

ARARAT RURAL CITY COUNCIL

# DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

(DAMP) 2021 – 2025



Ararat Rural City

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## INTRODUCTION

### 1. PURPOSE OF THIS DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Ararat Rural City Council has prepared a Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) to guide decision making in relation to the need of domestic pets, and their owners, and addresses the concerns of the public in a fair and even manner.

The aim of this plan is to facilitate the co-existence of pets, pet owners and the general population whilst addressing the welfare and legislative issues relating to animal management in the city boundaries. This plan also aims to promote responsible pet ownership and enhance the experience of animal ownership within the community, by doing so, making the Ararat Rural City Municipality an even better place to live.

While the directive to create a plan is in line with the Domestic Animal Act 2020 (DAA) which requires all Victorian councils to have a four-year plan in place for the management of dogs and cats within their area, the city has used a consultative process to consider options and concerns from all relevant groups and individuals.

It is now well recognised by the community and governments alike that there is more to animal management than merely collecting stray dogs and addressing compliance issues. Local government plays a key role in protecting and promoting responsible animal ownership in the community, essential to maintaining sustainable communities and a healthy environment.

This plan is designed to balance the needs of the community and at the same time manage the requirements of the Act. This is an evolving practice as the community grows and changes and environment concerns play a more important role within our city.

A key aspect of this plan is to manage domestic animal issues in a professional and efficient manner, provide education to the community on the responsibilities of pet ownership, where possible, and at the same time address and minimise the problems generated by irresponsible pet owners.

### 2. DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

Section 68A of the DAA requires a Domestic Animal Management Plan to:

1. Set out a method for evaluating whether the animal control services provided by the Council are adequate and comply with the requirements of the DAA.
2. Outline programs for the training of authorised officers to ensure that they can properly administer and enforce the requirements of the DAA.
3. Outline programs, services and strategies which the Council intends to pursue to promote and encourage the responsible ownership of dogs and cats
4. Minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals.
5. Address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats.
6. Encourage the registration and identification for dogs and cats.
7. Minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance.
8. 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 the DAA.

Every Council must:

1. Review its domestic animal management plan annually and, if appropriate, amend the plan;
2. Provide the Secretary with a copy of the plan and any amendments to the plan; and
3. Publish an evaluation of its implementation of the plan in its annual report.

### 3. DEMOGRAPHIC AND COUNCIL PROFILE

Ararat is a central western municipality located approximately 200 kilometres from the city of Melbourne, Victoria's capital, making it easily accessible by road or rail in about two hours. Ararat

Rural City Council (ARCC) comprises 4230 square kilometres covering 16 localities, in whole and has a population of approximately 11,300 with 7,000 people living in the Ararat urban area.

ARCC is predominately a rural area but has substantial residential areas in and around the city of Ararat.

The municipality includes the towns and rural districts of Pomonal, Elmhurst, Mt Cole, Warrak, Buangor, Ararat, Moyston, Maroona, Rossbridge, Tatyoon, Willaura, Mininera, Wickliffe, Westmere, Streatham and Lake Bolac.

Small townships are located at Buangor, Elmhurst, Willaura, Pomonal, Moyston and Lake Bolac. Most city's retail space is in shopping strips in central Ararat.

There is some industrial land use to the south-east and east of the city. Most of the rural area is used for agricultural purposes, including wool and meat production, wine and cropping.

#### 4. ARARAT OFF-LEASH DOG PARK.

The new off leash dog park is located between Vincent and Queen Street, next to the recently completed Ararat Skate Park and recreational space. The dog park furthers the intention of the active link precinct, which seeks to create a corridor promoting activity and social interaction in the centre of town.

The off-leash dog park has been designed with reference to guidelines on dog parks to promote safety and interest within the park. The park promotes safe play and bonding for dog owners and allows for healthy social interaction between owners and their dogs, encouraging off leash training. It also provides a safe location for residents and visitors to exercise their dogs off leash as well as the playground area to promote trick training and play. A popular stop area, this would also facilitate tourists on extended car trips a place to safely walk the dog.

The new Ararat Off Leash Dog Park was fully funded by the State Government as part of the Off-Leash Dog Parks – Economic Stimulus Program and forms part of the Governments Building Works package.





## 5. DOMESTIC ANIMAL STATISTICS AND DATA

Ararat Rural City Council is proud of the low euthanasia rates of impounded dogs. This can be attributed to the proactive approach towards rehoming and adoption. Council has built relationships with rescue organisations via formal Section 84Y agreements in an attempt to continue the low euthanasia rates. Council also offers Ararat based registered Community Foster Care Networks (CFCN) that have entered into a Section 84Y agreement a \$15.00 registration fee for animals removed from the pound. This allows these organisations to be legislatively compliant, whilst recognising the assistance these organisations need to remain viable. Once the animal is rehomed, the registration is transferred to their new owners and normal fees apply at renewal.

These proactive strategies have resulted in Council achieving the performance target of less than 7% of dogs (2.8% for 2020/2021) that enter the pound being euthanised. No dogs were euthanised due to an inability to be rehoused. The dogs that were euthanised were surrendered by their owners voluntarily following a dog attack, on humans or animals; or veterinary advice indicated, that due to health issues their quality of life was compromised.

The increased number of cats being euthanised is due to the continued removal, over a number of years of feral cats. The only cats that have been euthanised have been feral cats, or cats that were diseased. All domesticated cats are reunited with their owners, rehoused with rescue groups or adopted by the public from the pound.

Council offers subsidised dog and cat adoptions direct from the pound to the public. A member of the public can receive a fully vet worked dog or cat from the pound for \$100 per dog, and \$50 per cat. These heavily subsidised costs show the Council's commitment to animal welfare. This gives the community confidence that their animals will be rehoused if suitable. Rescue organisations are also publicly supporting Council's adoption processes of impounded animals via their Facebook pages.

Category	Number	Adoption Income	Total vet costs 2020/2021	Net Cost to Council for subsidised adoptions
Dogs directly adopted from Council	6	\$600.00	\$2,306.90	\$1,706.90
Cats directly adopted from Council	18	\$900.00	\$5,293.18	\$4,393.18

Other adopted from Council		\$100.00	N/A	N/A
Total cost to Council for subsidy 2020/21				<b>\$6,100.08</b>

2020 - 2021 Council subsidised adoption costs

During this time the Community has faced the impacts of COVID-19, and this has created an interest in more adoption and an increase in applications. Council have been able to successfully adopt out many of its animals looking to be rehomed.

Adoption is only available when there are the animals looking for new homes. Council is lucky enough to reunite the majority of the animals impounded with their owners. Of the ones that have been surrendered or not collected due to no identification, eg. microchip, these have been rehoused in new homes through our adoption program.

Since 2019, there has been over a million additional dogs being brought into Australian households. Council has been able to utilise the social media platform to either find animal owners or seek interest in adoption of the animals looking for their new homes. Council relies on its social media sites eg. Facebook, Instagram and utilises the local papers for Community information relating to animals.

