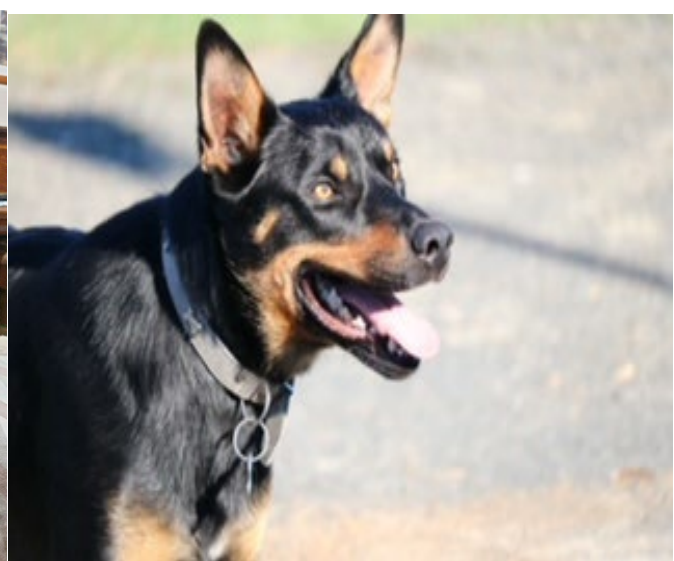


ARARAT RURAL CITY COUNCIL

# DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

2022-2026



<b>Domestic Animal Management Plan</b>		Review Date:	May 2022
		Last Reviewed:	
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Responsible Officer:	Manager Planning, Community & Compliance		
Approved By:	<b>Adopted by Council on XX</b>		
Related Documents:	Domestic Animals Act 1994		

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## Introduction

Our furry family members, in all their forms, can bring great joy to our household. To the wider community they can, however, be received in less glowing terms if they bark, trespass or leave a mess in their wake.

The *Domestic Animal Management Plan* (DAMP) seeks to outline how the Council's Community Safety team will work with pet owners, residents, and rate payers to maximise the joy these companion animals bring and minimise, or resolve, conflict between parties.

We acknowledge that this is an ongoing process and whilst this document seeks to set the course for our operations for the next 4 years, the annual review process required by the Domestic Animal Act (DAA) will provide an opportunity to refine and improve our operations during this time.

Under Clause 68A (2) of the DAA:

*(2A) 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. 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.*

This document is the result of our efforts to meet our legal obligations. In line with other changes to the organisation in recent years, this plan seeks to be more succinct, direct and forthright in what, how, when and why we approach this work. We hope that this will make the document clearer and build trust within the community about how we operate.

Keeping an animal or two for companionship is a part of everyday life for many people. Dogs and cats provide a buffer against loneliness, give us a reason to get up in the morning, add activity to our day and will often sympathise with our challenges.

As at 10 April 2022, there were 863 dogs and 233 cats registered by owners in our community. Not surprisingly the majority (70.44%) were living with owners in the Ararat town area where much of the population is based.

We also had 5 domestic animal business registered within the municipality. Domestic animal businesses are those that breed or provide boarding services (kennels & catteries) to the broader community.

Some dogs may be declared as dangerous or menacing. This is based either on their breed (specified in state legislation) or by past behaviour. These animals can be loving family pets, though the name “dangerous” or “menacing” might not suggest that. For declared animals, the legislation seeks to ensure that they are cared for and controlled in a way that minimises the risk to others.

We currently have 1 restricted breed and 4 menacing dogs registered in the municipality and 1 dog declared dangerous.

Within our community there are also people whose past experiences, current physical health or business activities may be impacted by interactions with the pets of others. This document is as much for them, as it is for the pet owners, as both groups have the right to enjoy a life of their choosing, without the risk of fear, harm or loss.

## What does Council do to manage animals?

### *Identification*

At the heart of our animal management operations is registration. The State requires all cats and dogs over 3 months old must be registered and microchipped. This process helps identify animals when lost or traded and provides a means of ensuring someone is nominated for the animal’s care.

Registration can be seen as an obligation, but it brings with it the benefit of ready connection if a pet strays or becomes lost.

### *Impounding*

If an animal is received by Council and its owner can’t be readily found, or if a pet is surrendered, then the Community Safety team will impound the animal.

The pound provides a temporary, safe and secure home while further searching occurs for the existing, or a new owner. Long term strays in the pound aren’t ideal and Council works to rehome pets as quickly as possible.

### *Responsibility*

Unfortunately, there are times where a pet may cause damage to other people, pets, stock or property. In these cases, Council staff will investigate the matter and seek to find a mutually agreeable outcome. Where this cannot be achieved there are a range of possible pathways that may be followed depending on the circumstances of the incident. In most cases, both the pet owner and the other person have rights for review, both internally and by others.

## Welfare

The welfare of domestic animals, both for owner and animal businesses is part of these individual owners responsibility. Council staff have a role to both investigate concerns relating to animal welfare, as well as work with other agencies on this issue. Council's Community Safety team are all authorised officers under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals* (POCTA). In this role staff may advise animal owners on improvements required or what we can legally do.

