

CENTRAL GOLDFIELDS SHIRE COUNCIL



Domestic Animal Management Plan

2017 – 2021

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1. DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLANS OVERVIEW

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

68A Councils to prepare domestic animal management plans

- (1) Every Council must, in consultation with the Secretary (*of the Department of Primary Industries*), prepare at four-year intervals a domestic animal management plan.
- (2) A domestic animal management plan prepared by a Council must—
 - (a) Set out a method for evaluating whether the animal control services provided by the Council in its municipal district are adequate to give effect to the requirements of this Act and the regulations; and
 - (b) Outline programs for the training of authorised officers to ensure that they can properly administer and enforce the requirements of this Act in the Council's municipal district; and
 - (c) Outline programs, services and strategies which the Council intends to pursue in its municipal district—
 - (i) To promote and encourage the responsible ownership of dogs and cats; and
 - (ii) To ensure that people comply with this Act, the regulations and any related legislation; and
 - (iii) To minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals; and
 - (iv) To address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats; and
 - (v) To encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats; and
 - (vi) To minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance; and
 - (vii) To effectively identify all dangerous dogs, menacing dogs and restricted breed dogs in that district and to ensure that those dogs are kept in compliance with this Act and the regulations; and
 - (d) provide for the review of existing orders made under this Act and local laws that relate to the Council's municipal district with a view to determining whether further orders or local laws dealing with the management of dogs and cats in the municipal district are desirable; and
 - (e) Provide for the review of any other matters related to the management of dogs and cats in the Council's municipal district that it thinks necessary; and
 - (f) Provide for the periodic evaluation of any program, service, strategy or review outlined under the plan.
- (3) Every Council must—

- (a) Review its domestic animal management plan annually and, if appropriate, amend the plan; and
- (b) Provide the Secretary with a copy of the plan and any amendments to the plan; and
- (c) Publish an evaluation of its implementation of the plan in its annual report.

Central Goldfields Shire

Central Goldfields Shire is located in the central part of the state. It covers an area of 1,534 square kilometres and has a population of 12,575. It includes the towns of Bealiba, Carisbrook, Dunolly, Maryborough and Talbot. It was formed in 1995 from the amalgamation of the City of Maryborough, most of the Shire of Tullaroop and parts of the Shire of Bet Bet and the Shire of Clunes and Talbot.

The Shire is governed and administered by the **Central Goldfields Shire Council**; its administrative centre is located in Maryborough, it also has a service centre located in Talbot. The Shire is named after the region having historically been a major goldfields region in Central Victoria.

2. INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this Domestic Animal Management plan is to provide The Central Goldfields Shire Council with a strategic framework that delivers policy, direction and action plan to deliver quality animal management for the next four years. The shire plays an important role in supporting and promoting responsible pet ownership. The object of this plan is to build on the success of previous Domestic Animal Management plans and strengthen our animal management practices which are based on education, excellent service delivery and enforcement of legislation requirements.

The Domestic Animal Management Plan will ensure that the Shire will meet its obligations under the Domestic Animals Act, 1994. We will continue to use a mix of regulatory and educational approaches to promote responsible pet ownership within the Shire.

This plan focuses predominantly on Cats and Dogs (registered animals), the Animal Management other domestic animals / pets are done through the planning provisions, legislative provisions including the prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 (POCTA) set by State and or Local Governments.

There are proven health benefits to pet ownership for people, including physical, mental and emotional improvements. Dogs and cats make wonderful companions and provide many emotional and physical benefits; they have the ability to form special bonds with their owners. They form a special relationship in families but more so in single person households where they can boost self-esteem and improve health and wellbeing. In recent years, dogs are also serving an important role in aged care centres, hospitals and as support animals.

Our Goals for animal management are

- To create an environment where people and pets can peacefully co-exist in the community;
- To inform and educate the community and to promote responsible pet ownership
- To promote the welfare and health of pets in the community
- To protect people and animals from attacks by dogs and cats.

