

Hepburn

SHIRE COUNCIL



Domestic  
Animal Management

Plan

2021/2025



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Hepburn Shire Council acknowledges the Dja Dja Wurrung as the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters on which we live and work. On these lands, Djaara have performed age-old ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal. We recognise their resilience through dispossession and it is a testament to their continuing culture and tradition, which is strong and thriving.

We also acknowledge the neighbouring Traditional Owners, the Wurundjeri to our South East and the Wadawurrung to our South West and pay our respect to all Aboriginal peoples, their culture, and lore. We acknowledge their living culture and the unique role they play in the life of this region.

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# Executive Summary

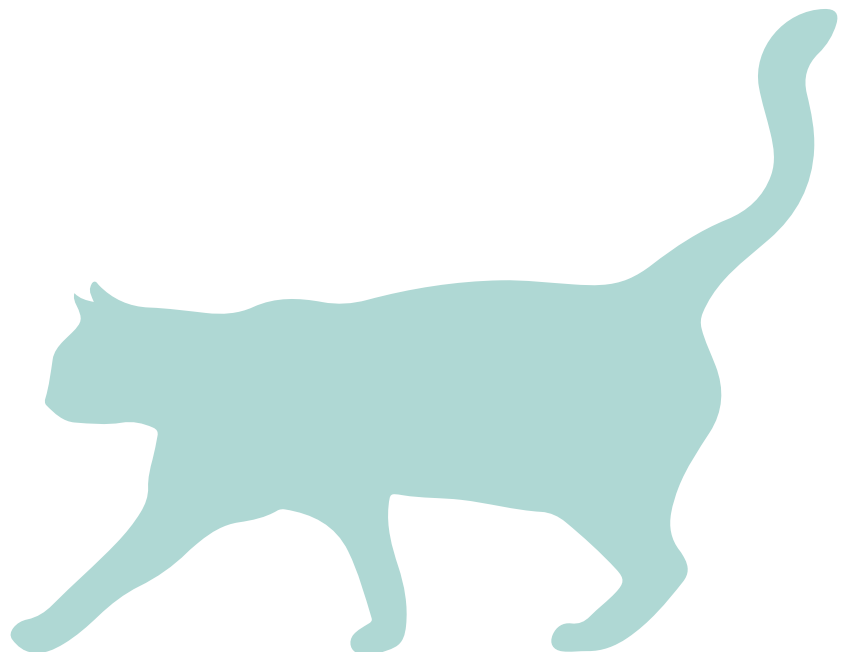
Domestic Animals are considered a part of society and play an integral role in the day to day lives of many Hepburn Shire residents.

Council understands the importance of meeting the expectations of the community, including the needs of pet owners, domestic animals that are such a significant part of peoples lives, as well as those that do not own pets but may be impacted by them. Therefore, it is vital that Council undertakes sensible planning to ensure that pets, pet owners and non-pet owners can co-exist in a harmonious way.

Hepburn Shire has developed this Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) as a statutory requirement under the Domestic Animal Act 1994. It is intended to provide Council with a management plan for all dogs, cats and domestic animal businesses within the municipality. The current DAMP builds on work undertaken in the previous plan and describes how Hepburn Shire will meet its responsibilities under the Act while ensuring its services also meets the expectation of the community.

This document outlines the scheduled programs and initiatives relating to Animal Management. Each key issue area has one or multiple objectives and action plans that detail the actions to be undertaken by the Hepburn Shire Council over the next four (4) years. Furthermore, the plan will be reviewed annually and evaluated against its targets.

The Plan comprises a set of activities which will be implemented to monitor the Hepburn Shire's progress in achieving the Plans goals and objectives over the four year period.



# 1. Introduction & Context



## 1.1 Purpose of Domestic Animal Management Plan

The Domestic Animals Act 1994 (the Act) requires council to prepare a Domestic Animal Management Plan every four years.

The plan must set out a method for evaluating whether the animal management services provided by council are adequate to give effect to requirements of the Act and the Domestic Animal Regulations 2015.

The plan must also outline programs for the training of authorised officers along with programs, services and strategies to:

- ensure that people comply with the Act, the regulations and any related legislation; and
- minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals; and
- address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats; and
- encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats; and
- minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance; and
- effectively identify all dangerous dogs, menacing dogs and restricted breed dogs in that district and to ensure that those dogs are kept in compliance with this Act and the regulations; and
- provide for the review of existing orders made under this Act and local laws that relate to the Council's municipal district with a view to determining whether further orders or local laws dealing with the management of dogs and cats in the municipal district are desirable; and
- provide for the review of any other matters related to the management of dogs and cats in the Council's municipal district that it deems necessary; and
- provide for the periodic evaluation of any program, service, strategy or review outlined under the plan.

Council is also required to review and where appropriate amend the plan and publish an evaluation of the implementation of the plan in the council annual report.

This Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) has been prepared to provide a strategic framework to the Hepburn Shire Council for policy direction, service programs, initiatives and action plans related to animal management during the period 2021-2025.

The following guiding principles will continue to underpin the delivery of domestic animal management services at Hepburn Shire Council:

- Working towards providing safe places for dog owners to exercise their dogs off lead
- Proactive in supporting and promoting responsible pet ownership
- Using education to increase compliance with legislation
- Balance the needs of pet owners with the needs of other community members and the environment
- Protecting the environment from any negative impacts of domestic animals
- Recognising the physical, mental and social benefits of pet ownership
- Reducing the number of stray cats throughout the Hepburn Shire
- Adopting a whole community approach to animal management



## 1.2 Process Applied in Developing the Plan

As part of the process of developing the new DAMP, Hepburn Shire Council invited community feedback, to help inform the direction of domestic animal management in the Hepburn Shire. Community feedback provides valuable insight into local issues and allows Council the opportunity to identify and address animal concerns, while continuing to be an inviting place for people with and without pets.

Council used a variety of methods to invite the community to provide feedback in the development of the new DAMP, primarily local newspapers, Council's Facebook page, Participate Hepburn Website and the Hepburn Life newsletter.

Through this community engagement, the following responses were received:

- 440 responses via Participate Hepburn website
- 10 hardcopy surveys
- 2 written submissions via email

### COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

The feedback received through this community engagement has been used to inform the priorities and actions outlined in this plan. A full engagement report which outlines the community feedback is available. The key themes identified across the engagement process are outlined below.

### DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT SURVEY RESULTS -THEMES IN ORDER OF FREQUENCY

Nuisance Cats	Aggressive Dogs	Dog Walking / Dogs off lead	Suggested Improvements for Pet Owners	Suggested Improvements for the General Community	Further Comments
Attack on birds and native wildlife	Dogs Rushing	Enforcement of dog on lead laws	Increased enforcement	Enforcement and reporting	Pet ownership issues relating to holiday accommodation
Cats out at night (including feral cats)	Dog Attacks (including people, pets, livestock and wildlife)	Education and responsible dog ownership	Improved facilities (including increase of off lead dog parks, tracks or areas)	Improved facilities (including increase of off lead dog parks, poo bins and 24hr accessible pound)	Visitor expectations
General nuisance (fighting, annoying indoor pets, defecating)	Dogs off lead	Improved facilities (including increase of off lead dog parks, tracks or areas)	Incentives	Responsible pet ownership education	Lack of an appropriate dog park in Trentham
Increased Council intervention (cat curfew, responsible pet ownership)	Increased Council intervention		Community education		Lack of dedicated dog parks or tracks in Creswick and Daylesford
90% community support for a night-time cat curfew	Dogs not confined		Reporting systems and 24/7 hotline		Importance of pets to promote positive health and wellbeing



## PUBLIC EXHIBITION

To finalise the plan and ensure that community feedback was captured in the first round of community engagement, a formal public exhibition period was held. During this time the draft plan was available for comment via Participate Hepburn. The draft was also emailed directly to those who provided an email address as part of the initial community consultation process and shared via social media.

