



# Reducing the Risk of Dog Attacks & Aggression

Rockhampton Regional Council investigates numerous dog attacks in the Rockhampton Region every year. Attacks by dogs on humans, other companion animals and livestock can be prevented in most cases. While dogs may be considered as man's best friend, it should be remembered dogs are not human and act with an animal instinct.

## What is a dog attack?

A dog attack is considered when a dog has acted in a way that: causes fear to a person or another animal, where a physical injury may or may not have occurred; or the attack causes bodily harm, grievous bodily harm or death.

All dogs have the capacity to cause harm or injury to another animal or person, especially children and the elderly.

A dog's likelihood of attacking and biting can depend on many interacting factors such as:

- not under effective control of owner
- lack of socialisation and training
- feeling threatened or being cornered with no room to move away
- being fearful or anxious
- its early life experiences
- poor health (physical and psychological)
- the behaviour of the person interacting with the dog
- a territorial defence.



## As a dog owner, how do you prevent or reduce the risk of your dog from attacking people or other animals?

- Ensure your dog has an effective enclosure and is unable to escape over, under or through the fence or other type of boundary in which it is kept.
- Ensure your dog is always under effective control in a public place and held by a lead no longer than two metres. You must be able to physically control your dog.
- Take time to understand basic dog behaviour and use appropriate training techniques such as positive reinforcement (praise not punishment) to help train them. Get to know your dog and its behaviours.
- Training and socialising your dog decreases its fear, anxiety and aggression towards other dogs and people. Training improves a dog's ability to cope with new situations.
- Desexing your dog can decrease the risk of it wandering or displaying aggressive behaviour.
  - Entire male dogs (dogs that have not been desexed) are a greater risk of displaying increased aggression through guarding behaviour.
  - Entire females add to the risk by attracting males.
- Restrict your dog to the backyard. Consider the dog's access to the front yard and location of your letterbox.

## Educate your family

Teach your family to be calm, respectful and gentle around dogs. Learn how to read a dog's body language, as you may get an indication of how a dog is feeling in a situation. Never tease or annoy a dog or throw objects at a dog. Avoid the risk of facial injuries by not hugging dogs and putting your face close to the dog's face.

Always supervise children, as bites can occur when they are playing with and/or patting dogs.

Never approach a dog that is:

- not with its owner and unfamiliar with you
- sleeping, eating or chewing a bone
- playing with its toys
- injured or sick
- in its kennel, on its bed, or in a car
- on the back of a ute or tied up
- fighting or play fighting
- behind a fence or gate
- with its puppies.



If frightened when approached by an unknown dog:

- stand very still and do not run, as the dog may give chase
- curl fingers into fists and place fists on your chest
- be very quiet, do not scream or yell
- look away from the dog, do not make eye contact
- wait for the dog to go away

Parents should teach their children to tell an adult whenever they are or have been frightened by a dog.

## How do I greet a dog

There are some simple steps to take to ensure you and your children stay safe when interacting with and meeting a dog for the first time:-

1. children should always ask a parent or guardian whether they can pat a stranger's dog
2. if the dog is on a lead, ask the dog owner's for permission before approaching or patting a dog
3. if permitted by the owner, let the dog smell the back of your hand.
4. when the dog is happy for you to do so, pat it on the chest and under the chin. Once acquainted, the child can stroke the dog's back gently. Avoid patting a dog on the head.

## Suggestions that may help in a dog attack situation

**Note: All dog attacks are different and these suggestions may not stop a dog attack**

- always give the dog room to move away
- stay calm and still, do not run away
- stay quiet, don't scream or yell
- try to ignore the dog and avoid prolonged eye contact
- avoid reaching out to hit or grab the dog
- use anything in your hand such as a school bag or a handbag as a shield not as a weapon