Key issues for the delivery of animal management within the central Goldfields Shire are;

- Compliance with registration of dogs and cats
- Dogs wandering and at large
- The large size of the shire
- Dog attacks on livestock in rural areas of the shire
- Cats in residential and rural areas which are semi owned by persons who feed them but take no responsibility for registration, desexing or microchipping
- Feral cat colonies in rural areas.

Elements of the domestic animal management plan

The plan builds on the good work undertaken by Council to date enhancing the management of domestic animals in key specific areas such as

- Pet registration and identification;
- Training of authorised officers;
- Nuisance pets;
- Dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs;
- Dog attacks;
- Overpopulation and high euthanasia;
- Domestic animal businesses;
- Promoting a pet-friendly community;
- Annual review of the plan and annual reporting;
- Responsible pet ownership;
- Barking dogs;
- Encouragement of building cat proof fencing and cat enclosures;
- Impounding of stray or wandering and lost dogs and cats;
- Supply of cat traps and pick up of trapped cats;
- Annual microchipping, pet education and free health check days in collaboration with Maryborough Veterinary practice.

Processes applied in developing the plan

In preparing the Domestic Animal Management (DAM) Plan existing animal management operations were reviewed including all procedures, local laws and orders. The strategic context was reviewed including plans and strategies that are relevant to animal management.

Role of other stakeholders

Local Veterinary Practice: Local Vet/s plays an important role in our animal management plan. Our Rangers and staff work closely with the practice especially in the area of the Animal Health Management plan and ensuring all animals in the Shire pound are vaccinated as soon as possible to minimise the chance of spreading disease or infections. They also play an important role in the education of pet owners and distribute Animal registrations forms to new clients on behalf of the Council. The practice runs an on-call service after hours and is always available for advice when approached. Other parts of the shire are serviced by Veterinary clinics in Bendigo, Castlemaine and Creswick.

The Department of Primary Industries (DPI): DPI has a range of responsibilities associated with the administration and enforcement of the Act. It also facilitates research and educational programs for domestic animals as well as literature which is distributed by Council to animal owners.

Local media: Local media assists the Council to promote responsible pet ownership, programmes run by the Shire in conjunction with other stakeholders such as schools and the veterinary practice. We also use local media to promote dogs and cats at the pound which are available for adoption. We feature a “pet of the week in the local paper” to encourage animal adoption.

Social media: Council uses social media to promote activities and news within the Council area, and we have recently commenced including animal management and featured pets on the pages. We also have a facebook page promoting dogs and cats in the Shire pound available for adoption.

Neighbouring Councils: Council maintains regular contact with bordering shires and value the input of shared information and education.

Pet owners: Pet owners are encouraged through media and education programmes to choose an appropriate pet to suit their circumstances and lifestyle. Our Shire rangers and staff are available to assist and will if required visit homes to advise pet owners in relation to various matters.

Domestic animal businesses: There are five domestic animal businesses operating in the Central Goldfields Shire. The DPI provides codes of practice for the operation of breeding and rearing establishments, shelters and pounds. Council inspects each domestic animal business annually as part of the permit renewal process.

3. STAFF AND TRAINING

Central Goldfields Shire has one full-time Local laws Coordinator, one full-time Local Laws Officer/Animal Ranger and one part-time Animal Ranger. There is a staff member available every day for after-hours call outs for animal management duties. All staff are required to perform regular animal enforcement duties. All three of our Officers are trained across both animal management and local laws duties.

