

Dog and Cat Management Plan 2023-2028



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Executive Summary

Every Council in South Australia is required by the *Dog and Cat Management Act 1995* (**the Act**) to prepare a Dog and Cat Management Plan (**the Plan**) that will guide its management of dogs and cats. The Plans are required to be prepared every 5 years and need to be approved by the Dog and Cat Management Board.

The Plan is based around the online portal – Dogs and Cats Online (**DACO**) – along with amendments to the Act, that include a suite of new requirements relating to both dogs and cats.

This is the Council's Dog and Cat Management Plan for 2023-2028, which was endorsed by Council at their Ordinary Meeting of 18 September 2023.

Key initiatives include:

- Various Action Plans.
- Community education on the suite of requirements applying to dogs and cats.
- Encouragement to all dog owners to participate in dog training programs.
- Investigation of an animal behaviourist/trainer to assist with resolving difficult nuisance dogs, including barking complaints.
- A Service Review/Feasibility Study of the case for introducing additional cat control and management initiatives, if and when required by Council.
- Investigation of the feasibility of Dog Parks being established in the Council area.
- Review of Council's role in relation to dog and cat management during emergency situations.

The District Council of Grant will continue to work with its community in relation to responsible and proper management of dogs and cats within the Council area at all times.

Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Plan

The Plan has been prepared to guide the District Council of Grant in relation to the management of dogs and cats kept by the community for the period 2023-2028. It has been prepared to comply with legislative requirements for dogs and cats.

Council's dog and cat management responsibilities are prescribed by the Act. The objectives of the Act are:

- *to encourage responsible dog and cat ownership;*
- *to reduce public and environmental nuisance caused by dogs and cats; and*
- *to promote effective management of dogs and cats.*

The Plan is based on the requirements of the Act and has been tailored to meet local priorities and to respond to feedback and input from the community, industry stakeholders, elected members, and Council staff.

1.2 How was the Draft Plan developed

Preparation of the Plan included a review of the Act, the existing Animal Management Plan, and the services provided by Council.

Initial input and feedback in preparing the Draft Plan was received from Council staff involved in dog and cat management. Input and feedback was also sought from the community and industry stakeholders.

Elected Members have considered the Plan on a number of occasions, including to endorse a community consultation approach for the Draft Plan, and to consider the community and industry stakeholder input and feedback received on the Plan as a result of the consultation. Council will further consider the Plan within six (6) months of any further changes to the Act being made.

1.3 Structure of the Plan

The structure of the Plan is as follows:

SECTION 2 provides a description of the District Council of Grant, an overview of the Council's responsibilities under the Act and a description of the Council's current dog and cat management service.

SECTION 3 provides an overview of the Plan.

SECTION 4 contains the Council's Action Plans.

Background

2.1 Profile of the District Council of Grant

The District Council of Grant is the most southern local government area in South Australia, located in the Limestone Coast Region. Situated on the southeast coast, it is bounded to the south and west by the Southern Ocean, the Victorian Border to the east, and the Wattle Range Council to the north and west. The Council encircles the local government area of the City of Mount Gambier.

The 2020 estimated resident population for the District Council of Grant is 8,619, with a population density of 0.05 persons per hectare. The population has grown by 0.41% since the previous year, compared to 0.58% growth in the City of Mount Gambier, and South Australia's growth of 1.01%.

The District Council of Grant is predominantly rural, with various townships which include Port MacDonnell, Tarpeena and a number of settlements. The Council area encompasses a total land area of about 1,900 square kilometres. Land is used largely for agriculture, particularly dairy, beef and sheep farming, and seed and grain growing, with some horticulture. Forestry and tourism are also important industries, with the rock lobster industry being significant at Port MacDonnell and Carpenter Rocks.

The District Council of Grant's mission is:

"To provide a range of services which meet the environmental, social and economic needs of our community".

