

Being responsible for your animals

Pets are an important part of family life for many people. As well as providing companionship, affection and fun, having a pet can provide children with an opportunity to learn about responsibility.

Having a pet brings with it a number of responsibilities. All pets involve some extra work and cost. Being a pet owner can be a very rewarding experience, but it is not for everyone.

As a pet owner, you are responsible for your animals' well-being. This includes: Regular feeding, care and contact. Depending on the type of pet you choose, you may also need to provide other necessities, such as regular exercise, grooming, foot or dental care, training and control.

Whether you own a dog, cat, horse, mouse, rabbit, fish or bird, anyone of them can become your friend for life, provided that their needs are met by you, the caregiver. If you are looking for more information on choosing or caring for a pet, there is more information on the [Royal NZ SPCA website](#) or ask your local vet for advice.

Animal Welfare

In New Zealand, the legislation regarding animal welfare is the [Animal Welfare Act 1999](#). It is a very wide-ranging act that deals with offences in the handling and management of animals (including birds). Common offences include failing to provide an animal with adequate food, water and shelter, deliberate acts of cruelty towards an animal and failing to seek necessary veterinary advice.

Care and exercise

Owners must ensure their dog receives proper care and attention. This means providing adequate food, water, shelter and exercise.

Be sure to keep your dog's vaccinations and wormings up to date. Your local vet will be able to help with a schedule. You can purchase Drontal worming tablets at Council offices.

Find out where you are allowed to exercise your dog in Buller.

Cleaning up after your dog

Don't forget to take something with you to remove faeces when exercising your dog, eg a pooper scooper or plastic bag. Failing to do so may result in a fine. At present there are doggy-doo bag dispensers in Reefton (1), Punakaiki (1) and Westport (1). We have installed a dispenser in the reception area of Council offices in Westport and Reefton.

Neutering your dog

De-sexing your dog makes it cleaner, easier to handle, less likely to roam, more socially acceptable, less aggressive, and less likely to suffer from diseases such as testicular and ovarian cancer. The Council encourages de-sexing by offering discounts on registration fees for neutered and spayed dogs.

Training your dog

Dog obedience training is a positive way of spending time with your dog. It can also help you comply with the responsible dog owner practices.