

# The responsible dog owner Handbook



**ACT**  
Government




**OWN A DOG**  
**OWN THE RESPONSIBILITY**  
[WWW.CITYSERVICES.ACT.GOV.AU](http://WWW.CITYSERVICES.ACT.GOV.AU)

# Congratulations on the newest addition to your family!

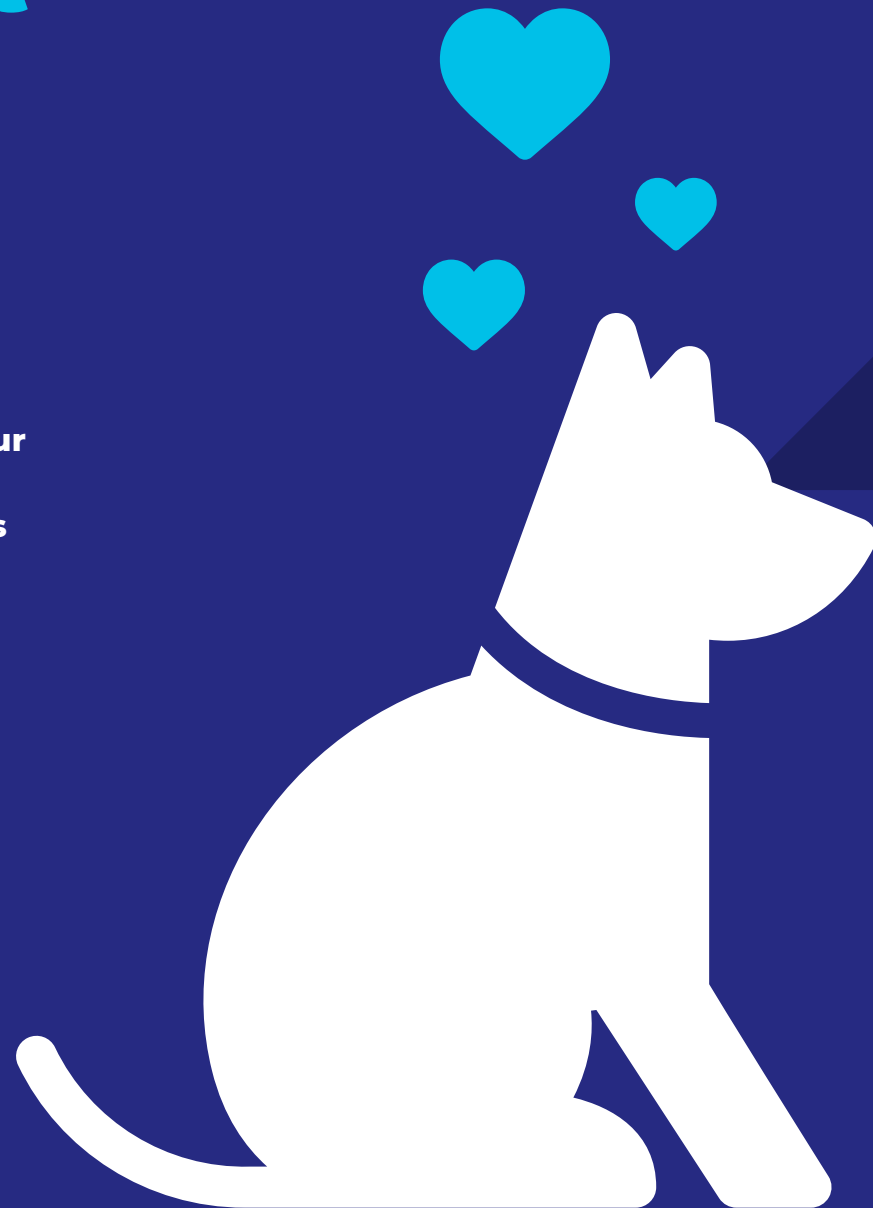
**This booklet has information on how to look after your dog and keep them safe and entertained. We have also provided information on your legal requirements and how to be a responsible dog owner.**

If you need help please contact Domestic Animal Services (DAS)

 [www.cityservices.act.gov.au](http://www.cityservices.act.gov.au)

 13 22 81

 92 Mugga Lane, Symonston ACT



# Welcoming your new dog

This is an exciting time for you and your family and, of course, your new family member. However, it is important to remember that this is a huge transition for your dog, just as it is for you.