2.2 Council's Dog and Cat Management Service

The Act provides the foundation for the Council's dog and cat management service. Each Council is responsible for administering and enforcing the provisions of the Act relating to dogs and cats within its area. Key features of Council's responsibilities under the Act are that:

- Dogs must be registered. Cats are not currently required to be registered in the District Council of Grant. Council may consider the introduction of mandatory cat registration following a detailed service review and community consultation. In the meantime, Council encourages all cat owners to register their cat(s) in the interests of responsible animal management.
- Dogs and cats must be microchipped and the details entered into Dogs and Cats Online.
- All dogs and cats born after 1st July 2018 must be desexed and the details entered into Dogs and Cats Online.
- Breeders of dogs and cats intending to sell the litters must be registered.
- People selling dogs and cats must give the new owner a written notice setting out the identity of the seller, the identity of the breeder, details of vaccinations and other treatments, information relating to the microchip, desexing and other relevant medical information, and in the case of dogs subject to control orders, details of the order.
- Dogs are not allowed to wander at large, attack a person or animal, or cause nuisance, defecate in a public place unless the owner immediately removes the faeces and disposes of it in a lawful and suitable manner. Dogs are required to be leashed on streets and roads.
- Councils have the power to seize and detain dogs.
- There are specific requirements in relation to the removal of cats from remote or fragile areas and in relation to unidentified cats in other areas.
- Councils have the power to make a range of by-laws in relation to the keeping of dogs and cats.

DOGS AND CATS ONLINE (DACO)

DACO is South Australia's mandatory database for the registration of dogs, cats, breeders, microchip and desexing information. Councils, veterinarians, microchip imPlanters, RSPCA and Animal Welfare Leagues can record and access certain information in DACO, and help return lost pets with registered microchips. DACO enables you to:

- Register dogs and cats;
- Pay registration fees;
- Keep details up-to-date; and
- Transfer ownership to new owners.

Further information regarding DACO can be found at:

<https://dogandcatboard.com.au/dogs-and-cats-online/about-dogs-and-cats-online>

FUNDING

Money received from dog registrations and expiations is spent on dog and cat management. A percentage of the funds received from dog registrations are paid to the Dog and Cat Management Board.

COUNCIL BY-LAWS

Council's By-law 2 relates to use of Local Government Land. Sections 9.5 and 10.1 regulate the presence of animals on Council owned land.

Council's By-law 5 relates to the management of Dogs. It covers:

- 1) Limits in dog numbers in private premises (Clause 7);
- 2) Dog exercises areas (Clause 8);
- 3) Dog on leash areas (Clause 9);
- 4) Dog prohibited areas (Clause 10);
- 5) Dog Faeces (Clause 11); and
- 6) Enforcement (Clause 13).

COUNCIL PARKS AND RESERVES – LEASH AND ACCESS REQUIREMENTS

An open space strategy shall be developed by the Council (**the Strategy**). The Strategy is intended to support a range of dog management controls in reserves across the district, whilst recognising the primary function of each reserve and the rights of park users. The Strategy should address, but is not limited to, the following:

- 1) A range of dog controls across the district, which recognises the primary function of each reserve and the needs of other park users;
- 2) Input of dog owners regarding the planning and development of open space areas will be sought during consultation with the general community;
- 3) The need for initiatives regarding the management of dog faeces in public places; and
- 4) The sourcing of funding for the implementation of faeces management (i.e. dog bag dispensers, etc) provided at parks and facilities.

POUND SERVICE

Council's pound service is operated via a fee-for-service model whereby Council has the ability to and will continue to house seized dogs up to the expiration of the 72 hour mandated hold period. Following that, Council's chosen service provider will take possession of the dog(s). Unclaimed dogs will be rehomed through one of Council's endorsed service providers.



CATS

Whilst Council is eagerly awaiting direction and advice from both the Act reform and the Dog and Cat Management Board, Council will take the following approach, noting that Council does not currently have appropriate facilities to house cats:

