



Murrindindi Shire Council
Domestic Animal Management
Plan 2013 - 2017

Murrindindi Shire Council

Domestic Animal Management Plan 2013-2017

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Domestic Animal Management Plan

All Councils in Victoria are required under Section 68A of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, to prepare and implement a Domestic Animal Management Plan (The Plan) which is reviewed annually.

The purpose of this Plan is to:

- Document current processes and practices under the Murrindindi Shire Council's animal management responsibilities;
- Increase compliance with the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*;
- Increase pet owners' knowledge of the principles of responsible pet ownership and enhance community safety and awareness;
- Assist the Bureau of Animal Welfare to achieve its stated objectives of reducing the numbers of dogs and cats being euthanised;
- Maximise the numbers of dogs and cats that are registered within the Murrindindi Shire;
- Raise awareness and minimise the harmful effect of domestic pets on the population of native birds, mammals and reptiles;
- Take into account community views on animal management matters; and
- Comply with the relevant provisions of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*.

2. Domestic Animal Management Plans

The *Domestic Animals Act 1994* (the Act) outlines the requirements for Councils to prepare and maintain a Domestic Animal Management Plan.

- (1) Section 68A of the Act states: every Council must prepare a Domestic Animal Management Plan, as follows:

'Every Council must, in consultation with the Secretary (of the Department Environment and Primary Industries), prepare at 4 year intervals a domestic animal management plan.'

- (2) The legislation states that the Plan must set out the following information;
 - (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;
 - (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;

- (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;
 - (ii) to ensure that people comply with the *Act*, the regulations and any related legislation;
 - (iii) to minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals;
 - (iv) to address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats;
 - (v) to encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats;
 - (vi) to minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance;
 - (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.
- (d) provide for the review of existing orders made under the *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;
- (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.

The *Act* also states that Council must undertake the following:

- (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.

3. Murrindindi Shire Council – Demographic and Council Profile

Where we live

Our Shire is 60 to 90 minutes north east of Melbourne. Our amazing landscape boasts beautiful National Parks and State Forests, fertile farming land, the pristine Goulburn River and Lake Eildon.

Removed from the fast pace of big city living yet easily accessible from Melbourne and regional hubs, the Shire promotes quality of life and a laidback lifestyle. The area has five key service centres in Alexandra, Eildon, Kinglake, Marysville and Yea that boast a range of businesses and facilities, educational hubs, medical services and a range of accommodation for visitors and residents.

These service centres are complemented by a number of diverse townships including: Acheron • Buxton • Cathkin • Castella • Flowerdale • Glenburn • Gobur • Highlands • Homewood • Kanumbra • Kinglake West • Koriella • Limestone • Molesworth • Murrindindi • Narbethong • Rubicon • Strath Creek • Taggerty • Terip Terip • Thornton • Toolangi • Woodbourne • Yarck.

Our history

The Wurundjeri tribe and the Taungurung language speakers are the traditional owners of the land known as the Murrindindi Shire.

European settlement followed Hume and Hovell's overland exploration in December 1824. Many local towns were established during the 1850s and 1860s after the discovery of gold.

The Murrindindi Shire Council was declared on 18 November 1994 by the amalgamation of the former municipalities of Alexandra and Yea, and the addition of parts of the former municipalities of Healesville, Broadford, Eltham, Whittlesea and Euroa.

On 7 February 2009, the Victorian bushfires claimed 95 lives in our Shire and burned more than 1500 square kilometres (40 per cent of the shire). Our Shire has shown amazing resilience to come back from this natural disaster and we have a community that continues to grow and prosper today.

Who we are

We have a small population in a large and diverse Shire. More than 80 per cent of our 13,058 population was born in Australia. Other common countries of birth include England 4.2 per cent, New Zealand 1.1 per cent, Germany 0.7 per cent, Scotland 0.6 per cent and Netherlands 0.6 per cent.

Our landscape, clean air and beautiful countryside are major attractors to our region. Our highest

proportion of the population (31.6 per cent) is aged between 45 and 64 and we are getting older. The percentage of those aged over 65 is expected to rise from 18.6 per cent in 2010 to 23.6 per cent in 2021, compared to the Victorian anticipated increase from 13.7 per cent to 20.2 per cent.

