

litter prevention kit

DOG POO



VICTORIANLITTER
ACTION ALLIANCE

This is one of a series of introductory guides complementing
VLAA's web site www.litter.vic.gov.au

This litter prevention kit has been prepared by the Litter Champion, a program supported by the Victorian Litter Action Alliance (VLAA) and managed by Sustainability Victoria.

Published by



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Contents

Dog poo litter prevention kit	3
Laws and enforcement	4
Infrastructure	5
Communication and partnerships	6
Pets	8
Best practice in litter prevention	9



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About the Victorian Litter Action Alliance

VLAA is the peak body for litter management and prevention in Victoria and aims to provide a coordinated approach to preventing litter across state and local government, industry and community sectors. Each of the Alliance members plays its part in the fight against litter. These members are:



This kit is an abridged edition of the Litter Prevention Kit - Dog Poo published by VLAA in 2007.
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Dog Poo litter prevention kit

About

This guide won't tell you everything about preventing dog poo litter, but it will give readers a snapshot of the circumstances in which it happens, and how to tackle it.

If you're serious about running a dog poo litter prevention program, read this guide then go to VLAA's website. There you will find the detail you need to develop a program, including resources such as forms, templates, case studies and fact sheets.

Best practice for litter prevention

VLAA's best practice model for litter prevention is a proven method for planning, implementing and evaluating a litter prevention program.

See the best practice section at the end for an overview of the program model, and to learn about the three key elements that guide successful campaigns – education, infrastructure and enforcement.



The dog poo problem

Victoria's 900,000 dogs produce 90 tonnes of dog poo each day.

Dog poo on streets, parks and beaches is unsightly and unpleasant. It is a significant worry for local communities and councils, and can compromise the health, and wellbeing and enjoyment of people in the environment.

Droppings contain harmful nutrients and bacteria, and some ends up in natural waterways and the ocean via the stormwater system. This can contribute to excessive *E. coli* readings on beaches after rainfall.

Children, people with immune system deficiencies and field sport players are most at risk of infection from dog poo, including infection by *Toxocara canis*, the roundworm found in the faeces of infected puppy and adult dogs.

The Litter Champion

The Victorian Litter Action Alliance litter champion program has proven itself a great way to combine our efforts to tackle litter in Victoria. The Litter Champion's role is to help anyone interested in learning about or taking action on litter.

Contact the Litter Champion: t: 03 8626 8700.
e: litterchampion@sustainability.vic.gov.au



Laws and enforcement

Local laws and dog poo

Councils can establish local laws and regulations to help combat the incidence of dog poo in public places.

Section 42(c) of the Domestic (Feral and Nuisance) Animals Act 1996 enables councils to make a local law 'requiring owners of dogs to remove and dispose of faeces deposited by their dogs in public places'.

The local law requiring dog owners to clean up after their dogs should be made under section 111 of the Local Government Act 1989. Councils can set an appropriate penalty and issue on the spot notices.

Some councils have included a provision requiring dog owners to carry a dog bag or pooper scooper when walking their dog in public.

The majority of Melbourne metropolitan councils have local laws relating to dog poo removal, with fines ranging from \$50 to \$200.

EPA Victoria

EPA's **pollution line 1300 EPA VIC** (1300 372 842) is available for anyone to use.

Those witnessing littering can report it and the culprits will be prosecuted. Local governments can also set up their own mechanisms similar to the EPA's.

EPA's **Litter Enforcement Toolkit** provides a thorough guide to the litter provisions in the *Environment Protection Act 1970*.

Visit www.epa.vic.gov.au.



Enforcement

People must be aware of the law and the penalties that can be applied when pet owners do not clean up after their dog.

Enforcement and education go hand in hand, and in the case of dog poo litter, there are opportunities to engage directly with dog owners, either in the places they do their walking, or through dog ownership networks and media.

The community, by and large, has a low tolerance for dog poo litter, so the power of peer pressure should not be underestimated.

To support signage and infrastructure, visible surveillance and the presence of local laws officers in popular dog exercise areas reinforces the message that one could be caught, and is an opportunity to provide information.

Tips for approaching dog owners

Many animal management officers find it useful to regularly visit local parks and reserves and get into conversation with dog owners. These positive interactions are great for community relations, getting the message across and gaining cooperation.

But approaching a dog owner in a public place requires tact and some techniques.