- In the case of cats that present as obviously domestic and where ownership is able to be established (i.e. via a microchip or collar with identification tag attached), Council will assist with returning the cat to its owner(s). In the event such cat(s) are found to not comply with the mandatory requirements regarding microchipping and desexing, owners may be required to prove compliance with such requirements before the cat(s) will be returned to them.
- In the case of feral cats:
 - Cats that are not microchipped and not registered with no identification and are found more than 1km from a residential dwelling will be considered “feral” for the purposes of this Plan.
 - Whilst still in the negotiation and planning phase, Council is considering entering into a fee-for-service model with the Limestone Coast Landscape Board regarding the management and control of feral cats, particularly in areas where feral cats are a significant problem.
 - Council will continue to hire out cat traps to members of the public.
 - In addition to the mandatory requirements of microchipping of cats and desexing of cats born after 1 July 2018, cat owners are encouraged to:
 - Sterilise any pet cat(s) before it reaches sexual maturity (which can be as early as four or five months of age);
 - At the time of obtaining a new cat or kitten, have a veterinarian check the animal over and provide all necessary vaccination and worming treatments;
 - Ensure your cat is easily identifiable with a collar and clear owner contact details; and
 - Keep your cat(s) indoors and unable to roam free between dusk and dawn, to minimise the risk of nocturnal cat fights and to protect both your cat and native wildlife.

Council’s approach to cat management will be further reviewed at the time the legislative review of the Act is completed, insofar as this Plan is inconsistent with legislation, or at any other time necessary (i.e. where advice from the Dog and Cat Management Board is received which is contrary to this Plan).

ANIMAL MANAGEMENT DATA

The following is a summary of the District Council of Grant's animal management statistics for the period 2022-2023.

Animal Management Data 2022-2023	
Total dog registrations	2982
Total cat registrations	509
Total number of microchipped cats	707
Total expiations issued	18
Number of court cases	0
Total court actions for year	0
Number of dogs impounded	19
Number of dogs impounded and subsequently returned to the owner	15
Number of reported of dog attacks (including harassment)	18
Number of Authorised Officers	15

Plan Overview

This section provides an overview of the Plan and the key recommendations contained in the following Action Plans.

The introduction of DACO and the amended legislative requirements resulted in significant changes to the way dogs and cats are managed in South Australia. DACO enables Council to access data to ensure registration, microchipping and desexing requirements are met. This exercise will be undertaken each year.

The Dog and Cat Management Board provides resources to the community and Council on responsible pet ownership. Council provides this information on its website.

A focus of this Plan is to provide education on the requirements applying to dogs and cats.

Reducing and managing dog attacks is a core focus. In addition to current initiatives, Council will encourage dog owners to enrol their dogs in formal dog training.

Council recognises the importance of providing a range of places for dogs to be exercised on and off the leash. Council will investigate establishing dog parks. An existing policy will be amended to include where and when dog waste facilities will be provided in public parks and reserves.

Council responds to a number of barking dog complaints each year. Most complaints are resolved in a few weeks. Some can take several months, and in some cases longer causing considerable angst to all parties and consuming many hours of Council Officer time. The actions in the Plan that encourage dog owners to participate in formal dog training could also assist in preventing barking dog problems.

Improved animal management data collection and collation will be planned and commenced, as a reference source for future use by Council.

Action Plans

The Plan contains the following Action Plans:

ACTION PLAN 1	Registration of dogs
ACTION PLAN 2	Microchipping & desexing of dogs and cats
ACTION PLAN 3	Dog and cat breeders
ACTION PLAN 4	Educating the community in responsible pet ownership
ACTION PLAN 5	Dog attacks & dogs wandering at large
ACTION PLAN 6	Dogs in Council reserves and other public places
ACTION PLAN 7	Barking dogs
ACTION PLAN 8	Cat management
ACTION PLAN 9	Unwanted/unowned dogs and cats
ACTION PLAN 10	Emergency management
ACTION PLAN 11	Training of Authorised Officers

Action Plan 1

Dog registration

Objective

To ensure that dogs are registered in accordance with the requirements of the Act.

Discussion

Dogs over the age of three (3) months are required to be registered.

With the introduction of DACO, dog registrations are now managed by the Dog and Cat Management Board, which sends out annual registration reminders and tags. Council is responsible for promoting and ensuring people register their dogs.

Council can set its own registration fees including any rebates. These need to be entered into DACO to allow the system to charge the correct fee.

There are two key challenges associated with dog registration: firstly, obtaining the initial registration, and secondly, ensuring people re-register annually.

Council has information on its website about registration requirements and follows up those who have not re-registered their dog.