#### 6. ANIMAL MANAGEMENT STAFFING AND OPERATIONAL STRUCTURE



#### 7. COMPLIANCE DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

ARCC's Community Safety Team consists of three full time Officers. A 24-hour animal emergency response service is provided with assistance of other Council officers on a rotational roster basis, all of whom are supervised by the Manager Planning, Community & Compliance.

This service has continued at full capacity during COVID-19. Officers have either worked from site or off site from home providing the same Community Service and service standards as normal.

## 8 SERVICES PROVIDED TO THE COMMUNITY RELATING TO ANIMAL MANAGEMENT

The Community Safety team is responsible for the animal management function that Council provides.

Such functions include:

- Impounding of domestic animals and livestock
- Managing of complaints relating to domestic animals and livestock
- Promoting responsible pet ownership in the community
- Investigating dog attacks
- Ensuring compliance with legislation and the various codes of practice relevant to domestic animals and livestock
- Domestic animal registration process
- Investigating animal welfare issues
- Management of domestic animal businesses
- Providing advice to owners and the general community in relation to domestic animals
- Afterhours animal emergency response
- Prosecute breaches of the Domestic Animals Act 1994, Impounding of Livestock Act 1994 and Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986.

## 9 ARARAT RURAL CITY COUNCIL'S LOCAL LAWS RELATING TO ANIMAL MANAGEMENT

In 2022, Council conducted a full review of the Local Laws, now known as the Neighbourhood Amenity Local Laws 2022. The Local Laws regulate pet ownership as follows:

### *Neighbourhood amenity Local Law 2022 Section 22 – Keeping Animals*

This Local Law restricts both the number and type of animals that a resident can keep on a Residential Property or on Rural Land.

### *Neighbourhood Amenity Local Law 2022 section 23 – Animal Accommodation*

An owner or occupier of land must ensure that all animals on that land are housed:

- In a clean, inoffensive and sanitary condition;
- So as not to cause nuisance; and
- In an adequate and appropriate manner for the type of animal being house.

### *Neighbourhood Amenity Local Laws 2022 Section 24 – Animal Excrement and Conduct*

A person in charge of a dog must not allow any part of the animal's excrement to remain on any road, nature strip, reserve or public or Council land in any built-up area.

A person in charge of a dog that litters a public place within a built-up area must immediately collect and dispose of the droppings in such a manner as not to cause a nuisance to any other person.

The Local law was revised in April 2022 and the DAMP 2022-2026 needs to reflect these changes.

## 10 TRAINING OF AUTHORISED OFFICERS

### 10.1 CURRENT AND PLANNED TRAINING

A variety of training is offered and provided for all authorised Officers, training options are annually reviewed to ensure relevant and up to date material is provided. The training options include enrolment in a Certificate IV in Government (Statutory Compliances) and Certificate IV in Animal Control, animal handling courses, investigation and statement taking courses, prosecutions courses, information technology courses and industry related seminars, conferences and briefings from the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR), Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), Australian Institute of Animal Management and other relevant associations.



## 10.2 OUR PLANS

### 10.2.1 Objective 1:

Develop and maintain a training register for individual officers detailing completed and proposed training to maintain skills and knowledge.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Maintain a database to record each officer's name, completed training, along with proposed additional training opportunities	Ongoing	Annually review, to ensure accuracy and to determine whether proposed training goals have been met for each Officer.
Two Community Safety Officers have successfully graduated in Government (Statutory Compliance) and Certificate IV in Animal Control and Regulations. A dangerous dog handling course and Bolt Gun training has also been completed.	2021/22	Both permanent Community Safety Officers successfully completed the course.
Staff attendance at industry related seminars and training, such as; Breed identification DEDJTR/BAW Seminars Dangerous dog handling Puppy Farm Bill	As offered	Seminars and training completed by Community Safety officer in 2020/21 online.

### 10.2.2 Objective 2:

Recruit and train additional authorised officers from within the Council depot, to provide Community Safety with an after-hours animal emergency call out pool. Appoint 5 casual Community Safety Officers for use as needed.

The appointment of two additional on call officers were secured for the 2020/2021 period. One Officer from the depot and one from the Municipal office.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Identify minimum level of experience and develop a training package required to build skill set.	Ongoing	Review and ensure all criteria are met prior to commencement of Officer out in the field. Training evaluations completed. Induction package created to reflect industry standards.
Mentoring program be developed to ensure accurate information and training is being provided whilst on the job.	Ongoing	Review feedback from both officers regularly to ensure effective development. Mentoring package created to reflect industry standards.
Allocate a variety of tasks for the Officer to have completed during the development period	Ongoing	Review each completion of task to ensure Officer is developing adequate skill sets required.

Officers to follow up complaints and provide feedback to improve skills and systems	Ongoing	Review on a regular basis at the Community Safety team meetings.
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## 11 REGISTRATION AND IDENTIFICATION

All dogs and cats over the age of 3 months must be registered with the Ararat Rural City Council as per Section 10 (1) of the Act; newly registered animals must also be microchipped before registration can be accepted.

New animal registrations for cats and dogs can be made in person at the Ararat Rural City Council Offices, corner of High Street and Vincent Street, Ararat between 8.00am – 5.15pm Monday to Friday. Or by mail with appropriate payment and copies of relevant proof required to: Ararat Rural City Council PO Box 246 Ararat Vic 3377.

Registration forms can be downloaded online from Councils website <http://www.ararat.vic.gov.au> or collected from ARCC Officers.

If an animal has been impounded by ARCC and is not registered with Council, the registration process must be completed at the Council Offices prior to release of the animal.

Animals that have been impounded and are not registered and micro-chipped must be micro-chipped prior to registration and release of the animal, when the appropriate fee has been paid.

Under Section 11 of the Act animal registration periods expire on 10 April each year. Animal renewal notices are sent out every year in late February or early March, allowing pet owners to renew their pet registration online via Bpay, by phone or in person at the Council Offices. Council audits listed owners every year to ensure animal registrations are renewed. Any outstanding registrations that are 12 months overdue are marked – inactive. If an animal listed as inactive is again located, the owner is liable for the offence of unregistered animal, (instead of failing to renew registration) and a new registration entry will be created.

When dogs and cats are outside of the owner's premises, Council identification tags must be worn as outlined in Section 20 of the Act. Animals found unsecured or at large from their property and are identifiable by means of an allocated Ararat Rural City Council identification tag have a higher chance of being reunited with their owners and therefore not impounded.

The registration data provides ARCC with an understanding of the level of pet ownership in the community and in turn this helps Council plan for services, information and programs associated with pets within the community.

Registration fees help fund the services provided by Council in relation to animal management and the DEDJTR (Domestic Animal Units) responsible pet ownership campaigns and programs provided within the Municipality of Ararat.

### 11.1 OBJECTIVE 1

Investigate the requirement to have new registrations online

Activity	When	Evaluation
Investigate the possibility of pet owners being able to register new dogs and cats online	2022	Software capabilities and payment options. 2020/21 – Rollout of new software may support this activity.

