



Central Goldfields Shire Council

Domestic Animal
Management Plan

2022-2025

December 2021



Central Goldfields Shire Council
Domestic Animal Management Plan

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Front page image: Kodie Greenwood

Date: December 2021

Acknowledgement of Country

Central Goldfields Shire Council acknowledges the ancestors and descendants of the Dja Dja Wurrung. We acknowledge that their forebears are the Traditional Owners of the area we are on and have been for many thousands of years. The Djaara have performed age old ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal. We acknowledge their living culture and their unique role in the life of this region.

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Source: Supplied – CEO Lucy Roffey with her Bernese Mountain Dog

KEY TERMS

DAM Plan	The Central Goldfields Shire Domestic Animal Management Plan
MEMP	Municipal Emergency Management Plan
MFPO	Municipal Fire Protection Officer
Act	The Domestic Animals Act 1994
Regulations	The Domestic Animals Regulations 2015
Engage	Central Goldfields Shire Council's Engagement Website Portal

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The primary focus of this Domestic Animal Management Plan is the management of companion animals, namely dogs and cats. Central Goldfields Shire Council acknowledges the role it plays in promoting responsible pet ownership and enforcing legislation. We are committed to balancing the needs of pet owners with those in our community who do not own pets. Consideration has been given to both parties in the development of our Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-2025. This Plan has been developed in accordance with Section 68A of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 and sets out a formalised approach to increase the awareness of domestic animal management practices within Central Goldfields. Central Goldfields Shire Council recognises the value domestic pets contribute in making Central Goldfields a great place to live. Domestic pets are not only considered part of a family, but are an integral part of a wider community. Research demonstrates that pets contribute to building a strong sense of community and developing active social capital; vital to any vibrant, healthy community. Pet ownership is positively associated with social interactions, community involvement and increased feelings of neighbourhood friendliness and sense of community. Our Council is unique with other regional and rural Councils as we also have animals that work, such as farm dogs or guide dogs.

With about 62 percent of Australians owning a dog or cat, these benefits, when aggregated across the whole community, are of significant interest to Council and others concerned with building healthier, happier neighbourhoods. In addition, these benefits create a ripple effect that extends beyond pet owners into the broader community, with pets helping to smooth the way for social interaction and general recreation. Pets provide increased opportunities for families to be more active; companionship to those who may be feeling isolated or lonely and assist people with a disability or illness to maintain independence and participate more fully in community life.

BACKGROUND TO DAM PLAN

Local Government has long been the level of government primarily responsible for domestic animal management. Section 68A of the Domestic Animal Act 1994 (the Act) requires all Victorian councils to prepare a Domestic Animal Management Plan (the Plan) at four yearly intervals. A copy of the plan and any subsequent amendments must be provided to the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture. Council is required to then report on the plan's implementation in its annual report.



Source: Supplied - Cr Liesbeth Long's working dog kelpie, Errol

1 INTRODUCTION

This Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAM Plan) has been prepared to provide a strategic framework for the Central Goldfields Shire Council (CGSC) for policy direction and action plans related to animal management during the four year period between 2022-25.

Council has a responsibility to enforce State legislation and its own Local Laws together with educating our community on issues associated with animal management and the role of the pet owner. This plan aims to integrate best practice in domestic animal management and describes actions to be undertaken during the period 2022-25.

1.1 PURPOSE OF DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

The *Domestic Animals Act 1994* (the Act) requires council to prepare a Domestic Animal Management Plan every four years.

The plan must set out a method for evaluating whether the animal management services provided by council are adequate to give effect to requirements of the Act and the Domestic Animal Regulations 2015.

The plan must also outline programs for the training of authorised officers along with programs, services and strategies to:

- Council, and our community members, comply with the Act, Regulations, related legislation, and relevant Codes of Practice; and
- minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals; and
- address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats; and
- encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats; and
- minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance; and
- 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 orders or local laws dealing with the management of dogs and cats in the 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 under the plan.

1.2 PROCESS APPLIED IN DEVELOPING THE PLAN

In preparing this Plan, the following methodology has been applied:

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

ENGAGEMENT

- A Community Survey was conducted via the Engage Central Goldfields portal during September 2021. This survey sought community input on a range of issues, including access to open spaces, animal registration and nuisance cats.
- Videos filmed with the Compliance Coordinator at the Council Pound directed people to the survey. These videos had over 1000 views on the Central Goldfields Shire Facebook page.
- 69 residents provided feedback to a multiple choice survey in the first stage of engagement
- Results of this survey across all subject matter showed the following areas were cause for most concern to residents:
 - Requests for fenced 'off leash' areas to separate smaller and larger dogs;
 - Concerns around the impact of cats on our native environment
 - Many respondents expressed the need for a fenced off dog park to reduce dog attacks, promote responsible ownership and increase positive animal socialisation
 - Nuisance animals – both dogs barking and cats trespassing.

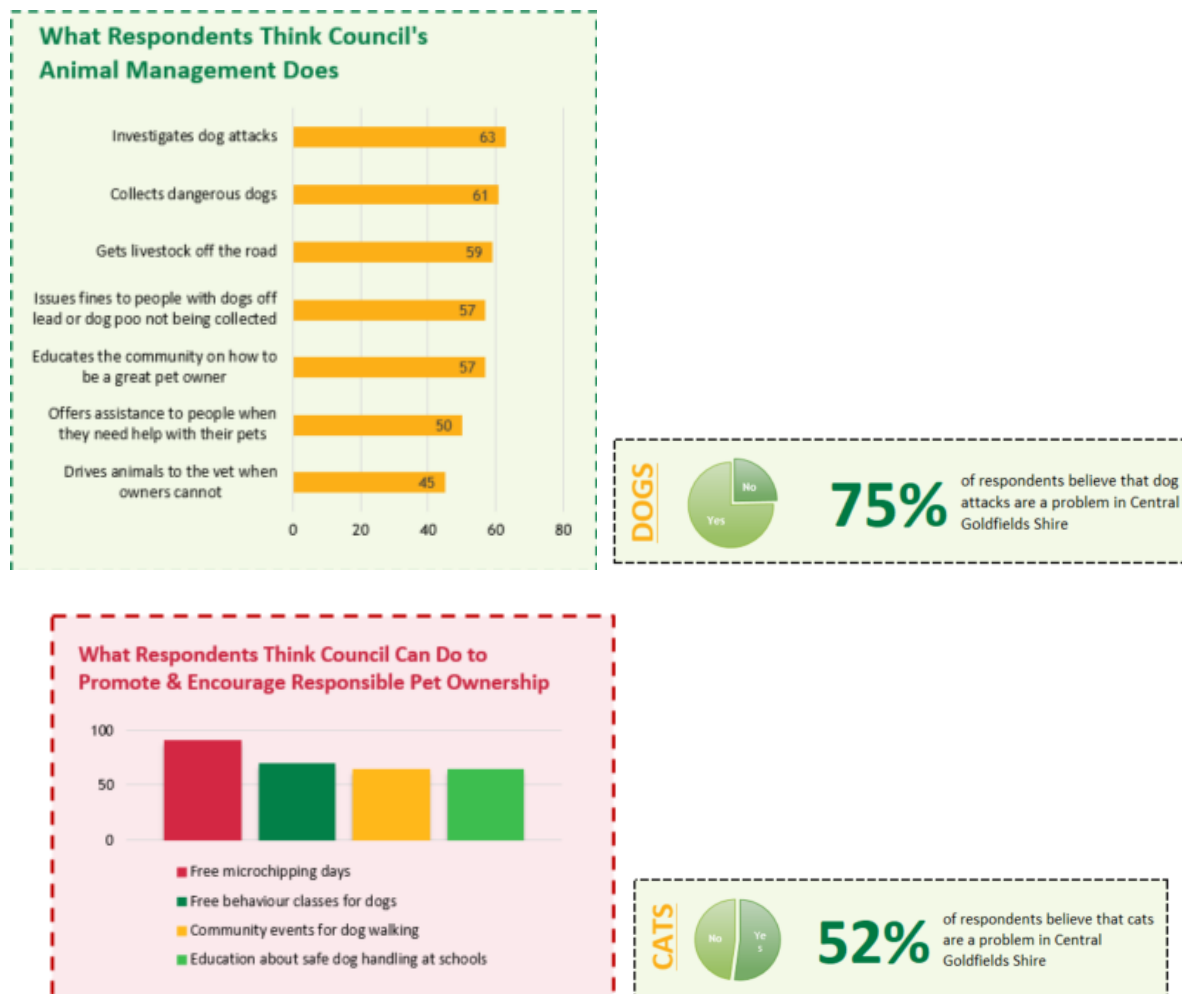


In today's video, our Compliance Coordinator Mark Jennings and "Chatter" the cat share some more information about why we need you to get involved in the...