Take 'ice-breakers' as conversation starters, e.g. brochures or freebies such as pooch pouches, pet food samples or discount vouchers.



Engaging with dog owners as they exercise their best friends? Ice breakers, such as a dummy fine, can get the conversation going and the message across, in a friendly way.

Infrastructure

The tools for behaviour change

Making it easy for people to both pick-up and dispose of dog poo by establishing physical or social infrastructure is key to long-term behaviour change.

A key element in helping people do the right thing is to make the changes as easy as possible by providing the right tools and infrastructure.

Responsibility for this lies with either or both the dog owner and the land manager.

Owners

Dog owners can be encouraged or required to carry doggy bags, the best types being those that attach to the dog's lead so they will never be caught without a bag.

Land managers

Land managers, usually councils, can install poo bag dispensers and disposal units in parks, educational signage, or even fence off particular areas to make it clear that dogs are not allowed under any circumstances.



Public place planning

Dog owners are a significant group of park users with genuine needs. But others have needs too.

The challenge is to balance or prioritise these needs when planning open spaces, while minimising nuisance and avoiding conflict with other park users.

Research points to a number of environmental design factors in parks that can make it easier for dog owners to clean up after their dogs.

Signage

Signs such as 'please pick up after your dog' are a constant reminder about owners' responsibilities.

Bin location

The further dog owners are from bins, the less likely they will use them.

Place bins at entry points, along pathways, and near sensitive human activity areas such as playgrounds.



Barriers

Human activity areas such as playgrounds, sporting and picnic facilities can be protected by barriers and fencing.

Off leash areas

Dog poo may be a greater problem in off-leash than on-leash areas – dogs are less under the owner's control or in sight.

Cleaning regimes

Littered areas attract more litter, so cleaning regimes will help minimise dog poo.

On or off leash?

When deciding about on or off-leash areas, consultation with users of the area is essential. Exercising dogs is just one public activity that must be balanced with other uses.

Communication and partnerships

We each have a role

Litter prevention programs are ultimately about people – those who litter, those who don't, and those who work individually or as a group to actively do something about it.

The following are a few tips that apply in particular to prevention of dog poo litter.

In terms of the litter prevention program model, the human factor is at play in all three key elements of education, infrastructure and enforcement, plus the communications, promotions and partnerships that may support it.

Collaboration – Working Together

The most effective approach to dog poo litter prevention is to get the key players from council and the community involved.

Many parts of the council have a role in or are affected by the dog poo program.

- Essential partners are the local laws officers.
- Waste and street cleaning managers who clean the streets, empty the bins and know the hot spots.
- Parks and open space - do they have the appropriate bins?
- Planning and development approvals – do they include areas for dogs & bins?
- Engineering – who buys and maintains the bins?
- Public relations and communications – is the topic on their radar?
- Is there a councillor with a passion for the topic?
- Customer service staff, who may be at the brunt of complaints about dogs and poo.
- Executive management and inter departmental planning teams.
- Consider setting up a litter action task force.

Target audiences

As with all litter prevention campaigns, engagement with your target audiences will determine the nature of your communications plan, what promotions and media are carried out, your key messages in media and signage, use of events and launches, and so on.

This also helps plan for the most suitable infrastructure and enforcement components in the litter prevention plan.

Target audiences for dog poo related campaigns may include:

- Networks and clubs – dog clubs, or regular users of a specific area.
- Related businesses – vets, boarding kennels and pet grooming services.
- Unrelated businesses – these individuals and organisations may become keen advocates to help keep their nearby public areas clean.

Traders

Every litter prevention campaign should also target local traders, either to be supporters and advocates, or as the target for taking action – in the case of dog poo, both of these motivations may apply.

For you, traders can promote key messages for your program, and provide program materials to customers. They are also your eyes and ears.

Traders too want clean places and neighbourhoods – clean is good for business.



Communication and partnerships

Community engagement

Concern about the presence of dog poo in public places such as streets, parks and on beaches often rates highly in public opinion surveys.

Seeing dog poo around in public places sends the message that it's okay, giving other dog owners 'permission' to leave their dog's droppings behind.

Although you may be targeting certain people, you are also sending the broader community the message that litter (especially dog poo) is harmful, against the law, and won't be tolerated.

With dog poo, you have a head start – dogs themselves. Interest in dogs and pets may be your inroad to dog poo litter education.