### 11.2 CURRENT EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

Current education/promotion of registration and pet identification activities include:

- Publicising the requirements to register pets over the age of three months in the Ararat Advertiser, Social Media through “Ararat Rural City Council” and on the counter publications at Councils Municipal office.
- Animal registration renewal notices are mailed out in late February or early March each year for currently registered animals. Online payments for registration renewals is now available.
- Council identification tags are obtained by pet owners on payment of the relevant registration fees.
- Information included on Councils website.

### 11.3 OBJECTIVE 1

To promote education and awareness of pet ownership through social media.

Activity	When	Evaluation
To promote education activities through social media.	Ongoing	Provide the media team with education material on a regular basis to upload to Council's social media pages.

### 11.4 CURRENT COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES

Council currently undertakes several compliance activities, including:

Annual animal registration renewal program – includes renewal notice, reminder notice and follow up phone calls, Officer inspections, door knocks and infringements.

- Annual audits conducted of declared dogs.
- Leave business cards detailing nature of call and contact name and number.
- Patrol public places to check cats and dogs are registered and identified.
- Animal complaints are checked for registration and identification compliance as part of the process of dealing with the complaint. Often people know where the animal they are complaining about resides.
- All authorised officers have microchip scanners.
- Follow up registration for animals notified as sold by domestic animal businesses (by letter, phone call, visit) if owner fails to register.
- Regularly update/audit registration database to ensure information is current (e.g of owner) to ensure owners are not distressed or annoyed by receiving unnecessary or incorrect renewal notices or not receiving a renewal notice at all.
- Check advertisements of dogs and cats for sale online and in the local paper to ensure they contain the microchip number of the animal being sold.
- Ensure all seized and impounded animals are identified as required by Council and registered to their owner prior to their release.
- Return lost/wandering registered pets to owners free of charge on the first occasion.

#### Summary

The data suggests that registration is essential to the success of everything that Council wants to achieve, and that education opportunities are more effective if the pet owning community registers their pets. Information can be disseminated, and pet owners are aware of what their rights and responsibilities are.

## 12 RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERSHIP

For many Australians pets are important members of the family. A pet can be a joy but they are a big responsibility.

Pets can provide us with company, stress relief and unconditional love. Pet ownership also teaches children responsibility, and helps them develop their social and nurturing skills.

Responsible pet ownership involves:

- choosing the right pet for your family's lifestyle
- caring for your all aspects of your pet's daily well-being including feeding, dry sleeping conditions, vaccinations, worming and flea treatments, appropriate exercise and socialisation
- complying with the law and ensuring your pet doesn't cause problems in the community by keeping your registration and microchipping details up to date, always walking your dog on a lead and having secure fencing and containment

As part of responsible pet ownership, every owner should consider desexing their animal if they aren't planning on breeding from it.

The benefits of desexing your pet include:

- less shelters and pounds having to euthanise animals due to overpopulation
- in most cases your pet will be better behaved and less likely to roam
- lower risks of certain types of cancers in cats and dogs
- discount registration costs

### 12.1 OBJECTIVE 1

Activity	When	Evaluation
Educate residents of their responsibilities as pet owners and the need for compliance	Ongoing	Provide a responsible pet ownership pamphlet when a new animal is registered (in information packs at reception)  Supply brochures at reception in view of customers  Mail out of Responsible pet ownership pamphlets in the animal renewals posted out each March.
Providing proactive Education	Ongoing	Promote responsible ownership information on social media and via newspaper articles  Promotion of the benefits of microchipping & registration as above.

## 13 OUR PLANS

### 13.1 OBJECTIVE 1

To increase annual re-registration compliance

Activity	When	Evaluation
Educate residents of the annual re-registration renewal period by means of advertising/media	March – May Yearly	Review media release types to determine most effective advertising medium.

releases, mailing of renewal notices.		
Develop registration data base capacity with mobile phone numbers and email addresses to allow for bulk messaging re registration requirements	Ongoing	Number of database entries upgraded to include mobile numbers and email addresses.

Ensure each property is audited and issued infringements where animals found to be unregistered.	July – August Yearly	Number of properties visited and infringements issued. Compare to previous results.
Ensure animal registrations have been renewed and infringements paid. Lodge unpaid infringements with Fines Victoria or Magistrates Court.	Sept – Oct Yearly	Number of issued infringements unpaid and animal registrations renewed. Compare to previous results.
Seize unregistered animals where matters found proven in Court or infringement paid and still not registered.	Month after date	Number of media releases issued to send the strong message for responsible pet ownership and compliance.

### 13.2 OBJECTIVE 2

Increase and maintain dog and cat registrations.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Ensure all seized and impounded animals are registered to their owner prior to release.	Prior to every release	Review annual registration numbers. Review number of dogs and cats being seized and impounded who are not registered to their owner.
Proactive door knocking in areas believed to have high number of unregistered via impoundment statistics. Check for unregistered and un-identified dogs and cats. Effective advertising prior to audit commencing.	Annually	Review annual increase in registration numbers. Review number of dogs and cats being seized and impounded who are not registered to their owner. Records of number of unregistered and identified animals picked up during door knocks.
Propose a month long – amnesty where animals can be registered without prosecution. To be conducted prior to proactive door knocking checking on registrations.	Annually	Number of animals that are registered during the amnesty period.
Undertake an annual micro chipping day to promote responsible pet ownership and registration.	Annually	Number of animals micro chipped and number of new registrations.

Provide photos on Councils webpage and social media page of impounded cats and dogs.	Ongoing	Number of hits on webpage and social media site featuring impounded cats and dogs.
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## 14 NUISANCE

### 14.1 CURRENT SITUATION

Type of Nuisance	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
No. of barking dog complaints received	20	15	26	29
No. of cat traps hired	16	17	21	46
No. of wandering stock calls	39	48	40	54

In order to capture, review and improve the recording of the number of animals wandering; a new record database has now been established to record all wandering animals; this data base also includes wandering livestock.

### 14.2 LEGISLATION/LOCAL LAW OVERVIEW

The Act regulates the nuisance for both dogs and cats relating to noise, trespassing and wandering animals. In addition to the Act, ARCC adopted its General Local Laws 2012 on 17th April 2012 to help minimise and prevent dog and cat nuisances occurring which are outlined below.

### 14.3 LOCAL LAWS RELATING TO NUISANCE

#### *Neighbourhood amenity Local Law 2022 Section 22 – Keeping Animals*

This Local Law restricts both the number and type of animals that a resident can keep on a Residential Property or on Rural Land.

#### *Neighbourhood Amenity Local Law 2022 section 23 – Animal Accommodation*

An owner or occupier of land must ensure that all animals on that land are housed:

- In a clean, inoffensive and sanitary condition;
- So as not to cause nuisance; and
- In an adequate and appropriate manner for the type of animal being house.

#### *Neighbourhood Amenity Local Laws 2022 Section 24 – Animal Excrement and Conduct*

A person in charge of a dog must not allow any part of the animal's excrement to remain on any road, nature strip, reserve or public or Council land in any built-up area.