Council received 82 submissions on the draft plan which related to the following topics:

- Proposed cat curfew
- Education initiatives
- Dog parks and walking paths
- Dogs off leash
- Enforcement actions

## 1.3 Hepburn Shire Profile

Hepburn Shire is a small rural Shire, with a population of 16,157. The population is projected to reach 17,700 by 2036. The Shire covers an area of 1,473 square kilometres which includes Clunes, Creswick, Daylesford, Hepburn Springs and Trentham, and the villages of Glenlyon, Allendale, Kingston, Leonard's Hill, Lyonville, Newlyn, Denver and Smeaton. Located in central Victoria, the Shire is ideally situated within easy access to Melbourne, Ballarat and Bendigo. It's a great place to live, work, invest and visit.

Hepburn Shire has a rich cultural history which began with the Dja Dja Wurrung People, the Traditional Owners and custodians of the area. Mass migration during Victoria's goldrush era saw many cultures settle in the region, which created a distinctive architecture and culture, still present throughout the Shire today. The Shire is renowned for its native forests, mineral springs reserves and waterways, botanical gardens, volcanic plains with rich soils, gold and many spectacular heritage buildings. It is a popular tourist destination that has a reputation for indulgence and relaxation, festivals and outdoor recreational activities.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted Hepburn Shire. Some of the biggest impacts on our community included social isolation, along with heightened financial

and emotional stress on families and local businesses. Another significant consequence of the pandemic was the impact on housing affordability and availability due to an influx of new residents choosing to move to our Shire.

## 1.4 Integration with Council Plan

Council in consultation with the community, recently developed and adopted the Community Vision 2021 – 2031 and Council Plan 2021 - 2025. The Council Plan outlines five focus areas to set the direction for the next four years and to create strong alignment with the needs and aspirations of the community and the services Council delivers:

- A resilient, sustainable and protected environment
- A healthy, supported and empowered community
- Embracing our past and planning for the future
- Diverse economy and opportunities
- A dynamic and responsive Council

The DAMP aligns with the focus area of a healthy, supported and empowered community. It seeks to increase the availability and accessibility of services in the Hepburn Shire area to support liveability, health and wellbeing.

## 1.5 Context and Current Situation

Animal management at Hepburn Shire is overseen by the Health and Community Safety Team. Within this team the officers that relate to animal management include a Coordinator, two full time Community Safety Officers, one full time and one part time Administration Officers.

Programs and services currently provided include:



Program / Service:	Service Level:
Identification and registration	Currently 3,088 dogs and cats registered
Domestic animal complaints	General complaints are actioned within 3 business days, subject to staff availability
Dangerous dog complaints	Dogs acting aggressively or that have attacked are actioned within 1 hour
Routine street, park and lake patrols	Once per month, subject to staff availability
Micro-chipping and desexing programs	Proactively promote and refer people to existing programs
Cat trapping program	Available to the community via booking system
After hours emergency service	24-hour after-hours phone service. Officer attendance for livestock on Council roads and dog attacks.

## 1.6 Domestic Animal Statistics

Key statistics for the financial periods 2018 to 2021:

Dogs	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021
Number of registered dogs	2416	1998	2273
Number of impounded dogs	29	28	22
Number of impounded dogs returned to owner	9	14	3
Number of dogs surrendered	6	2	8
Number of dogs rehomed	2	8	14
Number of dogs euthanised	6	1	2
Number of active declared dogs (dangerous, menacing, restricted)			2
Cats			
Number of registered cats	874	705	817
Number of impounded cats	22	33	73
Number of impounded cats returned to owner	2	4	2
Number of cats surrendered	3	10	1
Number of cats rehomed	7	10	27
Number of cats euthanised	5	9	2
Customer Requests			
Barking dogs	36	67	48
Straying dogs	177	159	109
Straying cats	95	90	68
Dog attacks	40	34	13
Domestic Animal Business			
Boarding establishments	2	2	2
Dog training establishments	1	1	1

## 2. Training of Authorised Officers

In order to deliver animal services that meet the requirements of the Act it is crucial that all authorised officers are adequately trained and have the opportunity to participate in regular further development.

### CURRENT SITUATION

Animal Management sits within the Health and Community Safety Team which forms part of the Infrastructure and Delivery Directorate. The team consists of two full time Community Safety Officers who are supported by the Coordinator Health and Community Safety and Administration Officers. All Officers carry out a multi-disciplinary role which includes animal management, parking and local laws. Council is committed to providing ongoing development to ensure that all staff are adequately trained and able to respond within the requirements of their roles.

Officers are required to participate in Councils corporate training program which incorporates a range of development and learning opportunities. In addition, staff are encouraged to attend industry related information sessions and seminars as they arise to ensure they remain up to date with industry best practice.

All new staff are required to participate in Councils Corporate Induction Program to ensure they are familiar with the relevant standard work practices and guidelines.

Performance Development Plan reviews are carried out annually which review training that has been carried out in the previous year and identify opportunities for development within the forthcoming year.

Councils current training and development activities are designed to ensure that all Officers have the necessary training and qualifications to undertake their duties.

Training activities include:

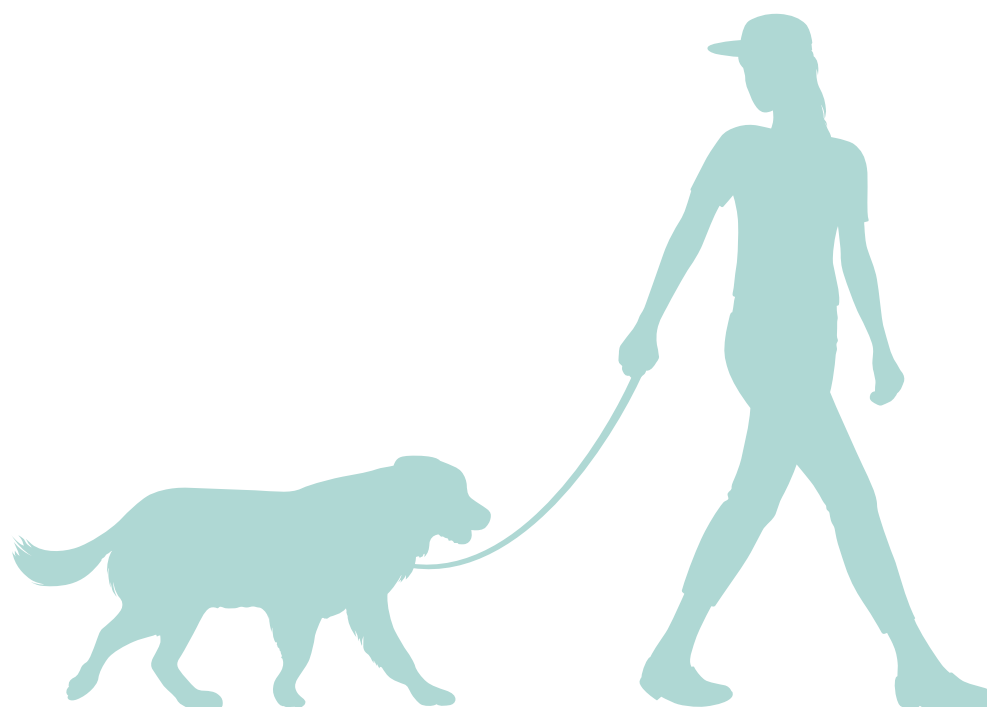
- Formalised training through accredited registered training organisations
- Short course refresher training on relevant topics
- Industry forums and training sessions
- On-the-job training

The type of training offered to Officers includes but is not limited to:

- Customer service including conflict resolution
- Dog and Cat handling
- Bite prevention
- Stock handling
- Traffic control and driver safety
- First aid
- Restricted dog breed identification
- Prosecution, statement taking and evidence gathering
- Handling pets in an emergency
- Understanding and working safely with dogs

**OUR PLANS FOR TRAINING****Objective 1: Ensure all Community Safety Officers have the skills and knowledge necessary to support the community and effectively perform their regulatory role**

Activity	When	Evaluation
Identify minimum training requirements and develop a training schedule for all Authorised Officers	2022	Training schedule developed, approved and incorporated into Officer's Performance Development Plan (PDP).
Identify additional training opportunities e.g. prosecutions training, conflict management, communication / education technique, emergency response, handling animals in an emergency or any other industry specific development opportunities that become available.	Annually	Training activities incorporated into Officers PDP and reviewed annually
Identify training opportunities for recognising and responding to domestic violence	2022 / 2023	Training incorporated into Officers PDP and reviewed annually
Ensure all new Authorised Officers have completed the minimum training requirements within 12 months of appointment	12 months from commencement of new employment	Completion of induction program Identify training requirements and include in Officers PDP
Complete annual Performance Development Plan reviews	Annually	Annual PDP reviewed and submitted to People and Culture



# 3. Registration and Identification of Domestic Animals

A registered and identifiable domestic animal has a much higher chance of being returned home and reduces the stress for both the owner and the pet if found wandering.

