

# Hepburn

SHIRE COUNCIL

## DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN 2017-2021

August 2017



## Table of Contents

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	3
2. LEGAL FRAMEWORK.....	4
3. INTRODUCTION.....	5
4. TRAINING OF AUTHORISED OFFICERS .....	7
5. REGISTRATION AND IDENTIFICATION .....	9
6. NUISANCE.....	14
7. DOG ATTACKS .....	18
8. DANGEROUS, MENACING AND RESTRICTED BREED DOGS.....	22
9. OVERPOPULATION AND HIGH EUTHANASIA.....	26
10. DOMESTIC ANIMAL BUSINESSES .....	30
11. OTHER MATTERS .....	33
12. ANNUAL REVIEW OF PLAN AND ANNUAL REPORTING .....	35
13. APPENDICES.....	36

## 1. 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 requirement to balance the requirements of animal owners, the broader community and the animals that are such a significant part of many people's lives. 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.

The 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 the Hepburn Shire Council with a management plan for all dogs, cats and domestic animal businesses within the municipality. The DAMP describes how the Hepburn Shire will meet its responsibilities under the Act, and builds on the work undertaken through the Shire's previous plans.

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 new 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 (4) year period.

## 2. Legal Framework

In accordance with Section 68A of the Domestic Animals Act 1994, every Council must prepare a domestic animal management plan, as follows:

### **68A Councils to prepare domestic animal management plans**

- (1) Every Council must, in consultation with the Secretary (*of the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources*), prepare at 4 year intervals a domestic animal management plan.
- (2) A domestic animal management plan prepared by a Council must—
  - (a) set out a method for evaluating whether the animal control services provided by the Council in its municipal district are adequate to give effect to the requirements of this Act and the regulations; and
  - (b) outline programs for the training of authorised officers to ensure that they can properly administer and enforce the requirements of this Act in the Council's municipal district; and
  - (c) outline programs, services and strategies which the Council intends to pursue in its municipal district—
    - (i) to promote and encourage the responsible ownership of dogs and cats; and
    - (ii) to ensure that people comply with this Act, the regulations and any related legislation; and
    - (iii) to minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals; and
    - (iv) to address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats; and
    - (v) to encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats; and
    - (vi) to minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance; and
    - (vii) to 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
  - (d) 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
  - (e) provide for the review of any other matters related to the management of dogs and cats in the Council's municipal district that it thinks necessary; and
  - (f) provide for the periodic evaluation of any program, service, strategy or review outlined under the plan.
- (3) Every Council must—
  - (a) review its domestic animal management plan annually and, if appropriate, amend the plan; and
  - (b) provide the Secretary with a copy of the plan and any amendments to the plan; and
  - (c) publish an evaluation of its implementation of the plan in its annual report.

## 3. Introduction

### **Purpose**

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 2017-2021.

Council plays an important role in supporting and promoting responsible pet ownership. The Community Safety Team has many varied roles within Council, including Animal Management and Local Law enforcement. Education is a particularly important component of the role and a major factor in increasing compliance with the legislation.

The DAMP ensures that Council will meet its obligations under the Domestic Animals Act 1994 whilst continuing to use a mix of educational and regulatory approaches to promote the notion of responsible pet ownership. It aims to integrate best practice in domestic animal management with Council's priorities for actions to be undertaken through to 2021.

### **Hepburn Shire Snapshot**

Hepburn Shire was created in January 1995 by the amalgamation of the former Shires of Creswick, Daylesford and Glenlyon, the Clunes portion of the Shire of Talbot and Clunes and the Trentham portion of the Shire of Kyneton.

Hepburn Shire is located in the Central Highlands region of Victoria, about 110 kilometres north-west of Melbourne. It is bounded by Central Goldfields and Mount Alexander Shires in the north, Macedon Ranges Shire in the east, Moorabool Shire in the south, and the City of Ballarat and Pyrenees Shire in the west.

Hepburn Shire is a predominantly rural area, with many townships, villages and rural-residential areas. The main townships are Daylesford, Hepburn Springs, Creswick, Clunes and Trentham. The shire encompasses a total land area of about 1,470 square kilometres. Rural land is used largely for agriculture (particularly sheep and cattle grazing and potato and crop growing) and forestry, with some viticulture. Tourism is an important industry, with the shire containing 80% of Australia's mineral spring reserves.