We have a strong workforce with around 54 per cent employed full time, 34 per cent employed part-time and 4.8 per cent unemployed which is below the state average for unemployment.

Our major employment sectors include management at 18 per cent, technicians and trades workers at 17 per cent, professionals at 15 per cent, labourers at 12 per cent and community and personal service workers at 12 per cent.

Those who have made the choice to live in Murrindindi Shire have at close hand, all that a world class city has to offer while living in a special part of the world.

What we do

Our community has a strong affinity with the land. This is a strong attraction for people to come to our area to enjoy the natural beauty.

Agriculture, viticulture, horticulture and aquaculture are significant drivers of our economy as is our hospitality and tourism industry.

Our region supplies most of Australia's strawberry runner stock and 80 per cent of Australia's trout stock. Our favourable climate conditions allow for the growing of stone fruits, berries and turf production. We also have a vibrant beef, sheep and grain industry.

Education also provides employment opportunities as does medical services and Local Government.

With over a million visitors each year, our tourism sector is a key economic driver that provides eco-tourism opportunities through to luxury holiday stays.

We offer a truly diverse range of opportunities across our Shire.

4. Domestic Animal Statistics and Data

Murrindindi Shire Council Key Statistics (2012/2013)			
Population (2011)	13,058	Area	3889 sq kms
Number of EFT Animal Control Officers	2	Hours training per officer annually	30
Number of registered dogs	2493	Number of cats registered	475
Estimated dog population	3843	Estimated cat population	1200
Number of Impoundments (dogs)	98	Number of Impoundments (cats)	140
Number of animals returned to owner	72		
Number of dogs rehoused (Coldstream Animal Aid)	24	Number of cats rehoused (Coldstream Animal Aid)	16
Number of dogs destroyed	2	Number of cats destroyed	124

Note: The majority of cats destroyed fall into the category of feral and/or nuisance animals and the dogs destroyed represented in the table are dogs involved in dog attacks.

5. Murrindindi Shire Council – Animal Management Staffing and Operational Structure

Murrindindi Shire Council's Local Laws Unit consists of a Coordinator of Local Laws and a Local Laws Officer. The Coordinator of Local Laws reports to the Manager Development & Environmental Services. The Local Laws Officer reports to and assists the Coordinator of Local Laws with the operational running of the Unit.

The Coordinator Local Laws role oversees both Local Law issues and Animal Management duties. The role also includes overseeing Council's 'after-hours' emergency service, which is resourced by officers on a rotational basis.

5.1 Animal Management Services provided to the Community

The Local Laws Unit is responsible for the delivery of animal management services. These services include:

- Impounding of domestic animals and livestock;
- Managing complaints relating to domestic animals and livestock;
- Promoting responsible pet ownership in the community;
- Investigating dog attacks;
- Ensuring compliance with legislation and the various 'codes of practice' relevant to domestic animals and livestock;
- Domestic animal registration process;
- Investigating animal welfare issues;
- Management of compliance issues for domestic animal businesses;
- Providing advice to the general community and owners of domestic animals on the care of their animals;
- Promotion of the 'responsible pet ownership' program;
- Attendance to 'after-hour' animal emergencies; and
- Development and maintenance of animal management strategies and local laws.

5.2 Local Laws relating to Animal Management

Council has a number of local laws which specifically relate to animal management issues. These local laws relate to the following:

- Restrictions on the number of various animals permitted to be housed in either residential or rural land;
- General housing requirements for domestic animals and livestock;
- Responsibility of owners of domestic animals and livestock for removal of excrement in a public place.
- Fencing requirements for containing livestock on properties; and
- Restrictions placed on owners of livestock when moving or grazing livestock.

The local laws pertaining to the above management issues are set out in 'Attachment 1' on page 28.

6. Training of Authorised Officers

6.1 Current and Planned Training

A variety of training is offered and provided for all Authorised Officers. Training needs are reviewed annually; a training plan is then developed and implemented.

Training courses have included:

- animal handling
- investigation and statement taking
- prosecution
- information technology

Officers also attend industry related seminars, conferences and briefings from the Department Environment & Primary Industries (DEPI), Australian Institute of Animal Management, Municipal Association of Victoria and other relevant Associations.

