

Staying Safe Around Dogs

Education Communications Package

for Local Government and Community-Based Organisations

Published July 2026

Resources for communities, supporting pets + people

Package includes:

- 1 x Template Newsletter Article
- 3 x Social Media Posts
- 4 x Community Hand-outs
- 5 x Activity Guides (for games)
- 1 x Link to Animation Clip
(for screening)



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Background on AMRRIC

AMRRIC is a national not-for-profit organisation that works in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across rural and remote Australia to improve the health and wellbeing of people, animals, Country and culture. Guided by a One Health approach, AMRRIC delivers practical, community-led solutions through animal health services, education, training, research and advocacy. Our work is culturally grounded, evidence-informed and focused on building local capacity, reducing risk and creating healthier, safer and stronger communities over the long term.

Background on Staying Safe Around Dogs Resources

Dogs have been an integral part of Aboriginal social, family, and environmental relationships for generations¹

They are owned for a variety of reasons, including providing security, to assist with hunting, and offering companionship. In some regions, dogs are also associated with creation stories and hold significant cultural value.

Dog bites are a complex public health issue that can result in serious physical injury, psychological trauma, disease transmission, and, in some cases, death²

While there is limited data on dog bite incidents affecting people in remote Indigenous communities, the impacts of unsafe interactions between people and dogs can be significant.

A range of genetic, developmental and environmental factors influence how dogs behave around people and other animals. Some of these factors cannot be easily controlled. For this reason, current education efforts focus on helping people recognise the subtle behavioural signals that dogs display indicating their emotional state.

Understanding dog behaviour and safe interactions is not solely the responsibility of dog owners. It is valuable knowledge for anyone who may encounter dogs.

This communications package contains a range of resources designed to increase awareness of dogs' behaviours and provide guidance on the steps to take if approached by a dog that is acting aggressively.

¹ Bennett, B., & Archer-Lean, C. (2023). *Understanding camp dogs: the relationship between Aboriginal culture and western welfare*. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, 19(2), 117718012311676. <https://doi.org/10.1177/11771801231167671>

² Morgan, M., & Palmer, J. (2007). *Dog bites*. *BMJ*, 334(7590), 413–417. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.39105.659919.be>

How to use this package

This package is intended for media and communications use for local governments and community-based organisations to spread awareness of important animal, human and environmental health topics among their communities.

The package includes templates for newsletters, Facebook posts, posters for distribution, as well as links to videos you can screen at community events.

Feel free to edit and adapt the resources for your community.

If you have any questions on the use of this material or any suggestions, please contact us at info@amrric.org

Overview of resources:

Media Item	Media Attachment
Newsletter Article	Photos (2) included in ZIP folder Select one photo to use with article.
Social Media Post # 1	Social Media Tiles (5) included in ZIP folder.
Social Media Post # 2	Links to animations provided (1), include relevant links in your social media post.
Social Media Post # 3	Game instructions (5) provided in ZIP folder
Community Handouts (posters and brochure)	Poster (1) and brochure (1) provided in ZIP folder.
Animation Video	Link (1) provided along with instructions to download for offline usage.

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[TEMPLATE ARTICLE FOR NEWSLETTERS]

Myth Buster: A Wagging Tail Means a Happy Dog

Myth: If a dog's tail is wagging, they are happy and friendly.

Reality: Not all tail wags are equal.

Many people assume that a wagging tail is a sign of happiness, but dogs use their tails to communicate a range of emotions - including excitement, nervousness, and fear. Looking at the tail alone can lead to misunderstandings.

A dog's tail movement is best thought of as an indicator of arousal, rather than happiness. A wagging tail simply means the dog is feeling something. To understand what that feeling is, you need to look at the dog's entire body.

A happy, comfortable dog will often display:

- A loose, wiggly body
- Soft eyes and blinking
- Relaxed ears
- An open mouth with a relaxed expression
- A broad, sweeping tail wag

These dogs usually appear comfortable and relaxed.

A dog that is fearful may display:

- A stiff body
- A lowered body position and tail
- Tail may be tucked between the hind legs or in a high position that could be straight or wagging
- Direct staring
- Closed mouth or baring teeth
- Raised hair
- Turning away or freezing

In these situations, the dogs' tail could still be wagging or moving about but the dog may not be comfortable.