Although it may be very tempting to shower your new dog with love, it is important to provide routine and consistency right from the start. You will need to decide what behaviours you expect and find acceptable for your dog and what behaviours you want to avoid. Make sure everyone in the home is aware of these expected behaviours so your new dog can understand what is expected right away.

## Adopting a dog

Adopting a dog from a shelter or rescue group has many benefits for the community, the dog and for you. Domestic Animal Services' shelter is always full with dogs who are looking for their forever home and by adopting a dog from the shelter, you're saving their life and reducing the number of unwanted or stray dogs in the community. When you adopt a dog from DAS, you'll have peace of mind knowing your new best friend has passed a temperament test, is in good health and is microchipped. Our rangers are always available to provide expert advice on your responsibilities involved with owning a dog and can help you choose the correct dog for your individual needs.

## Buying a dog

There are many ways to buy dogs, including online and through a breeder. When purchasing a dog this way, you must ensure that you're purchasing from a licensed breeder (license number must be shown) and not purchasing from an unlicensed 'backyard' breeder. By licensing breeders, the ACT Government can monitor the number of dogs and ensure they are well cared for in a safe and suitable environment. This also helps to reduce the number of unwanted litters in Canberra.



## Being a responsible pet owner

For many Canberrans, owning or caring for a dog is an important part of life. This is clear when moving about our Bush Capital, as it doesn't take long to spot people enjoying a walk with their dogs in our many parks, shared paths and trails.

We know that responsible dog ownership is crucial to Canberra becoming a safe, pet-friendly city and being a leader in dog management, but what exactly makes a responsible dog owner?

### 1. Responsible procurement

Do your research before choosing a dog. Staff at Domestic Animal Services (DAS) or other animal rescue organisations can assist in helping you pick the dog that's right for you. Be careful not to buy from illegal breeders and instead source your new dog through a legitimate organisation or a licensed breeder.

### 2. Meet your dog's basic needs

All dogs need adequate food, water, space, exercise, shelter, veterinary treatment, grooming and general attention to keep them happy and healthy. Responsible dog owners are committed to meeting these needs.

### 3. De-sex your dog

Owners must de-sex their dog if it is over six months of age unless they have a special permit. Studies show there is a strong correlation between non-de-sexed dogs and dog bites.

#### 4. Microchip your dog

Even responsible owners who make every effort to properly contain their dog can come home to find their dog is missing one day, whether someone let them out, they were frightened by fireworks or they are simply a very skilled escape artist. Microchipping, combined with registration, is a reliable tool to help reunite you with your dog and is a mandatory requirement under legislation.

#### 5. Register your dog

It is a requirement to register your dog as well as de-sex and microchip them. Registration contributes substantially to service provision and also has other benefits such as quality data to target services where they are needed, better align policies, identify trends and identify owners.

#### 6. Reinforce positive behaviour

All dogs must be kept under effective control at all times. Dogs are smart, but they can't read minds. Take the time to teach your dog the house rules and acceptable behavioural standards that apply at home and outside. What one person sees as harmless fun may be interpreted very differently by others and all Canberrans should feel safe and comfortable enjoying our beautiful outdoors. It is important to know your dog and manage any behavioural issues to prevent an incident from occurring.

#### 7. Provide your dog with adequate socialisation

Dogs are social beings and exposure to others, particularly from a young age, can dramatically reduce their chances of being involved in an attack or harassment incident. Using legitimate training or socialisation businesses, taking your dog for walks around other dogs in appropriate circumstances or letting your dog play in one of Canberra's dog parks under supervision are all ways you can keep your dog well-socialised.

