

Pet registration: Benefits for you and your pet

Every dog and cat three months of age and over must be registered with your local council. Existing registrations must be renewed by 10 April each year.

Your registration fee gives you more than just a lost and found service for your pet...

The importance of pet registration

Pet registration is a legal requirement under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*. You can be fined for not complying. However, there are many additional reasons to register your pet.

When discussing the importance of registration, the government is often asked why an owner should register when microchipping will help a lost pet find its way home. While microchipping provides a reunification service, there are many things that microchipping cannot provide that registration does. This section outlines some of the key community facilities and services that your dog and cat's registration fee pays for.



Facilities

Your pet registration fees may go toward providing the following facilities:

- dog parks, including off leash parks and fenced dog parks
- dog poo bins
- pounds and shelter facilities.

Reunification

- individualised registration tags for each of your registered dogs and cats
- animal management staff to support the collection and return of stray animals to owners.

Events, incentive schemes, and information may include

- free information booklets and fact sheets
- pet expos
- community discounted microchip and desexing days
- discount incentive schemes for new registrations
- on-line Responsible Dog Ownership e-learning course (available from www.vic.gov.au/pets).

Animal management staff

- staff to attend to nuisance complaints such as:
 - o barking complaints
 - o cat and dog trespassing complaints
 - o wandering and stray animals, etc
- staff to attend to and investigate dog attack/bite/rushing incidents
- staff to patrol parks, beaches and streets
- staff to pick up stray cats and dogs
- staff to manage and run pound and shelter facilities
- training courses and programs for animal management staff to ensure they have the most up to date information and skills in animal management
- animal management tools to ensure animal management officers are able to perform their role in the most efficient and comprehensive manner.

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Domestic Animal Business compliance

Your registration fee ensures that local councils have sufficient staff to audit Domestic Animal Businesses, such as:

- pet shops
- breeding facilities
- boarding kennels
- catteries
- training establishments
- shelters and pounds.

Auditing for compliance with the relevant mandatory codes of practice, under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, provides both consumer protection and animal welfare assurances for the community.

Dangerous and restricted breed dog management

Your registration fees cover the costs of staff to enforce the control of dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs to ensure that owners are compliant with the legislation and ensure these dogs do not pose a threat to the community.

In addition, the registration fee covers the cost of the Victorian Declared Dog Register, a database that tracks and records all declared dangerous, menacing, guard and restricted breed dogs.

Dog bite/attack education programs

Registration fees for dogs and cats in the community contribute to the following dog bite prevention programs:

- "We are Family" – a community education program provided free of charge to expectant and new parents preparing/introducing a new family member to a home with pets. The program provides learning tools for education sessions within antenatal and maternal and child health programs and information booklets and guides. The "We are Family" Program offers components of the "Living safely with dogs" program to families with infants, toddlers and preschoolers
- "Responsible Pet Ownership and Living Safely with Dogs" programs provide free pet education visits to more than 2600 primary and preschools in Victoria each year. The programs include a visit from a trained pet educator and their dog, free curriculum activities, on-line games for children, parent training sessions and information booklets. The programs teach safety around dogs and responsible pet ownership
- free community dog bite prevention education resources.



Emergency animal welfare

Local councils use pet registration information to plan emergency activities.

Evacuation and relief centres

Without a clear understanding of the numbers of dogs and cats in a municipality it is impossible for your local council to establish evacuation and relief centres with sufficient resources to be able to cater for all those people who may need to seek refuge with their animals.

Local councils also use registration numbers to provide supporting agencies and not-for-profit animal welfare agencies, such as the RSPCA and Animal Aid, with dog and cat numbers so they can provide aid such as cages, food, bedding, bowls, leads, kitty litter, animal care staff and veterinary support.

Identifying locations where animals may have been left behind

In addition, local councils can use registration information as a means of identifying homes where animals may have been left stranded in an evacuation situation. Failure to register may mean your animals will not be attended to because no one knows they are there. Registration could be the difference between your animal being evacuated and/or cared for or not.

Exotic disease and biosecurity

The State Government uses pet registration information for responding to exotic disease threats that effect cats and dogs. Without proper knowledge of the location of cats and dogs, in the event of a disease outbreak, the State Government cannot know who to contact to prevent the spread or effectively plan the eradication of the disease.

Research

The State Government uses pet registration fees as a source of funding for research into dog and cat welfare. These research programs provide the government and the general public with valid and reliable information about maximising the welfare of our pets.

Why do pets have to be registered at three months of age?

Most puppies and kittens are purchased or obtained between the age of eight to twelve weeks. Registering pets at three months of age ensures that more lost puppies and kittens can be returned to their owners. In addition, owners receive discount registration fees if their pets are desexed.

Registering pets at three months of age encourages early age desexing of cats and dogs. This may in turn prevent the breeding of unwanted cats and dogs, many of which are euthanased each year across Victoria.

Owning multiple pets

Owning multiple pets is a greater responsibility for any member of the community. All of your dogs and cats must be registered individually with your local council. Some local councils require permits for residents to keep more than a particular number of dogs and cats on their property. This helps to ensure the welfare of pets, it is important that they are kept in a healthy environment, and that neighbours are not inconvenienced by pets. Maximum numbers of pets per household are set by your council, and vary across the State.

It is important to register all your pets. If you do not have a permit for excess animals, council may take further action.

Registration fees

The types and levels of fees are set by your local council, and vary depending on a number of factors. Contact your council to find out which fees apply to your pet.

You are eligible for reduced registration fees if your pet:

- is de-sexed
- has an obedience certificate issued by a Government approved organisation
- is over 10 years of age
- is kept for working stock
- is kept for breeding by the proprietor of a registered business.

You also get reduced registration fees if you are a member of a pet organisation approved by the Minister.

Pensioners who have approved concession cards issued by the Department of Social Security and Department of Veterans Affairs are also entitled to a reduction in their fees.

Renew your pet's registration each year

Don't forget to renew your pet's registration each year by 10 April.

Moving home?

If you move to a new municipality, make sure you transfer your pet's registration. Often when you transfer registration your new local council will only charge you a percentage of the year's registration in lieu of the fees you have already paid. You must also remember to update your contact details with your microchip registry. Remember this is a separate task to updating your pet registration records with your local council.

My pet lost its tag...

If your pet loses its identification marker (which must always be worn by your pet when outside your premises) you can get a new one from your local council.

Cat and Dog Registration Statistics

Year	Dog Registrations	Cat Registrations
2008	632,556	224,660
2009	642,236	221,679
2010	657,074	220,821
2011	667,566	223,037
2012	684,788	216,461
2013	679,564	216,141
2014	673,039	212,664

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Compulsory microchipping

All cats and dogs registered with a council for the first time must be microchipped prior to registration. For more information, contact your local council or view the fact sheet "Microchip for life".

Note: Where the owner of a dog/cat is under the age of 18 years, the parent or guardian of that owner will be deemed the legal owner of the dog/cat and subject to any penalties/prosecutions.

For more advice or information

Be a responsible pet owner. Register your pet and make sure it wears identification when outside your property.

Call your local council if you have questions about your rights and responsibilities as a pet owner. Advice is also available from animal welfare shelters, vets and pet clubs.

Visit www.vic.gov.au/pets for more responsible pet owner information or call 136 186.

If you do not comply with registration requirements, you can be fined. Remember, if you really care about your dog or cat, then register it! Keep Victoria's pet programs and facilities running.



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