DACO allows cross-referencing of registrations against microchip data. For non South Australian dogs and cats, further microchip information can be obtained by contacting Central Animal Records.

It is known that many people mistakenly believe that if their dog is microchipped, then this means it is registered. In addition, some people don't know if cats are required to be registered or not. An action for the life of this Plan is to develop and disseminate to the community a simple Information Brochure of the animal management requirements that apply to dogs, cats, and new generations of dogs and cats. This will include the requirement that dogs are registered by the age of three (3) months. Details on how the Information Brochure will be disseminated to the community will be developed via Action Plan 5.

Actions & Strategies		Key Measures	Resources	Timeline
1.1	Undertake spot registration checks of dogs in Council reserves and other public places	Spot checks	Within existing resources	Annual
1.2	Cross reference registration and microchip data to uncover unregistered dogs	Number of dogs that are registered in accordance with the requirements of the Act	Within existing resources	Annual
1.3	Review procedures for enforcing dog registrations	Review	Within existing resources	Year 2

Action Plan 2

Microchipping and Desexing of dogs and cats

Objective

To ensure that dogs and cats are microchipped and desexed in accordance with the requirements of the Act.

Discussion

Microchipping

With the introduction of DACO and amendments to the Act, all dogs and cats are required to be microchipped. Approved microchip imPlanters are required to upload the details of the animals they microchip on to DACO.

This will help to return pets to their owners, and help to distinguish between owned and unowned dogs and cats.

New procedures have been implemented to manage and enforce these requirements. These procedures will be reviewed midway through the implementation of the Plan.

Community education is required to ensure pet owners are aware of the new mandatory microchipping requirement. An action for the life of this Plan is to develop and disseminate to the community a simple Information Brochure of the animal management requirements that apply to dogs, cats, and new generations of dogs and cats. This will include the requirement that all dogs and cats are microchipped.

Desexing

With the introduction of DACO and amendments to the Act, all dogs and cats born after 1st July 2018 are required to be desexed. Veterinarians are required to upload the details of the animals they desex to DACO.

The desexing requirement may help to reduce the number of unwanted and unowned animals. It has the potential to reduce dog attacks, the number of dogs and cats found wandering at large, and the number of unwanted/unowned dogs and cats over the long term.

Council is now able to cross reference animals included on the database to check for animals that are not desexed and follow up as appropriate.

An action for the life of this Plan is to develop and disseminate to the community a simple Information Brochure of the animal management requirements that apply to dogs and cats. This will include the requirement that all dogs and cats over the age of 6 months are desexed. It will also encourage owners of older dogs to consider getting their dogs desexed since non desexed dogs are more likely to be involved in a dog attack than those that are desexed. Details on how the Information Brochure will be disseminated to the community is detailed in Action Plan 5.



MICROCHIPPING

	Actions & Strategies	Key Measures	Resources	Timeline
2.1	Undertake spot microchip checks of dogs in Council reserves and other public places	Spot checks	Within existing resources	Annual
2.2	Include microchipping requirements in the <i>Dog and Cat Requirements in District Council of Grant</i> Information Brochure.	Information Brochure. Number of dogs and cats that are microchipped in accordance with the requirements of the Act	Within existing resources	Year 1
2.3	Review procedures for dealing with enforcing microchipping of dogs and cats	Review to be undertaken. Procedures updated as appropriate.	Within existing resources	Year 3



DESEXING

	Actions & Strategies	Key Measures	Resources	Timeline
2.4	Cross reference registration and microchip data to uncover unregistered dogs	Number of dogs that are microchipped and registered in accordance with the requirements of the Act	Within existing resources	Annual
2.5	Include registration requirements in the <i>District Council of Grant</i> Information Brochure.	Information Brochure completed	Within existing resources	Year 1
2.6	Conduct an annual review of the Plan's currency, implementation and performance against key measures.	Annual review to be conducted	Within existing resources	Annual
2.7	Check DACO database for dogs that are not desexed in accordance with the requirements of the Act.	Number of dogs and cats that are desexed in accordance with the requirements of the Act	Within existing resources	Annual
2.8	Include the mandatory desexing requirement in the <i>Dog and Cat Requirements in the District Council of Grant</i> Information Brochure.	Information Brochure completed Number of dogs and cats that are microchipped in accordance with the requirements of the Act	Within existing resources	Year 1
2.9	Investigate Council's possible involvement with a discounted desexing program.	Review undertaken	TBA	Year 1
2.10	Review procedures for dealing with mandatory desexing of dogs and cats	Review to be undertaken. Procedures updated as appropriate.	Within existing resources	Year 3

Action Plan 3

Dog and cat breeders

Objectives

To ensure the community is aware of the requirement to obtain dogs and cats from a registered breeder.