A person in charge of a dog that litters a public place within a built-up area must immediately collect and dispose of the droppings in such a manner as not to cause a nuisance to any other person.

The 2022 – 2026 DAMP will need to reflect the new Neighbourhood Amenity Local Law.

### 14.4 COUNCIL POLICIES FOR NUISANCE COMPLAINTS

#### 14.4.1 Cats and Dogs at Large

The Community Safety team has developed a Domestic Animal Procedure for dealing with domestic animals found at large (refer to attachment 7)

In circumstances where repeat offenders are allowing their cat or dog to roam at large, Council will withdraw Infringements and pursue the matter in the Magistrates' Court to seek an order from the

Court to require the owner to carry out works to ensure the animal is not able to escape from the owner's premises.

#### 14.4.2 Barking Dogs

Council has a standard operating procedure for barking dog complaints. This ensures all complaints received are handled in the same consistent manner by all authorised Officers. The procedure steps out the required processes involved to investigate the complaint, liaise with the dog owner and surrounding neighbours. This procedure was reviewed and now includes educational material for both parties involved.

Where nuisances are found to be proven pursuant to section 32 of the Act, Council can issue notices to the dog owner to abate the nuisance, issue infringements and/or have the matter heard in the Magistrate's Court to seek an order from the Court for the owner to abate the nuisance.

#### 14.5 OBJECTIVE 1

Activity	When	Evaluation
To introduce the hire of anti-barking collars and comfort coats	Ongoing	Number of hire of anti-barking collars and comfort coats as an option to pet owners with barking dog complaints.

#### 14.6 CURRENT EDUCATION/PROMOTION ACTIVITIES RELATING TO NUISANCE ANIMALS

- Providing barking dog information kits
- Providing information relating to building cat enclosures
- Information provided on Council's website
- Provide information brochures from DEDJTR & RSPCA
- Articles on Council's Website and Facebook page
- Encouraging the de-sexing of cats and dogs to reduce wandering and creating a nuisance
- Encouraging dog owners to seek advice from professional dog trainers and trial barking dog citronella collars and comfort coats.

#### 14.7 CURRENT COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES RELATING TO NUISANCE ANIMALS

- Investigate nuisance complaints in a timely manner to ensure minimal timeframes
- Sending out barking dog formal complaints statements and barking dog log sheets with Statutory Declarations attached.
- Report outcomes of prosecutions, when appropriate, regarding each area of nuisance to local media to raise awareness in the community of the benefits of preventing dog and cat nuisances.
- Issuing notices to comply, notices of objection, infringements where necessary and taking the matter to the Magistrates' Court.
- Providing cat traps free of charge to residents.

#### 14.8 SUMMARY

In order to reduce animal nuisance problems in the community, Council will continue promoting and providing education and compliance activities while striving to improve the activities and identify/trial new initiatives.

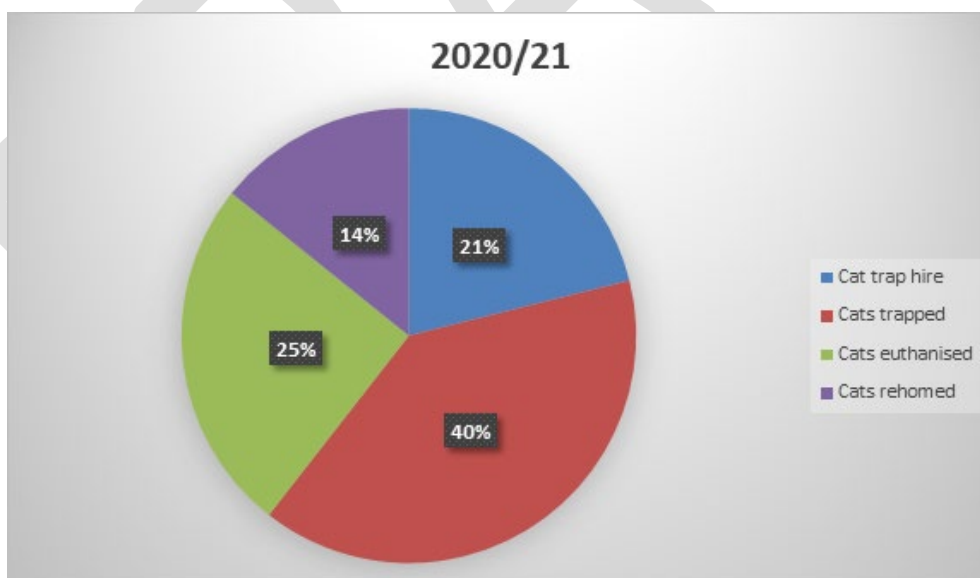
Over the next four years Council will continue to monitor the cat trapping program to ensure the program is promoted efficiently and provides assistance to residents, and continue media releases relating to Council's stance on compliance with nuisance type complaints.

#### 14.9 OUR PLANS

##### 14.9.1 Objective 1:

Revise Council's Order relating to the control of dogs and cats in public places.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Review cat trapping program at Pomonal (impacting the neighbouring Grampians National Park)	Annually	Number of feral cats taken of Grampians National Park at Pomonal.
Promote the free hire of cat traps for residents of the municipality. See graph below.	Annually	Number of cat trap hires annually.
Educate dog owners out in public by including off leash areas in media releases, and on website, (see off leash map attachment 9)	Ongoing/ as needed	Number of hits on web age. Number of media releases.
Review all dog off leash areas (if suitable) and produce an updated dog off leash map	Annually	Inspect dog off leash areas for suitability.
Ensure wide circulation of the Domestic Animals Branch publications such as "Preventing dog attacks" etc	Annually	Mail out publications with pet registration renewals. Distribute publications to Domestic Animal businesses, Veterinary Clinics and other community hubs.
Implement and enforce Order by ensuring compliance Officer/s patrol streets and parks.	Ongoing	Number of notices/warnings issued.  Decreased number of animal litter and dog off lead complaints received.



Of the 46 cat traps hired 2020/21, 86 cats were trapped and 55 where temperament tested and deemed feral and/or diseased, therefor unsuitable for rehousing.

#### 14.9.2 Objective 2

Decrease the timeframe of barking dog investigations from point of lodgement to resolution.

Activity	When	Evaluation



Set key performance indicators for Officers to complete barking dog complaints within a 6 week timeframe.	Ongoing	Review complaints annually to evaluate percentage completed within timeframe.
Use barking dog standard operating procedure and revise annually.	Ongoing	Review complaints to ensure standard operating procedure timelines were followed.
Assess the benefits of hiring out comfort coats and collars to dog owners where complaints received.	Ongoing	Number of barking dog complaints. Number of comfort coats and collars used to resolve barking dog complaints.

## 15 DOG ATTACKS

### 15.1 Current data

Dog attacks occur throughout the municipality to varying degrees. Council's mix of rural and urban environments dictates that too often; livestock are the victims of attacks. In built up areas, other dogs, cats and small livestock such as chooks and rabbits are often impacted by attacks. Although Council does receive reports of dog attacks on people, often the attack is the result of human intervention with an attack on an animal.