Like Comment Share

10 · 1 comment · 1.5K views

Source: Central Goldfields Facebook Page, November 2021



When the draft DAM PLAN was completed, this was presented to the community via the Engage Central Goldfields website in October.

There was also another video filmed in the Council Pound asking people to interact with us, either by sharing a photo of their pet or going to the *Engage* website to submit a response. This video was watched over 1000 times on the Central Goldfields Shire Facebook page.

- 1 community member provided succinct and extensive feedback to Council in the second round of engagement (email and report); 1 community member responded proposing greater controls for cats including the use of new technologies to alarm birds and wildlife; and another community member stated:

“...The serious impacts of domestic cat predation at urban/wildlife interfaces like where we live at Bucknall St. Aside from the many owners who simply let there [sic] cats roam unchecked, the paper quotes a study of 177 cats all of whom the owners mistakenly thought were constrained indoors at night, 39% actually had ranges of over 1 hectare ,up to ten house blocks away!

Domestic cats not only kill and maim their prey but also drive species away from their preferred habitat to sub-optimal ones where breeding rates and wellbeing are depleted. Cats carry dozens of viral, bacterial, fungal and parasitic diseases [e.g. toxoplasmosis] which contribute to species decline.

- **Many unwanted cats are dumped and go feral in more remote bushland where they are very destructive to native wildlife.**

We would like to suggest as part of the DAMP that a 24 hour curfew is introduced [nighttime only does not protect diurnal species such as birds and platypus]for all domestic cats, cats must stay on their home property 24/7. In addition the compulsory desexing of all pet cats be strictly enforced.”

- 3 people responded of social media raising matters such as ‘increased red tape’, remove the Council Order (Local Law) in the townships restricting dogs.

The social media campaign with the Draft DAM Plan asked the community to share images of their pets. The image with the most ‘likes’ would be used on the cover of the Plan. After gathering 52 likes, Kodie Greenwood of Talbot has her dog displayed on the front cover.

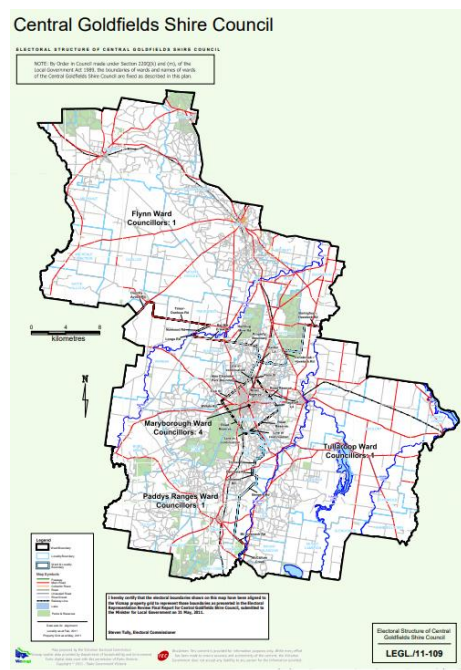
The engagement results in rich data and information that shows that Council will need to start considering a change from ‘business as usual’ for cat curfews, after-hours animal management services and managing dog attacks in the next DAM Plan.

The Local Laws Review will begin in 2022 which will consider whether the dog curfew in the townships of the Shire should continue. Extensive communication and engagement with the community is a part of the Local Law Review process.

Council thanks all of those in the community who responded to our survey, social media posts and via email.

1.3 DEMOGRAPHIC AND PROFILE OF COUNCIL

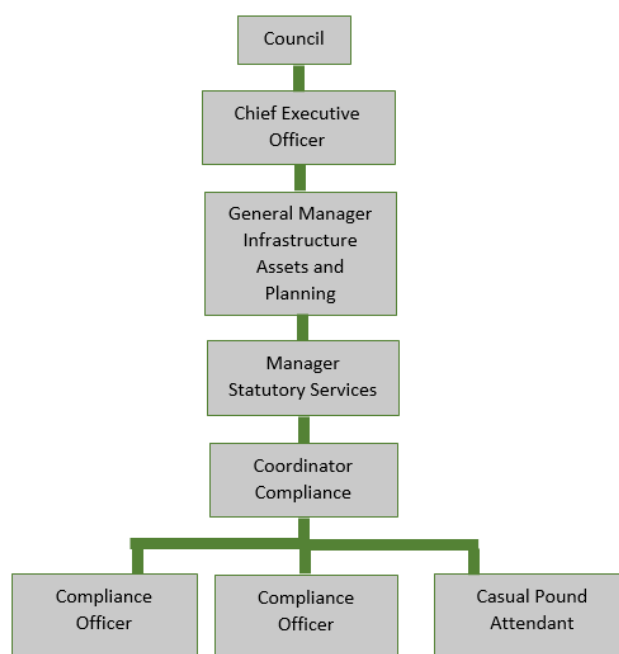
Located at the geographical centre of Victoria, Central Goldfields Shire is within one hour’s drive of the regional centres of Ballarat and Bendigo and just two hours from Melbourne.



<i>Details</i>	<i>Information</i>
Population ERP 2019	13 186
Projected population 2036	14 130
Land area	1533 km ²
Population density	8.6 person per km ²
Townships	Maryborough, Bealiba, Carisbrook, Dunolly, Majorca, Talbot, Bowenvale-Timor, Daisy Hill
Animals registered 2019-2020	2992
Animals registered 2020-2021	2874
Median age	50 years old
Gender	49.4% male; 50.6% female
Adjoining municipalities	Loddon Shire, Hepburn Shire, Mount Alexander Shire, Pyrenees Shire
Relevant Council Documents	CGSC Community Plan; CGSC General Local Law 2015; Compliance and Enforcement Policy 2021 MEMP (Municipal Emergency Management Plan)

1.4 CONTEXT AND CURRENT SITUATION

The Local Laws and Animal Management is a branch of the Statutory Services Department and a section of the Infrastructure, Assets and Planning Directorate.



Council has a range of animal management services, including:

Program/Service:	Service Level:
<i>Identification & Registration</i>	2191 dogs and 683 cats
<i>Identification & Registration- doorknock campaigns</i>	One cycle per year during renewal period, subject to staff availability
<i>Domestic animal complaints</i>	Within 2 days
<i>Dangerous Dogs complaints</i>	Within an hour
<i>Routine street patrols</i>	One per month, subject to staff availability
<i>Pound</i>	Open by appointment only
<i>Micro-chipping and/or desexing programs</i>	Council is applying for grants relating to micro-chipping and desexing programs.
<i>RPO School information sessions</i>	Council is planning to commence a school education program from 2022.
<i>After hours emergency service</i>	For livestock on Council roads and dog attacks, Subject to staff availability*
<i>Cat trap program</i>	Available to the community via booking

* As stated in the Central Goldfields Shire Council Service Charter

1.5 DOMESTIC ANIMAL STATISTICS

	2020 - 2021	
	Dogs	Cats
Number of registrations	2191	683
Number of dangerous or menacing dogs declared	1	NA
Number of registered domestic animal businesses	2	
Number of animals seized/surrendered	103	138
Number of animals reclaimed/rehomed	101	127
Number of prosecutions associated with dogs	0	-
Estimated dog/cat populations	7,592	
Number of complaints relating to dogs and cats	36	

REGISTERED DOGS & CATS

Council will be conducting proactive campaigns to promote responsible animal ownership, as well as the importance of registering domestic animals such as cats and dogs. These include public relation campaigns and information supplied at animal registration or adoption. Compliance Officers will commence pro-active door knocking patrols to identify properties who don't have their animals registered.