Misreading a dog's body language could lead someone to approach a dog that is fearful and unsafe to interact with at that time.

By learning to read the whole dog, not just the tail, we can create safer and more positive interactions for everyone.

Key Takeaway - A wagging tail doesn't always mean a happy dog. Understanding dog body language helps us recognise when a dog is comfortable, and when they need space.

Remember to read the whole dog, not just the tail.

Thanks @AMRRIC for sharing this info with us! To learn more about AMRRIC or access more resources, please visit [Resources - AMRRIC](#)

[IMAGE FOR NEWSLETTER ARTICLE]

Images for newsletter article supplied separately. Select one image to use alongside your newsletter article - check your downloads folder for article Image Options 1 and 2.



Reference images for newsletter article

[TEMPLATE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS]

Keep an eye on [AMRRIC's Facebook Page](#) and share our posts,

OR

Create your own with these templates on the following pages...

[SOCIAL MEDIA POST # 1]

Copy and paste this whole post, as well as the social media tiles (provided separately - check your downloads folder)

🐾 Do you know how to be safe around dogs? 🐾

Understanding how to behave around dogs, helps keep both people and pets safe.

Before interacting with a dog, remember:

- ✓ Always ask the owner first as some dogs aren't comfortable with strangers.
- ✓ Let the dog approach you - don't rush in!
- ✓ Speak calmly and move slowly
- ✓ Look at the body language the dog is displaying
- ✓ Never disturb dogs when they are eating, sleeping, or caring for puppies

Respecting dogs helps build trust and can prevent injuries.

For more tips, check the social media tiles below!

Thanks @AMRRIC for sharing this info with us. To learn more about AMRRIC or access more resources, please visit [Resources - AMRRIC](#)

[SOCIAL MEDIA POST # 1 ATTACHMENT]

Social Media Tiles supplied separately check your downloads folder, tiles can also be viewed and downloaded [here](#)



Reference images - Social Media Tiles; Dog Safety Tips

[SOCIAL MEDIA POST # 2]

Copy and paste this whole post, as well as the link below, to create a post from your page with the animation included.

Have you seen the animation video - My Dog, Max?

The animation is suitable for all ages and addresses the important topics of:

- Dogs' needs
- Behaviour
- Body language

The storyline follows a child looking after their best friend, Max — reading Max's behaviour, keeping people around him safe, and being proud to be a good pet owner.

Check it out below to learn more!

Thanks @AMRRIC for sharing this info with us! To learn more about AMRRIC or access more resources, please visit [Resources - AMRRIC](#)

[SOCIAL MEDIA POST # 2 ATTACHMENT]

Include the link in your social media post - [My Dog Max: Animation - AMRRIC](#)

Alternatively, download the animation from our website and upload the video along with the post above.

Uploaded videos tend to have better engagement than website links.

Instructions on how to download the animation can be found [here](#)

[SOCIAL MEDIA POST # 3]

Copy and paste this whole post and attach the games to your post - check your downloads folder for games or follow the link in Social Media Post #3 below

Are you a parent or teacher? Want to teach children about dog safety?

Try these five games designed to teach children about dog safety in a fun and memorable way!

Five games to play with children to reinforce dog safety and care messages.

- 1: Dogs' Needs Relay Race
- 2: Max's Needs
- 3: Doggy Doggy Where's Your Family Gone
- 4: Dog Catcher
- 5: Mother Dog

Thanks @AMRRIC for sharing this info with us! To learn more about AMRRIC or access more resources, please visit [Resources - AMRRIC](#)

[SOCIAL MEDIA POST # 3 ATTACHMENT]

Check your downloads folder for these games. Alternatively, games can be accessed [here](#)

Dog Games

Dog Catcher

Begin the game by choosing someone who will be the 'Dog Catcher'. Everyone else in the game becomes a 'dog'. Draw a circle around the Dog Catcher on the ground.

While the Dog Catcher counts to 10 in the circle, everyone else (the dogs) runs and hides.

The Dog Catcher then goes around looking for all the dogs. When found, each dog must go and stand in the circle.

As the Dog Catcher begins searching for the other dogs, the dog in the circle can howl out. When they howl, all the other dogs must howl, and then the dog in the circle can try to run and hide again. But if they are caught a second time, they then become a Dog Catcher.

