

FACT SHEET

DOG BEHAVIOUR

We all come into contact with dogs. Whether you own a dog or not, it is important that you and your family understand a dog's behaviour. The following tips can help children and others handle themselves in situations involving dogs and minimise the risk of injury.

Approaching dogs

- Children and adults should never approach a dog they don't know.
- Never run towards a dog you don't know.
- In general, avoid patting dogs you don't know.
- Always get permission from the owner to pat his or her dog.
- Approach the dog on an angle, not from the front or rear.
- Slowly extend the back of the hand (not an open palm), curl the fingers, and allow the dog to sniff it.
- Stroke the dog gently on the side of the chest or under the chin (not on top of the head or shoulders).
- Don't continue patting the dog if it backs away or doesn't sniff the hand.

When approached by a strange dog

- Avoid eye contact with the dog.
- Never pat the dog.
- Don't run away or scream, but stand completely still.
- Don't kick at the dog, squeal or jump.
- Keep your hands firmly by your sides and don't wave them around.
- Slowly back away.
- When the dog wanders off, quietly walk away.

Reading a dog's behaviour

Dogs may bite when frightened or when they have been provoked to act aggressively. Leave dogs alone if they show any of the following warning signs. Sometimes dogs can be frightened and aggressive at the same time and show a combination of the following signs.

A frightened dog:

- Has its ears back (watch out for raised hackles which will indicate it is aggressive even though frightened).
- Has its tail curled under its legs.
- Tries to minimise its size by hunching or lying down.

An aggressive dog:

- Shows its teeth and/or snarls, growls or barks.
- Has its ears forward and pricked up.
- Has its tail raised.
- Tries to look bigger by raising its hackles and standing on the tips of its paws.