#### Ask yourself...

- Will I have the finances to cover registration, veterinary treatment, grooming, dog walking, boarding, toys, bedding, food, bowls and a leash and harness?
- Will the dog suit my lifestyle and activity levels?
- Will I have the time to care for, exercise and entertain the dog?
- Does my home have enough space?

# Compliance

Being a dog owner brings with it responsibilities. The community expects to be able to enjoy public places without fear or threat of being harassed by dogs or walking on dog excrement. Residents are also entitled to enjoy their garden without dogs roaming onto their property or being disturbed by excessive noise from barking.

Dogs in the ACT must be on-lead in public places except in designated off-leash areas and enclosed dog parks. For more information on where to find on-leash and off-leash areas, please visit [www.cityservices.act.gov.au](http://www.cityservices.act.gov.au).



## De-sexing

De-sexing your animal is an important way to ensure they remain safe and healthy. De-sexing is essential to reduce the number of neglected or abandoned dogs. It may also improve behaviour, reduce aggression and help reduce reproductive health problems later in life. Female dogs do not need to produce a litter for full physical and emotional development. In the ACT, it is an offence to own a dog which has not been de-sexed, except for:

- when the dog is less than six months old
- if the keeper of the dog holds a permit to keep a sexually entire (un-de-sexed) dog.
- There are many benefits of de-sexing dogs and cats including:
  - de-sexed animals generally live longer, healthier lives
  - reduced risk of cancer and other diseases affecting the reproductive organs
  - reduced frequency of pregnancy and therefore the need to raise litters which can cause exhaustion in female cats and dogs
  - reduced territorial behaviour such as spraying and marking territory
  - less likely to display anti-social behaviour
  - reduces the huge cost associated with caring for and rehoming unwanted animals as a result of accidental breeding.

## Microchipping

Microchipping ensures that pets are identified for life and can be reunited with their owners if they are lost. On a larger scale, it can be invaluable following a natural disaster, such as a flood or cyclone, where a large number of pets can be displaced. All dogs in the ACT **must** be microchipped.

- Microchipping is not an alternative to registration, and **both** are compulsory.
- Microchipping is a safe procedure where a silicon chip, approximately the size of a grain of rice, is implanted under the skin of the animal. The procedure takes less than a minute and, once inserted, the chip cannot be lost. A dog or cat of any age can be microchipped.
- Few animals show any signs of discomfort during this simple and quick procedure.

Dogs can be microchipped by Domestic Animal Services, the RSPCA or any veterinarian. If you move to a new house, you should update both your dog's registration and microchip records. To update your contact details for your dog's registration please visit [www.cityservices.act.gov.au/dogrego](http://www.cityservices.act.gov.au/dogrego) where you can complete a simple smartform or call 13 22 81. To find out the microchip company that your dog is chipped with, visit [www.petaddress.com.au](http://www.petaddress.com.au) and follow the instructions on the website.

## Registration

Being a dog owner is enjoyable and rewarding, but it does come with responsibilities.

Dog registration is compulsory in the ACT. There is no mutual agreement between other States and Territories for dog registration, and all dogs which are kept in the ACT must be registered here.

All dogs must be registered if:

- they are over eight weeks old
- they have been kept in the ACT for 28 days or more
- the dog's keeper has been a resident of the ACT for 28 days or more

From 1 July 2021, you will be required to register your dog and update or confirm it's details annually. To register your dog for the first time visit [www.cityservices.act.gov.au/dogrego](http://www.cityservices.act.gov.au/dogrego) where you will complete a simple smartform and pay a once-off fee, alternatively you can call 13 22 81. Each year, coinciding with the date you first registered your dog, you will receive a notification from DAS to update or confirm your dog's registration details using an ACT Digital Account, at no additional cost.

Notifications will be sent at least 14 days prior to your dogs registration anniversary via email, text message or letter depending on the contact details recorded with your dog's registration.

If you move to a new house, no longer live in the ACT, or you no longer own the dog, you should update your pet's registration records. To update your contact details for your dog's registration please visit [www.cityservices.act.gov.au/dogrego](http://www.cityservices.act.gov.au/dogrego) where you can complete a simple smartform or call 13 22 81.