It is a requirement that all staff are authorised officers under the Domestic Animals Act and also that they have achieved a Certificate IV in Animal Control and regulation and Certificate IV in Government (Statutory Compliance). We currently have one staff member undertaking these courses which will be completed mid in 2018. We have one ranger qualified as a microchip implanter. In addition, our current training and development activities include

- Service delivery training in accordance with the principles of continuous improvement;
- Specific training related to animal management;
- Participation in Council training programs such as risk management, conflict management and other relevant courses;
- Ongoing training in relation to occupational health and safety issues and risks;
- Training with specialist equipment such as animal catch poles and cat traps as required;
- Ongoing training in relation to the gathering of evidence for court proceedings such as note taking, photographs and preparation of statements and other documents as required.
- All staff participate in their own research and education, and we have an open sharing of information to ensure best practices and continuous improvement.
- All staff are encouraged to undergo further development training and assistance with funding provided when possible.
- Annual skills audits are conducted.
- All Government updates and information notices are forwarded to all officers for information and notation.

All staff receive an average of 30 hours training per annum this is both internal and external training and information sessions. A training record for individual officers detailing completed and proposed training is maintained by the Council Human Resources Department. Council has recently upgraded their records Management system, and all staff have been trained to use the system to effectively reduce the quantity of paperwork and the keeping of documents manually.

4. REGISTRATION AND IDENTIFICATION.

Section 68 (A)(2)(c)(v) of the Domestic Animals Act (DAA) requires Council to outline programs, services and strategies to encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats. The purpose of animal registrations is to provide a dog and cat population and to provide funding for domestic animal management. A proportion of all registrations are 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, especially in rural areas where many working dogs may be microchipped but not registered and many cats are neither microchipped or registered. However, this is extremely difficult to quantify. It is known that registration rates are higher for dogs than cats.

It is a known fact that a registered and identifiable domestic animal has a much higher chance of being returned home and reduces the stress to both the owner and the pet is found wandering. Our current programs, services and strategies to encourage the registration of dogs and cats include;

- Central Goldfields Shire Council sends registration reminder notices out annually to all pet owners
- Pet registration information sheets are now included in all new resident information packs
- Half price registrations are available from November 30th to April 9th Each year.
- Providing a range of easy payment methods
- Enforcement of legislative requirements of the Act and local laws pertaining to the registration and microchipping of animals
- Education, warnings and notices to comply are the preferred methods of dealing with irresponsible pet owners, the use of infringement notices and Court proceedings are used as a last resort.
- Extensive use of local media and our own social media websites to promote registration requirements
- Extensive use of local media and our own social media websites to promote responsible pet ownership
- Providing a microchipping service at a discounted rate.
- A current programme to assist pet owners to update their microchipping details at Central Animal Records.
- An annual day in conjunction with The Local Veterinary Practice to microchip, register and give a free basic health check on domestic animals
- Central Goldfields Shire currently run a cat de-sexing program which pays for all cats from our pound to be de-sexed prior to adoption. The program also assists in discounted de-sexing on a case by case basis.
- Council registration forms are distributed to all new clients who attend at the Maryborough veterinary Practice

- All complaints are attended to promptly and registration, and identification checks are made in relation to each complaint
- Regular patrols are conducted upon request
- Ensuring all seized animals and impounded animals are microchipped and registered prior to returning them to their owner
- Follow up registration notifications received on all animals adopted from other centres or animal breeding businesses
- Regular cat trapping provided for residents.
- Our staff conduct a door knock on one street per week to conduct registration audits.
- Follow up each year (June) of animal registrations from the previous year which have not been renewed with a view to having registration paid or removal of the animal from our database.
- Registration forms and information are available on Council website.

Our council will continue all the above initiatives to maximise the number of registered and identifiable domestic animals to aid compliance activities and to help reunite lost pets with their owners. The promotion of pet registration, identification and responsible ownership will continue to be our highest priorities.

DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT STATISTICS 2016

| <u>DOGS</u> | <u>2016</u> |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|
| Number of registered dogs | 3408 |
| Number of declared menacing dogs | 5 |
| Number of dogs impounded | 282 |
| Number of dogs returned to owner | 188 |
| Number of dogs rehoused | 92 |
| Number of dogs euthanized | 13 |
| | |
| <u>CATS</u> | |
| Number of registered cats | 965 |
| Number of cats impounded | 207 |
| Number of cats returned to owner | 30 |
| Number of cats rehoused | 92 |

5. NUISANCE

Dog Attacks

Any reported incidents of dogs attacking or rushing are fully investigated in a timely manner and appropriate action taken against the dog owner. Any action taken against the owner is with the consultation of the victim. In the case of an attack against another animal, Council attempts to assist the victim by negotiating payments of restitution or veterinary accounts where possible. We have a current animal attack form which serves as a checklist for the officer investigating reports. In the last 12 months Council have obtained a dog trap which has been successful in trapping two dogs in rural areas where attacks on sheep have occurred.

All reports of dogs wandering are attended to as soon as possible to reduce the threat of a dog attack or dog rushing incident. Council offers an on-call ranger who will attend urgent after hour’s matters.

| | | |
|---|-------------|-------------------------------|
| Dogs attacks in Central Goldfields Shire | 2014 | 25 reported incidents |
| Dog attacks in Central Goldfields Shire | 2015 | 23 reported incidents |
| Dog attacks in central Goldfields Shire | 2016 | 17 reported incidents. |

The current local law prohibiting dogs from being within the Central Business district of Maryborough is currently under review.

A dog “off Leash” area has recently been opened in Maryborough and is currently under trial. We are receiving positive feedback about this, and it is envisaged it will become permanent. Our officers conduct random checks on the two lake areas in Maryborough in relation to pets being off leash in those popular walking areas

The existing local law in relation to dog faeces is supplemented by the placement of faeces bag dispenses at various popular walking locations around the Shire.

Cats

It is of concern that cat registrations are low within the Central Goldfields Shire and as part of our initiative to conduct “one street per week door knock audit”, we are concentrating in the identification of persons who own unregistered cats as well as cats that are a nuisance to their neighbours. As part of the audit, we are conducting microchip scans of animals and checking that the recorded details of owners are up to date. Residents require a permit to

own two or more cats and dogs within residential areas of the Shire and four or more in rural areas.

We offer a cat trapping service within the shire and have recently increased the number of traps from 9 to 14. We also offer a desexing cat subsidy to persons who are in need.

We continue to offer education material about nuisance issues to cat owners in registration information packs each year as well as effective use of local and social media to educate cat owners.

Dog barking complaints

It is our policy to encourage complainants to speak directly with their neighbours in an effort to resolve problems with pets especially dog barking issues. Where formal complaints are received we issue the complainant with “barking log kit”. The barking incidents are recorded on a log for three weeks and at the same time we visit the dog owner and inform them of the complaint and that a log is being maintained. We have also purchased some anti-barking devices, such as barking collars and towers, which we lend to dog owners to allow them to evaluate the effectiveness of particular devices for their dog. Council rangers will also visit the premises and give advice to dog owners to minimise the barking of their dog(s) for example the use of shade cloth to block a wire gate or fence and of course regular exercise and activities for the animal. Again we provide education material, such as pamphlets and other items to pet owners as well as complainants.

6. DANGEROUS, MENACING AND RESTRICTED BREED DOGS

We currently have no declared dangerous dogs or restricted breed dogs within the shire. We have three dogs which have been declared as menacing. All Rangers keep up to date with current legislation and information which is available in relation to these issues. Our Officers, this year will attend the Canine Anatomy and Identification Training to assist them in applying the restricted breed dog standard.

The owners of the dogs that have been declared as menacing are audited by our staff regularly to ensure that they are complying with conditions that were set at the time of the incidents. Security and fencing are checked, and we continue to work with the owners through education once the decision has been made to declare the dog as menacing.

All visits made are documented and results recorded to ensure continued compliance.

