



**CENTRAL
GOLDFIELDS
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

Central Goldfields Shire

Domestic Animal

Management Plan 2008-2011

October 2008

OVERVIEW

A community where pets, and working animals are recognised and accepted as important to the family unit, farms and breeding premises,, where all animal owners take an active role in responsible pet ownership within our community, adding to value to Council's responsive animal management services.

Executive Summary

The Domestic Animal Management Plan is a State Government requirement as outlined in Section 68A of the Domestic (Feral & Nuisance) Animals Act. This plan is required to be submitted to the DPI Secretary prior to 2 November 2008. The plan builds on the good work undertaken by Council to date enhancing the management of domestic animals in specific key areas.

The Plan is based on the following strategic directions for animal management:

- Identification and registration;
- Animal welfare – pet overpopulation and euthanasia;
- Encouraging responsible pet ownership – community education;
- Compliance and enforcement – local laws and orders;
- Prevention of animal attacks and risk to the community;
- Access to public places by dogs and cats;
- Dog faeces;
- Promoting a pet friendly community.
- Domestic animal businesses
- Staff training and development.

Section 8 of the plan provides for details of specific actions proposed to be undertaken against each of the above categories.

3 Introduction

The purpose of the Domestic Animal Management Plan (the DAM Plan) is to provide the Central Goldfields shire with a strategic framework that delivers policy direction and action plans for animal management for the next 3 years.

The preparation of the Plan follows a recent amendment to the Domestic (Feral and Nuisance) Animals Act 1994 (DAA) which now requires all Victorian Councils to have a three year plan in place for the management of dogs and cats within their area.

3.1 What will the Plan address?

Section 68A of the DAA requires that the DAM Plan address the following:

- *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*
- *Outline programs for the training of authorized officers to ensure that they can properly administer and enforce the requirements of this Act in the Council's municipal district; and*
- *Outline programs, services and strategies which the Council intends to pursue in its municipal district-*
 - *To promote and encourage the responsible ownership of dogs and cats; and*
 - *To ensure that people comply with this Act, the regulations and any related legislation; and*
 - *To minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals; and*
 - *To address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats; and*
 - *To encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats; and*
 - *To minimize the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance; and*
 - *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*
- *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 order or local laws dealing with the management of dogs and cats in municipal district are desirable; and*
- *Provide for the review of any other matters related to the management of dogs and cats in the Council's municipal district that it thinks necessary; and*
- *Provide for the periodic evaluation of any program, service, strategy or review outlined in this Plan.*

3.2 Process applied in developing the Plan

In preparing the DAM Plan, the following methodology was undertaken:

- Existing animal management operations were reviewed including existing procedures, local laws and orders.
- The strategic context was reviewed including plans and strategies that might be relevant to animal management.
- Various site visits were undertaken.

4 What is Domestic Animal Management?

Domestic animal management is very different than it was two decades ago when it was just dog management and consisted of a narrow range of responsibilities.

Today, it involves a wider range of issues (as listed below) and applies to both cats and dogs.

There is now widespread acceptance of the need to educate the community in responsible pet ownership not just enforce the requirements.

There is more interest in what Councils can do to improve the welfare of animals including unwanted animals. The DAA, introduced in 1996 and which replaced the former Dog Act, includes an animal welfare objective.

There is emerging interest in planning for the needs of pet owners given that around a third of all households own one or more pets and there are now well recognised health and social benefits arising from pet ownership.

Finally, our knowledge of animal behaviour and the approaches available to manage domestic animals are now much more sophisticated.

The substantive issues include:

- Registration;
- Identification (particularly micro-chipping);
- Dog attacks;
- Dealing with restricted breeds of dog;
- Problem barking;
- Wandering at large by dogs;
- Dog access to public places (parks, reserves and streets);
- Dog faeces management;
- Impacts of cats including compulsory confinement;
- Education in responsible pet ownership;
- Welfare of animal including unwanted animals and the issue of compulsory desexing;
- Training of animal management officers; and
- Health, leisure and social capital associated with pet ownership.