## Taking a dog into a public place

- You must have effective control over your dog at all times.
- You must remove all dog poo.
- You must carry appropriate equipment to remove droppings and dispose of them appropriately.
- You must keep the dog on-lead except in designated off-leash areas.
- You must not leave a dog unattended in a public place.
- You must not take a dog into a prohibited area.
- You must not take a female dog on heat into a public place.

**Effective control means you can prevent the dog from approaching other animals or people by the use of a leash, holding the dog or having the dog respond to your commands.**



## Dog park etiquette

When using one of Canberra's dog parks, it is important to follow the rules to ensure you and your dog are happy and safe at all times. Please make sure you:

- keep walking as this will reduce territorial behaviour
- stay alert and focused on your dog at all times
- bring plastic bags and clean up after your dog — there are bins provided
- limit the dogs you bring to two per owner if possible.

Please don't:

- Come into the park if your dog is un-vaccinated, aggressive or on heat
- Bring puppies into the enclosure that have not completed their vaccinations
- Come into the enclosure if it is already crowded
- Bring in food or toys
- Bring in children without careful adult supervision.





## Dog parks in Canberra

Belconnen dog park, Lake Ginninderra, Diddams Close

Casey dog park, park land, Yeend Avenue, Springbank Rise

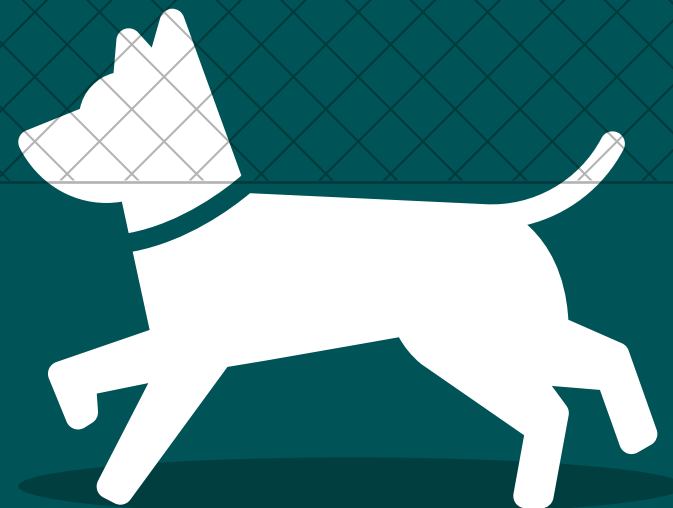
Duffy dog park, park land, Warragamba Avenue

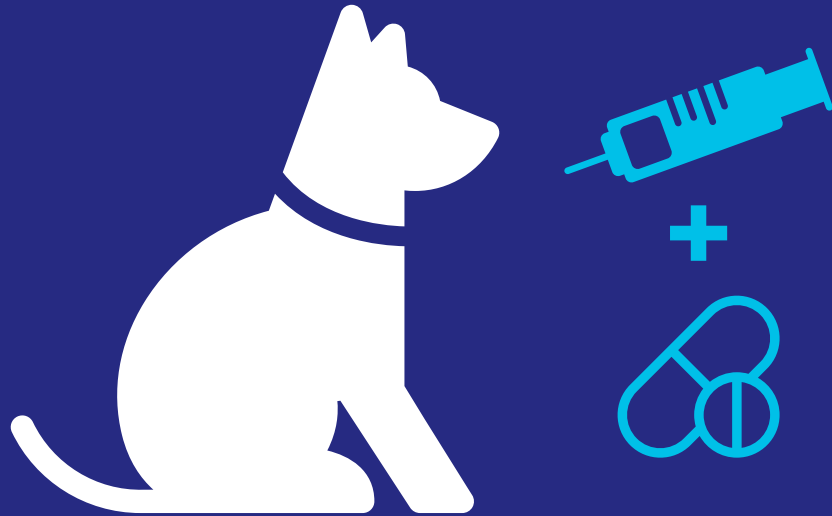
Forde dog park, park land, Amy Ackman Drive

Greenway dog park, Lake Tuggeranong, Mortimer Lewis Drive

O'Connor dog park, park land, Fairfax Street

Yarralumla dog park, park land, Weston Park





## Vaccinations

Although vaccinations are not mandatory in the ACT, we strongly recommend having your dog vaccinated to protect against a range of diseases which include parvovirus, distemper, hepatitis and kennel cough. Some places, such as kennels, will not take your dog if they are not vaccinated.

