DOG ATTACKS ON LIVESTOCK
Information for dog owners

Introduction
Every year, hundreds of sheep, goats and other animals in the City of Swan die or suffer injury after attacks by wandering domestic dogs. This causes both financial loss and emotional distress to livestock owners. Most attacks can be avoided if owners properly manage their dogs and stop them from wandering. This information sheet outlines what you can do as a dog owner to prevent your dog attacking neighbours’ livestock.

Definitions
The Dog Act 1976 interprets an “attack” to be:
(a) aggressively rushing at or harassing any person or animal; or
(b) biting, or otherwise causing physical injury to, a person or animal; or
(c) tearing clothing on, or otherwise causing damage to the property of, the person attacked; or
(d) attempting to attack, or behaving in such a manner toward a person as would cause a reasonable person to fear injury.

Information and advice
Dispelling the myths
• All dogs have an instinct to roam and hunt. Many owners believe their dogs are incapable of attacking livestock, but even friendly domestic dogs that would never attack a person will often attack livestock if allowed to wander unsupervised.
• Packs of wild, savage dogs are rarely responsible. Research shows that in outer metropolitan semi-rural areas most attacks involve one or two dogs from small properties nearby.

How to Prevent Your Dog Attacking Livestock
• Fence your dog in. A secure fence will prevent your dog roaming. This eliminates the opportunity for your dog to attack livestock.
• If necessary, restrain your dog. Dogs can be trained to accept restraint or confinement. However, if restrained a dog must have sufficient exercise during part of the day.
• Don’t be careless. Some owners claim their dogs escape despite efforts to restrain them, but this is a myth. Most dogs walk out through open gates, under or through insecure fences or over low ones. Many dogs that roam are unrestrained on properties without fences, or their owners forget to restrain them.
• Take care releasing dogs for exercise. Many owners deliberately release their dogs in the morning for exercise. This is when many attacks occur. The dog may be absent for less than an hour but this is sufficient time to kill livestock nearby.
• Prevent night-time roaming. Many dogs sleep at the back door and are there in the morning but that doesn’t mean the dog has stayed home all night. Dogs often roam after owners have gone to bed and return before they rise. In this time they can attack neighbours’ livestock.
• Sterilise your dog. Roaming is normal dog behaviour, particularly in male dogs as they mature. Dogs will roam in search of food or bitches on heat, then attack livestock. Roaming can be reduced by sterilisation.
• Keep your dog and family safe. Allowing your dog to wander puts its health at risk - and can even endanger yours. Every year hundreds of pets are shot, poisoned and impounded for attacking livestock. Other roaming dogs die from snake bite or traffic accidents. Those that do return often bring back diseases that are passed on to their owner’s family.
• Be a responsible dog owner. Dogs need more than feeding and watering; they have to be trained, controlled, vaccinated, registered and exercised.
Legal framework
In Western Australia, the Dog Act 1976 covers the registration, ownership and control of dogs. The Act states “it is an offence for any dog to attack or chase any person, or any animal owned by, or in the charge of another person, whether or not an injury is caused”. As a dog owner, you are legally responsible for your dog’s behaviour.
In relation to attacks on livestock, the Dog Act 1976 is administered by the City, not by the Police.

Fines and penalties
Dog owners can be fined up to $10,000 if their dog attacks. Livestock owners are permitted to destroy or capture any dogs they observe attacking livestock on their land, however the setting of baits for dogs is illegal.

Additional information
For additional details about this information sheet, please call the City of Swan on 9267 9267.

Information correct as at July 2008