To ensure that breeders of dogs and cats are registered in accordance with the requirements of the Act.

Discussion

With the introduction of DACO, breeders selling dogs and/or cats they have bred are required to register on DACO. The new legislation requires breeders to include their registration number in any relevant advertisement including sales online. People wishing to obtain a pet must do so from a registered breeder.

An action for the life of this Plan is to develop and disseminate to the community a simple Information Brochure of the animal management requirements that apply to dogs, cats, and new generations of dogs and cats. This will include the requirement that all dogs and cats need to be bred from and obtained from a registered breeder. Details on how the Information Brochure will be disseminated to the community is detailed in Action Plan 5.

Actions & Strategies		Key Measures	Resources	Timeline
3.1	Include the requirement to obtain dogs and cats from a registered breeder in the <i>Dog and Cats Requirements in the District Council of Grant</i> Information Brochure.	Number of residents who are aware of the requirement	Within existing resources	Year 1 Ongoing
3.2	Enforce compliance with the breeder registration requirement	Breeders registered as required	Within existing resources	Ongoing

Action Plan 4

Educating the community in responsible pet ownership

Objective

To implement appropriate community education activities designed to achieve responsible pet ownership.

Discussion

Council will continue to provide information about responsible pet ownership on its website, social media channels, and other communications channels. This will include links to the Dog and Cat Management Board's website. This information will be maintained and reviewed where appropriate.

Council believes that any additional education efforts it undertakes should be carefully focused and targeted. This is primarily because of the limitations of a small geographic area and limited resources available to an individual Council.

Council will have one education focus for the life of this Plan. Its objective will be to ensure the community knows the different requirements applying to dogs and cats. It will highlight the difference between registration and microchipping (a known source of confusion), the different ages at which registration and desexing must be completed, Council's local law requirements, and set out other parameters of responsible pet ownership such as the benefits of confining cats and the training and socialisation of puppies and dogs. It will set out the requirements as simply as possible in an Information Brochure that will be disseminated throughout the District and online. Its fundamental objective will be to ensure that all residents are aware of the different animal management requirements applying in the District Council of Grant.

	Actions & Strategies	Key Measures	Resources	Timeline
4.1	Review all education material presently provided by Council and expand and update as appropriate	Review to be undertaken	Within existing resources	Year 3 Year 5
4.2	Develop the <i>Dog and Cat Requirements in the District Council of Grant</i> Information Brochure	Information Brochure to be completed	Within existing resources	Year 1
4.3	Develop a dissemination strategy for the <i>Dog and Cat Requirements in the District Council of Grant</i> Information Brochure	Dissemination strategy developed and implemented Number of residents correctly following current requirement	Within existing resources	Year 1 Ongoing

Action Plan 5

Dog attacks

Objectives

To reduce the number and severity of dog attacks.

To optimise Council's procedures for dealing with dangerous dogs.

Discussion

There are two main issues relating to dog attacks:

- Managing dogs that have attacked a human or animal; and,
- Preventing future dog attacks via patrols, enforcement of legislation, and educating the community about dog behaviour and bite avoidance.

The number of reported dog attacks in the Council area is not high, however reducing risk and responding to those that do occur is a core animal management role. This includes dogs that attack, harass, chase or otherwise endanger the health of a person, animal or bird owned by or in the charge of another person (whether or not actual injury is caused).

