



# Important information for Found or Lost Dogs

## **I found a dog - what should I do?**

Report it to Council and staff will record your details and those of the dog and we can arrange to collect the dog from you to try and locate the owner. Some dogs do not have any identification, but may be micro-chipped. Council officers can scan for a chip and search databases to track the owner. Council staff may also be able to identify the dog if they have dealt with it before. If we identify the owner in the field, and they are home, we can return the dog immediately.

## **Can I hold the dog until the owner is found?**

Yes you can, however this is not recommended. If you decide to hold the dog you are liable and responsible for the dog. Some of the responsibilities whilst the dog is in your possession include:

- If the dog escapes you could be liable for allowing a dog to wander at large
- If the dog attacks, you could be liable for the attack (penalties apply and you could be sued for damages by victims)
- Not knowing the behavioural background of the dog can present risks as it could be aggressive and attack you, your family or pets, or create a noise nuisance
- The dog could have diseases that could infect you, your family or your other pets
- The dog may have special dietary needs or require medication
- If the dog is injured or killed whilst in your possession the owners could sue you for damages as you refused to hand it to Council and assumed responsibility for the dog
- If you keep the dog for more than 14 days, you are responsible for the dog and must register it with Council
- Even if you register the dog with Council and the rightful owner comes forward, you will be required to return the dog to the owner

### **If the owner is located, should I give the dog back?**

If the owners report the lost dog to council and we can match it with your report, we will put the owners in touch with you so they can claim the dog. If this is the case, we advise you return the dog to the owners. If you refuse to return the dog then you could be charged with theft if they report it to the police. You could also be putting yourself at risk if a conflict arises.

### **A person claiming they lost the dog approaches me, should I give it back?**

If you place up flyers, or put up a report on a website then someone could approach you directly to claim the dog. You can return the dog, however you have no way of proving that they are the actual owners. If you return it to someone who isn't the owner you could be liable for disposing of someone else's property and may face legal action. Council Officers are authorised to obtain names and an address to make sure the dog goes back to the rightful owner.

### **What's the best course of action?**

We recommend you report the found dog to Council, which will collect it from you and try and get it back to the owner. If we can't find them straight away we will keep the dog safe until claimed by the rightful owner/s. This ensures the dog is safe, looked after, does not escape again and does not cause any other concerns. If the dog does not look healthy we take it directly to a vet or the Animal Welfare League for immediate attention.

Council also requires identification and records all information before handing a dog back and ensures it is registered and not claimed illegally. In addition we can provide information to the owners to prevent the dog escaping again so it stays safe.

***Returning dogs to their rightful owners, preventing any harm to the dog and ensuring community safety is our goal. Handing the dog to Council is the right thing to do.***



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