

MEDIA RELEASE

28 July 2009

Promoting
Responsible
Dog
Ownership



Keep kids safe around strays

Stray dogs can be especially dangerous for children who are often unaware of how their voice and body language can affect a dog. **Dogs NSW** calls for owners to take greater steps in securing their dogs in their premises to keep the general community safe. 160,000 micro-chipped stray animals have been rescued in Australia since July 2008, making clear the need for pet owners to take bigger steps in making their premises secure for their animals.

Dogs NSW warns people who encounter stray dogs on the street to exercise caution and take time to assess the situation so as to avoid harm to themselves and the animal. Certain bodily cues, such as pointing, making direct eye contact, and fast forward motion can make dogs feel threatened. Stray dogs are especially sensitive to these cues because they are out of their premises, alone in unfamiliar territory.

“Around 66% of all strays are found between 9 am and 5 pm, meaning dogs are not being secured effectively at home when owners are at work. This leads to road accidents and occasionally fighting between animals. Given that it is currently school holidays and there are more children around, now it is more important than ever to safely secure dogs.”, believes veterinarian and **Dogs NSW** spokesman **Dr Peter Higgins**.

“In most cases, domestic animals are the kindest and most well trained animals to find, but this means they are often the most scared. If an animal is approached quickly by a stranger, it may bolt to a place where it can't be found, or worse onto the road.”

“It takes an expert to know how strays are going to react to strangers closing in on them. You're better off contacting your local council instead. They will be able to send out a ranger who will take the matter from there. That way the community and the dog are in safe hands.”, urges **Dr Higgins**.

“If the animal is dangerous or visibly injured, I would recommend whoever finds the animal to call the council or local let straight away so as to avoid any injuries, both to the animal and the person who finds them.”, advises **Dr Higgins**.

“Of course the problem here usually not the dogs themselves, rather owners not taking the appropriate steps to secure them when they are away from home. Dogs need high fences around them so that they can't jump over. Owners can leave toys and dogs chews for them to play with so that they don't get bored or anxious whilst they are on their own. And of course when they are outside they should be on a lead.”, suggests **Dr Higgins**.

*** ENDS ***

For further information, images or interviews, contact:

Tomas Ganderton or Dr Peter Higgins
Media Liaison
0401 927 653 or 0410 67 63 65
TomasGanderton@dogsnsw.org.au

Dogs NSW is located at:

The Bill Spilstead Complex for Canine Affairs,
44 Luddenham Road,
Erskine Park,
NSW 2759