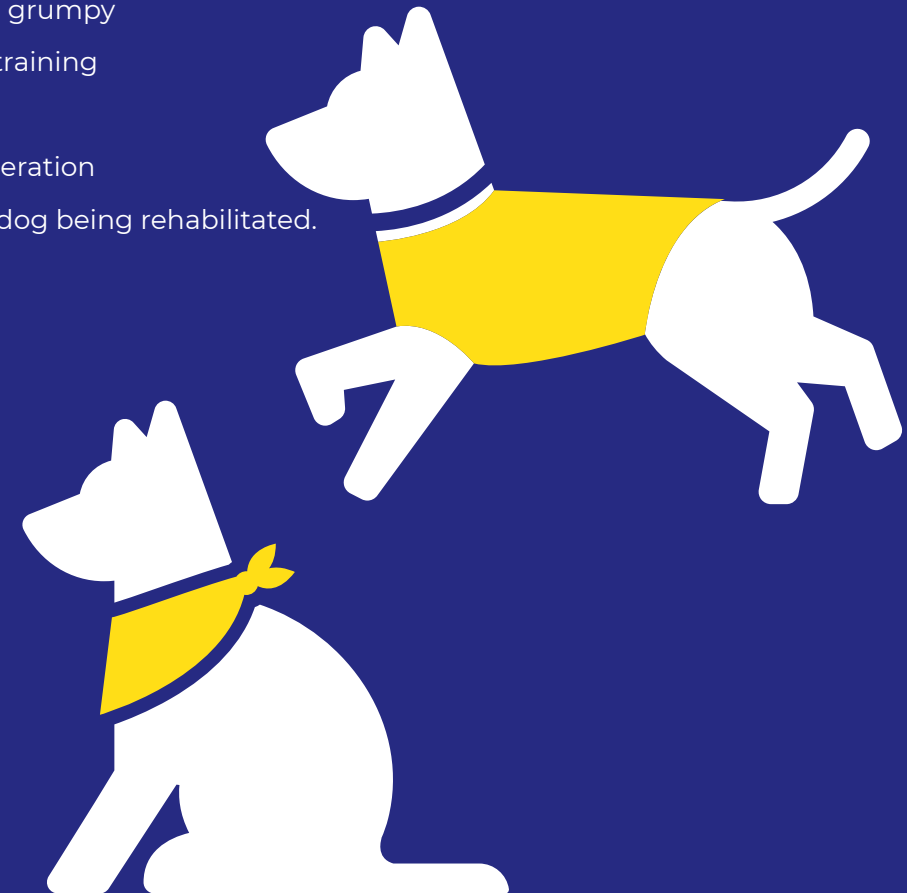
## Parasite control

It is highly recommended that you worm your dog every 3-6 months to prevent them from contracting ring worm, heart worm and hook worms. Dogs are also prone to attracting ticks, especially in warmer climates. Please make sure to check over your dog regularly for ticks, use appropriate medication and be extra vigilant when taking your dog to warmer climates.

## Yellow Dog Campaign

The Yellow Dog initiative is designed to bring awareness to dogs who need space while training, recovering from surgery or being rehabilitated. If you see a dog wearing a yellow bandana, vest or ribbon, do not approach this dog or its owner. The yellow is indicating that this dog needs some space. Some of the reasons a dog may need space include:

- nervous or anxious
- old and grumpy
- dog in training
- unwell
- post operation
- rescue dog being rehabilitated.