Emerging issues that Council will increasingly need to deal with in the future include:

- Increasing numbers of pet owners living in high and medium density forms of housing.
- Smaller household size and an ageing population.

Clearly, planning for domestic animals' management involves much more than simply fulfilling legislative requirements. The Central Goldfields Shire is committed to achieving better outcomes for everyone in the municipality including both pet owners and non pet owners.

5 Relevant Plans and Strategies

Relevant plans and strategies have been reviewed for their relevance and implications for the DAM Plan. Relevant plans include:

- Council Plan 2007-2012.
- Central Goldfields Shire Bicycle Strategy.
- Waste and Recycling Strategy 2003-2010.
- The Central Goldfields Recreation Plan
- The Public Health Plan.
- Master plans for various parks and reserves (some still to be developed)

5.1 Animal management at Central Goldfields

Local Laws

Council's **Local Law Part 4** relates in part to the keeping of animals. A permit is required to keep more than 2 dogs and 2 cats in urban areas, 6 dogs and 4 cats in rural areas or farming areas, and restrictions also apply to the number and types of other animal species.

Domestic Animal Businesses

There are 2 Domestic Animal Businesses operating in Central Goldfields Shire. There are Codes of Practice for the operation of breeding and rearing establishments, boarding establishments, and shelters and pounds. Council is required to ensure each establishment complies with the relevant Code of Practice by conducting regular audits. Council inspects each Domestic Animal Business annually as part of the annual permit renewal process.

Key statistics 2007

Dogs	
Number of registered dogs	2,632
Number of declared and menacing dogs in Boroondara	2
Number of impounded dogs	238
Number of impounded dogs returned to owner	142
Number of dogs rehoused	40
Cats	
Number of registered cats	751
Number of impounded cats	260
Number of impounded cats returned to owner	70
Number of cats rehoused	40
Prosecutions (successful)	0
Domestic Animal Businesses	
Number registered in Central Goldfields	2

Staffing

Council has one(1) full time for Local Laws/Animal Control, and two(2) part time Animal Management Officers assigned to regular animal enforcement duties. All are authorised officers under the DAA.

Staff receive an average 30 hours of training per annum.

All Animal Management Officers receive ongoing on the job training.

All Animal Management Officers have or should be in the process of attaining the Certificate IV in Animal Control and Welfare.

Education programs in responsible pet ownership

Council provides extensive information and links to information on animal behaviour and management in brochures and on its website. This includes information on both statewide and Council requirements for keeping dogs and cats as well as tips for diagnosing and responding to common animal behaviour issues.

Lost and unwanted animals

Lost and unwanted animals are taken to the Maryborough pound.

Council has held several micro-chipping days a year, and is likely to continue this practice. Council Animal Management officers have been trained in the micro-chipping process.

6 Key Issues for Central Goldfields

6.1 Discussion of Issues

Registration

Dogs and cats are required to be registered by State Government legislation.

The purposes of registration are 1) to provide a dog and cat population database and 2) to provide funding for domestic animals' management. A proportion of all registrations is allocated to the state government for administration of the DAA and provision of the statewide education programs.

It is believed that there are a greater number of domestic animals in the community than on Council's Database. However this is extremely difficult to quantify. It is known that registration rates are higher for dogs than for cats.

Compulsory micro chipping

Since 2007, the State Government through the provisions of the Domestic Animals Act has required all pets being registered for the first time to be micro-chipped. This includes pets that are being registered for the first time and those being registered at Central Goldfields for the first time.

There was a strong support for extending this requirement to all pets however there are resourcing implications to consider for an issue that would be largely solved in 7-10 years (due to the life span of existing dogs and cats). Council also needs to consider if introducing the requirement would discourage registrations.

Mandatory de-sexing (MD)

Current data shows that de-sexing rates in Central Goldfields are equivalent to the state average.. There appears to be little advantage in Central Goldfields introducing mandatory de-sexing at this point in time. It would be difficult to enforce at the local level and resource intensive, and will not be enforceable where animals are kept for breeding and/or working stock.

