

Animal encounters

Wild animals

These tips are specific to cats and dogs. If you come across a wild animal during the course of your work, notify Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon State Police, or a licensed wildlife rehabilitator.

Throughout the course of a workday, you may run into pets—walking down the street, riding in a car with their owner, or in a customer's yard. But while many pets may be friendly and at-ease, it's important to make sure you know how to best approach pets to avoid aggressive behavior and, ultimately, injuries.

How to approach animals

If you come across a pet during your job duties, it's important to approach them cautiously to avoid injury and unnecessary stress for the pet. Here are some things to consider:

- If the pet is accompanied by an owner, always ask permission before approaching or petting the animal.
- If the animal is in a car, avoid reaching through the window; this may cause the pet to feel scared or attacked.
- Approach pets slowly and calmly; ideally, let the pet approach you on their own terms.
- If the pet is calm, comes to you, and solicits attention, pet gently.
- If you're in doubt whether a pet is exhibiting fearful or aggressive behavior, ignore it and avoid it.

Fearful behavior

There are many ways to tell if a pet is exhibiting fearful behavior, which may lead

to aggressive behavior. These include:

- Cowering or crouching
- Furrowing their brows with ears to the side
- Raised hair on back and neck
- Showing hypervigilance
- Vocalizing
- Pacing
- Hiding or moving away from you

Every pet exhibits fear or aggression differently, so even behaviors that may seem benign—like a cat purring or swishing their tail, or a dog yawning—could be a sign of discomfort for that animal.

Bites and scratches

If you get bit or scratched by a dog or cat, it's important to treat the wound immediately as pets can spread disease. Common first aid for bites and scratches include:

- Wash the injured area thoroughly with soap and water.
- Control bleeding by applying direct pressure with a sterile gauze or bandage.
- Cover the wound with a clean bandage.
- Seek medical treatment—even bites and scratches can lead to septic shock if infection occurs.