# Animal welfare

The ACT Government has introduced new animal welfare laws and we want to reiterate the importance of looking after your animals, which includes domestic animals, wildlife, stock animals and aquatic life. As part of the legislation, you need to provide your animals with:

## Food and water

Making sure the animal has the appropriate food for its wellbeing and fresh clean water at all times of the year. It is essential that your dog receives all its nutritional needs, which come from a range of different foods. This includes kibble (dry food), meat and vegetables. Please speak to DAS staff or your vet about the right food to feed your dog.

## Shelter or accommodation

Shelter and accommodation suitable for your pet must always be provided.

The shelter should ensure protection from constant sunlight and also allow your pet to be dry and warm if it rains or during the colder months.



## An opportunity for the animal to display behaviour that is normal for the animal

Chewing, for instance, is a normal behaviour in puppies. Continued chewing into later age is a problem and should be managed. This is similar to marking of territories. Dogs naturally mark their territory, but this behaviour should be managed to ensure hygiene standards are maintained and the animal behaves in a way that meets acceptable standards of socialisation and exercise.

## Treatment for illness, disease and injury

As the keeper of an animal, it is your responsibility to ensure they receive appropriate vet treatment. You should also be aware and look out for any potential ailments, medical conditions and be aware of genetic issues (e.g. hip dysplasia).



## Ensuring the animal is never abandoned

Your pet relies on you to provide it food and shelter. As the keeper of the pet you must ensure they are never completely abandoned. If you can't provide the constant support your pet needs, you should consider re-homing.



## Grooming and hygiene

It is your responsibility as a pet owner to properly maintain your pet's grooming and hygiene. This means providing your pet with a hygienic living space and making sure they are well groomed to prevent injury, pain or stress. Dogs that shed hair require frequent brushing, and non-shedding dogs will require regular clipping.



## Exercise

Dogs require regular exercise, not just for their physical and mental health, but also to socialise with other dogs and puppies, which is crucial to their behavioural development.



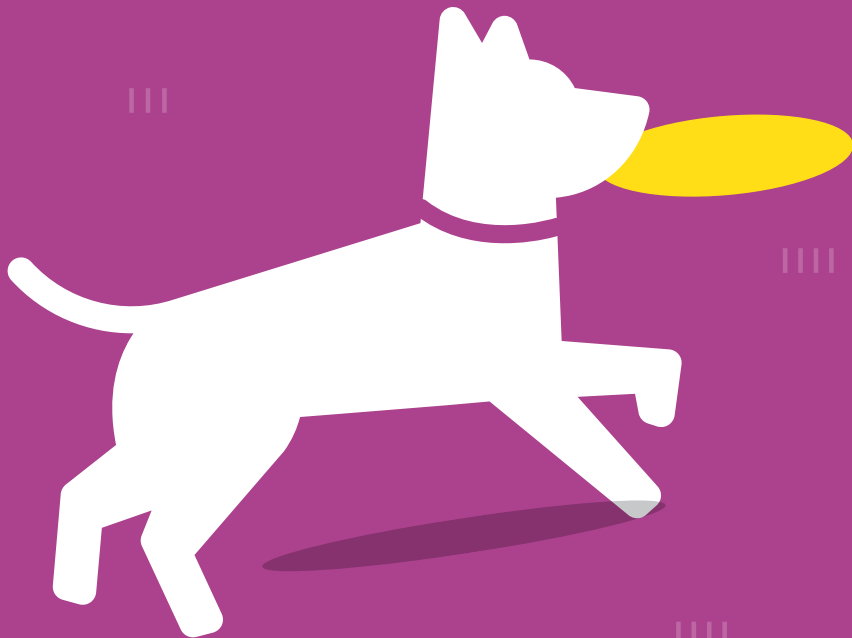
## Vets

Vets play a crucial part in ensuring your dog is safe, happy and healthy. Your dog needs to see a vet for vaccinations, injuries or illnesses. Vets can also provide you with information and advice on how to best care for your dog.

## Keeping your dog busy

Dogs require a high level of stimulation to keep them out of mischief. When dogs become bored, they tend to find ways to keep themselves entertained, which can include digging, chewing, jumping and barking. To help avoid this kind of behaviour, you need to keep your dog occupied when it is left on its own.