Incentives

Incentives are the gentle 'persuaders' to change behaviours. The idea is for the individual or organisation to take responsibility for dog poo they are responsible for in the longer term.

Financial and other incentives are a powerful way to encourage people to dispose of their dog's poo appropriately and responsibly.

Some examples

- Providing dog owners with free dog poo removal devices, such as bags, scoops or pouches.
- Recognition of dog clubs for cleaning up dog poo in their area (many club members will clean up after other people's dogs, as well as their own).
- Holding 'responsible pet ownership' competitions, to acknowledge and reward owners doing the right thing.
- A common strategy is to raise awareness of a dog poo mitigation product by introducing it for free, expecting future use to be paid by the individual or organisation.
- Enforcement also acts as an incentive, through fear of consequences, and believing in the likelihood of being caught or shamed if not cleaning up after ones dog.



Pets

Pet ownership can be the avenue to getting your message across about dog poo. If taking this approach, visit the following sources of information.

Responsible pet ownership

The Victorian Government's responsible pet ownership schools education program involves free visits to primary and pre-schools by a team of trained pet educators and their temperament tested pets.

These visits teach children about responsible pet ownership, and safety with dogs, offering an ideal route for getting the message to parents as well, through their children.

The Program is complemented by a teachers' kit, a website and popular mascots Victor the dog and Victoria the cat.

Visit www.pets.info.vic.gov.au.



Lost Dogs' Home

The Lost Dog's Home works for the welfare of dogs and cats by preventing animal cruelty and reducing the number of lost, injured and unwanted animals.

The Home provides shelter, animal management and veterinary services, conducts public education, and advocates to governments.

Visit www.dogshome.com.



RSPCA

The RSPCA provides a range of services and information about pet ownership, including a free animal care education program presented by qualified teachers, and targeting CSF and VCE learning outcomes.

Visit www.rspcavic.org.



Australian Veterinary Association

The Australian Veterinary Association has a great deal of information and research on the dog poo issue.

Visit www.ava.com.au.