Confinement of Cats

Although some Councils have sought to limit the negative impacts of cats on the environment by imposing night time curfews, it is not proposed to introduce a cat confinement requirement at this time in Central Goldfields. It is difficult to envisage how such confinement provisions could be effectively enforced. Council will review the merits of cat confinement in the review of this Plan in 3 years.

During the life of this Plan Council will, through education, encourage cat owners to confine their cats.

Dog attacks

Any reports of dog attack, either against humans or other animals are treated as serious issues by Council, and investigated immediately. The Local Laws Department has set out a KPI for a matter to be fully investigated and a brief prepared within 4 weeks of initial report.

Excessive barking

Council always suggests that complainants speak to their neighbours before contacting the Council so that issues can be resolved amicably and effectively. Council encourages people to do this as early as possible - before the excessive barking becomes entrenched. Council will provide information on managing excessive barking situations through the general local media, education material such as pamphlets and on Council's website.

Dog faeces

The existing local laws that requires dog owners to pick up their dog's faeces from public places and to take a bag with them when they are walking their dog is proposed to be retained.

The provision of dog faeces bags in parks is not proposed to be introduced. This is because:

- It shifts the responsibility from dog owners who need to provide their own bags to Council who would be providing and maintaining the dispensers.
- Providing the bags and maintaining the dispensers is very costly.
- The dispensers are prone to vandalism.
- It adds further paper to the waste stream (although bio-degradable bags are now available).

Education for responsible pet ownership

Council is committed to educating the community in responsible pet ownership. The Bureau operates education programs and activities on a statewide basis. Council intends to localise these key messages and work in partnership with state government authorities in delivering these programs. Council will also explore the development of education kits, show bags and give away material to assist with community education.

Strategic Planning

It is considered essential that feedback be obtained from the animal management department in relation to any strategic planning exercises involving the following:

- Open Space Planning.
- Bicycle and trails planning.
- Biodiversity and conservation planning.
- Litter management planning.
- Playground planning.
- Public health planning (both for the positive and negative effects of dogs and cats on health).
- Planning for the aged.
- Planning for volunteering.

6.2 Strategic Directions for 2008-2011

The Plan is based on the following strategic directions for animal management:

- Identification and registration;
- Animal welfare – pet overpopulation and euthanasia;
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- Access to public places by dogs and cats;
- Dog faeces;
- Promoting a pet friendly community.
- Domestic animal businesses
- Staff training and development.

6.3 Key Performance Indicators

Domestic animals' management will be reviewed against the following key performance indicators:

- Number of dog and cat registrations.
- Number of de-sexed dogs and cats.
- Number of dogs and cats entering pound, re-united with their owners or rehoused.

7 Performance Monitoring and Review

Implementation of the Plan will be based on the following key elements:

Responsible Officer

The Team Leader Local Laws/Animal Management in conjunction with the Director of Corporate and Community Services, will be assigned with responsibility for the implementation of the Plan.

Sound basis for recording data

Council will update its data records to reflect the key performance indicators listed below.

Performance Indicators

The Plan will be assessed against the following performance indicators outlined in the Section 6.

Annual Plan

The actions contained within the plan will be incorporated into the Local Laws Action Plans.

Annual Report

Reporting on action taken as a result of this plan will be incorporated into the Business Planning reporting process.

Review of Orders, Local Laws and Established Programs

A review of Council's animal management local laws and orders and established animal management programs will be undertaken on an ongoing basis if circumstances indicate a review is warranted.

8 Action Plans

The Action Plans that follow list the actions that Council will implement over the next 3 years to achieve its vision and goals.