Please refer to the 'Enrichment Ideas' pack attached or please refer to our website.



## Kong treats

Providing your dog with kong treats as a supplement to a balanced diet is a great way to keep them occupied during the day to help prevent digging, chewing and boredom they might suffer while you're away. On the next page is a list of different dog-friendly foods you can stuff into your kong. Please keep in mind every dog is unique and some may have allergies or a special diet. Please seek advice from your vet or rescue organisation if you are unsure.

# Dog-friendly foods

## Vegetables

Asparagus  
Broccoli  
Brussel sprouts  
Carrots  
Cauliflower  
Celery  
Cucumber  
Green beans  
Kale  
Peas  
Pumpkin  
Spinach  
Squash  
Snap peas  
Sweet potato  
Zucchini

## Fruit

Apples  
Bananas  
Blackberries  
Blueberries  
Rockmelon  
Oranges  
Pineapple  
Strawberries  
Watermelon

## Meat, Dairy & misc.

Applesauce  
Baby food  
Cheese  
Cottage cheese  
Eggs  
Flax seeds  
Honey  
Oatmeal  
Peanut butter  
Rice  
Salmon



## Kong treat recipe (fills 12 kongs)

- 1 kg pet mince/regular mince
- 1 cup lactose free milk
- 1 egg
- 1 cup chickpea flour
- small kibble/dry food
- salt reduced peanut butter

1. Mix up mince, milk and egg together in a bowl. Sprinkle through chickpea flour until you get a nice sticky consistency.
2. Fill 1/4 of the kong with mince mixture.
3. Add a small amount of kibble to the kong.
4. Fill the remaining kong space with more of the mince mixture.
5. Put a tablespoon of peanut butter on the top to seal in the mince mixture.
6. Repeat.

Note: You can freeze your kong once you have put the mixture inside, this will help keep your dog occupied for longer or make for a nice summertime treat.

# Dog-proofing your home

Dogs are very smart animals that can find ways to escape if your home isn't secure and escape proof. Keeping your fences and gates secure and maintained are your responsibility as a dog owner. We have provided some information on how to ensure your home is safe and secure for your new pet.

## For your yard:

- Make sure fences are secure and dogs aren't able to escape by jumping over or digging under the fence and there aren't any gaps through the fence.
- All gates are locked and unable to be opened.
- Colourbond fences may need to be riveted.
- Wooden fence panels need to be firmly fixed.
- If you have a dog who likes to jump, you may need an inward facing top for your fence to prevent your dog escaping.
- Do not use electrical devices in your yard or on your dog, these are illegal in the ACT.
- Keep objects away from fences that your dog could jump on to get over a fence.





## For your home:

- Ensure all cupboards and fridges aren't accessible to your dog, you can use childproof door locks if necessary.
- Ensure all electrical wires and cords are out of reach as dogs like to chew on these.
- Food is stored correctly and securely.
- Keep your treasured soft toys out of reach.

## Reading the signs of dog behaviour

It is important to understand your dog's emotional state and needs. Dogs have their own way of showing you if they are happy, sad, anxious or frightened and each dog can show you this in their own unique way. Being able to read your dog's behaviour is a great way to help prevent any conflicts with other animals or humans.

The ACT Government will work together with DAS to help people understand the different behaviour signals your dog is showing and how to best approach a dog through posters, information packs and stalls at dog related events.

We recommend training your dog through a puppy/dog training school, obedience classes or dog behaviourist to help you understand your dog's needs and to help with managing your dog.