REGISTERED DOMESTIC ANIMAL BUSINESSES

Two Domestic Animal Businesses (DABs) are registered in CGSC. These comprise:

- One Domestic Animal Breeder
- One Pound (Councils Pound)

Please note, Domestic Animal Breeders are only required to be registered with Council if they breed more than 3 fertile dogs, and are not a member of an applicable organisation.

Estimated dog and cat (owned) within the CGSC Municipality (based on 2016 census) there appears to be no current research to help estimate the true number of pets kept in Australian households.

Market research company BIS Shrapnel estimated in 1998/1999 that 40 per cent of households in municipalities owned one or more dogs at a rate of 1.44 dogs/household; and 26 per cent of households in the municipality owned one or more cats at a rate of 1.47 cats/household (BIS Shrapnel report to the Department of Primary Industries). Noting that these formulas and rates of ownership have not been reviewed and updated since 1998/99 the assumption of the estimated dog and cat populations has not been tested. However, it can be assumed that significant numbers of dogs and cats that are kept within the municipality may not be registered.

2020-2021 Registration Numbers	BIS Shrapnel report using population density
Dogs 2191	7,592
Cats 683	5,038



Source: Encouraging community members to register their dogs, Cr Chris Meddows-Taylor in the Maryborough Advertiser, March 2021

2. TRAINING OF AUTHORISED OFFICERS

The functions and responsibilities around animal management are delivered by the Compliance team that sits within the Statutory Services Department.

2.1 CONTEXT AND CURRENT SITUATION

The department comprises of a Manager Statutory Services, Coordinator Compliance, one full time Compliance Officer/Municipal Fire Protection Officer (MFPO), one part time Compliance Officer and a casual Pound Attendant.

All officers are multi-skilled and provide animal management, as well as general local laws services. These officers report to the Coordinator Compliance.

The Statutory Services Department has two part time business support officers who amongst other responsibilities provide support with matters including animal registrations and enquiries. In addition to the animal management service provided during business hours, an after-hours service is also provided.

As part of the DAM Plan, Council recognises the importance of authorised officers being adequately trained. All staff have or will be required to gain the Certificate IV Animal Control and Regulation and Certificate IV in Government (Statutory Compliance) which addresses the skills of animal handling, investigation, report writing, communication and time management.

Recent training completed by officers includes:

- Understanding and working safely with dogs (Australian Veterinary Behaviour Services)
- Certificate 4 in Animal Regulation and Management (Warner Institute)



Source: Supplied, Compliance staff Vehicle at the Pound, June 2021

2.2 OUR PLANNED TRAINING FOR AUTHORISED OFFICERS

The existing, current and proposed training for our Compliance Officers (including Pound Attendant where relevant) is explained in the table below.

<i>Authorised Officer Training</i>	<i>Current (2020-2021)</i>	<i>Planned</i>
Certificate IV in Animal Control and Regulation	Compliance Officer successfully completed	-
Certificate IV in Government (Statutory Compliance)	Compliance Officer successfully completed	-
Industry training – animal handling	Compliance Officer successfully completed	-
Bureau of Animal Welfare – training and information days	Compliance Officer successfully completed	Compliance Officers to continue to attend and participate
In-house training on relevant subject matter, e.g. brief preparation, statement taking	-	Compliance Officers to attend and complete training
In-house training and eLearning modules (i.e. Code of Conduct, Fraud & Corruption, Negotiation and Conflict, Service Charter, OH&S)	Compliance Officer successfully completed	Compliance Officers to attend and complete training
Induction program for new staff	New staff members were inducted into Council. Allowing Council to detail expectations and responsibilities relating to animal management.	New staff members will continue to be inducted into Council. Allowing Council to detail expectations and responsibilities relating to animal management.
Training on handling pets in emergency	Compliance Officer successfully completed	Compliance Officers to attend and complete training
First Aid – Certificate	-	Compliance Officers to attend and complete training
Understanding and Working Safely with Dogs	Compliance Officer successfully completed	Other officers to attend and complete training

2.3 OUR PLAN

OBJECTIVE 1: *To identify training opportunities as a part of the development of a training policy that clearly identifies minimum training requirements and any additional training needs that should be undertaken by authorised officers.*

Activity	When	Evaluation
<i>Identify minimum training requirements by consultation with management and staff</i>	Immediate	Documentation to be finalised and incorporated into an approved council training policy by 2023
<i>Identify additional training opportunities by consultation with management and staff</i>	Immediate	Documentation to be finalised and incorporated into an approved council training policy by 2023
<i>Identify training and opportunities for recognising and responding to domestic violence</i>	Immediate	Documentation to be finalised and incorporated into an approved council training policy by 2023

OBJECTIVE 2: *Maintain training for Animal Management officers as part of performance planning ensuring they have the skills necessary to support the community and effectively perform their regulatory role.*

Activity	When	Evaluation
<i>Complete a development plan process with each staff member, identifying training needs</i>	Ongoing	PDP Evaluation June 2022
<i>Authorised officers to receive training on prevention of family violence; recognising and responding to disclosures.</i>	2022	PDP Evaluation



Source: Supplied, Compliance staff at the Pound, June 2021

3. PROGRAMS TO PROMOTE AND ENCOURAGE RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERSHIP AND COMPLIANCE WITH LEGISLATION

Councils approach to education and enforcement is guided by the notion of Educate/Ask/Tell/Enforce. Compliance is the highest priority with enforcement generally occurring as a last resort when other methods have failed, or in some circumstances as an immediate response to wilful non-compliance or for serious matters such as failing to register animals and dog attacks.

Our engagement with the community tells us that this approach is consistent with their expectations. This DAM PLAN focuses on continuing best practice for the management of dogs and cats in CGSC and to promote responsible pet ownership.

3.1 CONTEXT AND CURRENT SITUATION

CGSC has an extensive number of programs and information currently in place to that promote and encourage responsible pet ownership and compliance with legislative and/or regulatory requirements. The information is provided through by a variety of methods including pamphlets, monthly news bulletin delivered to households, Council's website and increasingly social media.

CURRENT PROGRAMS AND INFORMATION

- Pound services that focus on rehoming animals

REGISTRATION AND IDENTIFICATION OF DOGS AND CATS

- Distribution of registration brochures and fact sheets, e.g. 'Living with Dogs and Cats' pamphlet as a guide for both pet owners and non-owners;
- Publishes information on the Council website and in the Council resident's newsletter to advise of the registration period and requirements;
- Follows up pet owners that have not renewed their pet registration;
- Annual door knock program;
- Improve the accuracy of Council's registration database with Microchip Registry data annually.
- Promotes the requirement for owners to "pick up" after their dogs and dispose of waste appropriately; and
- Increasingly provides dog waste bins and drinking fountains at parks.

NUISANCE

- Topical articles on animal management and current animal issues are published in the monthly resident news bulletin.
- Face to face contact with residents and regular patrols are conducted in parks and reserves. This allows officers an opportunity to interact, educate and advise pet owners on responsible pet ownership.
- Investigation of contraventions of Local and State controls
- Signage in parks to remind dog owners of the rules applicable when visiting a park.

DOG ATTACKS

Dog owners are encouraged to implement one or more of the following measures to reduce dog attacks:

- match dog breed choice with the dog owner's lifestyle;
- have dogs de-sexed to reduce their aggression or desire to wander at large;
- implement early socialisation and training for the dog;
- provide suitable conditions for confining the dog at its home;
- provide environmental enrichment at its home to relieve pent up energy; and
- Regularly exercise the dog.

Officers also focus on owners and the general public in promoting the important principles of dog attack avoidance. This is planned to be promoted through information brochures and on Council's website, with implementation in 2023.

Council's priority regarding dog attacks is not only through education and owners being able to control their dogs and reinforcing the importance of this, but also where an attack does happen to take action and steps to protect the community from future attacks by the same dog.

DANGEROUS, MENACING AND RESTRICTED BREED DOGS

Fact sheets are provided to the owners of these dogs informing them of their obligations and responsibilities as part of choosing to own such breeds. Officers are also able to provide one-on-one education to owners upon request.