Due to the unforeseen circumstances of COVID 19, dog attacks have risen within the community during restrictions.

Of the 15 reported attacks, 1 dog was euthanised. It had been attacking stock and then turned on the property owner leaving a leg wound. A couple of dogs were injured, causing puncture wounds and lacerations requiring extensive vet work to their torso and neck region and a person needed medical attention due to lacerations to their legs, arms and back while protecting their dog from being attacked. In this last case the dog was declared dangerous after an independent investigation and the matter is yet to go to Court.

Small rural towns also mean the dog owner and animal victim owner know each other. This can result in the parties not wishing to pursue matters formally through the Magistrate Court; as long as satisfactory arrangements between these parties are reached.

Wandering dogs are an issue that Council will be focussing on throughout the period of this Plan. Research shows that undesexed dogs wandering, whether registered or unregistered, is a volatile combination and often results in dog attacks.

Social Media has provided a forum for education to the community. Providing information on consequences and penalties associated with irresponsible pet ownership.

Council strategies for penalties may include:

- Infringements (where non-serious injuries are sustained)
- Menacing/Dangerous dog declaration
- Prosecution in Magistrate's Court
- Seek destruction/compensation order by Magistrates
- Seek mediation between parties
- Obtain a letter of no complaint from the complainant to allow Officers to take no further action where satisfaction resolution between the parties has been reached.

During 2020/21 there were 15 dog attacks reported to Council. Dog breeds involved were:

- Blue Heeler
- Bull Arab

- Cattle Dog
- Pointer Cross
- Staffordshire Terrier
- Wolfhound

There are currently 5 declared menacing dogs on the VDDR for Ararat Rural City Council. During this period, 1 new dog was added to the VDDR register, a Restricted Breed microchipped as a Pitbull, showing the classic signs and features of the breed. One dog previously on the register (German Shepherd) was revoked after professional training and a letter of support from the trainer which satisfied Council of its competence.

Where injuries have occurred to a person or another animal that is of a serious injury (as defined by the Act), Council will strive to have the matter heard in the Magistrate's Court, where enough evidence is sufficient to form a prosecution.

### 15.2 CURRENT EDUCATION/PROMOTION ACTIVITIES

- Prosecutions and dog attacks will be reported to the local media to raise community awareness of responsible pet ownership.
- Media releases relating to livestock attacks
- Providing new residents with animal registration information
- Promoting the effective confinement and control of dogs
- Promoting puppy socialisation and obedience training
- Mailing out literature titled – "Preventing dog attacks in the community" with annual registration renewals.

### 15.3 CURRENT COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES

- Once Officers are notified of dog attack report, they will be dealt with as top priority
- Provide an afterhours response to reported dog attacks
- Ensure all reported dog attacks are recorded and investigated to meet all points of proof provided in the DAA. Seize dogs and prosecute owners in accord with Ararat Rural City Council's enforcement procedure
- Be proactive in declaring dogs dangerous or menacing (using the provisions of sections and 34 and 41A of the DAA correspondingly)
- Ensure unclaimed dogs at the pound are temperament tested to determine whether they are suitable for rehoming.

### 15.4 OUR PLANS

#### 15.4.1 Objective 1

Provide targeted education and compliance campaigns in area where data reporting shows higher numbers of dog attacks incidents.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Collate and record data for dog attacks reported including, date/time, animal type, dog attacked animal/person, dog unsecured/off lead, dog unregistered, sex, entire/de-sexed.	Ongoing	Evaluate data annually to determine areas required specific education/compliance activities.
Report outcomes of all dog attack prosecutions to local media to raise awareness in the community of the need to report dog attacks and Council's action in relation to attacks.	Ongoing	Website, social media and media release strategy.

#### 15.4.2 Objective 2

To minimise the incidence of dog attacks in the community.

Activity	When	Evaluation
<p>Providing proactive Education/Compliance Activities in the targeted areas of higher dog attack incidents.</p> <p>Educating key dog attack prevention messages (eg confinement of dogs to property, leash laws) through media articles, mail outs, website information. Actively patrol areas for roaming, unsecure and/or unregistered dogs.</p>	Ongoing	<p>Record type and number of education materials distributed.</p> <p>Numbers of proactive patrols conducted.</p> <p>Number of media articles published.</p>
Inform the community of outcomes of dog attacks prosecuted in Court.	Ongoing	As occurs.
Set key performance indicators for Officers to complete dog attacks investigations within 6 week timeframe.	Ongoing	Review complaints annually to evaluate percentage completed within timeframe.

## 16 DANGEROUS, MENACING AND RESTRICTED BREED DOGS

### 16.1 CURRENT SITUATION

Currently there is one restricted breed dogs registered with Ararat Rural City Council. Compliance Officers have received training in identifying these types of dogs so any information received at Council pertaining to these breeds is followed up.

### 16.2 DECLARED DOGS CURRENTLY REGISTERED WITH THE MUNICIPALITY.

TYPE	2018	2019	2020	2021
Registered restricted breed dogs	0	0	1	1
Registered declared dangerous dogs	0	0	0	0
Registered declared menacing dogs	6	4	4	4

The Act defines restricted breed dogs as any one of the following:

- Pitbull Terrier
- American Pitbull Terrier
- Fila Brasileiro
- Dogo Argentino
- Japanese Tosa
- Perro de Presa Canario

Owners of restricted breed dogs are required to abide by specific regulations, in particular; secure enclosures, warning signs on premises, having the dog muzzled in public and on a lead at all times, as defined by the Act and the Domestic Animals Regulations 2005 (the Regulations) Section 34A (a) the Act states: A dog is a dangerous dog if –

- (a) *the dog is kept as a guard dog for the purposes of guarding non-residential premises; or*
- (b) *the dog has been trained to attack or bite any person or anything when attached to or worn by a person.*

Ararat Rural City Council currently has 56 registered dogs attached to the Corrections Victoria, Security and Emergency Services Group. Due to Ararat being the training facility, all dogs are registered with Ararat Rural City Council. As these dogs are used by Government authorities, they are exempt from provisions of the Domestic Animals Act 1994. Owners of declared dangerous dogs must abide by the same regulations as owners of guard dogs other than the perimeter fencing requirements.

*Section 41A (1) of the Act states:*

1. *A Council may declare a dog to be a menacing dog if-*
  - (a) *The dog has rushed at or chased a person; or*
  - (ab) *the dog bites any person or animal causing injury to that person or animal that is not in the nature of a serious injury.*

The Victorian Declared Dog Register (VDDR) is a database that records all declared dogs for all relevant parties to see. Any dangerous or restricted breed dog entered onto the VDDR is declared for the life of the animal and cannot be revoked by Council. Council can review a menacing dog declaration.

### 16.3 CURRENT EDUCATION/PROMOTION ACTIVITIES

- Media releases, website and social media relating to legislation/changes/updates
- Media releases, website and social media relating to differences between Restricted Breed Dogs and Dangerous Dogs
- Media releases, website and social media with information on how to report menacing dogs and dog attacks.