## Education

Council also has an educative role in the care and management of domestic animals. This is delivered in a variety of ways from working with individuals, households, and operators of animal businesses, to media items across multiple formats on pet care and responsibilities.

## Guiding Principles for animal management

In the operation of our animal management function, we seek to:

- Provide professional caring service to all people and pets involved
- Make responsible decisions that protect the health and safety of our community
- Partner with other agencies to provide quality services
- Monitor and manage, our performance to ensure we are continuously improving.

## Legal responsibilities

We operate the service under a number of a legislative tools including:

- *Domestic Animal Act* (DAA)
- *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals* (POCTA)
- *Planning & Environment Act* and
- *Neighbourhood Amenity Local Law*

In simple terms these tools focus as follows:

Legislation	Key control areas
Domestic Animal Act	Animal registration, stray/wandering/abandoned pets, nuisance, dangerous and menacing animals, Domestic Animal Businesses and animal sales, greyhounds.
Prevention of Cruelty to Animals	Animal cruelty (across most species not just cats and dogs) and responsibility to animals being harmed.
Planning and Environment Act	This act governs the development of the Council Planning scheme which in turn regulates the use of land for animal keeping, breeding and boarding both on a domestic and commercial scale regulates the number of animals that can be kept in various zones without a permit. Legislatively overrides the Neighbourhood Amenity Local Law. Regulates cat and dog breeding and boarding businesses, as well as racing dog businesses.

Neighbourhood Amenity and Local Laws	Regulates the provision of animal accommodation and management of animal waste. Also specifies animal keeping numbers, for any situation not covered by the Planning Scheme.
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The Community Safety team and other Council staff are able to advise people on the requirements of legislation, as part of their role in education and enforcement.

## Strategies for animal management

This 4 year plan defines key achievements based on both known regular activities and identified opportunities for improvement. This section of Outcomes and Actions is expected to be updated annually throughout the period as actions are completed and new issued identified.

Outcomes	Actions
1. Facilitate responsible pet ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Keep accurate records of animals in the community through registration</li> <li>b) Annually doorknock an area of the community to confirm accuracy of records</li> <li>c) Inspect premises of all dangerous and menacing dogs annually to ensure compliance with requirements</li> <li>d) Promote measures that prevent wandering and escape in media at six monthly intervals</li> <li>e) Promote the benefit of registration at six monthly intervals</li> <li>f) Annually report on key metrics for animal ownership to Council and State government</li> </ul>
2. Facilitate responsible financial and humane measures in service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Review the procedure for management of animals received to ensure best outcomes for animals, particularly unweaned animals by July 2022</li> <li>b) Review the animal adoption subsidy against the costs of vetwork, pound and registration costs and report to Council in September 2022 for consideration</li> <li>c) Benchmark registration costs against other Councils and report to Council by November 2022 in readiness for the forthcoming animal registration year</li> <li>d) Review the current pound arrangements to ensure animal care remains at good practice and report to Council by February 2024</li> <li>e) Support owners to comply with relevant laws and take enforcement action where compliance is not achieved</li> </ul>

3. Maintain strong partnership with agencies involved in animal welfare that share common goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Continue to partner with pet shelters and breed specific rehoming groups to provide alternative care arrangements for animals received and unclaimed</li> <li>b) Support work of RSPCA and AgVictoria in investigations into animals issues</li> <li>c) Work with Victoria Police, as needed, on animal crime matters</li> </ul>
4. Ensure staff are confident and capable in handling likely situations arising from service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Monitor training opportunities provided to sector and utilise as needed</li> <li>b) Ensure after hours staff have necessary resources and induction to deliver quality service</li> <li>c) Implement new remote worker safety arrangements by March 2023</li> </ul>
5. Address feral animal problems both at Council sites and on private land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Maintain an annual feral cat program on Council properties across the municipality</li> <li>b) Provide cat traps for hire to the community and fund the destruction of feral cats captured</li> <li>c) Refer complaints of feral domestic animals on state land to the relevant state land manager</li> </ul>

## Monitoring progress

The collection of key information throughout the year is expected to provide an insight into the area of progress, areas needing greater focus and new issues that arise.

Data will be collected monthly by the Community Services Team and reviewed quarterly by the Manager. Where there are any significant issues identified these can be flagged with the CEO and Council, as required, and a response can be implemented to endeavour to address the issue.

Monthly information to be collected is:

1. Animal Management request
2. Animals collected, reclaimed and rehomed
3. Timelines of first response to animal management requests
4. Cat traps hired
5. Dog attacks reported and investigated
6. Barking dog complaints received and actioned
7. Animal wandering complaints and fines

Quarterly information is to be collated on:

8. Dogs and cats registered
9. Proportion of animals desexed
10. Restricted breed dogs registered
11. Declared dangerous dogs registered
12. Menacing dogs registered
13. Domestic animal businesses registered

Data collected will inform the Council reporting through the *Know your Council* website and the annual review of this document