Hepburn is named after Captain John Hepburn, an overlander and pastoralist who founded the rural town of Smeaton and also established the Smeaton Hill Run on 15 April 1838.

The original inhabitants of the Hepburn area were the Jaara (DjaDja Wurrung) Aboriginal people. European settlement dates from the late-1830s, with land used mainly for grazing and crop growing. Gold was first discovered in the area in 1851, prompting the establishment of many townships. Rapid growth took place through to the late-1800s, when gold supplies waned and many mines were closed, leading to population loss. Land was then used mainly for timber milling and grazing. The townships of Daylesford and Hepburn/ Hepburn Springs benefited from tourism during the late-1800s and early-1900s, due to the attraction of the mineral springs and the areas becoming spa resorts.

Gradual growth took place during the 1970s and 1980s, due largely to resurgence in tourism and people seeking alternative lifestyles. The Shire's population increased marginally during the 1990s, rising from about

13,300 in 1991 to about 13,800 in 2001. The population, according to figures in the 2011 Census data, is 14,367– this is slightly lower than the forecast of 15,020 (made in 2006).

Major features of the shire include Wombat State Forest, Hepburn Mineral Springs Reserve, Central Springs Reserve, Hepburn Bathhouse & Spa, Wombat Hill Botanical Gardens, Mount Beckworth picnic area, Creswick Regional Park, Hepburn Regional Park, Lake Daylesford, Daylesford Spa Country Railway, Dunach Nature Conservation Reserve, Fryers Ridge Nature Conservation Reserve, the University of Melbourne - Melbourne School of Land and Environment (Creswick campus) and numerous wineries. The Shire is served by the Midland Highway and the Ballarat/Maryborough railway line.

### **2011 Census Information – at a glance**

Total population – 14,367

Male – 6,951

Female – 7,416

Median age – 46

Families – 3,870

Average children per family – 1.8

Private dwellings – 8,051

Average people per dwelling – 2.3

Median weekly household income - \$850

Median monthly mortgage repayments - \$1,226

Median weekly rent - \$185

Average motor vehicles per dwelling – 1.9

### **Council Plan**

Council in consultation with the community, recently developed and adopted the 2017-2021 Council Plan. The Council Plan outlines five strategic objectives 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:

- Quality community infrastructure
- Active and Engaged communities
- Sustainable environment
- Vibrant Economy
- High Performing Organisation

The DAMP aligns with the broader strategic directions of Council. In particular it seeks to provide for active and engaged Communities and assist Council in being a high performing organisation.

## 4. Training of Authorised Officers

Section 68(A)(2)(b) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 requires Council to outline programs for the training of authorised officers to ensure that they can properly administer and enforce the requirements of this Act in the Council's municipal district.

Animal Management sits under the responsibility of the Community Safety Team which forms part of the Infrastructure Department. The team currently consists of a full time Coordinator and two Local Laws officers, one being full time and other 0.8EFT. Each officer undertakes animal management work as a portion of their overall workload.

The Hepburn Shire is committed to ensuring all staff involved in Animal Management are equipped for the demands of their role and are competent in their job.

Staff continue to receive training in customer service, health and safety, workplace behaviours and the delivery of community education information and will be encouraged to attend industry related information sessions and seminars for networking opportunities and to keep up with latest trends and innovations.

Annual performance reviews are completed and include a review of the staff member's skills and training undertaken in the previous year.

Authorised Officers are required to have sound understanding and knowledge of a range of legislation including Council's General Local Law No.2 and apply this knowledge to various situations. Apart from being able to administer and enforce these regulations, officers need to be able to communicate with all members of the community, diffuse difficult situations, safely handle animals and perform numerous other tasks. A variety of training is offered and provided to all officers to ensure they are equipped to respond to the demands of their roles.

The Hepburn Shire's current Authorised officer 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.