## CURRENT SITUATION

All dogs and cats over the age of three months must be implanted with a microchip and registered with the municipal council in which they reside. Registrations must be renewed annually by the 10th April.

Registration and identification of domestic animals is seen as the foundation of responsible pet ownership. Council has programs, services and strategies to encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats.

Registration is an important function of responsible pet ownership as animal registration fees help fund animal management services provided by Council, the responsible pet ownership campaign and other education programs run by the State government.

## Our Orders, Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures

- Section 10C of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 requires cats and dogs to be microchipped as a condition of registration (which is compulsory once the animal is three months of age).
- General Local Law No. 2 - Community Amenity and Municipal Place – Part 6 Animals – Clause 6.1 regulates the numbers of dogs and cats that can be kept at a property without a permit depending on the land size
- Annual registration renewal and reminder notices
- Legislative requirement under the Act for registration of dogs and cats at age of three months

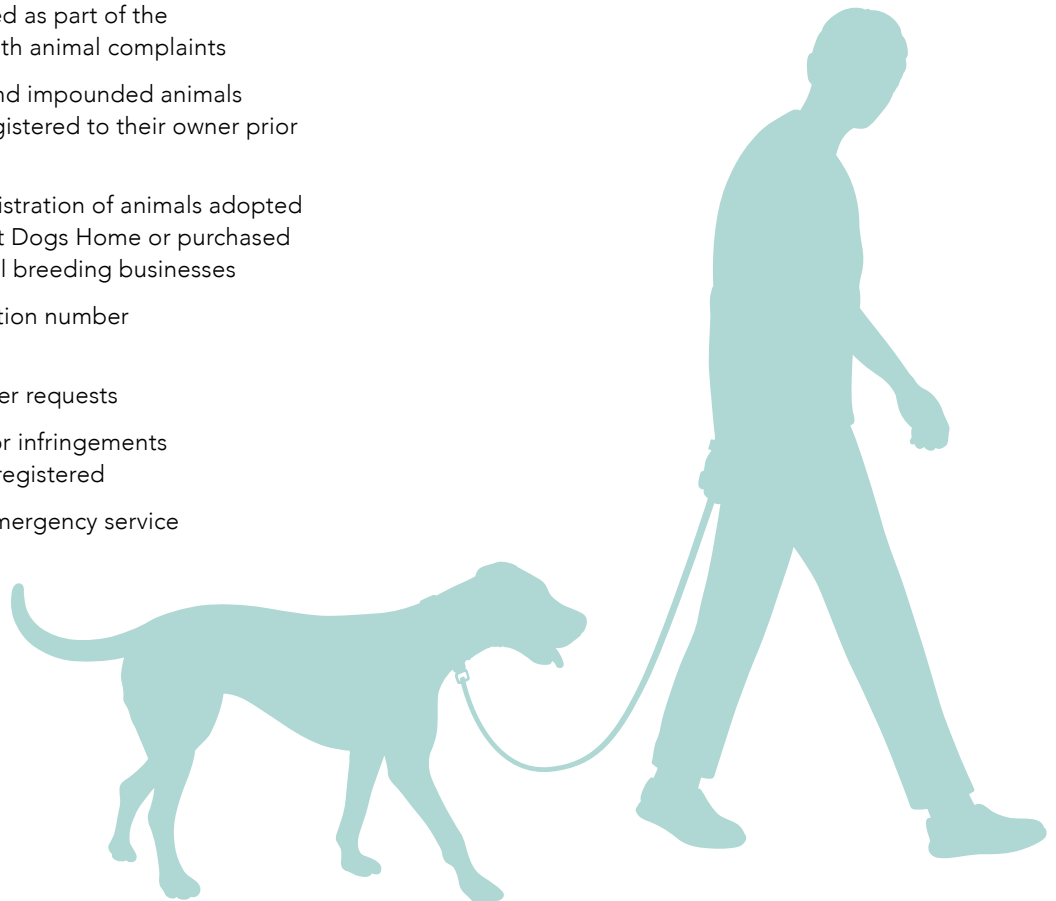
## CURRENT ACTIVITIES

Council provides the following domestic animal services to the local community:

- Animal registration renewals mailed out in March each year to households who have a current animal registration
- Use of social media to promote responsible pet ownership and animal registration requirements
- Responsible pet ownership pamphlets included with any mail outs of a notice to comply, infringement or other relevant correspondence
- Registration fee reduced by 50% for new applications received between 10 October and 9 April each year
- Registration fee waived for the first year for all eligible dogs and cats
- Information about registering animals, including a downloadable registration form available on Council's website
- Providing a range of registration payment methods – BPay, PostBillPay, Credit Card or in person
- Ensuring that registration and identification compliance is checked as part of the process of dealing with animal complaints
- Ensuring all seized and impounded animals are identified and registered to their owner prior to release
- Follow up on the registration of animals adopted from the RSPCA, Lost Dogs Home or purchased from domestic animal breeding businesses
- Permanent identification number registration tags
- Investigating customer requests
- Issuing notices and/or infringements for animals found unregistered
- After hours animal emergency service

## SUMMARY

Council's priority is to reunite lost pets with their owners as quickly as possible. The promotion of pet registration and responsible pet ownership, together with education in ownership obligations, are considered high priority areas. Council aims to increase the number of animals registered across the shire and will continue to support incentives that encourage registration.



## OUR PLANS FOR REGISTRATION AND IDENTIFICATION

### Objective 1: Ensure all cats and dogs which are over the age of three months and reside within the municipality are registered with the Hepburn Shire Council.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Undertake a sample review of newly microchipped dogs and cats in the Municipality by contacting registration microchip registries. Check all animals are also listed on Council's pet registration database and follow up those that are not.	2023	Council's registration database cross referenced Number of Notices to Comply issued
Identify unpaid registrations. Follow up of unpaid animal renewal notices from previous year	May/June Annually	2021-2022 – Number of reminder notices sent 2023-2025 Number of reminder notices sent and Notices to Comply issued
Ensure all seized and impounded animals are registered to their owner prior to release	Ongoing	Number of animals registered prior to release
Follow up of reported unregistered animals from customer requests	Ongoing	Number of requests actioned
Advertise pet registration renewals – webpage, Council on-hold message, social media, entry points of Council	February/March Annually	Annual registration renewals advertised
Exploration of alternative methods of payment of renewal notices	2023	Alternative methods identified
Ensure that animal complaints are checked for registration compliance as part of the process of dealing with the complaint. Where appropriate, issue a Notice to Comply for unregistered animals.	Ongoing	Number of Notices to Comply issued
Investigate and determine next steps for the use of SMS messaging of owners who have not renewed their registration	2023	Investigation completed
Provide registration forms and pet ownership information on Council's website	Ongoing	Website updated with current forms and fact sheets
Issue 'Register Your Pet' Notices when unregistered pets are detected. Where appropriate, issue a Notice to Comply for unregistered animals.	Ongoing	Number of notices issued
Provide responsible pet ownership information, animal registration forms and other pet related documents to all new residents	Ongoing	Number of new resident packs distributed
Provide responsible pet ownership information, animal registration forms and other pet related documents to all new residents	Ongoing	Number of new resident packs distributed

