

Media Release

The Hon Jaclyn Symes MLC

Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Minister for Regional Development

Minister for Agriculture

Minister for Resources



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RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERSHIP PROGRAM MOVES ONLINE

Victorian primary school students will be able to continue learning about interacting safely and responsibly with pets, with the Victorian Government moving the Responsible Pet Ownership program online.

Minister for Agriculture Jaclyn Symes welcomed the move, which is ensuring the lessons can continue for schools and students whilst 'stay at home' directions are in place to help limit the spread of coronavirus.

With most dog attacks involving children aged up to eight years old, and children currently spending more time at home with their pets, these safety messages are critically important.

The Responsible Pet Ownership program is normally delivered by trained pet educators and their dogs at primary schools and kindergartens to teach children how to safely interact with pets.

In the absence of school visits, Animal Welfare Victoria has created an online learning hub for primary school teachers to help them deliver safety messages through activities that can be completed in class, at home and online.

The program focuses on teaching children about basic dog behaviour, appropriate behaviour around dogs and what to do if approached by an unknown or aggressive dog.

It features 'Victor and Victoria's Pet Town' – an animated interactive tool for children based on the program's safety messages. Children can also play games in 'Pet Town' with Victor the dog and Victoria the cat.

A tablet version of this game has also been developed and is free to download from app stores.

The Responsible Pet Ownership program has been operating in Victoria for 20 years. To find out more about the Responsible Pet Ownership program, visit animalwelfare.vic.gov.au.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Agriculture Jaclyn Symes

"These are really important lessons for kids to learn, so it's reassuring that kids and teachers will still be able to access important pet safety advice, even while our pet educators are unable to visit them at school."

"Australia has one of the highest rates of pet ownership in the world – with children currently spending more time at home with their pets, it's vital that they continue to get these safety messages in a fun and engaging way."