## OUR PLANS FOR TRAINING

**Objective 1:** Ensure all Animal Management staff have the knowledge and skills necessary to carry out their work.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Identify minimum training requirements by consultation with management and staff	2018 and Annually	Training schedule developed, approved and incorporated into officer's induction/annual training plans.
Identify additional training opportunities by consultation with management and staff, e.g. prosecutions training, conflict management, communication / education technique, networking opportunities and conferences, emergency response, handling animals in an emergency	Ongoing	Training activities incorporated into officer's annual training plans and completed
Ensure all new Authorised Officers have completed the minimum training requirements within 12 months of appointment on top of the induction program	12 months from commencement of new employment	Completion of induction reviews and annual reviews
Conduct annual performance reviews	Annually	Annual performance review conducted
Officer's attendance at industry related training eg. prosecutions training, conflict management, handling pets in emergencies, conferences etc.	Ongoing	Training completed
Liaise with neighbouring councils to identify opportunities to access training sessions facilitated by larger councils	Ongoing	Training opportunities identified and incorporated into annual training plans



## 5. Registration and Identification

Section 68(A)(2)(c)(v) of the *Domestic Animals Act* requires Council to outline programs, services and strategies to encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats.

### CURRENT SITUATION

Registration and identification of domestic animals is seen as the foundation of responsible pet ownership.

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.

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

Data for the number of dog and cat registrations for the last three years can be found in the table below:

Animal Registration	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Cat	796	807	866
Dog	2358	2430	2441

### 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.
- Annual registration renewal and reminder notices including the setting of fees.
- Legislative requirement under the Act for registration of dogs and cats at age of three months.

### CURRENT ACTIVITIES

- Mailing out of animal registration renewals each year to currently registered animals
- Use of social media to promote responsible pet ownership and animal registration requirements
- Responsible pet ownership pamphlets posted to dog owners with notice to complies, infringements and other correspondence
- Half price registrations for new applications from 10 October each year until April 9.
- Information about registering animals, including a downloadable registration form available on Council's website
- Providing a range of easy registration payment methods – BPay, PostBillPay, Credit Card, etc
- 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 complaints
- 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 priorities for Council to focus on. Council aims to increase the number of animals registered across the shire and will be considering incentives to 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.	2018	Council's registration database cross referenced Number of 'Notices to Comply' issued
Identify unpaid registrations. Follow up of animal non-renewal registration from previous year's record	May annually	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 complaint	Ongoing	Number of Notices to Comply issued
Advertise pet registration renewals – webpage, Council on-hold message, entry points of Council	February/March Annually	Annual registration renewals advertised
Exploration of alternative methods of payment of renewal notices	2019	Alternative methods identified
Ensure that animal complaints are checked for registration compliance as part of the process of dealing with the complaint. Issue of notices to comply for unregistered animals and appropriate follow up to ensure compliance	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	2018	Investigation completed
Provide registration forms and pet ownership fact sheets on Council's website	2018 and annually	Website updated with current forms and fact sheets
Issue 'register your pet' notices when unregistered pets are detected.	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

**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	2018 Ongoing	Website updated Number of social media posts Number of media releases
Investigate and recommend next steps for the introduction of discount fees as an incentive to register animals and improve responsible pet ownership	2018	Investigation completed
Use social media as a tool to promote responsible pet ownership	Ongoing	Number social media posts
Investigation opportunities to work with local Veterinary surgeons on promoting Responsible Pet Ownership	2020	Investigation complete

**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	2018	Investigation completed
Identify unpaid registrations. Follow up animal non-renewal to ensure compliance	May 2018	Number of Notices to Comply issued
Exploration of alternative methods of payment for animal registrations	2019	Alternative methods identified
Review and benchmark animal registration fees with other local governments and consider the introduction of discount fees as an incentive to register	Annually	Council's registration fees reviewed
Liaise with and review other local government processes to identify opportunities for improvement	Annually	Review complete

**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 its general enforcement	2019 and Annually	Policies and Procedures developed Annual review undertaken
Identify unpaid registrations. Follow up animal non-renewal to ensure compliance	Annually	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 complaint	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. Issue of notices to comply for unregistered animals and appropriate follow up in non-compliance continues	Ongoing	Number of Notices to Comply issued

## 6. Nuisance

Section 68A(2)(c)(vi) of the Domestic Animals Act requires Council to outline 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 causing serious problems with nuisance behaviours such as spraying, fighting, home invasion and spreading diseases. This nuisance can cause responsible pet owners unforeseen financial stress.

Farmers have historically used cats as a means to control rabbits, rats and mice. If left uncontrolled and unsexed, these cats can contribute to the problem faced by many in the community.

#### *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.

Uncontrolled dogs also cause nuisances in the community. Ultimately it is the owner's responsibility to ensure this nuisance is abated but Council does aim to return as many dogs as possible home without these animals becoming impounded. Council uses the City of Ballarat Animal Shelter (formally RSPCA) as its dog and cat pound and shelter.