### 16.4 CURRENT COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES

- Ensure all declared dogs are accurately registered on the Victorian Declared Dog Registry and that details regarding change of owner/change of address/death of dog are updated as soon as possible.
- Follow up non compliance issues until owner complies
- Establish Council policies and procedures for non compliance – infringement, prosecutions
- Patrol industrial and commercial areas/non residential premises after hours to check dangerous dogs guarding premises have been declared, are identified as required (collar of the kind prescribed), and are being kept in compliance with the DAA and Regulations
- Monitor training in parks to ensure that dogs are not being trained to attack, bite, rush or chase are not doing “sleeve work”.

## 16.5 OUR PLAN

### 16.5.1 Objective 1

Ensure declared dogs are compliant to relevant legislation and regulations.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Ensure all owners of declared dogs are aware of their obligations under the DAA regarding identification and keeping these dogs. Doing so by providing them with relevant sections of the DAA, brochures & fact sheets sent out as information kits.	Ongoing	Declared dog kits developed and distributed annually.
Patrol industrial sites or building sites that may have guard dogs.	Ongoing	Distribute information kits to any premises identified.
Ensure that Council has effective declaration policies and procedures to avoid declarations being over turned at VCAT (establish partnerships with other Councils that have success at VCAT for ideas and assistance). Ensure Council has specific declaration procedures for each type of declaration: Dangerous dogs Menacing dogs Restricted breed dogs	Ongoing	Declaration policies and procedures are developed and implemented.
Random property inspections of declared dogs to ensure compliance	Ongoing	Review checklists as occurs
Prosecute repeat offenders for serious breaches detected	As occurs	As Occurs
Educate the community about what is a declared dog	Ongoing	Number of complaints regarding declared dogs from the community Review accuracy of complaints

### 16.5.2 Summary

Over the next four years, Council will work to ensure that all dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs are kept in a manner which is compliant with the Code of Practice.

## 17 OVERPOPULATION AND HIGH EUTHANASIA

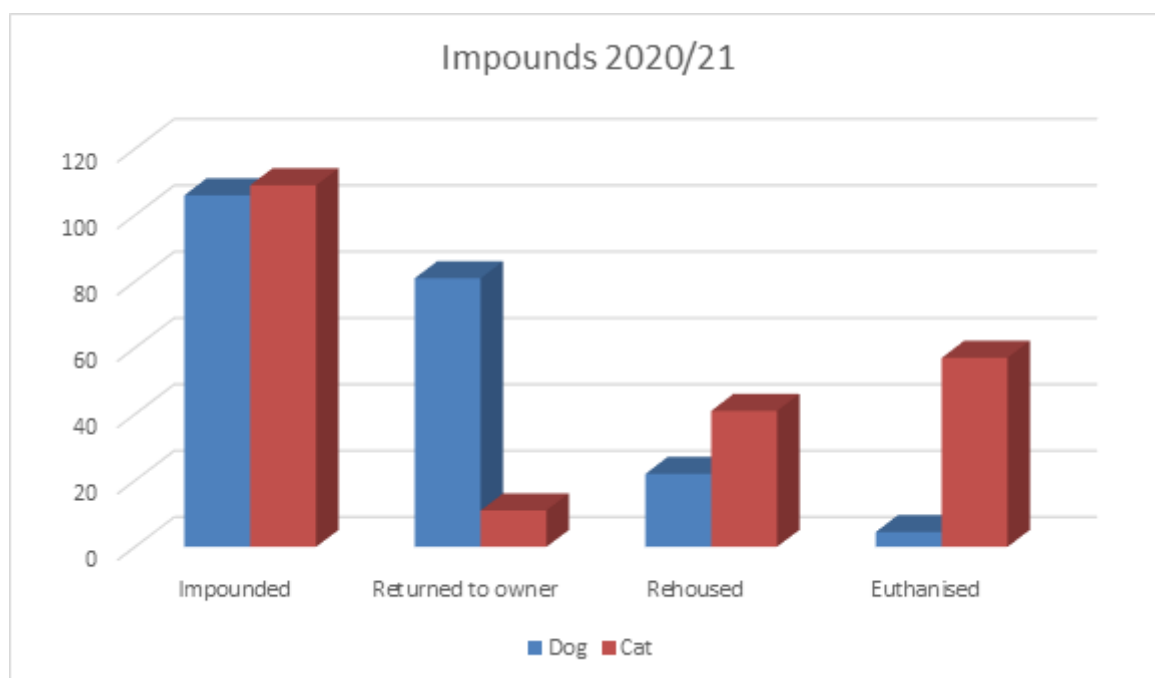
### 17.1 CURRENT SITUATION

Category	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
<b>DOGS</b>				
Number registered	2279	1888	1658	1600
Impounded by Council	147	108	111	93
Surrendered by public *(see below)	19	20	17	13

Adopted	31	9	5	7
Rescue Organisation	18	35	24	15
Euthanised	2	4	3 + 1 deceased	3 *
Reclaimed	114	80	78	81
<b>CATS</b>				
Number Registered	674	547	494	462
Impounded by Council	117	172	138	101
Surrendered by public	48	21	12	8
Adopted	43	28	19	19
Rescue Organisation	42	101	59	22
Euthanised	77	53	40 + 10 deceased	57
Reclaimed	3	11	10	11
Domestic Animal Business/shelters	4	4	5	4

Council continued to work with rescue organisations over the past year, which has resulted in Council achieving the target of less than 7% of dogs (2.8%) that enter the pound being euthanised. No dogs were euthanised due to an inability to rehouse them.

Dogs euthanised were injured in an accident or old and suffering from respiratory problems and surrendered by their owners due to the inability to care for the animal, one dog was deceased at the owners property who required help with disposal.



All domesticated cats are reunited with their owners, rehoused with rescue groups or adopted by the public from the pound. The 54.3% of cats impounded that were euthanised in 2020/21 were a result of the feral cat trapping program. 45.7% of impounded cats were rehoused either with a rescue organisation or adopted direct from the pound.

## 17.2 CURRENT EDUCATION/PROMOTION ACTIVITIES

- Promote the benefits of de-sexing – no surprise litters, fewer unwanted animals in the community, fewer animals euthanised, reduced aggression, reduced wandering
- Community displays – brochure stands, social media & media releases promoting and raising awareness about de-sexing overpopulation and high euthanasia rate fact sheets and other material developed by the Bureau of Animal Welfare and/or Ararat Rural City Council.
- Continue registration and microchipping programs to ensure pet cats and dogs can be returned to their owner, to reduce euthanasia rates.
- Promote appropriate pet selection to avoid animals being surrendered.
- Continued Councils dog and cat subsidised adoption program which assists in the reduction of euthanasia rates.
- Advertise found animals on the Ararat Rural City Council website and Ararat Council Facebook page.
- Advertise adoptable animals on Ararat Rural City Council website, Ararat Active Facebook page and the Pet Rescue website.
- Keep lists of people wanting to adopt dogs or cats, keeping them in mind when a suitable animal becomes available.

