133677**, then ask
for **03 9209 6777**
- Speak & Listen users phone
1300 555 727, then ask for
03 9209 6777

 accesshub.gov.au



Dogs are important
members of the family but
all dogs have protective
and territorial instincts.
It is important to know
what to do if a dog attack
occurs, whether you are
the victim or if your dog
has attacked. When a dog
attack occurs, Council's
Animal Management Team
are here to help.

The *Domestic Animals Act 1994* gives Council authorised
officers the authority to
investigate dog attacks.
Authorised officers are
impartial and responsible for
enforcing relevant legislation
and have the right to do
so without being subject
to harassment, obstructive
behaviour or abuse.



Did you know?

**Dogs must be kept on a leash in all
public places unless clearly signed
as an off-leash area.**

The dog in this photo is living their
best life inside the fenced dog off-
leash area at M.O. Moran Reserve.

If a dog attack occurs

All incidents should be reported to Council, from aggressive behaviour to serious attacks. Your report can prevent something worse from occurring.



Seek immediate help

Seek medical or veterinary attention if required. It's important to take your dog to the vet even if there are no apparent injuries.



Gather information

Gather as many details as you can and write them down. This can include:

- Date, time, location.
- Description of the dog and their owner (registration tag, name tag, breed, colour, sex, markings, collar size and colour).
- Description of the owner (name, address, contact phone number, male or female, age, hair colour, clothing).
- If a car was involved and the offender drove away with the dog – car registration number, make, model and colour.
- A description and photographs of any injuries to yourself and your pet.
- Note if you have seen the owner/dog return to an address.
- Note down the name/number of any witnesses.
- Note if the owner called the dog by a specific name.



Contact Council

Contact Council on 9209 6777 as soon as it is safe to do so. You can call this number 24/7 as our after hours team will assist outside standard operating hours.

When Council receives a report

Council is committed to dealing with every dog attack seriously and investigating impartially. Once a report is received, Animal Management Officers will contact you within 24 hours.

Actions we can take

- An officer will contact you to discuss the incident and arrange to take a statement.
- Seek other evidence that may be relevant including photos of injuries, doctors report and vet report.
- Obtain photographs of any injuries to yourself or your animal(s).
- Invite the owner of the alleged attacking dog to participate in a formal interview to obtain a full picture of the incident.
- Assess the circumstances and evidence and make a decision for action.
- Issue appropriate legal notices such as a warning, infringement, direct court action or a control order.
- Inform the parties of the outcome.
- In the case of some serious attacks or repeat incidents with the same dog, Council may decide to declare the dog as 'menacing' or 'dangerous'. This imposes restrictions which can include leashing and muzzling requirements (refer to page 8 of this guide).

If a signed statement or evidence is not provided, Council may not be able to continue to investigate the case as there is a requirement for a burden of proof in prosecutions.



Did you know?

Only 20% of dog attacks are reported, leaving 80% unreported. This creates a risk of repeated attacks and injury to people and pets.

Outcomes for dogs and owners



What can happen to your dog if it attacks

- The dog can be declared menacing or dangerous which sets extra requirements for keeping the dog.
- The dog can be seized or euthanised.



What can happen to the owner of an attacking dog

- The owner may be ordered to pay compensation for any damage caused.
- Fines can be issued by Council officers and the Court.
- A criminal conviction can apply – for serious attacks, the owner can be sentenced to up to 10 years in prison.
- The owner can be subject to an order banning dog ownership for up to 10 years.

Careful consideration is undertaken before serious penalties are imposed, so it is important to still report attacks – impounding or euthanising a dog is always a last resort.

Note: where the person in control of a dog is under the age of 18 years, the parent or guardian of that person is deemed the legal owner of the dog and subject to any penalties or prosecutions.

Owner obligations

Remember **YOU** are responsible for the actions of your dog.