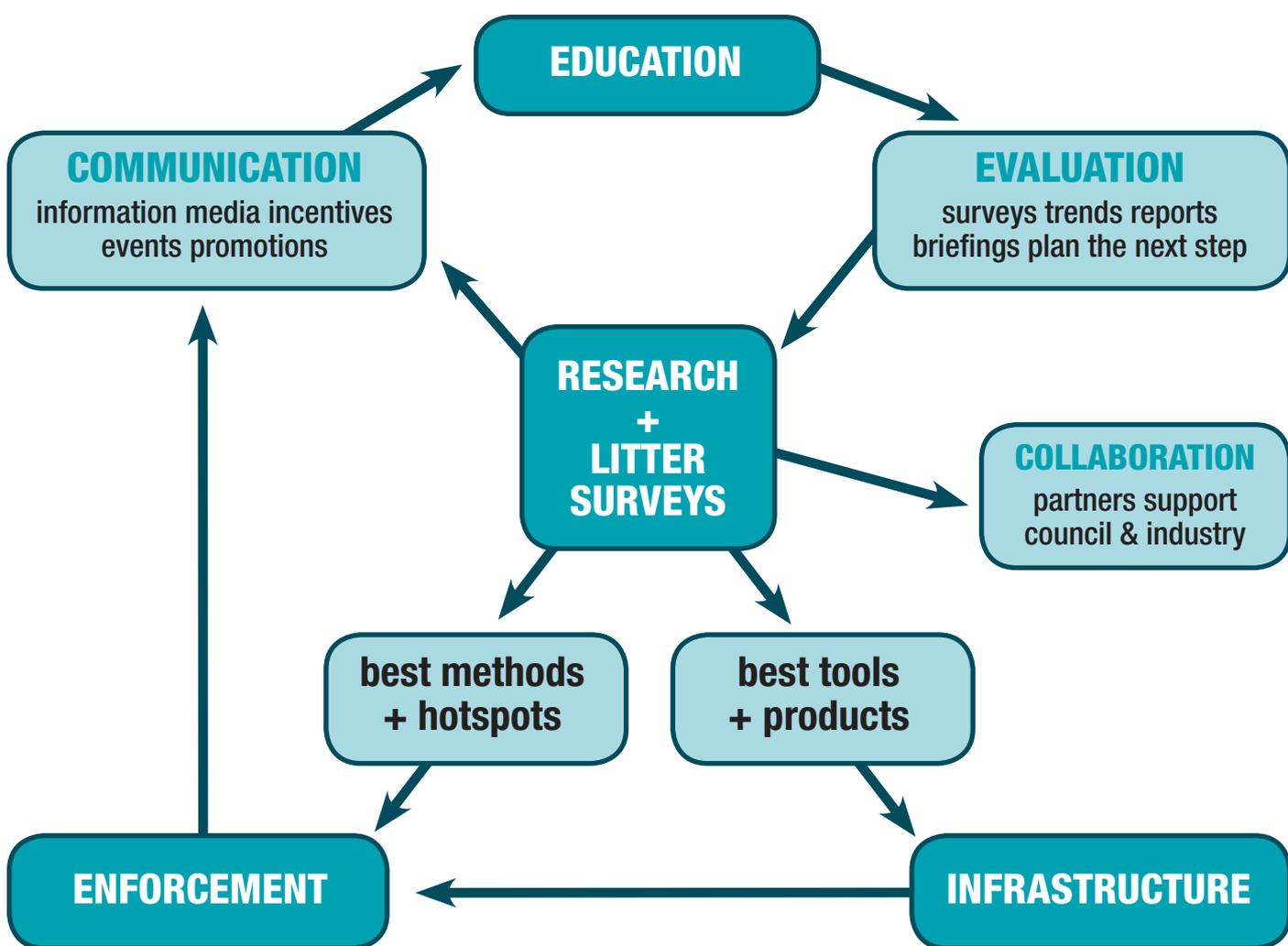
Best practice in litter prevention

VLAA best practice programming model

For any litter and waste prevention program, the three key elements of education, infrastructure and enforcement are central to success.

These underpin the other components of best practice – research, incentives, working together, good communication, and to complete the loop, monitoring and evaluation.

VLAA developed its best practice programming model in 2007 to set a consistent standard for planning a litter reduction program.



Best practice in litter prevention

AT THE VERY START

1. Research – understand the problem

You need to be fully versed in existing knowledge about behaviours, impacts and proven tactics for litter prevention, as well as understanding the characteristics of the location and behaviours you are targeting.

You also need to establish on-the-ground base line information, i.e. carry out litter counts and surveys, and then periodically repeat the exercise.

IMPLEMENTATION

2. Education – explaining the problem

Education is our most powerful tool for achieving long-term change in the community. It can change peoples' motivations and build their capacity to do the right thing. The aim is to imbed a way of thinking – "I know how to, I want to, and I know what the benefits are".

3. Enforcement – reinforcing the message

Enforcement is not just about catching and prosecuting people. Public knowledge that littering laws are being enforced and will result in fines and possibly public shame is what makes this component work. But of course, enforcement must also actually happen, not simply be promoted.

4. Infrastructure – the tools of change

Making it easy for people to 'do the right thing' by establishing physical infrastructure is another key to long-term behaviour change and reducing litter. Infrastructure can include appropriate bins, signage and as part of the enforcement equation, surveillance cameras and 'under investigation' barrier tape.

5. Incentives – persuading people to change their behaviour

Rewards, privileges and other incentives are a powerful way to encourage people to dispose of their waste appropriately and responsibly.

6. Working together – support and collaboration

Working in a coordinated manner within your council or organisation, engaging with the local community, and gaining the cooperation and support of key sectors such as business and traders, goes hand in hand with litter prevention. This starts at the beginning when planning a program, and will be the key ingredient for sustainable success.

7. Good communication – every step of the way

A strong communications plan publicising each phase of your program helps build support in the community, and is another avenue for educational messages. Communication within your teams, with partners and your own senior management is also important to maintain this essential 'back room' support throughout.

THE LOOP

8. Monitoring and evaluation – what have we achieved?

Monitoring the program during and after implementation tells you how well the litter reduction program is going, based on the base lines established at the beginning, and the targets you set yourself.

This forms the basis for 'doing it again', but with the hindsight of considerable experience.

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This kit is presented as an introduction. Always go to the VLAA web site www.litter.vic.gov.au for full details and resources for running a litter prevention program. Please contact the Litter Champion litterchampion@sustainability.vic.gov.au or phone 03 8626 8700 for more assistance.

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