## Objective 2: Promote Responsible Pet Ownership.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Promote the benefits of registration and identification including safe return of lost pets and 'free ride home', in various media formats	Ongoing	Website updated Number of social media posts Number of media releases
Provide free registration for eligible animals or 50% fee reduction for the first year as an incentive to register animals and improve responsible pet ownership	Ongoing	Number of reduced fee animal registrations per annum
Provide discounted renewal fees for eligible animals (microchipped and desexed) as an incentive to promote responsible pet ownership	Ongoing	Number of reduced rate renewals received per annum
Use social media as a tool to promote responsible pet ownership	Ongoing	Number social media posts
Identify and promote existing programs that encourage responsible pet ownership e.g. free or discounted desexing programs.	Ongoing	Database of available programs developed and maintained

## Objective 3: Improve the dog and cat registration renewal process to encourage prompt response to renewal invitations

Activity	When	Evaluation
Review the Animal Registration processes and procedures to ensure a positive customer experience	Annually	Review undertaken
Advertise pet registration renewals – webpage, Council on-hold message, entry points of Council	Ongoing	Registrations renewals advertised
Investigate and recommend next steps for the use of SMS messaging owners who have not renewed their registration	2023	Investigation completed
Explore alternative methods of payment for animal registrations	2023	Alternative methods identified
Review and benchmark animal registration fees with other local governments	January/February Annually	Council's registration fees reviewed



## Objective 4: Ensure that the Community Safety Team works consistently and fairly implementing the *Domestic Animals Act*.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Develop and review policies and procedures relating to animal registration and enforcement	2023	Policies and Procedures developed and/or reviewed
Identify unpaid registrations. Follow up animal non- renewal to ensure compliance	May/June Annually	Number of reminder notices. Number of Notices to Comply issued
Ensure all seized and impounded animals are registered to their owner prior to release	Ongoing	Number of animals registered prior to release
Follow up of reported unregistered animals from customer requests	Ongoing	Number of Notices to Comply issued
Ensure that animal complaints are checked for registration compliance as part of the process of dealing with the complaint. Where appropriate, issue a Notice to Comply for unregistered animals.	Ongoing	Number of Notices to Comply issued



# 4. Nuisance Animals

This section outlines the programs, services and strategies to minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance.

## CURRENT SITUATION

### Cats

Large feral/semi-owned cat populations throughout the Hepburn Shire are having an impact on flora and fauna. Community feedback indicates that wandering cats continue to cause a nuisance by spraying, fighting, home invasion and potentially spreading diseases.

Historically, farmers have used cats to control rabbits, rats and mice. If left uncontrolled and un-desexed, these cats can also contribute to the problem.

### New Objective – Cat Curfew

During community consultation it was identified that approximately 90% of respondents were supportive of a cat curfew being introduced. Feedback suggested that the introduction of a cat curfew would address issues such as roaming cats, the impact of cats on wildlife, cats leaving waste on people's property, fighting cats and the number of stray cats in the community.

Therefore, a major action of this plan will be to investigate the introduction of a cat curfew and identify the most appropriate method of implementing this program.

### Dogs

Barking dogs can cause unnecessary stress on the community if left unmanaged and investigating such complaints can take extensive time as officers are required to gather sufficient evidence to prove a nuisance is occurring. Council aims to resolve these complaints as quickly as possible but, in some cases, this may not be possible as the cause of the barking (wildlife/cats trespassing) may be outside the control of the dog owner.

Dogs that are wandering and/or not under effective control may also cause a nuisance in the community by defecating on private property or in public areas, entering private property and aggravating other pets.

Council aims to return as many dogs as possible home without these animals becoming impounded however when an owner is not able to be identified or contacted, Council uses the City of Ballarat Animal Shelter as its dog and cat pound and shelter.

Council provides an after-hours animal emergency service and works with community members to reunite animals with their owners after hours.

### New objective – off lead dog park master plan

During community consultation it was identified that approximately 41% of respondents have witnessed or been personally affected by a dog attack within the past 12 months and 58% have concerns about dogs being walked off lead or not under effective control by the owner. Feedback suggested that the Shire needs improved facilities that provide off lead areas for dogs to exercise and greater enforcement is required for on lead laws where applicable. This may reduce incidents such as dogs rushing, dogs fighting, dogs attacking people, pets and wildlife and dogs defecating on private property.

Therefore, a major action of this plan will be to undertake a dog park planning project which will develop an Off-Lead Dog Park Master Plan for Hepburn Shire.

### Our Orders, Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures

- Section 26 Order requiring dogs and/or cats to be restrained in specified public places
- General Local Law No. 2 - Community Amenity and Municipal Place – Part 6 Animals – Clause 6.1 regulates the numbers of dogs and cats that can be kept at a property without a permit depending on the land size
- General Local Law No. 2 - Community Amenity and Municipal Place – Part 6 Animals – Clause 6.2 not to allow dog excrement to remain in a public place within a built-up area
- Cat Trapping Procedure

### CURRENT ACTIVITIES

- Providing advice, education and assistance one on one with animal owners
- Making available Responsible Pet Ownership fact sheets
- Encouraging the de-sexing of cats and dogs to reduce wandering
- Impounding of wandering dogs
- Impounding of nuisance cats through the cat trapping program
- Providing dog poo bags in key parks and reserves
- Encouraging cat owners to confine their cats to their property utilising cat runs
- Provision of cat cages for trapping nuisance cats
- Investigation of barking dog complaints
- Excess animal permit application inspection to reduce the possibility of nuisance complaints
- Providing advice to dog owners/complainants of causes of excess barking, including separation, anxiety, boredom, external factors, territorialism, communication with other dogs etc
- Issuing Notices to Comply under the legislation to gain compliance
- Regular patrols of problem areas

### SUMMARY

The most common customer requests received by Council regarding animals are in relation to barking dogs, uncontained dogs and stray/feral cats. These issues can cause a great deal of stress and irritation and they consume a lot of Council Officers time. Through education pet owners, including farmers, may become more aware of the issues their pets may be causing and find effective ways to reduce the nuisance behaviour.

Council aims to reduce nuisance issues in the Shire by developing a range of programs, services and initiatives that support those who have pets enjoy the benefits they bring but also support the safety and amenity of all residents.



## OUR PLANS FOR NUISANCE ANIMALS

## Objective 1: Promote Responsible Cat and Dog Ownership

Activity	When	Evaluation
Develop a social media plan to promote various elements of responsible pet ownership, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Picking up after your dog</li> <li>• The importance of socialising and training dogs</li> <li>• What to do if you find a lost pet</li> <li>• Keeping cats out of other people's property</li> <li>• Responsibilities of owning a greyhound</li> <li>• Identifying when a dog is stressed or threatened</li> <li>• How to report dog attacks and potential outcomes if your do attacks</li> </ul>	Ongoing	Number of social media posts Facebook likes, shares and comments Webpage clicks
Increase information on Councils website regarding responsible pet ownership and provide tips on how to reduce barking.	2022	Website updated
Circulate Safe Cat, Safe Wildlife education material throughout the Shire	2023	Less reports of stray / nuisance cats
Audit signage and placement of dog faeces bag dispensers in municipality	Annually	Audit undertaken Number of signs and dispensers installed or replaced
Promote free or low-cost de-sexing and microchipping programs	Ongoing	Database of current programs identified and maintained
Investigate and recommend improvement opportunities for alternative options for the community to report nuisance animals to encourage increased reports	2023	Investigation complete
Develop a community education program e.g colouring in competitions, education in schools etc	2023	Successful implementation of program

## Objective 2: Develop and implement a Cat Curfew Program that includes education, after hours procedures and enforcement actions

Activity	When	Evaluation
Develop a cat curfew program and draft a cat curfew policy	2022/2023	Draft policy developed
Implement actions of the of the cat curfew policy once it has been adopted	July 2023	Introduction of cat curfew
Promote the benefits of containing cats to their property using materials developed through Safe Cats, Safe Wildlife and include the resources with registration renewals	2023	Information distributed with registration renewals Social media posts Media releases
Audit the number of cat cages available to residents and determine if supply is sufficient to meet the need	Prior to introduction of cat curfew	Audit complete and new cages purchased if required
Develop and provide education material about cat enclosures and nuisance issues to cat owners in registration information packs	2023 Ongoing	Information Pack developed and on website Number of packs provided
Use social media as a tool to promote responsible cat ownership	Ongoing	Number of social media posts
Continue to provide cat cages to residents for trapping nuisance cats trespassing on their property as per the Cat Trapping Program	Ongoing	Number of cat traps hired Number of cats caught and transported to relevant facility
Investigate opportunities to work with local Veterinaries, animal shelters, animal welfare groups, Parks Victoria and other relevant entities to curb nuisance cat problems	Ongoing	Number of joint projects completed
Work towards development of a 24 hour cat confinement policy	2025	Community consultation completed Draft policy developed
Continue to work with community and external organisations on actions relating to reduction of feral cat population throughout the Shire.	Ongoing	Number of feral cat's collected and transported to relevant facility.