Dog attacks are often caused due to dogs not being contained to a property so it is important to make sure your dog is secured to the property, with adequate fencing. This means keeping your yard secure and gates shut.

Even in a designated off-leash area your dog must be “under effective control” which means:



- The dog will return to its owner on command.
- The dog does not bother, attack, worry or interfere with other people or animals.
- The owner retains a clear and unobstructed view of the dog.



Did you know?

Muzzles can be a useful tool if your dog shows aggression. Often, your dog will feel calmer and less protective.

If a dog is declared 'menacing' or 'dangerous'

If a dog is declared 'menacing' or 'dangerous', additional requirements apply for keeping the dog.



Menacing dogs

A dog can be declared menacing under Section 41(d) of the **Domestic Animals Act 1994** if it has rushed at, chased or bitten a person without causing serious injury. Menacing dogs may be required to be leashed and/or muzzled in all public places, in the interest of public safety.



Dangerous dogs

A dog can be declared dangerous under Section 34 of the **Domestic Animals Act 1994** if it has caused death or serious injury to a person or animal. Dangerous dogs must be kept muzzled and on a leash at all times in a public place (including off leash areas). The dog must also wear a red and yellow striped prescribed collar.

Other obligations apply for keeping a dog that has been declared 'dangerous' or 'menacing' so it is important to carefully research the regulations if it applies to your dog. More information is available through the Animal Management Team or Animal Welfare Victoria.



Did you know?

Any size or breed of dog can show aggressive behaviour or attack.

How dog attacks happen

Dog attacks can be caused by territorial behaviour, fear, noise and trauma. It can often be obvious if a dog is displaying aggressive tendencies. This can include signs like **snarling, raised body hair, baring teeth, dilated pupils, growling, barking and nipping**. It is important to be mindful of these signs and take caution to prevent an attack. Give the dog space to be comfortable.

If you are approached by an aggressive dog

- Stand still, don't run.
- Keep your hands by your side.
- Stay quiet, try not to make any noise.
- Avoid eye contact with the dog, look at the ground.
- Once the dog has lost interest, slowly back away.
- Telling the dog to sit can provide time to deal with the situation.

It is important to approach dogs safely

- Always ask the owner if you can pat their dog.
- Approach the dog from an angle, rather than directly from the front or rear. Never approach or pat the head.
- Slowly extend the back of your hand with your fingers curled under and allow the dog to sniff.
- Stroke the dog on the side of the chest, the shoulders or under the chin (not on top of the head).
- Don't continue patting the dog if it backs away or doesn't sniff your hand.



Did you know?

Confining dogs could prevent 80% of attacks in public places. Most attacks that occur in public places happen outside the dogs property, due to the dog not being secure and their territorial instincts.

If your dog is aggressive

If your dog is displaying aggressive behaviour, you must seek professional advice as soon as possible.

You should have your dog checked by a vet for any health problems that might contribute to the aggression and contact a professional and certified animal behaviourist or dog trainer.

For contact details, ask your vet, local council, animal shelter or dog club or association for advice, or search for 'dog training' online.

If you are concerned about people's safety around your dog:

- Keep your dog securely confined to your property.
- Don't allow visitors to interact with your dog until you have resolved the aggression problem.
- Provide a comfortable space for your dog for it to retreat if people are around and always supervise young children interacting with your dog.
- Consider using a muzzle, and always use a leash.



Did you know?

Most attacks occur due to your dog having fear or anxiety. You can contact your vet or animal behaviourist for further advice.

If your dog is involved in a dog attack in the community:

- Restrain your dog if safe to do so.
- Check the welfare of others involved.
- Swap details with the other dog owner(s).
- Council must be notified to investigate, so please cooperate.

Dog attacks can occur in seconds so it is important to actively supervise your dog at all times.

Image: Dog attack training session





Scan the QR code

For more
information



For more information:

📞 **ASSIST** 03 9209 6777

🖱️ portphillip.vic.gov.au/pets-and-animals