## 17.3 CURRENT COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES

- Implemented a formal program of assessment for euthanasia or suitability for rehoming of dogs.
- Investigate reports of animal hoarding
- Investigate reports of unauthorised “backyard breeders” to ascertain whether they should be registered as a domestic animal business
- Provide cat cages to local residents for trapping cats trespassing on their property
- Enforcing the Local Laws relating to prescribed number of animals on a property
- Microchipping and registration of all impounded animals prior to release to the owner
- Microchipping, immunisation, registration and desexing of all impounded animals prior to being released for adoption.

### Summary

There are a lot of opportunities to introduce programs which will positively impact the community, and the dogs and cats within it. Council has had great success in meeting their low euthanasia target of less than 7% (2.8%). Council will continue to work towards successful outcomes for all animals that come through the system.

## 17.4 OUR PLANS

### 17.4.1 Objective 1

Continue encouraging de-sexing of animals. The below activities will continue into the 2019/20 pet registration cycle.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Discount registration fees for cats and dogs that are de-sexed to encourage registration of animals over 3 months of age.	Ongoing	Number of new animals registered in category yearly.
Continue successful partnerships with animal rescue/shelter organisations to offer subsidised de-sexing of dogs and cats.	Ongoing	Number of owners of animals taking advantage of subsidised de sexing rate. Apply for Government grants where available.

Enter into Section 84Y agreements with animal rescue/shelters to ensure released dogs are de-sexed prior to rehousing	Ongoing	Number of Section 84Y agreements
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## 18 DOMESTIC ANIMAL BUSINESSES

Domestic Animal Act S68A (2)(c)(ii) 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

- also addresses 68A(2)(a),(c)(i),(d),(f)

### Current data

In Victoria, the Domestic Animals Act 1994 defines Domestic Animal Businesses as any of the following:

- A Council pound (operated by the Council or a contractor on behalf of Council)
- A dog and/or cat [breeding business](#) - where there are three or more fertile females and animals are sold (whether a profit is made or not), and the proprietor is not a member of an Applicable Organisation. If the proprietor is a member of an Applicable Organisation, they are exempt from registering as a breeding Domestic Animal
- Business if they have less than 10 fertile female animals AND no more than 2 are not registered with an Applicable Organisation.
- A [dog training establishment](#) (where the business is run for profit)
- A [pet shop](#) (operated in a permanent location that must be open at least 5 days per week)
- An [animal shelter](#) (e.g. welfare organisations such as the RSPCA and The Lost Dogs' Home)
- An [establishment boarding](#) dogs or cats (where the business is run for profit to provide overnight, daycare or homecare boarding)
- An establishment that is [rearing](#) dogs or cats (where the business is run for profit).

There are several businesses in Ararat Rural City Council currently undertaking activities which fall into a category of Domestic Animal Business (DAB). These businesses include pet shops, boarding establishments and breeding establishments. Legislation has changed considerably over the past few years in an effort to regulate breeding establishments, otherwise known as puppy farms.

There are 5 registered domestic animal businesses within Ararat Rural City Council, these include 1 pet shop, 1 boarding establishment, 2 domestic animal breeder and Councils registered pound and shelter.

Registered domestic animal businesses are audited both randomly and on receipt of complaints.

Council actively investigates the presence of animal businesses to ensure compliance with the relevant codes of practice and legislation.

In 2020-2021 Council reviewed multi-animal permit holders to identify those without planning permits or running breeding businesses. A number have now been resolved.

### 18.1 CURRENT EDUCATION/PROMOTION ACTIVITIES

- Providing information to registered domestic animal businesses.
- Promoting DEDJTR information and codes of practices.
- Advertising new legislation amendments.

### 18.2 CURRENT COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES

- Investigate reports
- Monitoring advertising sites
- Renewal/Registration process
- Inspecting suspected unregistered domestic animal businesses
- Liaising with planning department to ensure planning conditions are adhered too.
- RSPCA Inspector support.



### 18.2.1 Objective 1

Ensure domestic animal businesses are compliant with relevant legislation and codes of practice.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Monitor Councils registration database for owners with more than 3 fertile females.	Ongoing	Compliance with local laws and related legislation
Encourage de-sexing of animals by keeping registration fees for de-sexed animals at low rates whilst increasing the full cost of registrations.	Ongoing	Percentage increase of de- sexed animals compared to entire animals.
Conduct searches for unregistered domestic animal businesses via internet/media/newspapers.	Ongoing	Number of DAB's identified.

### 18.2.2 Objective 2

Identify illegally operated Domestic Animal Breeding Establishments in the municipality and ensure compliance and/or closed down.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Media campaigns to raise awareness of DAB definition and code of practices that must be adhered to.	As identified	Evaluate number of complaints received and properties identified during inspection or otherwise.
Investigate advertisements of pets for sale.	As identified	Mandatory microchipping of animals from breeding establishments.
Audit DAB randomly to ensure compliance.	Ongoing	Number of audits compared to number of follow ups required.

## 19. ANNUAL REVIEW OF PLAN AND ANNUAL REPORTING

As per 68A(3) of the Act, 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 timeframes.

### 19.1 ATTACHMENTS

#### *Attachment 1: Neighbourhood Amenity Local Law 2022 – Section 22– Keeping Animals*

1) *An owner or occupier of private property must not without a permit keep or allow to be kept on that private property at any one time more than:*

(a) *Six (6) different types of animals; and*

(b) *The maximum number for each type of animal than is set out in the following table:*

<i>Type of Animal</i>	<i>Maximum number allowed in urban area.</i>	<i>Maximum number allowed in rural area.</i>
<i>Cats</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Cattle</i>	<i>Zero</i>	<i>No maximum limit</i>

Dogs	2	6
Domestic birds (excluding Noisy birds)	20	No maximum limit
Domestic fish	No maximum limit	No maximum limit
Domestic Mice/Rats	10	No maximum limit
Domestic Rabbits/Ferrets	4	10
Domestic Turtles, Tortoises, Frogs and the like	No maximum limit	No maximum limit
Goats	Zero	No maximum limit
Guinea Pigs	4	No maximum limit
Horses/Donkeys and the like	Zero	1 horse per 2ha
Large Birds and/or Noisy Birds	Zero	10
Pigeons	20	100
Pigs	Zero	No maximum limit
Poultry	10	No maximum limit
Sheep	Zero	No maximum limit
Any other agricultural animals	Zero	No maximum limit

- 2) Sub-clause (1) does not apply to the temporary grazing of no more than six (6) sheep in a urban area for a continuous period, or any combined period, not exceeding 4 weeks in any calendar year.
- 3) Unless otherwise authorised by or under an Act a person must not, without a permit, keep or allow to be kept any exotic, wild, dangerous or large animal not listed in sub-clause (1).
- 4) For the purpose of calculating the numbers of animals kept under sub-clause (1), the progeny of any dog or cat lawfully kept will be counted from 12 weeks after their birth.