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

The below table shows the nuisance reports received by the Hepburn Shire in the past two years:

Nuisance Report	2015/16	2016/17
Barking Dogs	65	35
Straying Cats	61	67
Straying Dogs	187	206

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

- Section 26 Order requiring dogs and/or cats to be restrained in specified public places
- Planning Permit Conditions - 141 Mulcahys Road, Trentham - conditions 28 - Cat Restrictions requiring the keeping of cats to be permitted only if they are confined to the dwelling or appropriate enclosure suitable to contain cats
- 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.
- Clause 6.2 does 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
- 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
- Barking dog noise log record sheets provided to complainants
- 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

## Summary

The most common nuisance complaints received by Council are in relation to barking dogs, uncontained dogs and stray/feral cats.

The majority of time spent by officers relates to dealing with customer complaints contained in this section. Through education, animal owners, including farmers can be made aware of the benefits of de-sexing their cats, confining domestic cats to their property, report wildcats and be involved in trapping programs to reduce wildcat numbers.

It is important that an emphasis is placed on semi-owned/feral cats. Managing cat nuisance problems can often take up a considerable amount of officer time and resources due to the travel associated with these type of complaints.

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 Pet Ownership

Activity	When	Evaluation
Use social media as a tool to promote responsible pet ownership	Ongoing	Number of social media posts
Audit signage and placement of dog faeces bag dispensers in municipality. Increase numbers in areas that require them	2020	Audit undertaken Number of signs installed or replaced
Hand out "Well done and thank you" cards to those complying with requirements - e.g. walking dog on lead, under effective control	2019 and Ongoing	Number of cards handed out
Investigate opportunities to work with local Veterinaries on promoting Responsible Pet Ownership and managing nuisance animals	2020	Investigation complete
Investigate and recommend improvement opportunities for alternative options for the community to report nuisance dogs to allow for increased reports	2019	Investigation complete

### Objective 2: Support the community to curb nuisance cat problems

Activity	When	Evaluation
Investigate and recommend next steps for the introduction of a cat curfew/containment and mandatory de-sexing of cats	November 2019	Investigation completed
Develop and provide education material about cat enclosures and nuisance issued to cat owners in registration information packs	2020 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
Review the new cat de-sexing subsidy	2018	Program reviewed
Assist residents with dealing with cat nuisance problems by purchasing additional cat cages and provide them to local residents for trapping nuisance cats	Annually	Number of cat traps hired Number of cat traps available for hire
Investigate opportunities to work with local Veterinaries, animal shelters, animal welfare groups, ParksVic and other relevant entities to curb nuisance cat problems	2018	Investigation complete



**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 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	2020	Number of Notices to Comply issued Number of new permits issued
Investigate the opportunity to waive fines as part of Council's internal review of infringement process, if the owner attends relevant training to address specific nuisance issues ownership course	2019	Investigation completed
Assist residents with dealing with cat trespass /nuisance problems by purchasing additional cat cages and provide them to local residents for trapping nuisance cats	Annually	Number of cat traps hired
Increase patrols to minimise dogs at large in known hot spots and on leash areas, e.g. Lake Daylesford, Calemben Park	Annually	Number of patrols undertaken
Review of current barking dog kit and procedures	2021	Review completed
Investigate areas for improvement with Council's After Hours Animal Emergency service in consultation with local Veterinaries and Police, including promotion of the service provided and recommend any identified improvements	2020	Investigation complete
Liaise with and review other local government processes to identify opportunities for improvement	2018	Review complete

**Objective 4:** Review of current local laws and orders 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 No. 2 Reviewed
Review the existing Section 26 Order in relation to on and off leash areas in the Shire	November 2019	Section 26 Orders reviewed

## 7. Dog Attacks

Section 68A(2)(c)(iii) of the Domestic Animals Act requires Council to outline programs, services and strategies to minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals

### CURRENT SITUATION

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

In responding to dog attack reports, officers find that the alleged attacking dog had attacked previously, however was not reported to Council. Had the initial attack(s) been 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 dog attack reports received by Council over the last 3 years.