### Objective 3: Undertake a dog park planning project, including development of an Off-Lead Dog Park Master Plan for Hepburn Shire

Activity	When	Evaluation
Undertake a dog park planning project which will include development of an Off-Lead Dog Park Master Plan	2023	Off-Lead Dog Park Master Plan finalised
Seek to amend either existing Section 26 Order in relation to on lead areas within the Shire OR Seek to amend Local Law 2 to include a requirement for dogs to be on a lead when not in a designated off lead area	Following adoption of the Off-Lead Dog Park Master Plan	Section 26 and/or Local Law 2 amended
Implement recommendations of the Off-Lead Dog Park Master Plan	2024/2025	Development of off-lead areas as determined by the plan

### Objective 4: Ensure that the Community Safety Team works consistently and fairly implementing the *Domestic Animals Act*.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Develop and review policies and procedures relating to nuisance animals and its general enforcement	Annually	Policies and procedures developed and reviewed
Identify properties that exceed the limit of animals allowed and ensure these properties obtain the appropriate permit	Ongoing	Number of Notices to Comply issued Number of new permits issued
Increase patrols to minimise dogs at large in known hot spots and on leash areas, e.g. Lake Daylesford, Calembreen Park	Ongoing	Number of patrols undertaken per year
Investigate areas for improvement of Council's After-Hours Animal Emergency service, including how to promote contact number	2022	Investigation complete
Liaise with and review other local government processes to identify opportunities for improvement	2023	Review complete

# 5. Dog Attacks

Although not common, unfortunately dog attacks against people, pets, livestock and wildlife do occur. This section outlines programs, services and strategies Council use to minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals.

### CURRENT SITUATION

In the most recent year (2020/2021) Council has responded to 13 reports of a dog attack, which is a significant reduction on previous years. Dog attack complaints vary in severity and as such only two proceeded to court.

Dog attacks remain a high priority for Council with officers responding immediately, where possible, to all reports, including after hours.

Community feedback indicated that approximately 41% of respondents have witnessed or have been personally affected by a dog attack within the past 12 months and 58% have concerns about dogs being walked off lead or not under the control of the owner.

In responding to dog attack reports, Officers often find that the alleged attacking dog had attacked previously, however was not reported to Council. If initial attacks are reported, subsequent attacks may not have occurred. Education is required to encourage the community to report dogs at large, dogs rushing and dog attacks of all types.

The below table displays the number of dog attack reports received by Council over the last 3 years.

Dog Attack Reports	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021
Hepburn Shire	40	34	13*

*\*Reduction in reported dog attacks in 2020/2021 may be due to people being at home with their pets more during the COVID-19 restrictions. This may also relate to the reduction in stray dogs collected during the same period.*

### Our Orders, Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures

- General Local Law No. 2 - Community Amenity and Municipal Place – Part 6 Animals – Clause 6.1 regulates the numbers of dogs and cats that can be kept at a property without a permit depending on the land size.
- Section 26 Order requiring dogs and/or cats to be restrained in specified public places
- After Hours Animal Emergency Response Procedure



**CURRENT ACTIVITIES**

- Responding promptly to notifications of a dog attack
- After hours animal emergency response
- Provision of education and information to community about responsible pet ownership
- Encourage dog de-sexing to assist in reducing the incidence of wandering animals
- Promoting effective confinement and control of dogs
- Promoting de-sexing of dogs to reduce aggressive tendencies and wandering
- Promoting early socialisation of dogs with other animals and humans
- Impounding dogs that are not confined to their property

- Investigation of reported attacks, and follow up on compliance
- Ensuring suspected attacking dogs are effectively secured or seized pending investigation outcome
- Issuing warnings/infringements for wandering or unsecured dogs
- Declaring dogs as menacing, dangerous or restricted as required
- Inspecting property where declared dangerous dogs reside

**SUMMARY**

Dog attacks are taken seriously by Council and reducing the risk will remain a high priority. Officers will respond immediately to all dog attack reports where possible and will raise awareness in the community on how to reduce the risk of a dog attacks.

**OUR PLANS FOR DOG ATTACKS****Objective 1: To educate the community about dog attacks in order to increase awareness and reporting**

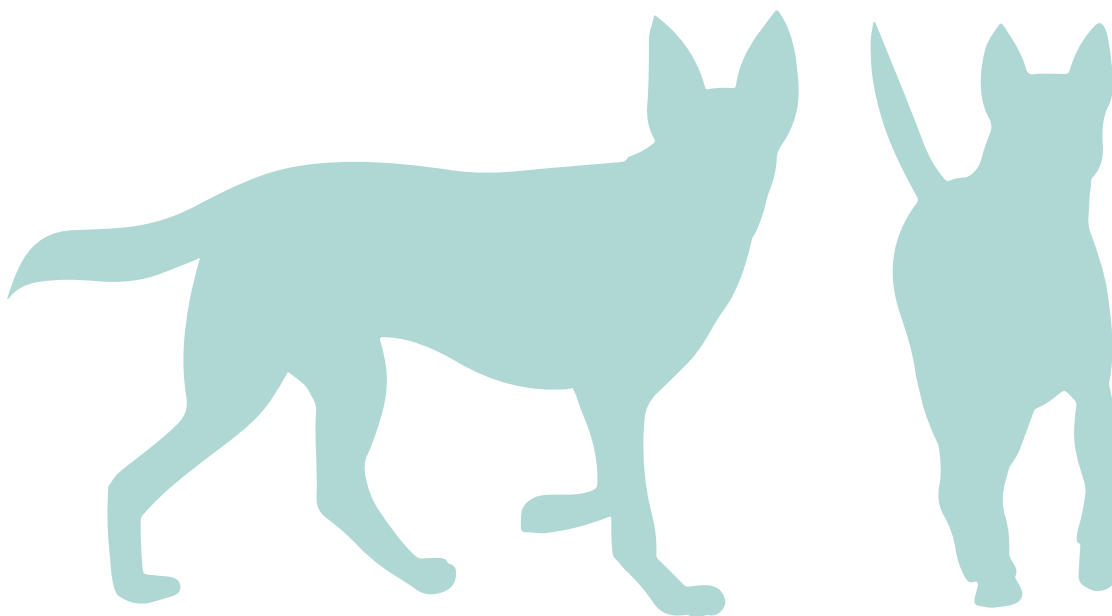
Activity	When	Evaluation
Conduct a targeted campaign to improve public awareness of what a dog attack is and how to report one using social media, media releases, website updates and community newsletters	2023	Number of social media posts, media releases and website hits. Compare number of dangerous dog reports pre and post campaign
Publicise key dog attack prevention messages (e.g. confinement of dogs to property, leash laws etc.)	Ongoing	Number of social media posts Number of media releases
Distribute responsible pet ownership pamphlets from the Bureau of Animal Welfare online and at each customer service site	Ongoing	Responsible Pet Ownership information available on website and at each customer service site/library
Improve public awareness of dog attack investigations and the associated penalties, and the powers available within the Act for both Council and the community	2023	Number of social media posts Website content reviewed and updated Number of mail outs Number of media releases
Investigate alternatives for the community to report dog attacks to allow for an increase in reports, e.g. Dob in a Dog Line	2024	Investigation complete

## Objective 2: Review of current local laws and orders relating to Animals

Activity	When	Evaluation
Seek to amend either existing Section 26 Order in relation to on lead areas within the Shire OR Seek to amend Local Law 2 to include a requirement for dogs to be on a lead when not in a designated off lead area	Following adoption of Off-Lead Dog Park Master Plan	Section 26 Order reviewed Section 26 and/or Local Law 2 amended

## Objective 3: Ensure that the Community Safety Team works consistently and fairly implementing the *Domestic Animals Act*.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Develop and review policies and procedures relating to management and enforcement of dog attacks	2023 then annually	Policies and procedures developed Policies and procedures reviewed annually
Liaise with and review other local government processes to identify opportunities for improvement	Ongoing	Improvement opportunities identified
Review Council's After-Hours Animal Emergency service, including communication of the service	2022	Review complete and any improvements implemented



# 6. Dangerous, Menacing & Restricted Breed Dogs

This section outlines programs, services and strategies Council use to effectively identify dangerous dogs, menacing dogs and restricted breed dogs in the municipality and describes how those dogs are kept in compliance with this Act and the regulations.