DOMESTIC ANIMAL BUSINESSES (DAB)

Council advises and educates DAB operators on any changes to legislation or on any new codes of practice that relates to their business. This is done via visits to the premises, and education not only during renewal of the business registration, but on an as needs basis where the business may need further education or follow up. Each business is also supplied with material from the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR).

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

The Compliance team ensures that emergency relief and recovery components of the Municipal Emergency Management Plan (MEMP), provides details regarding local arrangements and providers for relevant animal welfare services including:

- Liaising with relevant animal welfare agencies and organisations to enable effective and timely delivery the animal welfare service; and
- Provide information to Council's communications team relating to the management of animals impacted by an emergency.

PUBLIC EDUCATION PROGRAM

Council's partnership with the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR) allows it to implement programs into schools about the importance of responsible pet ownership. The 'We Are Family' program is currently used throughout CGSC which focuses specifically on the parents of children 0 to 4 years, the most at risk group to a dog attack. It provides information and strategies for parents to ensure the child and pet relationship is a happy and safe one.

EXCESS ANIMALS PERMITS

Residents can apply for an *excess animals permit* from the Compliance/Local Laws area. This permit is assessed by Council Compliance officer/s, in conjunction with Planning Compliance. If there are no planning limitations, applications are reviewed and assessed. Part of the review includes gaining consent from neighbouring properties. All permits are issued with strict conditions, and if any conditions are breached the permit may be withdrawn.

FERAL CATS

Council offers a cat trap hire service (for a small fee). At the time of publishing, Council has 8 traps available to the public. Approximately 2-3 are rented out per month, and we would encourage the community to utilise this service.



Source: Supplied, Council cat trap available for hire, December2021

3.2 OUR ORDERS, LOCAL LAWS, COUNCIL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

This section explains the list of council's orders, local laws and policy relevant to promoting responsible pet ownership and compliance with legislative requirements.

CURRENT ORDERS

In 2014, Central Goldfields Shire Council resolved to make Order Number 5 pursuant to section 26(2) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 which expanded the prohibition of dogs in the townships of the Shire. Prohibited Areas - A dog must not enter a Prohibited Area.

Council has a designated off leash area at Jack Pascoe Reserve (this is signed but not fenced) – image below. Future strategic work associated with Maryborough Master Planning are reviewing this and future areas for dogs. Owner's obligations in a Designated Reserve – provides for exercise off a chain, cord or leash, with some restrictions. Owners must be equipped to remove dog faeces at all times.

CURRENT LOCAL LAWS

Council's Local Law No 3 – Community Amenity Amongst other things, this Local Law regulates the keeping of animals in CGSC. It requires an annual permit from Council to keep more than two dogs and two cats. The Local Law also contains requirements for housing animals, controlling animal odours and removing dog excrement from a road or Council land.

CURRENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- Compliance and Enforcement Policy



Source: Supplied, Maryborough off leash dog area, Jack Pascoe Reserve

3.3 OUR PLAN

OBJECTIVE 1: Reduce the number of costly and time consuming compliance actions by educating the community about their legislative obligations.

<i>Activity</i>	<i>When</i>	<i>Evaluation</i>
Distribution of fact sheets and web content regarding legislative obligations.	Ongoing	Increased awareness of roles and responsibilities from pet owners (higher registration rates, less nuisance)
Use of dog poo stencils on walking tracks, entries to parks and on footpaths (response to resident complaints)	2022	Decrease in complaints around dog poo being left by dog owners
Program park patrols for educating the community	Ongoing	Increased awareness of roles and responsibilities from pet owners (higher registration rates, less nuisance)
As part of an education campaign - create a scheme for magnetic signs around pet registration and other relevant messaging on all Compliance vehicles	Registration period 2022	Increased awareness that pets need to be registered.
Consider the use of corflute signage in reserves, and update to maintain relevance as required.	2022	Increased awareness of roles and responsibilities from pet owners
Schedule specific articles prepared and put in the monthly bulletin to meet needs of the community	Ongoing	Educate to meet the demands of trends/weather
Annual microchipping day and event stalls at local markets; open days at the Pound	2022 (COVID requirements permitting)	Public awareness about roles and responsibilities, options for microchipping

OBJECTIVE 2: Promote Animal Welfare platforms.

<i>Activity</i>	<i>When</i>	<i>Evaluation</i>
Promote Animal Welfare platforms, following assessments to ensure consistency with the objectives of this plan.	Ongoing	Less reports of wandering/nuisance to be monitored (a 20% reduction in reports).
Create a PCG for local welfare groups to discuss actions regarding welfare concerns in the community	2022	Better connection with community and groups such as Vets and Police

Update the website and social media to provide advice and information about animal welfare	Ongoing	Educate the community (higher registration rates, less nuisance)
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OBJECTIVE 3: Promote 'Safe Cat, Safe Wildlife'* messaging among residents.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Circulate safe Cat, Safe Wildlife education material throughout municipality (Find out more: www.safecat.org.au)	Registration period 2022	Less reports of wandering/nuisance cats with 1 year timeframe.

*Cat containment (whether through curfews and associated legislation or as part of responsible pet ownership) can be supported through providing cat owners with resources and information to assist with transitioning their cat to a stay at home lifestyle. Many cat owners don't believe they are able to provide their cats with what they need at home (or know what those needs might be), presenting a large barrier to undertaking the behaviour and meaning that enforcement alone is unlikely to result in the desired change.

Safe Cat, Safe Wildlife is a campaign run by Zoos Victoria and RSPCA Victoria that provides cat owners with these resources, helping them give their cat the safest and happiest life. The website safecat.org.au contains information articles and short tips and tricks for an indoor lifestyle, as well as helping highlight the benefits to cats staying at home (welfare and safety for the cat and a safer neighbourhood for local wildlife). Individuals can join a Safe Cat community, with quarterly emails that contain new engaging content and offers/discounts for cat enrichment items, supporting cat owners and helping to build a social norm of pet cats staying at home rather than being left to roam the streets.

Councils, breeders, vets and other organisations can register and receive free resources (such as physical postcards and brochures as well as digital resources) to share with their audiences as required, such as with renewal notices, after de-sexing, shelter pick-ups, nuisance calls). Find out more: www.safecat.org.au.



Source: Supplied, Council Compliance staff at Council Pound

4. PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS OVER-POPULATION RATES AND ANY HIGH EUTHANASIA RATES

4.1 CONTEXT AND CURRENT SITUATION

Council is committed to reducing the unnecessary euthanasia of animals impounded and only after alternatives to house or re-home have been exhausted will euthanasia be considered. **This is always the course of action and last option considered.** Animals impounded in CGSC and euthanised during 2020 compared with those recorded for 2012 and 2016 are shown in the below table.

<i>Animals</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2020 - 2021</i>
Impounded dogs	282	103
Impounded cats	207	138
Euthanised dogs	13	2
Euthanised cats	85	11
Infringements for Excess Animals	0	0
Number of cats desexed	Data not available	98
Number of dogs desexed	Data not available	51
Number of animals rehomed	402	228

These statistics show a significant decrease in the number of dogs and cats being impounded. However, there is a large number of cats that have been euthanised and this in part correlates with an increase of wild cats being impounded. The reasons for the increase are not well understood at this point in time and will be further explored as an action arising out of this Plan.

The data shows an increase in the number of animals being desexed since 2016.

The data shows an increase in the number of animals rehomed.

REDUCTION IN EUTHANISATIONS

Central Goldfields Shire is proud of the 86% reduction in the number of animals' euthanised since the previous DAM Plan was released. This reduction is attributed to:

- Greater promotion of animals entering the pound via the Central Goldfields Rehoming Facebook page
- Building relationships with other pounds and shelters through 84Y agreements under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*. These agreements allow Council to move animals to other facilities that have a greater chance of rehoming.

“It is so pleasing to see such a significant reduction of euthanasia. Well done to the Compliance Officers for looking at other ways to find solutions” – Carly, Maryborough Veterinary Practice

Of course, there are times where euthanasia is the most appropriate outcome, such as health issues or temperament. In these circumstances, Council staff consult with the treating veterinarian to confirm the most appropriate outcome.