The RSPCA's Information Paper Preventing Dog Attacks in the Community (2015) states that a prevention strategy for dog attacks must contain the following key elements:

- Registration and microchipping of all dogs – so that all dogs are traceable to their owners and that owners can be directly informed of their responsibilities.
- Control of unrestrained and free roaming dogs.
- Provisions for the control of menacing dogs.
- Desexing of non-breeding dogs – this is because entire male dogs are at greater risk of aggression and female entire dogs add to this risk by attracting entire males.
- Education of the public, and in particular children in dog behaviour and bite prevention.
- Training of owners and dogs – training programs based on positive reinforcement techniques provide an opportunity to educate owners on responsible dog ownership, basic dog behaviour, and use of appropriate training techniques.
- Socialisation of dogs with people and other animals – because unsocialised dogs are more likely to show aggressive behaviour.

Council has standard operating procedures for dealing with dog attacks and dogs that are wandering at large. Council Staff also patrol Council reserves and streets. These procedures will be reviewed and updated where appropriate.

Some veterinarians provide puppy pre-school. These programs teach puppies how to interact with strangers, other puppies, loud noises and even children. Owners also gain knowledge about pet care. Council will encourage puppy owners to enrol in these programs.

Training beyond puppy pre-school is also important. Options include obedience classes and training in the home with a dog behaviourist. Council will encourage residents to have their dog undergo training.

Dogs wandering at large

Objective

To reduce the incidence of dogs found to be wandering at large.

Discussion

Dogs that are wandering at large are a risk to the safety of the community and themselves. A major contributing factor to dog attacks that occur in public places is the inadequate confinement of dogs at their home property.

Council has standard operating procedures for dealing with dogs that are wandering at large including trapping/capture of wandering dogs, park and street patrols, and information and educational material. This material will be reviewed and updated as appropriate.

DOG ATTACKS

	Actions & Strategies	Key Measures	Resources	Timeline
5.1	Augment the information on Council's website about the known causes of dog attacks and the importance of socialising and training puppies and dogs. Provide links to puppy pre-school and dog training programs	Website to be updated	Within existing resources	Year 2
5.2	Write to each school in the Council area to remind them of the importance that all children receive training in bite avoidance, and to consider engaging with the Dog and Cat Management Board's dog bite prevention campaign, <i>Good Dogs Bad Days</i>	Responsibility assigned	Within existing resources	Annually

DOGS WANDERING AT LARGE

	Actions & Strategies	Key Measures	Resources	Timeline
5.3	Review Council's procedures for dealing with dogs wandering at large and update as appropriate	Quarterly reviews held	Within existing resources	Year 2
5.4	Review existing education material for its content on the importance of securely confining dogs, and the implications if a dog is found wandering at large	Review to be undertaken	Within existing resources	Year 2



Action Plan 6

Dogs in Council reserves and other public places

Objectives

To provide appropriate places for dogs to be exercised off the leash.

To ensure dog owners comply with the requirements that dogs are exercised on the leash where required, and under effective control of a responsible person in off leash areas.

Discussion

Dogs are required to be leashed in all public places except designated dog parks.

Council Officers patrol public places to ensure dogs are leashed/kept under effective control as required, and that owners dispose of their dog's faeces appropriately.

Dog parks are places where dogs can be exercised off the leash providing they are kept under effective control of a responsible person at all times. They provide an alternative form of exercise and are a place where dogs can socialise around other dogs and humans. They are also popular with dog owners.

Council will investigate creating a dog park or parks, during the life of this Plan.

In line with By Law No. 5, Council has endorsed a number of "dog on-leash" and "dog prohibited" areas throughout the district. A list of these can be found at <https://www.dcgrant.sa.gov.au/services/animalmanagement/dogs/dog-on-leash-and-dog-prohibited-areas>. Dogs are able to be exercised in any other public place in the Council area off-leash, however it is an expectation that any dog in any public place remain under effective control at all times, whether by use of a leash or otherwise.

Dog owners are required to remove and dispose of their dog's faeces from public places. Dog waste disposal bags are provided in several Council reserves and are maintained by Council's outside staff. Council receives periodic requests for additional dog waste bag dispensers to be provided. A Council Policy will be amended to include the number and location of dog waste bag dispensers.