**Attachment 2: Neighbourhood Amenity Local Law 2022 - Section 23 – Animal Accommodation**

- 1) The owner or occupier of any private property on which animals are kept must provide accommodation in accordance with Domestic Animal Act 2020:
  - a. the type of animals to be kept; and
  - b. the height of the shelter; and
  - c. the number of animals to kept; and
  - d. the capacity to maintain it in a sanitary and inoffensive condition; and
  - e. the capacity to protect neighbours from noise from animals on the land; and
- 2) All animals housing must be maintained so that:
  - a. all manure and other waste is removed and/or treated as often as necessary so that it does not cause a nuisance or offensive condition; and
  - b. all manure and other waste is stored in a fly and vermin proof receptacle until removed from the premises or otherwise disposed of to the satisfaction of the environmental health officer; and
  - c. the ground surrounding the housing is drained to the satisfaction of the environmental health officer; and

- d. *the area of land within 3 metres of the area or structure in which the animal is kept must be kept free from dry grass, weeds, refuse, rubbish or other material capable of harbouring vermin; and*
- e. *all food, grain or chaff is kept in vermin proof receptacles; and*
- f. *the area where animals are kept must be thoroughly cleaned and maintained at all times in a clean and sanitary manner to the satisfaction of the environmental health officer.*

*Attachment 3: Neighbourhood Amenity Local Law 2022 Section 24 – Animal Excrement and Conduct*

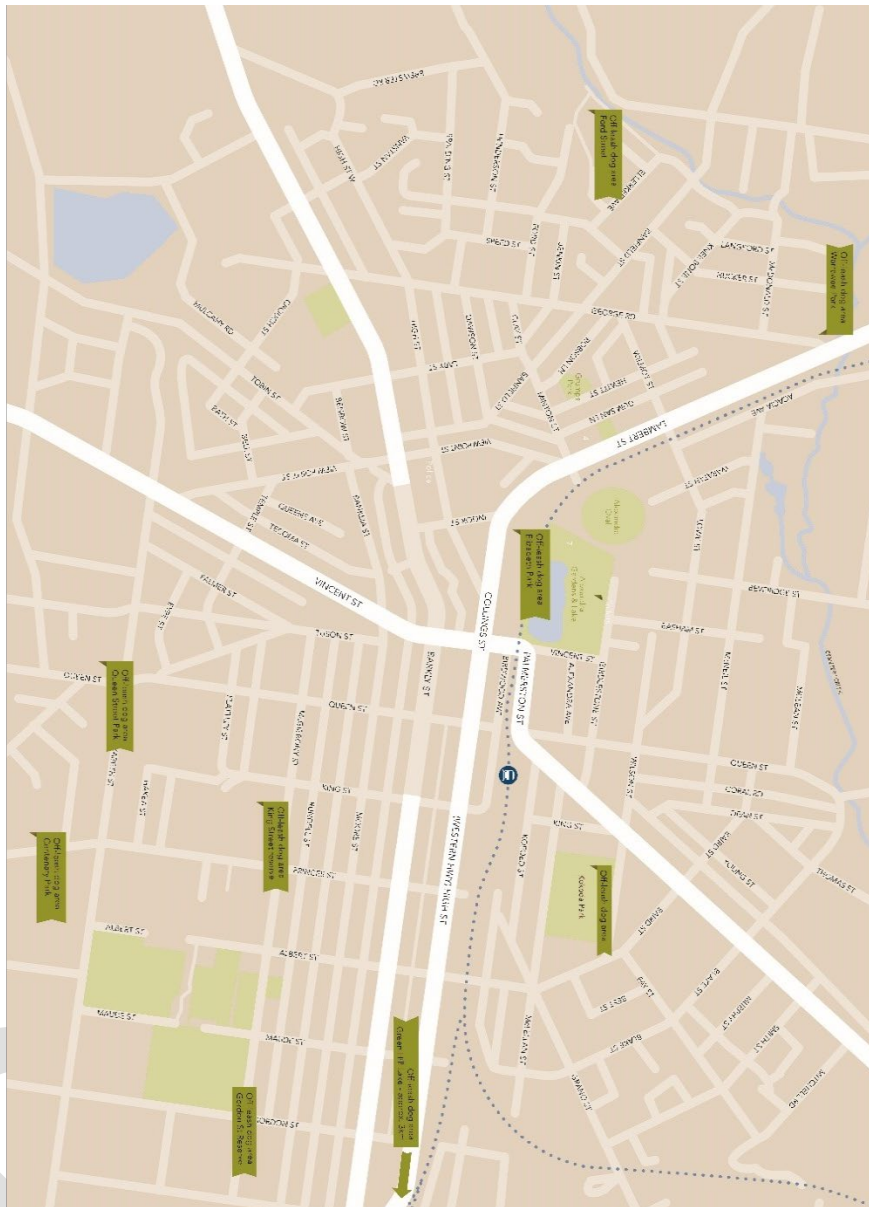
- 1) *A person in charge of an animal must not allow*
  - a. *any part of the animal's excrement to remain on any road or Council land ;or*
  - b. *The animal to dog any part of Council Land.*
- 2) *A person in charge of any animal on any road or Council Land must carry a litter device suitable to clean up any excrement left by the animal while under the person's charge and must produce such litter devise upon request of an Authorised Officer or Delegated Officer.*

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## DOMESTIC ANIMAL AT LARGE PROCEDURE

<b>REGISTERED ANIMAL</b>	<b>UNREGISTERED ANIMAL – MICROCHIPPED</b>	<b>UNREGISTERED ANIMAL – NOT MICROCHIPPED</b>
<p><b><u>First Occasion</u></b> Return to owner, verbal warning given – 1 per 12 months. NOT APPLICABLE If dog has been impounded and registered upon release within the last 12 months, or has been involved in a dog attack – straight to 3<sup>rd</sup> offence.</p>	<p><b><u>Microchipped Animal</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Charge impoundment fee</li> <li>• Animal to be registered prior to release</li> <li>• Infringe for “Dog at large”</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Not Microchipped</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If identified by owner, animal to be microchipped and registered prior to release.</li> <li>• No owner identified, rehouse with agreed animal rescue organisation.</li> <li>• Euthanise as last resort if not suitable for adoption or unable to rehouse.</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Second Occasion</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Return to owner</li> <li>• Impoundment fee to be charged.</li> </ul>		<p><b><u>Infringe at large and unregistered if owner identified.</u></b> Animals that have been previously impounded and registered upon release to the owner, will be infringed again for at large if the animal is found wandering within 12 months of previous impoundment. (see 3<sup>rd</sup> occasion reference under Registered Animal Column)</p>
<p><b><u>Third Occasion</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Return to owner</li> <li>• Impoundment fee to be charged.</li> <li>• Infringe for being at large.</li> </ul>		

Attachment 4: Dog Off Leash Areas - Ararat City Town Parks



- Warrawee Park - Elizabeth Park - King Street - Centenary Park
- Kokoda Park - Ford Street Park - Elizabeth Street - Gordon St Reserve – Queen St