2020-2021 Euthanasia numbers	2016 Euthanasia number
2 Dogs	13 Dogs
11 Cats	85 Cats

84Y AGREEMENTS AND FOSTER RELATIONSHIPS

In 2021 Council commenced an 84Y agreement under the Domestic Animals Act 1994. To date, this agreement is with Robyn's Nest, however steps are underway to increase the number of pounds and shelters used under this agreement.

"Having an 84Y agreement with Central Goldfields Shire has been a positive development for the animals of the Shire. We have been able to rescue cats, dogs and other animals who for many different reasons would not have been able to be rehomed through the Shire Pound. We are proud of the great working relationship we have with the Shire". – Robyns Nest



After seeing the rate of euthanasia in animals in shelters across the nation, Robyn Hunter decided to do something about it and created Robyn's Nest and All the Rest Animal Incorporated.

Source: Maryborough Advertiser, May 2021

4.2 STATE & LOCAL LAWS, COUNCIL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

FURTHER CONSULTATION REQUIRED BEFORE INTRODUCING A CAT CURFEW ORDER

At this time, Council is not introducing a Cat Control Order under the Domestic Animals Act. During the period of this Plan, Council will be conducting further community engagement to identify the direction the community wants us to head in. Of note, 51% of respondents from the recent community survey identified cats as a problem. That is not a significant number, although we do acknowledge this as a small sample size, therefore, specific engagement to ensure the best outcome for our community is the objective for the period identified in this Plan.

Other ways to control cats

Cat curfews are not the only way to manage the impact of cats in the environment. Councils Compliance Officers are authorised to enforce Section 25 of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, which prescribes that cats must be contained within their owners property at all times. Curfew or not, owners must be responsible for their animals.

To enforce the Domestic Animals Act 1994, Council does provide services to the community, such as cat trapping.

In addition, Council will be looking for any grants around cat desexing, which will go along way to reduce the number of litters within the community.

CURRENT LOCAL LAW

There are no orders currently for overpopulation or high euthanasia.

CURRENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

If an animal is impounded all reasonable efforts are made to locate the owner, house or re-home impounded animals. Only after alternatives to house or re-home have been exhausted, will euthanasia be considered, always as the last option.

84Y Agreement stipulates the requirements for rehoming with other providers to ensure animals have the best option.

- Compliance and Enforcement Policy

4.3 OUR PLAN

OBJECTIVE 1: To provide readily accessible information to the public about the causes leading to overpopulation and high euthanasia rates.

<i>Activity</i>	<i>When</i>	<i>Evaluation</i>
Promote confinement of animals to owner's premises to prevent stray cats and dogs and possible euthanasia if the animal is not microchipped and registered	Ongoing	Promotes compliance and the importance of registration
Review the annual cat trapping program with a view to identifying how the programme might be enhanced in terms of reducing wild cat population	June 2022-2025	Less reports of wild cats and nuisance cats Higher take up of cat traps by the public
In partnership with animal welfare agencies, investigate the prevalence of wild cats and explore recommendations to reduce the unowned cat population.	Ongoing	Investigation undertaken and recommendations implemented Partnerships established between groups

OBJECTIVE 2: Actively seek opportunities to deliver low cost cat desexing programs

<i>Activity</i>	<i>When</i>	<i>Evaluation</i>
Participate in government grant opportunities as they become available*	Ongoing	Number of cats desexed by the end of the desexing program.
Approach animal welfare organisations or the local Vet to explore partnerships and cat desexing options	Ongoing	Programs considered and subsequently delivered within budget constraints.

OBJECTIVE 3: Develop partnerships to strategically address to reduce the unowned cat populations and programmes designed to address a reduction in high euthanasia rates

<i>Activity</i>	<i>When</i>	<i>Evaluation</i>
Engage with animal welfare organisations seeking opportunities to partner programmes specifically designed to reduce unowned cat populations and programmes designed to reduce high euthanasia rates.	Ongoing	Partnerships with these organisations and programmes being run effectively.

OBJECTIVE 4: Develop a media program to educate the community on the impact of not desexing cats, and wild cat impacts

<i>Activity</i>	<i>When</i>	<i>Evaluation</i>
Educate community on the importance of desexing Educate community on impacts of wild cats	Ongoing	Media campaign for programs completed annually (use Dogtober/Animal registration/Fire Planning)

*The Victorian Government allocated a further \$7.5 million boost to animal welfare grants in the 2020–21 State Budget. This targeted funding commitment includes \$1.5 million over three years to enable delivery of free or low-cost desexing programs for cats and dogs owned by vulnerable and disadvantaged Victorians. Councils are eligible to apply.

For more information, visit: <https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/livestock-and-animals/animal-welfare-victoria/community-and-education/animal-welfare-fund-grants-program>



Source: supplied, Councils Central Goldfields Rehoming Facebook Page

Council's Rehoming Page had 5249 followers, December 2021

5. REGISTRATION AND IDENTIFICATION

Council has programs, services and strategies to encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats.

5.1 CONTEXT AND CURRENT SITUATION

Council has an annual registration period for the registration of dogs and cats. Council officers do not release animals from the Pound unless Council registration fees are paid and information update to date. Compliance officers undertake microchip checks on lost or wandering animals.

CURRENT DATA (2020)

As detailed in *1.5 Domestic Animals Statistics* Central Goldfields Shire had 683 cats and 2191 dogs registered during the 2020 - 2021 financial year. There are a number of actions that were identified in the previous plan to assist in the education of residents and to promote the importance of animal registrations. These have been raised in the consultation on this DAM PLAN and are proposed to be implemented this term.

They are summarised below:

- making available to residents a pamphlet titled 'Living with Dogs and Cats' as a guide for both pet owners and non-owners;
- follow up pet owners that have not renewed their pet registration;
- publish information on the Council website and in the Council newsletter distributed to residents to advise of the registration period and requirements;
- promote the requirement for owners to "pick up" after their dogs and dispose of waste appropriately;
- provide dog waste bins and drinking fountains at some reserves; and
- distribute registration brochures and fact sheets to residents.

Council will in the future be able to identify the number of people in the Shire that claim a pension discount on their animal registration.

5.2 OUR ORDERS, LOCAL LAWS AND COUNCIL POLICY

Council's orders, local laws, policies and procedure that relate to the registration and identification of cats and dogs within their municipality are explained in this section.

In 2021, Council established a process to record and verify microchip numbers with the animal registration.

CURRENT ORDERS:

Section 10C of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 requires cats and dogs to be microchipped as a condition of registration (which is compulsory once the animal is three months of age).

Dogs and cats being registered for the first time must be micro-chipped. Micro-chipped animals can be promptly returned to their owners when they stray or become lost.

CURRENT POLICY

- Compliance and Enforcement Policy
-

OUR CURRENT COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES

- Conduct regular door knocking campaigns to check for unregistered cats and dogs;
- All seized and impounded animals are identified as required and registered and microchipped prior to their release;
- Patrolling public places, such as streets, reserves and parks to check that dogs are registered.



Source: supplied, Compliance staff rural patrol, 2021

5.3 OUR PLAN

OBJECTIVE 1: Improve the accuracy of Council registration database by cross-referencing with micro-chip registry data.

<i>Activity</i>	<i>When</i>	<i>Evaluation</i>
Improve accuracy of Council pet registration database by contacting micro-chip registries to obtain details of dogs and cats in the municipality that are microchipped. Cross reference Council's registration data with the registry to identify unregistered animals and follow up those that are not.	Ongoing	Demonstrate Council's pet registration database can be accurately cross referenced with micro-chip registries Demonstrate an increase in numbers of pets registered with Council following microchip registry cross-referencing exercise.

OBJECTIVE 2: Improve promotion of pet registration and responsible pet ownership.