**CURRENT SITUATION**

Hepburn Shire currently has only one declared dangerous dog currently registered in the Hepburn Shire, one declared menacing dog and no known restricted breed dogs.

	Menancing	Dangerous	Restricted
Hepburn Shire	1	1	0

Council administers and enforces provisions of the Act to identify and control dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs to ensure the safety of the community.

**Our Orders, Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures**

There are no current orders, local laws, policies or procedures relating to Declared Dogs.

Officers are guided by the Domestic Animals Act 1994 for all declared dog matters.

**CURRENT ACTIVITIES**

- Educating owners of dogs in relation to the laws surrounding declared dogs
- Attend all complaints in relation to suspected Dangerous, Restricted Breed and Menacing dogs
- Inspect all properties where a declared dangerous or restricted breed dog resides annually or as required
- Registration and identification of dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs including
- Ensure compliance with the requirements for keeping dangerous dogs
- All declared dangerous dogs, menacing dogs and restricted breed dogs to be listed on the Victorian Declared Dog Registry (VDDR)

**SUMMARY**

Declared dogs are not a current problem within the Hepburn Shire. Officers will continue to educate the community about declared dog requirements to raise awareness of what would be required if dog owners do not take precautions to prevent their dog from escaping and attacking.

Annual audits will be undertaken routinely, and any issues of non-compliance will be addressed accordingly.

**OUR PLANS FOR DECLARED DOGS****Objective 1: Identify and register all Declared Dogs in the municipality.**

Activity	When	Evaluation
Cross-reference microchip database information with current Council registration database to identify potential restricted breed dogs	Annually	Council's registration database cross referenced
Community Safety Officers to undertake Restricted Breed dog training to ensure easy identification	When Available	Training completed
Improve public awareness of what a declared dog is using social media, media releases, website updates etc	Ongoing	Number of social media posts Number of media releases
Ensure all declared dogs are recorded on the Victorian Declared Dog Registry (VDDR) and the VDDR is kept up to date	Ongoing	Number of dogs recorded

**Objective 2: Ensure declared dogs are compliant to relevant legislation and regulations**

Activity	When	Evaluation
Continue to declare dogs as Restricted Breed, Dangerous or Menacing in accordance with legislation	Ongoing	All dogs declared in accordance with legislation
Investigate complaints about Menacing, Dangerous Dogs or Restricted Breed Dogs	Ongoing	Investigations completed
Undertake random property inspections of declared dogs to ensure compliance	Annually	Number of inspections undertaken

### Objective 3: Ensure that the Community Safety Team works consistently and fairly implementing the *Domestic Animals Act*.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Develop and review policies and procedures relating to management of declared dogs	2024	Policies and procedures developed Policies and procedures reviewed annually
Animal Management Officers to undertake Restricted Breed dog training to ensure easy identification and consistent enforcement	When available	Training completed
Follow up all non-compliance until owner complies. Prosecute repeat offenders or serious breaches detected	Ongoing	Compliance achieved or offenders prosecuted
Liaise with and review other local government processes to identify opportunities for improvement	Ongoing	Improvements identified and implemented



# 7. Overpopulation and High Euthanasia

The overpopulation of animals is an ongoing issue that presents challenges within the community such as impacts on wildlife, people and other domestic pets.

There are also impacts on the welfare of cats and dogs if they stray, are semi owned, or malnourished due to limited capacity of owners to care for them. The overpopulation of cats in the stray population is a problem as it leads to higher rates of euthanasia due to low rehoming rates.

## CURRENT SITUATION

Council's pound and euthanasia procedures are guided by the Domestic Animals Act 1994. Council aims to reunite any lost or seized animals with the owner wherever possible. Council will continue to offer this free service to the community. As part of this free service officers also educate the owners on adequate fencing to ensure their animals are kept safe. However, an animal must be identifiable (ID tag or microchip) to enable Council to return the animal to its owner.

When officers are unable to identify an owner, animals are transported to the Ballarat Animal Shelter. Animals that are not reclaimed are offered for rehoming if they meet temperament and health requirements. Animals may be

euthanised if they have an untreatable disease or if they have temperament issues that pose a risk to the community.

Overpopulation of cats and unowned community cats continue to be an issue in the shire and have been identified as a priority area for Council to address.

There is a large unchecked wild cat population which creates a serious problem of uncontrolled breeding. Council assists property owners with cat trapping to remove unwanted and unowned cats. The damage to native fauna from wild cats is significant, together with problems of nuisance, disease and parasites.

For officer safety and to ensure that cats are humanely trapped, officers will only collect cats that have been trapped in Council supplied cages and caught as per Councils Cat Trapping Guidelines.

## Our orders, local laws, council policies and procedures

General Local Law No. 2 - Community Amenity and Municipal Place – Part 6 Animals – Clause 6.1 regulates the numbers of dogs and cats that can be kept at a property without a permit depending on the land size.

All lost and unwanted animals are taken to Ballarat Animal Shelter. Dogs and cats found whilst wandering or lost are held for 8 days to be claimed by the owner and a release fee is payable. Any dog or cat which is impounded and is not claimed within 8 days then becomes the property of the Ballarat Animal Shelter and may be rehomed or euthanised.

All animals impounded must be implanted with a microchip and registered to their owner prior to their release. All animals sold from the shelter must also be vaccinated and desexed.

**CURRENT ACTIVITIES**

- Cat desexing subsidy to reduce the number of unwanted cats
- Provision of low-cost cat traps delivered and collected by authorised officers
- Provision of the Free Ride Home program where animals are able to be reunited with their owner
- Attendance and assistance with situations of animal hoarding
- Excess animal permit system to manage the number of animals per property
- All animals impounded are implanted with a microchip and registered to their owner prior to their release
- All dogs and cats rehoused from the shelter are also desexed prior to being rehomed
- Issuing of caution and infringement notices for dogs and cats found at large and follow up of registration and identification requirements

**SUMMARY**

It is Council's priority to reduce the number of feral/semi-owned cats within our Shire.

Council will also continue to promote animal de-sexing to reduce overpopulation and euthanasia within our community.

Council will continue to raise awareness with the community, with a strong emphasis on feral/semi-owned cat populations and work with them to reduce the numbers.