Actions & Strategies		Key Measures	Resources	Timeline
6.1	Continue to patrol Council's streets parks and reserves to ensure dog owners are complying with the requirements relating to leashing, effective control and disposing of dog faeces	Number of patrols	Within existing resources	Ongoing
6.2	Investigate the creation of a dog park or parks in the Council area.	Review to be undertaken	Within existing resources	Year 2 and Year 5
6.3	Include the requirements relating to dogs in public places in the Dog and Cats Requirements Information Brochure	Number of residents who are aware of and comply with the requirement	Within existing resources	Year 1 Ongoing

6.4	Develop a Map showing designated off leash areas within the District	Map	Within existing resources	Year 1
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Action Plan 7

Nuisance barking

Objectives

To reduce the number of barking dog complaints.

To optimise procedures for resolving barking dog complaints.

Discussion

The Council is responsible for investigating barking dog complaints. If a complaint is proven, the owner can be fined or taken to Court.

There are two issues with nuisance barking: firstly, reducing the number of complaints, and secondly optimising the way that complaints received are managed.

The reasons dogs bark excessively can include:

- External stimuli (e.g. passersby, other dogs barking, possums and cats)
- Separation anxiety
- Territoriality (visitors to the property)
- Boredom
- Neglect
- Poor health
- Lack of space or exercise

Often the owner is not at home to hear or stop the barking, which can also become a learned response/entrenched habit. With difficult cases, the owner may not have the skill and/or commitment to resolving the problem.

Council has standard operating procedures in place to deal with barking dog complaints. Council provides information to assist people to reduce the incidence of problem barking. Council Staff can also assist owners with suggestions on reducing a nuisance barking problem.

Prevention

Prevention should be the starting point because once excessive barking becomes entrenched it is often harder to resolve.

New dog owners will be encouraged to attend puppy preschool and/or dog training to reduce the incidence of excessive barking. This can be instrumental in achieving awareness and prevention. The importance of regular exercise and an enriching home environment will also be emphasised as these can help to reduce the number of problems.

Resolution

In most cases, nuisance barking is resolved quickly using Council's standard operating procedures. However, in some cases, the barking has become entrenched and/or the owner does not have the skill to resolve the problem. In these cases, many hours of Council Officer time can be spent trying to resolve the problem. It is considered that the involvement of a professional dog behaviourist or dog trainer could help to identify the cause of the barking and actions required to reduce the nuisance.

Council will investigate the use of a dog behaviourist or trainer to assist with difficult nuisance barking complaints. Such a program could include consultation with a dog behaviourist/trainer in one or more sessions. To be eligible,

it would require commitment by the owner and their acknowledgement of the problem. An investigation and analysis of this type of program will be undertaken.

	Actions & Strategies	Key Measures	Resources	Timeline
7.1	Continue to use Council's standard operating procedures for investigating nuisance barking complaints	Number of nuisance barking complaints successfully resolved	Within existing resources	Ongoing
7.2	Update education material on the importance of early socialisation and training of puppies and dogs to reduce the incidence of nuisance barking Disseminate the information via Council's website, social media and other communications platforms	Information updated Posts to Council's social media and other communications platforms	Within existing resources	Year 2
7.3	Investigate and conduct a cost benefit analysis of the involvement of a dog behaviourist / trainer in difficult nuisance barking complaints	Cost benefit analysis completed If appropriate trial and review and program Number of nuisance barking complaints successfully resolved	TBA	Year 3 Year 3-5

Action Plan 8

Cat control and management

Objective

To implement a cat control and management regime that reflects the views of the local community.

Discussion

The new microchip and mandatory desexing requirements are important steps in addressing cat control and management.

Council does not receive a large number of complaints about cats.

The Act provides Council with the opportunity to explore options relating to the registration and/or confinement of cats to their home property. These issues will be considered in a Service Review/Feasibility Study into cat management taking into account legislative obligations, adjoining council cat management services, and community views.

Council will also provide ongoing education activities including the benefits of confining cats to their home property.