Dog Attack Reports	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Hepburn Shire	16	40	39

### 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 Responses Procedures

### CURRENT ACTIVITIES

- Respond to notification of dog attack (immediate - including 24 hour emergency service)
- 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 at large.
- Promoting early socialisation of dogs with other animals and humans
- Impounding dogs that are not confined to the premises
- Investigation of reported attacks, and follow up on compliance

- Ensuring suspected attacking dog/s are effectively secured or seized pending investigation/prosecution outcome;
- Issuing warnings/infringements for wandering or unsecured dogs
- Declaring dogs as menacing, dangerous or restricted as required.

### Summary

Dog attacks are taken seriously by Council and reducing the risk will remain a high priority with the Hepburn Shire. 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 attack.

## OUR PLANS FOR DOG ATTACKS

**Objective 1:** To educate the community about dog attacks in order to increase awareness and reporting

Activity	When	Evaluation
Develop information packs to be made available to those involved in a dog attack incident, e.g. dog owner, victims (including victim dog owner)	2020	Information packs developed
Improve public awareness of what a dog attack is and how to report using social media, media releases, website updates, direct mail etc	Ongoing	Number of social media posts Number of media releases Number of mail outs Website content reviewed and updated
Publicise key dog attack prevention messages (e.g. confinement of dogs to property, leash laws etc.) through social media, print articles, mail outs.	Ongoing	Number of social media posts Number of media releases Number of mail outs
Make available responsible pet ownership pamphlets from the Bureau of Animal Welfare online and at each customer service site	2018 and Ongoing	Responsible Pet Ownership information available on website and at each customer service site/library
Investigate opportunities to work with local Veterinaries on promoting Responsible Pet Ownership and reporting dog attacks	2020	Investigation complete
Improve public awareness of dog attack investigations and the associated penalties, and the powers available within the Act for both Council and the community	2018	Number of social media posts Website content reviewed and updated Number of mail outs Number of media releases
Investigate and recommend any identified alternatives for the community to report dog attacks to allow for an increase in reports, e.g. Dob in a Dog Line	2019	Investigation complete

**Objective 2:** Review of current local laws and orders 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
Review the existing Section 26 Order in relation to on and off leash areas in the Shire	November 2019	Section 26 Order Reviewed

**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 dog attacks and its general enforcement	2018 and Annually	Policies and procedures developed Policies and procedures reviewed annually
Liaise with and review other local government processes to identify opportunities for improvement	2020	Review complete
Investigate areas of improvement with Council's After Hours Animal Emergency service in consultation with local Veterinaries and the Police, including promotion of the service provided	2020	Investigation complete

## 8. Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs

Section 68A(2)(c)(vii) of the Domestic Animals Act requires Council to outline programs, services and strategies to 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

### CURRENT SITUATION

There is only one declared dangerous dog currently registered in the Hepburn Shire.

No declared menacing or restricted breed dogs are registered with or known to be living in the Hepburn Shire.

Council	Menacing	Dangerous	Restricted
Hepburn Shire	0	1	0

Each council has its own procedures in the management of declared dogs and each community will also have a differing view on the reporting of animal issues, therefore statistics in each local government area will always be different.

### 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 "declared" dogs' enclosures, Restricted Breed and Menacing dogs' properties for compliance and correct signage where kept annually and on random occasions.
- Registration and identification of menacing and restricted breed dogs including renewal
- 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, throughout the life of the Plan.

## 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 for potential restricted breed dogs	2018	Council's registration database cross referenced
Animal Management 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  2021	Number of social media posts Number of media releases Website advertising information on declared dogs

**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
Ensure all declared dogs are accurately registered on the Victorian Dangerous Dog Registry.	Ongoing	All declared dogs registered
Investigate complaints about Menacing, Dangerous Dogs or Restricted Breed Dogs.	Ongoing	Investigations completed
Undertake random property inspections of declared dogs to ensure compliance	Annually	Inspections undertaken



**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 declared dogs and its general enforcement	2021	Policies and procedures developed
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	2019	Review complete

## 9. Overpopulation and High Euthanasia

Section 68A(2)(c)(iv) of the Domestic Animals Act requires Council to outline programs, services and strategies to address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats

### CURRENT SITUATION

Council's pound and euthanasia procedures are guided by the Domestic Animals Act 1994. Council aims to wherever possible return any lost or seized at large animal to its owner. Council will continue to offer this free service to return animals to their owners whenever possible. 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.

Overpopulation of cats and unowned community cats continue to be an issue in the shire and are 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.