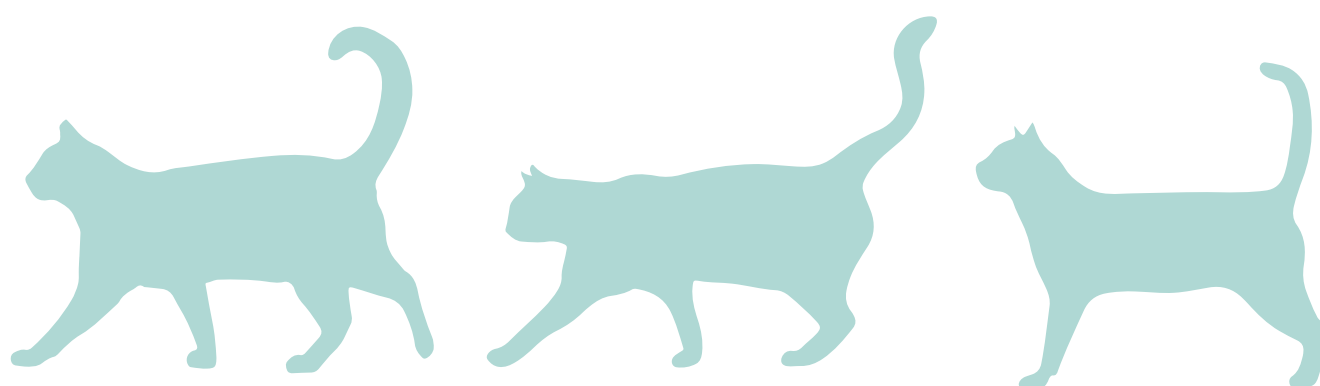
**OUR PLANS FOR OVERPOPULATION AND EUTHANASIA****Objective 1: To decrease the number of stray, abandoned and unwanted cats**

Activity	When	Evaluation
Promote discounted fees as an incentive to desex cats and improve responsible pet ownership	Ongoing	Number of new de-sexed cats registered
Promote the benefits of desexing, via media, social media, website	Ongoing	Number of social media posts Number of media articles
Continue to work in partnership with external organisations to identify and address cases of cat hoarding within the shire	Ongoing	Number of property visits Number of cats collected
Implement action of the cat curfew policy once it has been adopted to reduce the number of stray cats breeding within the community	2024	Actions of the policy implemented
Continue to offer low cost cat trapping program to residents	Ongoing	Number of cat traps hired
Liaise with and review other local government processes to identify opportunities for improvement	Ongoing	Improvements identified and implemented



## Objective 2: To minimise the number of animals euthanised

Activity	When	Evaluation
Partner with other Council teams to provide support to community members in caring for their pets	Ongoing	Number of instances of support
Provide assistance to families experiencing domestic violence by providing up to 14 days respite for any domestic pet free of charge	Ongoing	Number of weeks respite care provided
Provide a means for people without a permanent address to register their pets which will encourage de-sexing and minimise uncontrolled breeding	2022	Number of pets registered without a fixed address
Continue to work in partnership with external organisations to identify and address cases of animal hoarding within the shire	Ongoing	Number of property visits Number of animals collected
Promote free or low-cost de-sexing programs that aim to minimise uncontrolled breeding	Ongoing	Database of programs maintained
Liaise with and review other local government processes to identify opportunities for improvement	Ongoing	Improvements identified and implemented



# 8. Domestic Animal Businesses

All Domestic Animal Businesses must register with their local Council. Under the Act, Councils have the authority to:

- Refuse registration of a business if they fail to comply with the legislation and relevant code of practice
- Set special conditions on the registration of any domestic animal business

This section outlines programs, services and strategies which Council intends to pursue in its municipal district to ensure that people comply with this Act and the regulations.

## CURRENT SITUATION

Three Domestic Animal Businesses (DABs) are currently registered within Hepburn Shire consisting of two boarding establishments and one dog training establishment. These businesses are inspected annually to ensure they continue to comply with the regulations.

There are no breeding establishments or pet shops currently registered in the Shire.

## Our Orders, Local Laws and Council Policies and Procedures

- General Local Law No. 2 - Community Amenity and Municipal Place – Part 6 Animals – Clause 6.1 regulates the numbers of dogs and cats that can be kept at a property without a permit depending on the land size.
- Hepburn Shire Town Planning Scheme – requirement for planning permit in certain areas for animal related businesses
- Any new Domestic Animal Business must be inspected prior to registration

## CURRENT ACTIVITIES

- Providing information to registered businesses to ensure compliance
- Annual registration of all Domestic Animal Businesses
- Conducting annual audits of all registered Domestic Animal Businesses within the Shire
- Investigating suspected or reported unregistered animal businesses
- Issuing Notice to Comply/Infringement notices as required
- Liaison with planning department over suspected animal businesses

## SUMMARY

Council is committed to ensuring Domestic Animal Businesses comply with the Act and Code of Practice.

**OUR PLANS FOR DOMESTIC ANIMAL BUSINESSES****Objective 1: Identify and register all Domestic Animal Businesses within the Hepburn Shire**

Activity	When	Evaluation
Identify all businesses that should be registered within the municipality and cross reference against our database of registered businesses	Annually in March	Cross reference complete
Provide a list of all registered Domestic Animal Businesses on Council's website to ensure the community are aware of which businesses are registered and report any that may not be registered	2022	List of DABs on website List reviewed annually
Work closely with planning department of Council to ensure all new planning permit applications for animal related businesses are referred to the Community Safety Team for registration where required	Ongoing	Number of planning referrals received
Investigate any reports of unregistered businesses	Ongoing	Number of requests received and investigated

**Objective 2: Ensure compliance with Domestic Animals Act 1994 in relation to Domestic Animal Businesses**

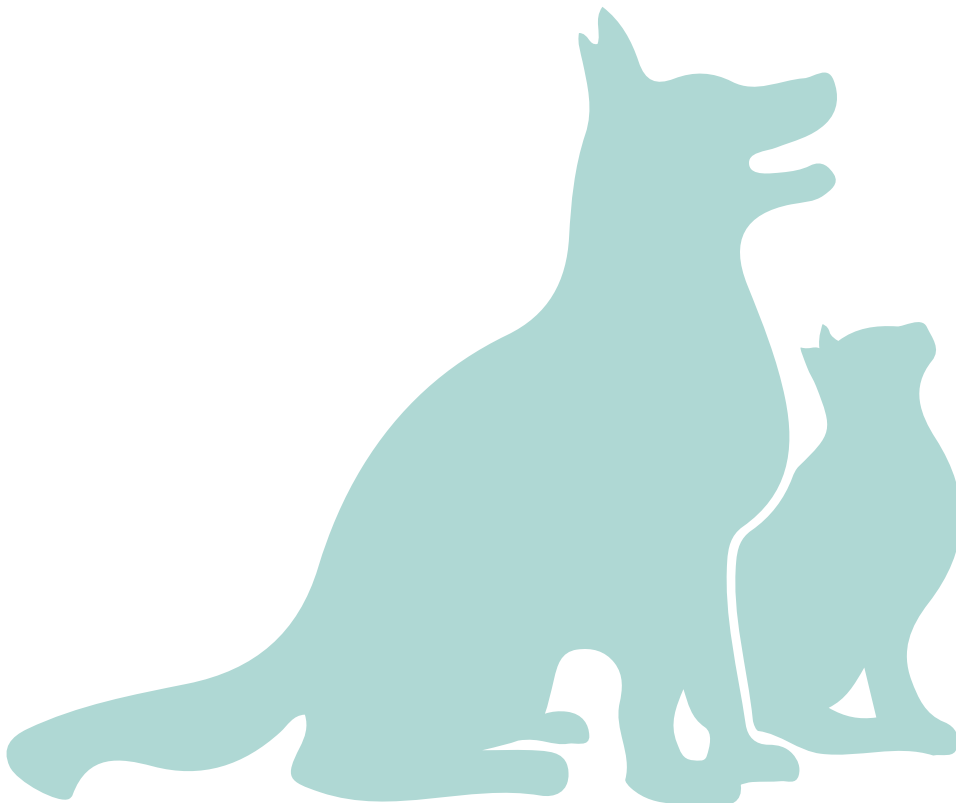
Activity	When	Evaluation
Conduct annual audits of all registered Domestic Animal Businesses	Annually	Number of audits completed
Where required, act promptly to address any areas of non-compliance	Ongoing	Compliance achieved
Investigate and act upon public complaints about Domestic Animal Businesses	Ongoing	Number of complaints received and investigated
Inspect properties of new excess animal permit applications to ensure they are not a breeding business	Ongoing	Inspections completed

### Objective 3: Ensure that the Community Safety Team works consistently and fairly implementing the *Domestic Animals Act*

Activity	When	Evaluation
Develop policies and procedures relating to Domestic Animal Businesses, including enforcement	2023	Policies and Procedures developed
Ensure Animal Management officers complete audit training	When available	Training completed

### Objective 4: Review of current local laws, orders and fees relating to Animals

Activity	When	Evaluation
Review the Local Law No. 2 to ensure it is consistent with the current community expectations and environment	November 2019	Local Law reviewed
Set Domestic Animal Business registration fees to reflect costs of audits, inspections, visits, etc.	Annually	Annual review of fees undertaken



# 9. Other Matters

This section provides a review of any other matters related to the management of dogs and cats in the Council that is not mentioned in the sections above.