	Actions & Strategies	Key Measures	Resources	Timeline
8.1	Undertake a service review/feasibility study into cat management	Review to be undertaken	TBA	Year 1-2
8.2	Include information on Council's website on cat control and management, including the benefits of confining cats to their home property	Responsibility assigned	Within existing resources	Year 1
8.3	Include the fact that cats are not required to be registered or confined to their home property in the Dog and Cats Requirements Information Brochure	Number of residents who are aware of the requirement	Within existing resources	Year 1 Ongoing

Action Plan 9

Unidentified, unowned and unwanted dogs and cats

Objective

To ensure unidentified, unowned and unwanted dogs and cats are dealt with in accordance with the requirements of the Act.

Discussion

Council utilises the services of third party providers to hold impounded dogs that are not registered or are unclaimed after the prescribed time under the Act.

Council will also review and reconsider a further tri-partied agreement with the City of Mount Gambier and an appropriate third party provider capable of housing impounded dogs during the life of this plan.

	Actions & Strategies	Key Measures	Resources	Timeline
9.1	Review procedures for dealing with unidentified, unowned and unwanted dogs and cats	Review to be undertaken. Procedures updated as appropriate.	Within existing resources	Year 3
9.2	Decide on a possible facility for detaining cats	Responsibility assigned	Within existing resources	Year 1



Action Plan 10

Emergency management

Objectives

To clarify Council's animal management and welfare role in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from bushfires and other emergencies.

Discussion

Council's role in planning for and preparing for emergency situations, including bushfires, needs to be better clarified. This could include information and reminders about preparing for, responding to, and recovering from emergencies. It could also clarify Council's role in accommodating dogs and cats before, during and following emergency events.

	Actions & Strategies	Key Measures	Resources	Timeline
10.1	Clarify Council's role in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from bushfires and other emergencies	Review undertaken	Within existing resources	Year 2
10.2	Disseminate information to the community as appropriate about emergency management and animal management/welfare	Information disseminated to the community	Within existing resources	Year 2

Action Plan 11

Training of Authorised Officers

Objective

To ensure Council Staff involved in animal management have appropriate and required knowledge and skills to carry out their responsibilities.

Discussion

Council's animal management service requires specialist staff who require ongoing training.

Actions & Strategies		Key Measures	Resources	Timeline
11.1	Ensure Authorised Officers and other Staff involved in delivering the animal management service have appropriate training	Type and number of training sessions attended by staff.	Within existing resources	Ongoing

Appendix

Community feedback in relation to the Plan

Council undertook community consultation from 3 June 2022 to 24 June 2022, via Council's online feedback platforms (Council's Facebook page, YourSay page and website). In addition, Council published a media release promoting the draft Plan and a notice in the Community Newsletter.

Council received a total of six (6) responses to the consultation. A summary of the feedback received is outlined below:

- Cats and cat management in general pose a concern to the community. As a result, consideration of the following is needed:
 - Enforcement of microchipping of cats;
 - ID collars to be mandatory.
 - Desexing of male cats to be mandatory.
 - Cat management needs to be a higher priority for Council.
- Council should consider involvement in a discounted desexing program (particularly in relation to cats), with consideration of the following:
 - Cats by nature are more likely to roam than dogs, presenting a higher opportunity to breed.
 - Compulsory requirements for cats are much lower than for dogs in South Australia.
 - Whilst a discounted desexing program is supported in encouraging desexing of domestic cats, veterinary clinics should not be financially disadvantaged as a result of such a scheme by having to personally bear the cost of such discounting. If Council is not willing to bear the costs of a discounted program, animal owners need to be made aware of the full costs of these services and/or full transparency around the how's and why's of any discounting program (i.e. due to funding, etc).
 - Further promotion around this would be welcomed, particularly encouraging both dog and cat owners to consider the costs of desexing and other responsible animal owner requirements prior to owning an animal.
- With little ability for Council to house cats, there is a significant impact on local veterinary clinics and animal rescue organisations to try and re-home stray cats, with the majority of them being extremely difficult to identify.
- Increased education of the community about responsible pet ownership, including appropriate fencing and enclosures, collars and identification, etc.
- Encourage responsible buying of pets from registered breeders and animal welfare organisations.
- Encouragement of dog training for dog owners and socialisation and building better relationships between owners and neighbours.
- Consideration of dog parks
- Clear guidelines around dog on and off-leash areas