Cat trapping in various areas throughout the Shire has resulted in many feral, unowned or unidentified cats/kittens being captured. Unfortunately many of these cats/kittens are suffering from contagious diseases such as influenza (cat flu), immunodeficiency virus (AIDS) and leukaemia (FeLV).

Statistics for animals impounded in Hepburn and euthanased over the last three years are shown in the table below.

<i>Impounded Animals</i>		2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Dogs	Impounded	55	45	58
	Surrendered	24	25	25
	Returned to Owner	31	23	33
	Rehomed	44	39	34
	Euthanased	10	7	25
	Registered on Release to Owner	Unknown	5	9

<i>Impounded Animals</i>		2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Cats	Impounded	111	138	139
	Surrendered	34	18	17
	Returned to Owner	2	3	1
	Rehomed	58	75	49
	Euthanased	82	100	85
	Registered on Release to Owner	Unknown	2	1

The euthanasia rates for cats are higher due to it not being possible to rehouse many of the feral and diseased cats which have been humanely trapped.

### 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 the City of Ballarat Pound (formally RSPCA Shelter) in Gillies Street, Wendouree. 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 the 8 day time period becomes the property of RSPCA and may be sold or destroyed.

Only dogs and cats that pass the temperament tests and Veterinarian check are rehoused.

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.

The RSPCA takes responsibility for the care, maintenance and all costs and profits from sales associated with dogs and cats taken to the shelter by Council staff or members of the public.

### CURRENT ACTIVITIES

- Cat desexing subsidy to reduce the number of unwanted cats (newly introduced)
- Provision of cat traps delivered and collected by authorised officers.
- Animals listed on the RSPCA adoption page

- Investigate all reports of animal hoarding
- 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 de-sexed 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. Impound rates for cats has been on the increase. As many of them have been feral cats carrying diseases, many have been euthanased.

Council also sees opportunity in promoting animal desexing to reduce overpopulation and euthanasia in 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 continue encouraging de-sexing of animals

Activity	When	Evaluation
Investigate the introduction of discount fees as an incentive to de-sex animals and improve responsible pet ownership	2018	Investigation complete
Review the new de-sexing subsidy for cats	2018	Review complete
Promote the benefits of de-sexing, via media, social media, website	Ongoing	Number of social media posts Number of media articles
Liaise with and review other local government processes to identify opportunities for improvement	2018	Review complete

**Objective 2:** 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
Investigate the introduction of a cat curfew/containment and mandatory de-sexing of cats	November 2019	Investigation completed

**Objective 3:** Raise awareness about semi-owned/feral cat population

Activity	When	Evaluation
Implement "Who's for cats?" education campaign in local area. Utilise the resources available from Bureau of Animal Welfare	2020 and Ongoing	Campaign implemented
Continue to offer cat trapping program to residents	Ongoing	Number of cat traps hired
Investigate opportunities to work with animal shelters, Parks Victoria, Veterinarians and other relevant entities on cat trapping programs	2021	Investigation complete
Liaise with and review other Local Government processes to identify opportunities for improvement	2018	Review complete

## 10. Domestic Animal Businesses

Section 68A(2)(c)(ii) of the *Domestic Animals Act* requires Council to outline programs, services and strategies which the Council intends to pursue in its municipal district to ensure that people comply with this Act, the regulations and any related legislation

### CURRENT SITUATION

Three boarding establishment Domestic Animal Businesses (DABs) are currently registered within the Hepburn Shire. These businesses are audited annually and have achieved compliance on each inspection over the past 4 years. 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

### CURRENT ACTIVITIES

- Providing information to registered DABs to ensure compliance
- Annual registration of DABs
- Auditing of DABs
- Investigating suspected or reported unregistered DABs
- Issuing Notice to Comply/Infringement notices as required
- Liaison with planning department over suspected DABs

### 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:** Educate the community about domestic animal businesses

Activity	When	Evaluation
Provide a list of all registered and compliant domestic animal businesses on Council's website	2018 and annually	List of DABs on website List reviewed annually
Improve public awareness about what a Domestic Animal Business is (social media, website)	Ongoing	Number of social media posts

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

Activity	When	Evaluation
Investigate all businesses that should be registered as Domestic Animal Businesses using yellow pages (or similar, including online sites) and ensure compliance	2020	Investigation completed
Undertake audit's of all registered Domestic Animal Businesses	Annually	Audit completed
All registered businesses are compliant with current legislation and relevant code of practice	Annually	Compliance achieved
Work closely with planning department of Council to ensure all new planning permit applications for animal related businesses are flagged with Community Safety Team for registration where required	Ongoing	Number of businesses identified and registered
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 and its general enforcement	2021	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



## 11. Other Matters

Section 68A(2)(e) of the *Domestic Animals Act* requires Council to provide for the review of any other matters related to the management of dogs and cats in the Council's municipal district that it thinks necessary

### EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

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.