<i>Activity</i>	<i>When</i>	<i>Evaluation</i>
Increase publicity and education regarding animal registration and micro-chipping among Council's residents by publishing information in a diversity of formats (online, local paper, letters, other publications, videos).	Ongoing	Review relevant publications to ensure registration is advertised/promoted
Increase publicity and education regarding animal registration and micro-chipping among all residents by using media platforms; temporary signage on Council vehicles/reserves; messaging on voicemail.	Ongoing	Review relevant media to ensure registration is advertised/promoted

OBJECTIVE 3: Improve compliance with pet registration requirements

<i>Activity</i>	<i>When</i>	<i>Evaluation</i>
Undertake annual registration door knock program	Registration period April	Review annual increase in registration numbers. Record of unregistered and unidentified animals detected during door knocks. Infringements issued for unregistered animals
Community Education at Council Events	Ongoing	Attendance at several events during the year, and increased profile
Improve accuracy of Council pet registration	Ongoing	Increase in registration/identification of unregistered animals

database by contacting micro-chip registries to obtain details of dogs and cats in the municipality that are microchipped		
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OBJECTIVE 4: Review the registration fees and costs of providing all the services.

<i>Activity</i>	<i>When</i>	<i>Evaluation</i>
Review the Animal Management Service and assess whether the fees are adequate Check to see whether the fees meet the Charter of Human Rights	Budget period December	Review the costs of providing the service and check to see whether there can be any cost recovery Review the number of pension registrations, and non-registered animals to see whether the fees are too high to encourage compliance
Investigate a reduced fee incentive scheme for registration, desexing or microchipping	2022	Consider voucher for concession holders; investigate grants to cover these costs; investigate partnerships with commercial businesses



Source: Supplied, Councillor Liesbeth Long, November 2021

6 NUISANCE

This section outlines the programs, services and strategies to minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance.

6.1 CONTEXT AND CURRENT SITUATION

CATS

The main nuisance with cats in CGSC is caused by stray and wild cats. These cats are enticed to remain in an area by residents feeding and other plentiful food supplies. They are the main cause of attacks on the natural habitat, including native animals and compromise the amenity of the area.

Council provides cat traps to residents to enable them to trap cats which are then collected by Council officers. Demand for these is often high and there can be longer waiting periods to obtain them. Additionally, officers proactively set traps in areas of the municipality where nuisance and wild cats are known to be of concern.

A night-time cat curfew has not been considered previously in CGSC, however it is applicable in the Councils on the eastern and southern borders (Bendigo, Mount Alexander, and Hepburn).

BARKING DOGS

Council's role includes investigating nuisance caused by barking dogs. When a complaint is made, officers undertake investigations. This includes speaking to the complainant, the dog owner and attending the location to determine what is occurring and to establish whether the barking goes beyond mere annoyance, and if a nuisance offence has occurred.

Council can only intervene a barking dog complaint if it is legally classed a "nuisance". The Domestic Animals Act 1994 (the Act) regulates barking dogs if it creates a nuisance. The Act makes it an offence to allow a dog to be a nuisance if it injures or endangers the health of any person, or by persistently or continually barking to such a degree that it unreasonably interferes with the peace and comfort of another person in any other premises.

When a complaint is lodged with Council, it is often because the neighbour-to- neighbour approach has not worked. Council's initial response is to obtain a statement from the community member about the times the barking occurs and the impact it has on the complainant, and may also request that they keep a log/diary, so as to determine the frequency of barking and also whether there may be a cause that could be attributed to the behaviour dependant on when it may be occurring and its frequency.

The dog owner is provided with information how the barking may be reduced and is asked to implement strategies. The investigation proceeds with enquiries with other neighbours and the officer making their own observations. The dog owner is again made aware that an investigation is underway, and once all the available evidence has been collected the dog owner may be formally interviewed. Council will continue to review its procedures so that they are consistent with best practice.

DOG FAECES

Existing controls require dog owners to carry bags with them when their dog is being exercised in public and to remove their dogs' faeces from public places as well as properly dispose of the waste. This remains a significant for concern for Council and well as users of these public recreational spaces whether they are used for informal recreation or for organised sport. Although most dog owners do the right thing it is necessary to heighten our educative approach to reaffirm that not picking up after your dog is not only the persons responsibility as a responsible dog owner, but that failing to do so has a potentially significant impact upon the enjoyment of these spaces by residents.

DEDICATED OFF LEASH AREAS FOR DOGS

Work exploring the feasibility of fenced off-leash areas is currently being explored within the Master Planning of Maryborough's Recreation Reserves.

NUISANCE SUMMARY

During the 2020 – 2021 financial year, Council investigated 144 barking dog complaints. Pleasingly, only one of these investigations led to a Notice to Comply being issued. This aligns with Councils proactive approach to investigating these types of complaints. In assessing these complaints, noise logs are assessed and when possible the source of the noise is assessed in person.

6.2 OUR ORDERS, LOCAL LAWS AND POLICY

CURRENT POLICY:

- Compliance and Enforcement Policy

Enforcement associated with issuing notices to comply, infringement notices and filing charges for prosecution regarding dogs and cats causing a nuisance.

Enforcement associated with issuing notices to comply, infringement notices and filing charges for prosecution regarding dogs and/or cats that are not desexed.

OUR CURRENT COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES

Council's focus in recent times has been to address complaints about barking dogs, nuisance cats and dog faeces. These will continue to be high priorities for officers over the currency of this plan.

Activities for these complaints include:

- Conducting regular park patrols;
- Park audits of signage;
- Enforcement via official warnings, infringement notices and prosecutions as required.

6.3 OUR PLAN

OBJECTIVE 1: Reduce cat nuisance complaints by 15% per year.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Prepare CGSC for the Introduction a cat curfew in the next DAM PLAN	2024	Compare number of cat nuisance complaints before and after curfew introduced
Provide education material about cat enclosures and provide a DIY cat enclosure workshop	2022	Less complaints about wandering cats; higher use of cat traps for hire during this plan 2022-2025 and less in future plans
Circulate safe Cat, Safe Wildlife education material throughout municipality (Find out more: www.safecat.org.au)	Registration period	Less reports of wandering/nuisance cats with 2 year timeframe.

OBJECTIVE 2: Consider the appropriateness of government grant funding to support cat containment equipment or initiatives (e.g. cat containment runs) in areas of biodiversity value*. *Subject to being successful award of grant*

Activity	When	Evaluation
Establish a partnership with an eligible organisation as per the relevant grant guidelines (if required).	1 year	Partnership with relevant organisation secured.
Develop a project plan and grant application for cat containment initiative/s in areas of biodiversity value.	2 years	2 projects completed / 6 cat runs installed with the funding obtained.

OBJECTIVE 2: Reduce and minimise the amount of nuisance dog complaints to Council by education and enforcement.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Improve the barking dog complaint/investigation procedure and ensure it is published on the Council website	1 year	Updated on web, procedure approved by CEO
Continue to roll out the provision of dog faeces disposal bins and bag dispensers in parks subject to annual Council budget process	Ongoing	Increase in new bins and dispensers installed over the life of the plan
Increase awareness of the requirement to pick up dog faeces by: • distributing brochures; and • using stencilled designs on footpaths in reserves	Ongoing	Community feedback and number of complaints received. Decrease in complaints regarding dog faeces
Implement any outcomes of feasibility work around improvements to dog off leash areas and 'dog parks'	Council resolution	Work with recreation area – master planning for parks and reserves – implementation of recommendations from study

<p>Include information regarding confinement, barking dogs, dogs at large and other information relating to responsible pet ownership in animal registration information packs each year and on Council’s website and publications</p>	<p>Alongside registration renewal time</p>	<p>Annual review</p>
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*Council, either directly or in partnership with an eligible organisation (e.g. landcare, conservation, education organisations), may be able to apply for grant funding to support cat containment initiatives within their municipality. Regularly check this Department of Land, Water and Planning’s biodiversity funding page to determine if suitable streams of funding become available:
<https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/grants>



Source: Supplied, Compliance staff – responsible pet ownership starts from the beginning

7 DOG ATTACKS

In this section Council outlines the programs, services and strategies to minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals.

7.1 CONTEXT AND CURRENT SITUATION

Dog attacks in CGSC recorded for 2016 and 2020 are shown below:

RECORDED DOG ATTACKS

Nature of Attack	2020 – 2021
Dog attacks recorded	48
Dog attack prosecutions	0
Fines issued	0

7.2 OUR ORDERS, LOCAL LAWS, COUNCIL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

CURRENT POLICY

- CGSC Compliance and Enforcement Policy

OUR CURRENT COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES

Authorised officers routinely:

- maintain street and reserve patrols with a specific focus on high risk areas e.g. high attendance reserves;
- promptly respond to complaints; and
- use declaration/destruction powers appropriately.

