

## SAFETY FIRST

The K9-Kube has created safer work practices for council officers and a more humane way of collecting stray animals.

BY STEPHANIE HOLLEBRANDSE



THE AUTHORISED OFFICERS AT SWAN HILL RURAL City Council provide a range of services for their local community, many of which involve transporting animals – especially dogs. When one officer was bitten while lifting a dog into a standard transport cage on a council vehicle, Swan Hill Rural City Council identified a crucial need to develop a safer process for performing this task.

Authorised council officer Darren Rovere teamed up with manufacturer CJM Attachments to address the problem. They created a purpose-built device called K9-Kube. The hydraulic lifter is designed to lift an animal from ground level onto a transporting vehicle, eliminating undue stress on the animal and risk of injury to the officer.

The idea was born when Rovere was working on his Certificate IV in statutory compliance. As part of the project he was required to devise a way to improve his workplace.

“I looked around and there was one council using a ramp design, but you had to roll it down and unfold its legs, which seemed awkward,” he says. “I knew we could do better. So I took my idea to CJM attachments and they told me it would work.”

The development of the K9-Kube has significantly improved Rovere’s day-to-day work, while crucially ensuring the safety of the council’s authorised officers.

“Prior to using the K9-Kube, we had to manually load dogs into the back of the ute,” he says. “Two officers

### SAFE SYSTEM, SAFE ANIMAL

The K9-Kube includes the following safety features:

- Top of the unit is fully covered, ensuring the animal is safely contained.
- The box is well ventilated so the animal won’t suffer from heat exhaustion or lack of air.
- There’s a window at the front of the unit so the animal can clearly see what’s going on around it.
- The floor is covered with a rubber mat so it’s a comfortable place for the animal to sit.
- Sliding doors are installed so the animal can exit the K9-Kube as quickly and safely as possible with no risk of getting caught.

would have to physically lift the animal from the ground and, if it didn’t want to be lifted, the dog would become distressed and therefore put the handler at risk of hurting their back or even being bitten.”

For these reasons, authorised officers were previously required to operate in pairs. Now, the K9-Kube enables a single officer to perform the task of collecting a dog in a safe manner, leading to an increase in council productivity.

“One officer can go out on any day and lift any animal, from a Jack Russell to a sheep, from the ground to the back of the ute,” Rovere adds. “And because you can lower the device to the ground, it’s definitely a more humane way of moving animals.”

Ensuring the safety of both the animals and the handlers was the project’s key objective. Manager of Corporate Operations at Swan Hill Rural City Council, Pat Ahern, says lengthy discussions surrounding occupational health and safety issues took place during the development of the K9-Kube.

“There was a lot of discussion between ourselves and our officers to get this project off the ground,” he says. “These discussions, which involved identifying key features required as well as minimising risk to both staff and animals, were then passed on to the manufacturers at CJM Attachments.”

These key requirements included being able to contain the animal and lift it from ground level for transport, and for the doors to slide and lock automatically.

Jeff Sibley from CJM Attachments says the equipment is very easy to use and has certainly improved the safety of the council’s employees.

“The unit comes fully self-contained and is easily installed to the tray of a single or twin cab one-ton utility,” he says. “Basically, you plug it in and away it goes and because it can be safely used by one person, it’s also saving people’s time.”

Some of the safety features include external hazard lights, a beeper system so people know it’s in use and easy push-button control panel that requires both hands, eliminating any risk of limbs getting caught in the moving parts.

The K9-Kube is proving to be a great success and has since been purchased by two other councils. Several others are currently showing interest in the product. •••



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The K9-Kube has eliminated manual loading of the dogs and other animals.

## K9-KUBE shifts sheep

The K9-Kube is not only used for safely moving stray dogs, but has also helped shift stock like goats and sheep from country roads. Darren Rovere from Swan Hill Rural City Council says those in the industry will know that once you lift one heavy sheep your arms won’t normally be able to lift a second straightaway.

With the K9-Kube, the process is made easier, faster and safer. The process eliminates the need to lift the sheep both into the vehicle and over the fence, and ensures it is placed safely back in the paddock.

**Step 1:** Lower the K9-Kube and secure the sheep in the compartment.

**Step 2:** Sliding doors slide shut and the sheep is secured inside.

**Step 3:** Once at destination, lower the K9-Kube to the level of the fence.

**Step 4:** Open the sliding door and the sheep simply jumps out over the fence.



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