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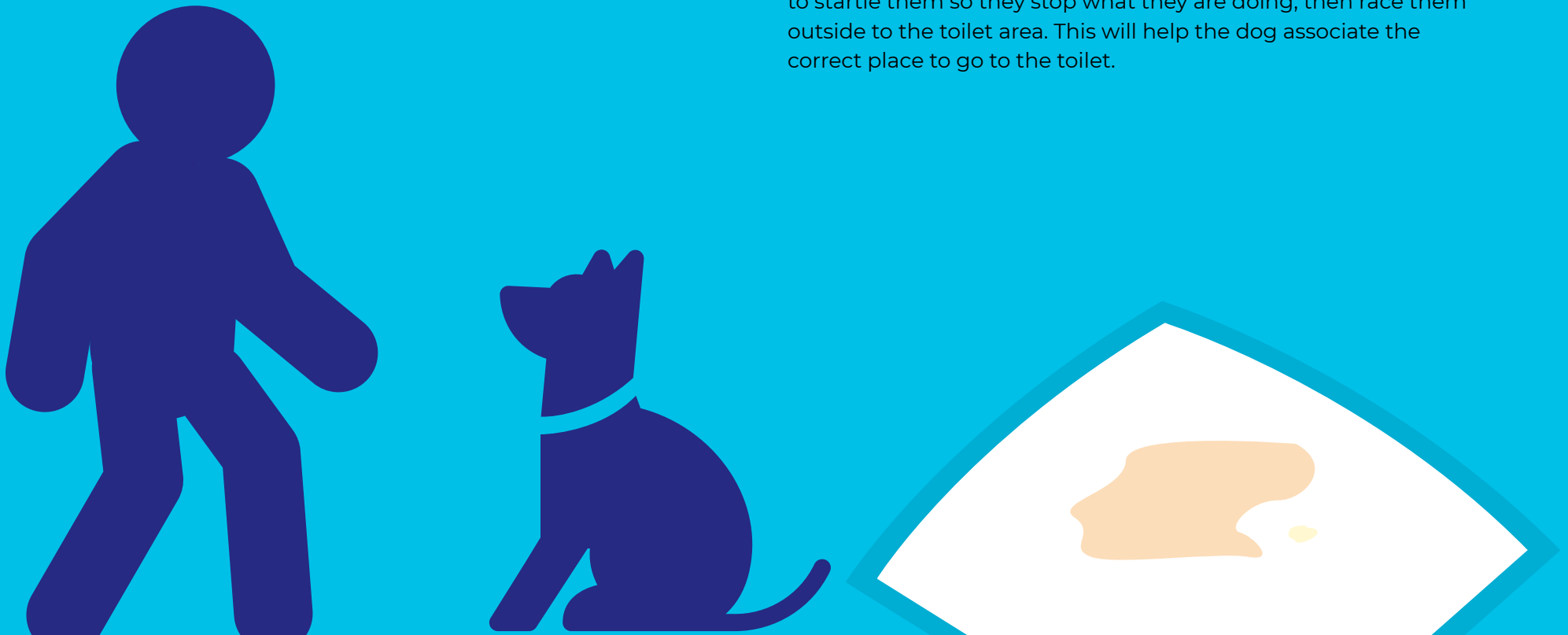


# Toilet training your dog

Toilet training your new dog can be a tricky and time-consuming task. Some rescue dogs may already come toilet trained and just need to be introduced to the rules of their new home, and some dogs might not have any experience at all with toilet training. It is important to note that dogs don't have full control of their bladder until they are 18 months old. We highly recommend using positive reinforcement by the way of treats and rewards to help train your dog. Yelling at your dog or punishing them for having an accident inside will not help your dog learn, but instead make them fearful.

Here are some tips to help you toilet train your dog.

- Take your dog outside first thing in the morning, before bed, after every meal and every hour in between. Stay with them and encourage them to go to the toilet. If they wee, give them lots of praise and a food treat.
- If your dog doesn't go to the toilet when you take them outside, bring them back in and make sure you keep an eye on them. Try to take them back outside 20 minutes later. If you see your dog sniffing and circling with their nose to the ground, or your dog is whining or frowning, take your dog outside. This is a sign that they need to go to the toilet.
- If you catch your dog going to the toilet inside, make a loud noise to startle them so they stop what they are doing, then race them outside to the toilet area. This will help the dog associate the correct place to go to the toilet.



**Now you're  
ready to  
welcome  
your dog into  
your home!**





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