7.3 OUR PLAN

OBJECTIVE 1: Increase reporting of dog attacks in the community by 10% per year (shorter term objective – initial education / enforcement activities will increase reporting of incidents).

Activity	When	Evaluation
Improve public awareness of what a dog attack is and how to report using media articles, public notices in parks, A-frame billboards, website updates, direct mail, etc.	Ongoing	Evaluate this activity (and overall objective) by comparing number of dog attacks reported to council pre and post campaign. Meet objective of increasing reports by (number) % Could also consider doing a community survey to measure awareness of dog attacks and how to report them, before and after the campaign.

OBJECTIVE 2: Promote responsible pet ownership to the younger generation

Activity	When	Evaluation
Visiting local schools to educate the next generation of pet owners of the importance of responsible pet ownership	1 year	Participated in the DJPR program and the MCHC Pet Safety Program

OBJECTIVE 3: Reduce and minimise the risk of dog attacks in the community.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Where appropriate, utilise media releases or other means to inform the community about successful prosecutions	1 year	Promoted
Awareness campaigns about dogs biting owners, friends and family	1 year	Promoted
Information about keeping dogs safely contained	1 year	Promoted
The benefits of training and socialisation dogs from an early age	1 year	Promoted



Central Goldfields Shire compliance coordinator Mark Jennings and compliance officer Jo Gibbs are reminding residents it is their responsibility to ensure their dogs are safely contained to their property following an increase in calls about loose dogs.

COMMUNITY

Warning to pet owners after spate of attacks

Source: Maryborough Advertiser, 22 October, 2021

8 DANGEROUS, MENACING AND RESTRICTED BREED DOGS

In this section Council outlines programs, services and strategies to effectively identify all dangerous dogs, menacing dogs and restricted breed dogs in the municipality and to ensure those dogs are kept in accordance with the DA Act and regulations.

8.1 CONTEXT AND CURRENT SITUATION

Definitions for dogs fitting one of these three classifications are:

A DANGEROUS DOG

- a dog declared as dangerous by the Council (e.g. it has caused death or serious injury to a person or animal); or
- a dog kept as a guard dog for the purpose of guarding non-residential properties or a dog trained to attack or bite a person or thing when attached to or worn by a person.

A MENACING DOG

Is a dog declared menacing by the Council because it has:

- rushed at or chased a person; or
- bitten a person or animal causing a non-serious injury to that person or animal; or
- has been declared a menacing dog under a law of another State.

A RESTRICTED BREED DOG

Is a dog that is any one of the following breeds:

- Japanese Tosa;
- fila Brasileiro;
- dogo Argentino;
- Perro de Presa Canario (or Presa Canario);
- American Pit Bull Terrier (or Pit Bull Terrier).

The number of dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs currently registered in Central Goldfields:

Dog Classification	2020
Dangerous dogs	0
Menacing dogs	1
Restricted breed dogs	0
Totals	1

8.2 OUR POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

CURRENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Undisciplined and/or inadequately trained dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs in public places pose the largest risk to the public and authorised officers. These categories of dogs are dealt with in accordance with the relevant legislation and Council procedures.

CURRENT COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES

In line with State Government legislation, Council deems the control of dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs as a very serious matter. Random patrols by Authorised Officers are conducted throughout the municipality, and responding to complaints from residents also assists to identify these types of dogs.

8.3 OUR PLAN

OBJECTIVE 1: Developing a policy to assist in deciding whether or not to declare a dog dangerous, menacing or restricted breed dog provides assurance to local residents the decision making is fair and nonbiased.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Develop a policy to assist decision making regarding the declaration process	1-3 years	Policy adopted by Council
Develop a procedure to assist Council staff enact the policy	1-3 years	After adoption by Council

OBJECTIVE 2: Ensure declared dogs are compliant to relevant legislation and regulations

Activity	When	Evaluation
Conduct random property inspections of declared dogs to ensure compliance	Ongoing	Ensure the register of declared dogs is kept up to date



Source: Supplied, Compliance staff vehicle which Canine Cube – safe way to transport

9 DOMESTIC ANIMAL BUSINESSES

This section explains how Council will outline programs, services and strategies which Council intends to pursue in its municipality to ensure that domestic animal businesses (DABs) comply with the Act, regulations and any related legislation.

9.1 CONTEXT AND CURRENT SITUATION

CGSC CURRENT DATA

There are 2 DABs in CGSC which consist of:

- Central Goldfields Shire Council Pound
- Kelpie Cottage

9.2 OUR POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

OUR ORDERS, LOCAL LAWS AND COUNCIL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The Act and associated regulations specifically regulate DABs. Comprehensive codes of practice developed from those regulations require no additional policies or procedures from Council.

OUR CURRENT COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES

Compliance inspections of DABs are conducted annually by authorised officers. In addition, spot checks on DABs are carried out throughout the year. Should public complaints relating to DAB animal management practices be received, they are promptly investigated and responded to. 9.1.5

SUMMARY

The 2 DABs registered in CGSC are sufficiently monitored with spot checks and compliance inspections. Accurate registers of DABs are maintained.

9.3 OUR PLAN

OBJECTIVE 1: Identify and register all Domestic Animal Businesses in the municipality by December 2022.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Identify all businesses that should be registered DABs in the municipality, including businesses selling pets / pet products / services in the municipality. Follow up to determine whether they are and should be registered with council.	December 2022	Compare number of registered DABs before and after activity.
Monitor councils registration database for owners with more than 3 fertile females	Ongoing	Number of 3 fertile females found in comparison to previous years

OBJECTIVE 2: Annually inspect and audit all registered DAB's

Activity	When	Evaluation
Conduct compliance inspections on DABs	Ongoing	Compare number that are found non-compliant prior
Monitor the Pet Exchange Register for source numbers issued to locals who are not a registered business	Ongoing	Compare number that are found with number that are registered

OBJECTIVE 3: Audit the Pound to ensure compliance with the Domestic Animals Act

Activity	When	Evaluation
Use the guidelines by AgVic to determine that the Pound is meeting the requirements; ensure any breaches are complied	Ongoing	Subsequent audits by AgVic are successful

10 OTHER MATTERS

In this section Council outlines any other matters related to the management of dogs and cats in their municipal district that it thinks necessary.

10.1 CONTEXT AND CURRENT SITUATION

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Like all municipalities in Victoria, Council maintains a Municipal Emergency Management Plan (MEMP) for responding to natural disasters and emergencies. The purpose of the MEMP is to provide a coordinated response and then recovery to support an emergency-affected community. This plan sets out the procedures to be followed when Council and community resources are required in the case of an emergency.

CGSC is generally a moderate risk area with storm, flood damage, bushfire, major transport emergency or chemical spillage may require an appropriate and prompt response. It is important for residents to know how the MEMP operates and what to do in an emergency.

The Victorian Emergency Animal Welfare Plan was recently been reviewed and updated in consultation with the wildlife welfare sector in response to the 2019/20 bushfire season, to ensure it provides a strong framework for responding to animal welfare emergency needs in Victoria. The plan is a joint responsibility of the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR), and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP).

Under the plan, DJPR is responsible for coordination of activities relating to all animals other than wildlife, DELWP is responsible for coordination of activities relating to wildlife.

An Emergency Animal Welfare Plan (EAWP) should be developed for CGSC which would outline the procedures to enable council animal management staff to understand their roles and responsibilities when undertaking activities assigned to Council and when they are assisting members of the community to manage their companion animals and livestock during an emergency. Considering the other relevant local issues, such as domestic violence or other gender based violence, or elderly incapacitation, this EAWP would have a great scope in the CGSC community.

POUND SERVICES

Council has a pound and rehoming service at Burns Street Maryborough.

This service is unusual in the region, as other Councils, such as Mount Alexander and Bendigo have outsourced their Pound and Rehoming as it has been a cost effective means to do so - especially in the absence of owning, having access or being able to easily establish and locate such a facility. It is noted that metropolitan Councils such as Monash are now considering bringing the service in-house as the costs for outsourcing are becoming increasingly high. Monash and surrounds are considering a shared service across other Councils nearby.

