

PROCEDURE 18

Dog death, catastrophic welfare event or serious complaint

Purpose: Respond compassionately, preserve facts and remains, meet reporting duties and avoid speculation.



SITE CUSTOMISATION REQUIRED. This national baseline must be adapted through a site risk assessment, worker consultation and advice from the relevant state or territory regulator, emergency services, council, insurer and veterinarian. Human life takes priority.

Business and site details

Business legal name		Trading name	
Site / branch		ABN	
Physical address		Emergency entry / cross street	
Site manager		Incident Controller	
Maximum dogs		Maximum people	
Operating hours		Main phone	

Document control

Issue date		Next review date	
Approved by		Position	

Activate this procedure when

- Dog dies, is found deceased, requires emergency euthanasia, suffers a life-threatening incident, is alleged to have been seriously mistreated, or an owner makes a serious welfare complaint.

P Protect people	A Alert and activate	W Welfare and secure dogs	S Sign off accountability
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Step-by-step emergency response

- 1 Protect and confirm.** Secure the area and other dogs. Contact a veterinarian immediately; only an authorised veterinary professional should confirm death or determine treatment/euthanasia.
- 2 Notify leadership.** Escalate to the owner/operator and insurer. Check police, council, animal-welfare and WHS reporting requirements.
- 3 Preserve evidence.** Do not clean, discard food/medication/equipment or alter records beyond what is necessary for safety and welfare. Save CCTV, access and environmental data.
- 4 Contact the owner.** Use a senior, calm caller. Give confirmed facts, actions taken and the veterinarian's details. Do not speculate, blame or use text/email as the first notification unless contact cannot otherwise be made.
- 5 Manage remains respectfully.** Follow owner instructions and veterinary/legal requirements for transport, post-mortem examination and release. Maintain identification and chain of custody.
- 6 Support and document.** Separate factual incident notes from opinions, obtain witness accounts and support affected staff.

Do not

STOP	Pronounce death, move remains or arrange disposal contrary to veterinary or authority direction.
STOP	Alter, backdate or recreate records.
STOP	Publish any information or respond publicly without authorised, privacy-safe wording.

After the immediate danger

- Commission an appropriate independent review for a serious event.
- Track corrective actions and communicate findings to the owner and authorities as appropriate.
- Review emergency consent, surveillance, staffing, monitoring, medication and handover systems.

Assigned emergency roles

Incident Controller	Selects the safe action, liaises with emergency services and authorises recovery.	
People / Area Warden	Protects people, sweeps assigned areas if safe and reports status.	
Dog Movement / Canine FA	Secures, identifies, separates, triages and moves dogs within training.	
Communications / Recorder	Calls services and owners, maintains the time log and preserves records.	

Procedure readiness checklist

- ☐ Maintain owner consent, emergency treatment, euthanasia and remains-handling instructions.
- ☐ Require veterinary confirmation and direction for death, euthanasia, post-mortem and release.
- ☐ Provide a private, secure and temperature-appropriate area for dignified temporary custody.
- ☐ Preserve dog identity, chain of custody, CCTV, records, equipment and environmental evidence.
- ☐ Nominate a senior compassionate caller and privacy-safe communication process.
- ☐ Keep insurer, police, council, animal-welfare and WHS notification pathways current.

Site-specific arrangements

Private secure holding area	
Veterinary confirmation contact	
Senior owner-contact person	
Evidence / chain-of-custody storage	

Emergency contacts and notifications

Veterinarian and owner		Manager / insurer	
Police, council, welfare or WHS authority if required		Primary / emergency vet	

Recommended drill: Practise a private factual owner call, evidence preservation and a documented veterinary handover.

Drill, review and authorisation record

Last drill date		Participants	
Corrective action owner		Action due date	
Procedure authorised by		Authorisation date	
Gaps identified / corrective actions			

Sources and further guidance

[19] [Safe Work Australia - Incident notification](#)

[21] [Agriculture Victoria - Boarding establishments code](#)

Review date: source links and national emergency numbers were checked for the master manual on 31 August 2026. Confirm local numbers, warnings, laws, codes, licences and veterinary arrangements before issue and at every review.