

HEALTH & SAFETY TOOLBOX ADVICE

SAFE HANDLING OF STRAY DOGS – Stray Dog toolbox 2026, V1

Date: 18.8.2026

Team: Domestic Team Environmental Health

Purpose

This toolbox provides guidance on the safe handling of stray dogs and aims to reduce the risk of injuries to employees, the public and animals during collection and transportation.

Key Risks

- Dog bites and scratches
- Aggressive behaviour
- Manual handling injuries
- Exposure to disease and parasites
- Road traffic hazards

PPE

- Dog treats
- Protective gloves
- Selection of leads and harnesses
- Secure cages in van
- Safety footwear if applicable and site conditions require
- High visibility clothing if collecting near a road
- Mobile phone and pebble
- First aid kit in van or car

Before Attending

Gather information on location, behaviour and hazards. Check size of the dog and temperament as reported by the finder, as this will dictate if 1 officer or 2 officer visit required.

Loose stray dogs cannot be dealt with.

If the public say it is loose and a road hazard then they must report directly to the Police.

If the dog is loose and considered a threat to other dogs, children etc then again they must call the Police.

Customer services to provide this advice as first point of contact. Officers to confirm if caller put through.

It remains important for customer services to continue to take all details, even if we are unable to attend, in case we receive a report of a lost dog that matches the loose dog report.

If dog is contained and the finder is asking for officer attendance then it is advisable to inform the holder that there may be a delay in attendance. This will allow some time for the owner to make contact either via Facebook or direct with the council and collect the dog themselves. If officer attendance is required then check handling equipment including lead, transport cage, scanner, first-aid kit and phone and pebble prior to visit.

Complete outlook diary with address attending and confirm if going straight to Woodgreen, although if 2 officers in attendance to handle dog into van then consider the requirement for both officers to also travel to Woodgreen. The location of the dog pick up will dictate what is most appropriate.

Assessment

For strays held by members of the public on district, or those held by vets, then the assumption is that it is likely to be compliant and able to be handled. Officers to request the finder of the stray to lead the dog to the van and to lift it in. If finder not prepared to do this (concerned about dogs temperament, cannot lift etc) then after consideration of finder's reasons for not assisting decide if gloves required.

Small dogs – encourage dog to jump into van. Or if too small to jump in then decide if gloves or blanket required. Lift dog into van with the use of gloves and/or blanket over it.

Larger dogs - If a large dog, then as per training, encourage the dog into the van with treats. If they place their front paws up then can lift from behind. If cannot jump in, then use a dog ramp (to be purchased). If the dog does not want to go up ramp, then place gloves on if deemed a requirement and lift the dog in. If large, then 2 persons may be required. 2 Officers may already be in attendance. If not call for assistance.

If the report advises a dog is trapped in someone's garden but is unable to be approached by the finder/resident (so not loose but contained and a risk to the occupier), then officers to attend in pairs to assess the situation. Dynamic risk assessment as to whether the dog can be caught with suitable PPE or whether to ask for Police assistance. Bite gloves, 2 persons with slip leads as a minimum.

Safe Handling of all strays

DO: Approach calmly, speak quietly, use approved equipment, request assistance if needed.

DO NOT: Chase, corner, or attempt to handle an aggressive or nervous dog without suitable controls.

Capturing and Transport

Use the safest and least stressful capture method. Ensure dogs are securely contained and transported in locked cages.

Prior to travelling to Woodgreen call them to advise you have a dog on route. 0300 3039333 before 4.30 pm. ** after 4.30 pm.

On arrival Woodgreen staff will remove the dog from the van.

Spray the van with flea spray prior to onward travel.

Incident Response

If you feel threatened or nervous for whatever reason, create distance and withdraw. Call the office for assistance or call the police if the dog is showing signs of being highly unpredictable or aggressive.

If bitten officers to seek immediate medical attention. If out on-site use first aid kit in van or car to clean wound. However, if possible, wash wound immediately with running water and soap for at least 5 minutes. Then seek emergency medical care.

If it is suspected that the bite came from an imported stray dog, then inform the medical provider so they can assess for post-exposure prophylaxis (such as urgent rabies evaluation and tetanus shots) depending on the dog's origin country and vaccination background.

High-Risk Pathogens from Imported Dogs

- Rabies: A fatal viral infection transmitted via saliva. High-priority concern if an imported dog originates from a high-rabies country.
- *Capnocytophaga canimorsus*: Bacteria living in normal canine saliva that can enter via a bite and cause severe, rapid systemic infection or sepsis in humans.
- *Pasteurella* species: The most frequent cause of painful, fast-developing local soft-tissue infections and cellulitis following a dog bite.
- Leishmaniasis: A protozoan parasite usually spread by sand flies, but infectious material from active canine skin lesions can occasionally transmit directly to humans.
- *Brucella canis*: A bacteria tied to imported breeding dogs that can spread to humans via contact with birth fluids, reproductive secretions, or broken skin contact

Key Safety Message

Your safety comes first. No stray dog should be approached or captured if doing so places you, colleagues or members of the public at unacceptable risk.

Further actions for discussion

Action Required	Person Responsible	Target Date
1. Check access to microchip accounts Petlog, Petrac, Animal Trackers and Identibase/Anibase to ensure all officers have authority to access for owner details.		Sept 2026
2. Investigate dog ramp options and purchase.		Sept 2026
3. Check flea spray for suitability for use on officers clothing.		Sept 2026
4. Any other thoughts?		

Officer record of review of toolbox advice

Name

Signature