CGSC Pound was audited by Agriculture Victoria in 2020 and found to have several breaches of the Domestic Animals Act. During 2021 staff have worked to bring the Pound up to an acceptable standard. It is anticipated that some further minor renovations to the cat enclosure are required.

Partnership's and 84Y Agreements with other rehoming services assist Council to meet the requirements under the Act.

AFTER HOURS SERVICE FOR THE COLLECTION OF DOGS AND CATS

Council provides an afterhours service for the collection of dangerous dogs (after a dog attack) and for livestock wandering on major roads.

The community has asked for Council to consider whether the service could also include pickups for lost and wandering dogs and cats. There are approximately 1-2 of these per week (after standard business hours and on weekends).

Most Councils around Victoria *do not* provide this service. Usually the community members who choose to pick up a wandering animal take the onus of responsibility to find the owner either by door knocking or posting an update on social media (e.g. Facebook). Then if the owner cannot be located, Council responds during business hours.

There are alternative devices that Council could consider, such as a dog box at the Pound where people can drop the dog/cat in and then if the owner calls Council, Council can give them a pin to retrieve the animal themselves. Only registered and microchipped animals will be released to owners.

PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS (POCTA) LEGISLATION

The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 (POCTA) allows for the authorisation of local government officers, who are employees of council and authorised under Section 72 of the Act.

Council officers who are authorised under POCTA have the powers to investigate cruelty, seize and dispose of animals, destroy suffering animals, deal with abandoned or distressed animals and prosecute cruelty offences. Council officers are not authorised as POCTA inspectors as the investigation of POCTA offences that occur within the municipality are currently investigated by the RSPCA and police. The RSPCA and police have demonstrated an ability to adequately respond to animal welfare matters that are controlled under the provisions of POCTA.

PET OWNERSHIP IN PROMOTING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

According to the Australian Companion Animal Council, pet ownership provides an opportunity to improve health. A pet may become a stimulus for exercise, reduce anxiety, and provide an external focus of attention. Pets are also a source of physical contact and comfort and may decrease loneliness and depression while promoting an interesting lifestyle. The benefits of pet ownership are consistent with the health promotion and disease prevention goals outlined in the Health and Wellbeing Act.

These goals include:

- increasing physical activity and fitness and
- improving mental health and preventing mental disorders.

Council is committed to working in an integrated way across Statutory Services, Strategic Planning and Recreation Planning to consider the unique needs of pets and their owners.

PET OWNERSHIP FOR COMPANIONSHIPS IN ELDERLY OR ISOLATED HOMES

According to the Australian Companion Animal Council, pets have been shown to greatly increase quality of life for the elderly including reduced tension, fatigue and confusion and increased feelings of enthusiasm, interest and inspiration. The role of pets is particularly significant for those who live in a nursing home or in some situation of assisted care. Numerous studies show pets provide one of the few interventions capable of permanently lifting the atmosphere of hospices and nursing homes.

Research undertaken in nursing homes and private residences shows pets delay the aging process. This is achieved through increased physical exercise and socialisation and increased mental functioning attained through talking to pets and having the responsibility of caring for them. Pets also boost the activity levels of the elderly, and dogs especially help people keep an active routine providing a reason to get up in the morning.

Central Goldfields recently adopted Positive Ageing Strategy 2021-2026 stated that “increased pet ownership is embraced as an effective method of mitigating loneliness, with ‘pets as companions’ embraced throughout the Shire” (pg. 24). A Pets as Companions program is recommended as an outcome of the strategy to reduce isolation.

Reference: Australian Companion Animal Council, The Power of Pets, 2009
<https://www.gleneira.vic.gov.au/media/2900/the-power-of-pets-2009.pdf>

10.2 OUR POLICIES

CURRENT POLICIES

- CGSC Emergency Management Plan
- CGSC Positive Ageing Action Plan

10.3 OUR PLAN

OBJECTIVE 1: Create an Emergency Animal Welfare Plan (EAWP) which represents current knowledge contingencies and represents best practice.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Create an EAWP plan	2 years	Plan completed and adopted by Council

OBJECTIVE 2: Increase community awareness and promote services available for people and animals exposed to family violence

Activity	When	Evaluation
Develop connections with community welfare groups to assist providing services to people with pets	2 years	A terms of reference of MOU between groups to assist people escaping difficult situations

Central Goldfields Shire Council
Domestic Animal Management Plan

Use the media to explain the services that are available	2.5 years	Media update (use Dogtober/Animal registration/Fire Planning)
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OBJECTIVE 3: Investigate ways to manage the community expectations for providing an after-hours dog and cat collection service.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Review the Animal Management Service staff provision, costs and requirements to provide this service	1 year	Service Review completed and recommendations supported by Council and CEO
Undertake extensive consultation across the whole community about the provision for this service	1 year	Engagement campaign undertaken with clear and definitive outcomes
Consider other means for providing this services – such as tools or technology; community members support; other devices	1 year	Implementation of alternative measures

OBJECTIVE 4: Continue to work with other sections of Council to advocate for integrated planning solution for community members with pets

Activity	When	Evaluation
Internal participation in master planning; recreation planning and asset planning	Ongoing	User groups, such as people with pets are considered in strategies and plans for land use



Source: Cr Wayne Sproull with 18 month old kelpie/staffy X Archie

11 ANNUAL REVIEW OF PLAN AND ANNUAL REPORTING

CGSC will review of this DAM Plan annually.

The review will evaluate the activities listed under each objective in this plan to determine whether they have successfully been activated, are in progress or otherwise. In each case, action or none action should be commented on.

The annual evaluation of this DAM PLAN will be:

- published in Councils' Annual Report; and
- provided to the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning Secretary together with any amendments to the plan.

EVALUATION OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DOMESTIC ANIMALS MANAGEMENT PLAN

Complete for each activity	
Was each activity completed?	Yes/No
Describe any changes you will make if you do that activity again.	
Was an activity not done or is now not planned to be done?	If so, why?
If an activity was unsuccessful and you don't plan to do it again, outline insights you have into why it didn't work.	
Complete for each objective	
Did you meet your objective by carrying out the planned activities?	Yes/No
Describe your level of success/progress in meeting the objective.	
Address quantitative data to determine that each plan and activity are working	Take monthly records, check increases/decreases of data

CONCLUSION

“Animals, more so cats and dogs, have switched their family status from being a mere outside pet to ward off trespasses, snakes and any other vermin considering wandering onto ones property to now being an integral adored and much loved family member. Dogs also have become calming influences in hospitals, aged care facilities to wellbeing dogs at schools etc. notwithstanding pets have for decades been companions to our blind guiding and providing a quality of life.

All this said we as responsible owners need guidance and disciplines around how we manage the behaviours of our family members in animal suits not too dissimilar to communities having laws and rules for human behaviours.”



Source: Cr Grace La Vella

Chapter and Topic	Action
1. Evaluation	Explains how council programs are effective, efficient and deliver on Government’s expectations.
2. Training of Authorised Officers	Explains how Authorised Officers are suitably trained to carry out their duties effectively.
3. Programs to promote and encourage responsible pet ownership and compliance with legislation	Explains how responsible pet ownership and residents understand their obligations.
4. Programs to address over-population rates and any high euthanasia rates	Explains how council is providing programs and education to reduce the population of unregistered animals and the euthanasia rates within their municipality.
5. Registration and identification	Explains how residents are aware of their obligations and as a result register and identify their cats and dogs.
6. Nuisance	Explains how residents can access prevention, support and are held accountable if their animals are causing a nuisance.
7. Dog attacks	Explains how there are policies and procedures to minimise the risk of dog attacks on the public and other animals.

8. Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted breed dogs	Explains how these dogs are kept in accordance with the Act and Regulations to ensure there is minimal risk to residents.
9. Domestic Animal Businesses	Explains how Domestic Animal Businesses understand their obligations and are compliant with Act, the Regulations and related Code of Practices.
10. Annual Review of Plan and Annual Reporting	Explains how the targets in the DAM PLAN are being met.
11. Other matters, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Reviewing existing order	Explains how council is reviewing existing orders and making necessary changes where necessary