The game ends when all the dogs are caught, and the last dog caught becomes the Dog Catcher for the next game.

This game shows the difficulties of catching dogs as a single person, a problem-solving dog program, and how much easier it is when everyone helps.

Resources: AMRRIC 2024



Dog Games

Doggy Doggy Where's Your Family Gone

Have the class sit in a large circle. Choose one person to be the 'Doggy'.

The Doggy places a picture of a dog and its family on their back, in the middle. The Doggy can ask another student for help with the placement of the picture. The Doggy must sit on their knees in the middle of the circle and fold their arms over their head, placing them onto the floor.

While the Doggy is in position with their head down and eyes covered, someone from the circle is chosen to sneak up and steal the picture off the Doggy's back.

This person must sit back in their spot in the circle as quietly as possible and hide the picture behind their back.

Everyone in the circle then sings "Doggy, Doggy, where's your family gone? Have they left you on your own? Wake up Doggy, wake up now!"

Doggy then sits up and has to guess where their family is. Doggy has three chances to guess who has the picture.

If Doggy chooses the right person, they remain as Doggy. If Doggy does not choose the right person, the teacher chooses a new Doggy for the next game.

This game shows the importance of a dog having a family to love and care for them. It also helps students understand and empathize with the dog and how they must feel being left alone.

Resources: AMRRIC 2024



Dog Games

Mother Dog

Choose someone to be the Mother Dog. Have the Mother Dog sit with their back to the other players, at least 3 metres away.

Put a stuffed dog toy or picture of a puppy behind the Mother Dog and have the Mother Dog pretend it is her puppy.

Have the other players take turns sneaking up behind the Mother Dog. The aim is for the players to try to steal the pup from behind the Mother Dog.

If the Mother Dog hears the person sneaking up she can quickly turn around and bark angrily. If the Mother Dog has caught a player moving when she turns around, they go back to where they started. Mother Dog then turns around again so she cannot see the players, and the next player has a turn at trying to steal the pup.

The game ends when someone manages to steal the pup. That player then becomes the Mother Dog for the next game.

The aim of the game is for the students to empathise with the Mother Dog. It is important that this is emphasised at the end of each game by discussing how the 'Mobby Dogs' felt when they thought their pup would be taken.

Resources: AMRRIC 2024



Dog Games

Max's Needs

Use a toy dog 'Max' and place it in the centre of the room. Have a bag filled with resources which Max needs to stay happy and healthy. This bag is called the Dog Needs Bag.

In the bag you will have a ball, blanket, picture of family, water bottle, and an empty packet of food and medicine.

Tip - Can substitute the physical items for flash cards with pictorial representations on these items

Hide all of Max's resources from the bag around the room without the students watching you.

Explain to the students that Max is feeling very sad and upset. He has no shelter, no water, no food, no medicine and no family to love and care for him. To make sure Max is happy and healthy, everyone must help find all of Max's things and bring them back to him.

Set a time for 2 minutes. The students have to find all of Max's resources in this time; otherwise, Max will be sad.

If the student's have managed to get all of Max's items back to him in the allocated time, play another round of the game and shorten the time to 1 minute.

This game helps students to memorise the basic needs of our dogs and the importance of having these resources for them to be happy and healthy.

Resources: AMRRIC 2024



Dog Games

Dogs Needs Relay Race

Separate the class into two groups and have them stand opposite each other on the end of a basketball court on a line.

Set up the relay race by placing a toy dog in front of each group on the centre line of the court, with a food bowl and water bowl.

Next to each group place the following items:

- bucket full of water
- bucket half full of dry dog food
- tennis ball
- blanket
- empty medicine packet
- plastic cup (this is used to carry the food and water)

The first student in line for each group takes a scoop of dog food from the bucket with the plastic cup and has to run this up to the empty food bowl next to their dog. They then run back to their group and tag the next person in line. This is repeated until the food bowl is full.

When the food bowl is full the students must start filling the water bowl. They must scoop the water in their cup and run it down to their dog's water bowl, then run back to their group and tag the next person in line. This is repeated until the water bowl is full.

The next student in line then delivers one of the other items to the dog eg the blanket, and places it next to their dog. This is repeated for each of the remaining items (blanket, picture, medicine)

When the last item is placed next to their dog, this student must run back to tag their whole group. The whole group then runs down and stand next to their dog. This is the dog's family. The first group to finish giving their dog all of the items, wins!