1. IDENTIFICATION AND REGISTRATION			
OBJECTIVES: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Maximise the number of registered dogs and cats in Central Goldfields Shire</i> • <i>Ensure all dogs and cats are identified as required.</i> 			
ACTION	TASK COMPLETION INDICATORS	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
- 1.1 Continue current program of following up households that have not re-registered their pets.	- Annual follow up undertaken.	- Local Laws	- Annual
- 1.2 Review Council's approaches to boosting registration.	- Review conducted.	- Local Laws	- Annual
- 1.3 Review Council's promotional material and other ways to promote registration and micro-chipping. Boost the message in relation to the benefits of registration and the difference between registration and micro-chipping.	- Review completed. - Material updated. - Press release	- Local Laws.	- Year 1/3 - Year 1/3 - Year 2
- 1.4 Monitor registration rates.	- Impacts assessed.	- Local Laws	- As required.
- 1.5 Work closely with local Vets to ensure relevant information on responsible pet ownership is available.	- Follow ups	- Local Laws	- As required

2. ANIMAL WELFARE – PET OVERPOPULATION AND EUTHANASIA			
<p>OBJECTIVES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Reduce the number of unwanted litters.</i> • <i>Reduce the number of stray, lost and abandoned animals.</i> • <i>Reduce the number of semi-owned animals.</i> • <i>Increase the number of returned animals.</i> • <i>Increase the number of re-homed animals.</i> • <i>Encourage pet owners to attend to their pet's basic needs and provide them with a quality home environment.</i> 			
ACTION	TASK COMPLETION INDICATORS	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
- 2.1 Provide information to owners of impounded pets on the benefits of desexing their pets.	- Information brochure prepared.	- Local Laws	- Year 2
- 2.2 Boost Council's communications with the community in relation to the benefits of confinement, desexing, registration and micro-chipping.	- Review completed. - Media release prepared.	- Local Laws	- Year 1 - Year 1
- 2.3 Ensure Council's website has links to information on attending to pets' basic needs and that this is included in other relevant promotional material.	- Council's website and other relevant promotion material amended. - Include links to appropriate breed selection and information to help people to reduce problem behaviours in their pets that might result in them relinquishing their pets.	- Local Laws.	- Year 2

3. ENCOURAGING RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERSHIP – EDUCATION

OBJECTIVE:

- *Implement appropriate community education programs in responsible pet ownership.*

ACTION	TASK COMPLETION INDICATORS	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
<p>- 3.1 Ensure prospective pet owners have access to appropriate and animal management responsibilities including the need for all newly registered pets to be micro-chipped.</p>	<p>- Information provided on Council's website and other promotional material. - Annual Press release.</p>	<p>- Local Laws</p>	<p>- Year 1. - Annual.</p>
<p>- 3.2 Encourage the community to provide their dog with appropriate etiquette/obedience training. Provide links on Council's website and other promotional material.</p>	<p>- Review information provided on Council's website and other promotional material. - Annual press release.</p>	<p>- Local Laws</p>	<p>- Year 2. - Year 2-3.</p>

4. COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT – LOCAL LAWS AND ORDERS

OBJECTIVE:

- *Maximise compliance with domestic animal laws, orders and regulations (state and local).*
- *Ensure Councils local laws and orders reflect community priorities and best practice in animal management.*

ACTION	TASK COMPLETION INDICATORS	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
- 4.1 Review all procedures for dealing with complaints made and incidents occurring under the DAA.	- Review completed. - Recommendations implemented.	- Local Laws.	- Year 2. - Year 2-3
- 4.2 Review all animal management laws and orders made under the DAA.	- Review completed.	- Local Laws.	- October 2010.

5. PREVENTION OF ANIMAL ATTACKS AND RISK TO THE COMMUNITY			
OBJECTIVE: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce attacks by dogs and cats on people, pets and wildlife. 			
ACTION	TASK COMPLETION INDICATORS	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
- 5.1 Review procedures for dealing with dog attacks and harassment complaints.	- Review completed.	- Local Laws	- Year 1.
- 5.2 Develop a press release on the implications for your dog if it attacks or bites an animal or human.	- Release once a year.	- Local Laws	- Year 1
- 5.3 Encourage all schools in the municipality to participate in the State Government's schools visitation program.	- Letter to each school in Central Goldfields Shire	- Local Laws.	- Year 1.
- 5.4 Ensure any dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs are properly identified and managed by their owners.	- Conduct annual audit of properties containing dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs.	- Local Laws.	- Annual
- 5.5 Ensure all dogs declared by Council are recorded on the Victorian Declared Dog Register.	- Annual audit completed.	- Local Laws.	- Annual.
- 5.6 Ensure Council's website has information on the importance of confining cats and the impact of wandering cats on wildlife.	- Links established.	- Local Laws	- Year 1