The Hepburn Shire Council has developed an Emergency Animal Management Plan (EAMP) which covers issues regarding domestic animal management in an emergency. This plan was created in 2015 (reviewed 2017) and is a sub-plan of Council's 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 website links to assist pet owners in the event of an emergency.	2018	Links made available
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
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	Animal Management Officers maintain membership on MEMPC
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 web links to Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 (POCTA Act) information, codes (dog and cat private keeping, etc), brochures, etc, via Council's website	2018	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

## 12. Annual Review of Plan and Annual Reporting

As per Section 68A(3) of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, Council will review its *Domestic Animal Management Plan* annually to assess whether any amendments are necessary in order to ensure the plan is relevant and can be completed within the required time frame. Any changes to the plan will be forwarded to the DEDJTR.

Council will evaluate and publish the evaluation of its *Domestic Animal Management Plan* as part of its *Annual Report*.

In the final year of the plan, Council will undertake a major review and prepare drafting the next *Domestic Animal Management Plan* for the 2021-2025 period.

## 13. Appendices

Below are tables of comparable statistics for similar size municipalities that are currently available. Council will continue to build this comparison as additional information becomes available.

### REGISTRATION AND IDENTIFICATION

The following table shows the animals registered in local governments of similar size in 2015/16:

Local Government	Cat	Dog
Hepburn Shire Council	807	2430
Alpine Shire Council	551*	2143*
Moyne Shire Council	728	2673
Gannawarra Shire Council	409	2246
Glenelg Shire Council	1328	4054
Strathbogie Shire Council	389	1889
Northern Grampians Shire Council	535	1851
Mount Alexander Shire Council	1571	4298

\*2016/17 Registration Statistics

### NUISANCE

The following table shows the number of reports other similar local governments received for nuisance complaints during 2015/16:

Nuisance	Straying Dogs	Straying Cats
Hepburn Shire Council	187	61
Gannawarra Shire Council	283	93
Strathbogie Shire Council	139	Unknown
Northern Grampians Shire Council	240*	
Mount Alexander Shire Council	53	23

\*Statistics have been combined in current DAMP

## DOG ATTACKS

The below table displays the dog attack reports received by Council over the last 3 years with comparisons of other Local Government of similar size.

Dog Attack Reports	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Hepburn Shire Council	16	40	39
Moyne Shire Council	Unknown	Unknown	22
Gannawarra Shire Council	23	26	Unknown
Strathbogie Shire Council	24	16	18
Northern Grampians Shire Council	Unknown	22	13
Mount Alexander Shire Council	57	34	26

These statistics however only reflect those dog attacks reported to Council. It is known that not all dog attacks that have occurred are reported.

## DANGEROUS, MENACING AND RESTRICTED BREED DOGS

In comparison the following table shows declared dogs within other local governments of similar size.

Council	Menacing	Dangerous	Restricted
Hepburn Shire Council	1	1	0
Alpine Shire Council	9	3	0
Moyne Shire Council	0	3	0
Gannawarra Shire Council	0	0	0
Strathbogie Shire Council	3	0	0
Northern Grampians Shire Council	5	0	0
Mount Alexander Shire Council	2	1	0

## OVERPOPULATION AND HIGH EUTHANASIA

The table below provides a snapshot of the cats impounded by other local governments in 2015/16. As cats are a current priority for the Hepburn Shire, it is worthy to note a comparison of impounded cats. Larger Councils have been included to compare the issues the Hepburn Shire has in comparison.

Council	Number of cats impounded
Hepburn Shire Council	138
Alpine Shire Council	90
Moyne Shire Council	140
Macedon Ranges Shire Council	242
Gannawarra Shire Council	35
Wyndham City Council	1585
Glenelg Shire Council	496
City of Greater Bendigo	1131
City of Ballarat	1174
Northern Grampians Shire Council	195