Students learn the resources required to keep dogs happy and healthy.

Resources: AMRRIC 2024



Reference Images for Social Media Post # 3 – Dog Games

[COMMUNITY HANDOUTS]



The resources are designed to assist with understanding a dog's body language that indicates how a dog is feeling, as well as two personal safety positions that can be used if approached by a dog that is acting aggressively – “Tree” and “Rock” body positions.

Resources include:

- Dog Body Language – poster
- Staying Safe Around Dogs – poster
- Staying Safe Around Dogs – brochure

These can be shared online, physically distributed, and placed on public noticeboards in locations such as schools, health clinics and community stores.

Check your downloads folder for these resources or view and download them from [here](#)

[ANIMATION CLIPS – LINKS TO SCREEN AT COMMUNITY EVENTS]

These animations can also be downloaded for use offline


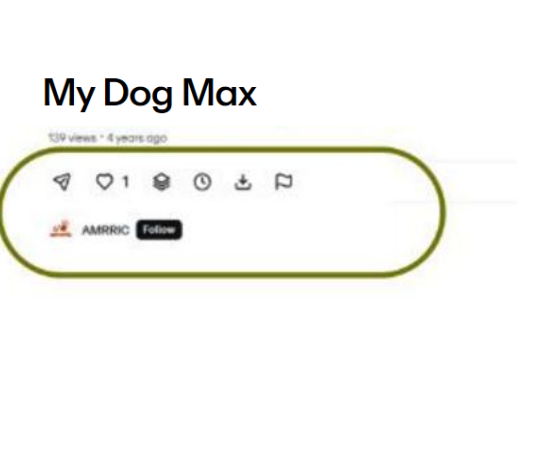

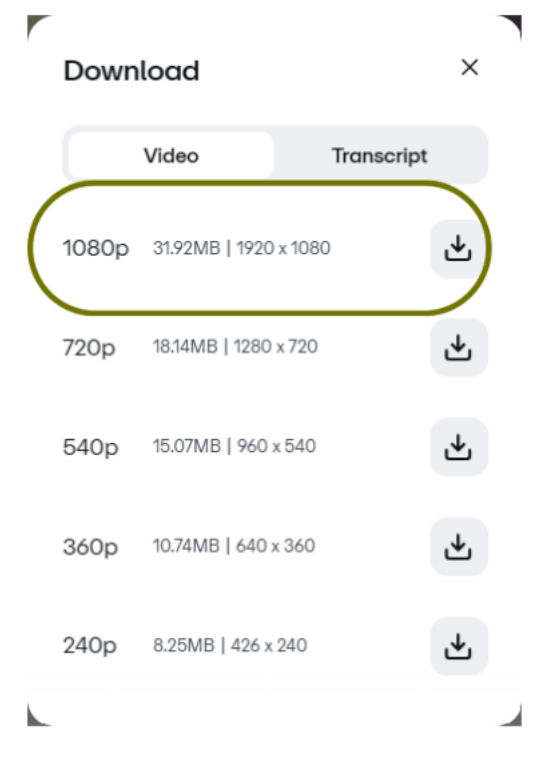
My Dog, Max - Animation

The storyline follows a child looking after their best friend, Max — reading Max's behaviour, keeping people around him safe, and being proud to be a good pet owner.

Watch My Dog, Max [here](#)

Instructions on how to download can be found [here](#)

HOW TO DOWNLOAD AMRRIC'S ANIMATION CLIPS

Step 1		<p>From the AMRRIC website click on Vimeo - located in the bottom right corner of the animation.</p> <p>This will take you to the Vimeo webpage.</p>
Step 2		<p>Look for the download symbol below the video on the left-hand side.</p> <p>The download symbol will be below the title of the video and will appear like this:</p>  <p>Click on the download icon</p>
Step 3		<p>An option will appear to select what size animation you would like to download.</p> <p>Where possible, the highest quality download is recommended. Especially if planning to screen the animation on a large TV or via a projector.</p> <p>Once downloaded, locate the animation video in your downloads folder.</p> <p>It is now ready to use offline!</p>

Thank you for exploring AMRRIC's Education Communication Package.

We welcome any feedback you may have and would love to see how your local government or community-based organisation is using the educational resources.

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