6. DOG FAECES			
OBJECTIVES: • <i>To ensure people remove their dog's faeces</i>	<i>from public places.</i>		
ACTION	TASK COMPLETION INDICATORS	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
- 6.1 Review all messages conveyed to the community in relation to dog faeces to ensure people 1) carry a bag and 2) pick up.	- Review completed.	- Local Laws	- Year 2
- 6.2 Ensure that penalty provisions are clearly stipulated on signage	- Signage review completed	- Local Laws	-
- 6.3 Introduce an education/enforcement campaign.	- Education and enforcement campaign completed.	- Local Laws	- Year 2
- 6.4 Evaluate the success of the dog faeces campaign.	- Evaluation completed.	- Local Laws	- Year 2

7. PROMOTING A PET FRIENDLY COMMUNITY			
<p>OBJECTIVES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To harness the health, companionship and social benefits of owning pets. Promote mutual respect and tolerance by all members of the community with respect to animal management issues. 			
ACTION	TASK COMPLETION INDICATORS	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
- 7.1 Provide information on choosing a pet that is appropriate to a person's lifestyle.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide links with breed choice information on Council's website. Release annual media release. Provide links with Pet Links type services on Council's website. 	- Local Laws	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Year 2 Annual Year 2
7.2 Ensure the needs of pet owners and the benefits of pet ownership are considered in Council strategic planning exercises.	- Feedback sought from and provided by Council's Animal Management Department in the development of all relevant plans and strategies.	- All Council departments.	- Ongoing
8. DOMESTIC ANIMAL BUSINESSES			
<p>OBJECTIVE:</p> <p>Ensure all Domestic Animal Businesses operate in accordance with statutory requirements and community expectations.</p>			
ACTION	TASK COMPLETION INDICATORS	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
- 8.1 Complete an annual audit of all domestic animal businesses.	- Audit completed.	- Local Laws.	- Annual.

9. STAFF TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT			
OBJECTIVE:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure all staff involved in animal management at Boroondara have the knowledge and skills necessary to carry out their work. 			
ACTION	TASK COMPLETION INDICATORS	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
- 9.1 Ensure qualifications and training for Council and contract staff involved in animal management are relevant and current.	- Maintain currency.	- Local Laws	- As required.
9.2 Conduct an annual skills audit.	- Audit completed.	- Local Laws.	- Annual
10. PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND REVIEW			
ACTION	TASK COMPLETION INDICATORS	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
- 10.1 Adopt the set of key performance indicators.	- KPIs adopted under the Plan	- Local Laws	- Year 1
- 10.2 Incorporate action plan into Departmental business plan, report and assign responsibility accordingly.	- Business Plan.	- Local Laws	- Annual
- 10.3 Review Plan as required.	- Plan reviewed and updated as required.	-	- Annual

11. ACCESS TO PUBLIC PLACES			
ACTION	TASK COMPLETION INDICATORS	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
OBJECTIVES: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of leash free areas throughout the municipality. • Ensure suitable areas for dogs and their owners to exercise and recreate. • Ensure the successful operation of off leash areas. 			
- 11.1 Audit parks for suitable and sufficient signage outlining on and off leash areas and dog faeces.	- Review completed.	- Local Laws	- Year 2
- 11.2 Ensure that off leash areas identify owners' responsibility to maintain control over animals.	- Review completed.	- Local Laws	- Year 2
- 11.3 Implement the recommendations	- Recommendations implemented.	- Local Laws	- Year 2/3