

Perth dog experts criticise WA Government's draft guidelines for dog owners

Peter de Kruijff and Joanna Delalande | The West Australian
Thursday, 2 May 2019 2:00AM



Premier Mark McGowan's government has been criticised for its proposed dog ownership guidelines. Picture: Danella Bevis

Perth dog behaviour experts have criticised the State Government's "ridiculous" proposed guidelines for dog owners, saying they lack common sense and could lead to pets being "afraid of their own shadow".

A 43-page draft document advises owners to stop training if a dog is anxious, avoid speed bumps when driving with their animals and carry a first-aid kit when out jogging with a dog.

While some dog trainers were pleased to see dog health acknowledged, most agreed the guidelines were unrealistic for owners.

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Bark Busters Home Dog Training in WA manager Cliff Guelfi said some of the guidelines put a blanket over animal behaviour.

"If a dog has a personality where it is stressed it will shy away from everything, including training," he said.

"I don't see any dog owners carrying a first-aid kit around. I would think that's fearing the worst."

Kathy's Dog Training and Behaviour Consulting owner Kathy Kopellis McLeod said recommendations around driving with animals were particularly ridiculous and could even be detrimental to a dog's behaviour.

"I think they're losing common sense with this guideline," she said.

"If we keep dogs in their comfort zone we're not teaching them any resilience. We could end up compounding them to the point where they're afraid of their own shadow," she said.

The professionals contacted by The West Australian agreed the guidelines should instead include steps such as a ban on electronic dog collars.

Premier Mark McGowan, who had not read the guidelines until seeing them on the front page of yesterday's The West Australian, said there should be high animal welfare standards.

"Like everyone else I like my dog and I want to make sure everyone else treats their dogs well and properly," he said.

"I think everyone else generally across the community has the same attitude, so let's just have strong standards of animal welfare. These are voluntary and they're a draft."

He said the Government was working on rules to outlaw puppy farming, which would be rolled out this year.