## **EMERGENCY ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN**

Hepburn Shire Council has experienced two major storm and flood events during 2020/2021. The most recent flood event in Creswick highlighted some areas of concern regarding the management of pets during an emergency.

Victoria's emergency management arrangements identify the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions as the primary agency for domestic animal welfare support services during emergency response, however, as the closest level of government to the affected community, local government also has a key role in supporting emergency animal welfare activities.

Evidence from previous emergencies has shown that people's decisions during emergencies are influenced by a number of factors, including their pets. The bond between people and their animals has prompted a greater level of planning for the needs of animals during

an emergency. Animal owners and carers hold the responsibility to prepare their animals for emergencies, however Council is committed to supporting the community during times of emergency through thorough emergency management planning.

Hepburn Shire Council has developed an Emergency Animal Management Plan (EAMP) which covers issues regarding domestic animal management in an emergency. This plan is a sub-plan of the Municipal Emergency Management Plan.

As part of Council's Emergency Management plans it is Council's responsibility to undertake emergency exercises to ensure that those plans can work effectively in times of emergency. Council undertakes annual emergency exercises and also participates in regional emergency exercises to ensure it is ready for an emergency.

Council is also a member of two Municipal Emergency Management Enhancement Groups (Central Victoria and Grampians) where members discuss and share information on emergency management activities, including Animal Emergency Management.

## **ANIMAL WELFARE**

The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 (POCTA) allows for the authorisation of local government officers, who are employees of council and authorised under Section 72 of the Act.

Council officers are not currently authorised as POCTA inspectors. The investigation of POCTA offences that occur within the Shire are currently investigated by the RSPCA.

Council has a strong working relationship with the RSPCA and assists them however possible to investigate animal welfare reports. Officers also report any suspected animal welfare offences to the RSPCA as required.

**OUR PLANS****Objective 1: To ensure consideration is given to the management of Domestic Animals during emergency events**

Activity	When	Evaluation
Review all emergency management plans relevant to domestic animals, including contact lists	Annually	Emergency Management Plans Reviewed
Provide information on Councils website to assist pet owners in the event of an emergency	2023	Information available on website
Ensure animal management officers are adequately trained to manage domestic animals in an emergency	When Available	Training completed
Up skill other Council Officers (as required) to ensure Council has the resources to assist during an emergency	Ongoing	Training opportunities made available to all emergency management staff
Officers to maintain involvement in emergency management groups within the shire to ensure that the needs of domestic animals in the event of an emergency are met	Ongoing	Coordinator to maintain membership in the Emergency Management Group
Improve awareness about pet safety in an emergency (social media, website)	Ongoing	Number of social media posts Number of media articles

**Objective 2: Work in partnership with the RSPCA to decrease the incidence of cruelty to animals using education and compliance**

Activity	When	Evaluation
Provide information on Councils website regarding animal cruelty including how to report it if required	2022	Website information updated
Liaise with relevant agencies such as RSPCA in relation to prevention of cruelty issues	Ongoing	Number of welfare reports submitted to RSPCA Number of joint inspections undertaken with the RSPCA

# 10. Annual Review of Plan and Annual Reporting

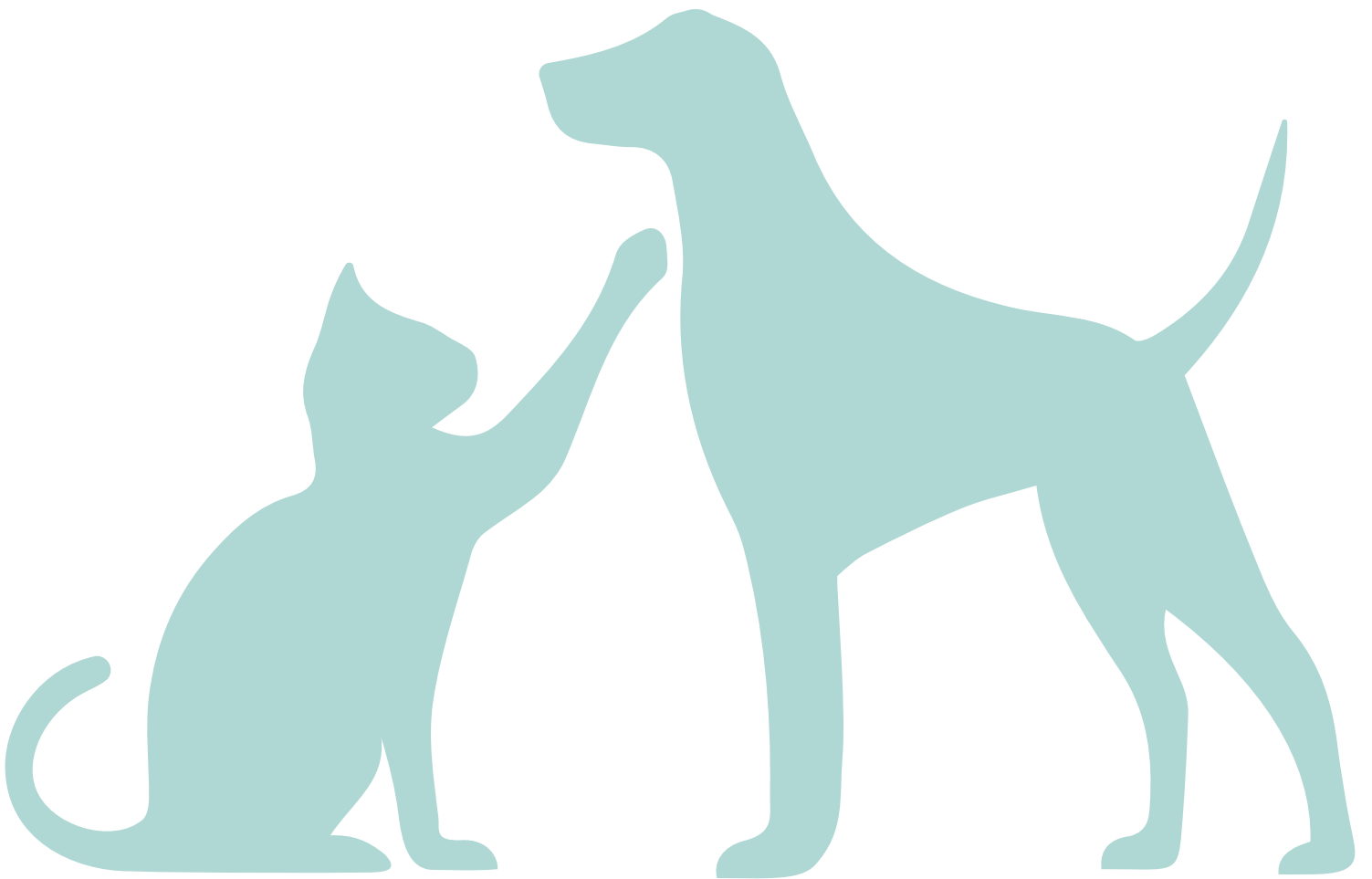
As required by the Domestic Animals Act, Council must review its Domestic Animal Management Plan annually and amend the plan as required. The following section outlines how Council will meet these requirements.

## OUR PLANS FOR ANNUAL REVIEW AND REPORTING

### Objective 1: Comply with Section 68A(3) of the *Domestic Animals Act*

Activity	When	Evaluation
Provide the Secretary with a copy of the plan and any amendments to the plan	September 2022 and annually	Copy provided to Secretary
Review of the Domestic Animal Management Plan annually and, if required, amend the plan	Annually	Plan reviewed annually
Publish evaluation of the plan in Councils Annual Report	Annually	Evaluation report published
Provide progress reports through Councils Quarterly Reporting framework	Quarterly	Quarterly reports provided
Undertake a major review of the plan after four years	2025	Major review complete







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#### COUNCIL OFFICES

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##### CRESWICK

68 Albert Street,  
Creswick

##### CLUNES

The Warehouse - Clunes  
36 Fraser Street, Clunes

##### TRENTHAM

13 Albert Street,  
Trentham