7. OVERPOPULATION AND HIGH EUTHANASIA

Central Goldfields Shire manages its own animal pound, and all lost or surrendered dogs and cats are taken there. If the owner can be identified, the animal is currently registered, and there are no other issues or offences involved, as part of our education process we will return the dog or cat and issue a warning to the owner. We do charge a pound release fee to the owner. Dogs and cats that are impounded will not be released to the owner unless they are microchipped and registered. Any dog or cat which is not claimed by the owner within the statutory 8 days period becomes the property of Central Goldfields Shire and will be available for adoption. Only dogs and cats that pass the temperament test are veterinarian

checked, vaccinated and desexed are rehoused. (Refer central Goldfields Shire Animal Health Management Plan Revised August 2017)

Currently, Our Animal Management Team place regular articles in our local newspaper featuring a “pet of the week” available for adoption from the pound. As part of that program we have articles featuring dogs and cats that are brought to our pound, this often involves an emotional story about a particular dog or cat, the aim is to promote discussion and education in the community about the effects of irresponsible pet ownership. We also use our own social media to promote the messages.

While not a big issues in our shire we have had several cases of cat hoarding. Our rangers have worked closely with these persons to control the issue. We have had success in working with them rather than attempting to just remove all cats from them. We have issued permits for the current cats, assisted in microchipping and desexing, and placed conditions that no further cats are to be taken to the properties.

We encourage the continued visits from local schools to our Shire Pound and where children can interact with the animals and find that they are enthusiastic to learn the history of particular animals and how they came to be in the pound. Our staff speak to them about desexing their animals, registration and microchipping. We believe that this education process reaches the children and the parents and encourages responsible pet ownership. We plan to expand on this in 2018-19 and trial, with school approval, visiting the schools to capture a comprehensive audience. This education will be with a Veterinarian from the local practice and would cover aspects of responsible pet care and ownership.

We will continue with the use of cat traps in the areas where strays are an issue. Our staff monitor local social media sites for animals for sale or free to good home and take appropriate action where required. We encourage persons to consider the pound rather than giving kittens away and of course, follow up with assistance and education to have the adult anima desexed. We encourage the public to report any incidents that may involve any illegal breeding establishments.

8. DOMESTIC ANIMAL BUSINESSES

Our data

Domestic Animal Business (DAB) register database. We have numbered permits and copies of completed audits are maintained in the records management system.

Orders, local Laws, Council policies and Procedures.

We enforce the legislative requirements of the Domestic Animals Act. Central Goldfields Shire currently has 5 DAB in operation. They are audited annually by the Local laws department according to the current code of practice.

Our Current Activities

- Provide information to registered DABs to ensure compliance
- Annual registration of DAB
- Annual auditing of premises

- Investigate all reports of suspected unregistered DAB
- Issue compliance notices or infringement notices as required.
- Liaise with CGSC planning department over any suspected DABs and any new planning application for DABs
- Monitor social media, local free advertising boards and newspaper advertisements to identify businesses selling pets.
- Monitor all legislation changes in relation to DABs
- Training in 2018 for Animal management Officers to conduct audits.

9. OTHER MATTERS

- An audit was conducted on CGSC animal pound in 2017, and all issues raised by that audited will be completed by December 2017 to ensure our full compliance with legislative requirements.
- A review of our emergency management plan in relation to animals was completed in 2016
- Our off-leash area was opened in January 2016 for a 6 month trial and having received no complaints in relation to it has now become a permanent fixture
- Central Goldfields Shire Council has a new record management system which allows for a more efficient information storage and search provision.
- The prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 (POCTA) allows for the authorisation of local government officers, who are employees of the council and authorised under section 72 of the Act. We currently have one officer who is not authorised and this will be actioned in 2018 when the officer's training is completed.

10. ANNUAL REVIEW OF PLAN AND ANNUAL REPORTING

As per section 68A(3) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994, Council will review its Domestic Animal Management Plan annually to assess whether any amendments are necessary in order to ensure the plan is relevant and effective. An evaluation of the implementation of the plan will be included in CGSC annual report.