6.2 Key Performance Objectives

6.2.i Objective 1: Develop and maintain a training register for individual officers detailing completed and proposed training to maintain skills and knowledge.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Training is identified through the Annual Performance Review cycle	Annually	Annual review, to ensure training KPIs are achieved & adjusted accordingly.
Staff attendance at industry related seminars and training, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breed Identification • Annual AIAM Conference • DEPI/BAW Seminars 	As offered	Annual review of programmed attendance in line with training register

6.2.ii Objective 2: Develop Authorised Officers for Council's 'after-hours' emergency service from staff within Council to ensure adequate staffing of the program.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Identify minimum level of experience and training required to build necessary skills to complete tasks	By April 2014	Review and ensure all criteria are met prior to commencement of after-hours duties.
Allocate a "buddy" to the officer being developed and ensure accurate information and training is being provided whilst on the job	Initially over two-week period August 2014	Review feedback from both officers to ensure effective development. If required then further resources allocated.
Allocate a variety of skill based tasks for the officer to complete during the development and training period	Ongoing	Assess completion of each task to ensure officer is developing required skill sets.

7. Registration and Identification

All dogs and cats over the age of 3 months must be registered with Murrindindi Shire Council in accordance with state government legislation. All new registered animals must also be micro-chipped.

New animal registrations for cats and dogs can be made in person at the Customer Service Centres at Alexandra, Kinglake and Yea.

Registration forms can be downloaded online from Council's website <http://www.murrindindi.vic.gov.au> or are available from any of Council's Customer Service Centres.

Domestic animals purchased from domestic animal businesses are provided with a 'New Domestic Animal Owners' package that includes animal registration forms and information on responsible pet ownership.

Local Veterinary Clinics will assist with the micro-chipping of these animals. Council does provide micro-chipping days every second year at various locations throughout the municipality.

Under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, animal registration periods expire on April 10 each year. Animal renewal notices are sent out in March every year. Registration renewal payments can be made either via the internet, telephone or in person at any of Council's Customer Service Centres.

The registration renewal process is reviewed every year to ensure animal registrations are accurate prior to the renewals being issued.

Animals found unsecured or wandering at large from their property that are registered with Council have a higher chance of being reunited with their owners. When dogs and cats are outside of the owner's premises, Council identification tags must be worn as outlined in Section 20 of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*.

The registration of animals provides Council with an understanding of the level of pet ownership in the community and in turn this helps Council plan for services and programs associated with pets in particular areas of the community.

Registration fees help fund the services provided by Council in relation to animal management. A statutory component of the registration fee collected by Council assists in funding the Bureau of Animal Welfare's 'Responsible Pet Ownership' program.

Registration fees are reviewed annually as part of the budget process.

7.1 Current Education Activities

Current education activities relating to registration and identification include:

- Publicising the requirement to register pets over the age of three months in the local media throughout the Shire as well as on Council's website;
- Mail out animal registration renewal notices in March each year to currently registered animals;
- Promotion of the Bureau of Animal Welfare's (BAW) Responsible Pet Ownership program in maternal health centres, pre-school/kindergartens and in primary schools; and
- Responsible Pet Ownership brochures are made available to the community at all customer service centres or upon request. These brochures are included in new animal registration notices to provide information regarding the importance and requirements of registration.

7.2 Current Animal Management Activities

Current compliance activities for registration and identification include:

- A door knock audit conducted each year for animal registrations that have lapsed.
- Ensuring all impounded and unregistered animals are micro-chipped and registered
- Issuing notices and /or infringements for animals found unregistered.
- Prosecuting owners of unregistered animals where infringements remain unpaid and animals remain unregistered.
- Monitoring Domestic Animal Businesses registered within the municipality.
- Monitoring local media advertisements relating to animals being offered for sale.
- Patrols by Council Officers to enforce the provisions of the Act and Council's local laws.
- On-going commitment to the 'after hours' animal service program.

7.3 Summary

The number of unregistered animals that enter Council's pound facility remains high, which suggests that there is a number of unregistered animals within the municipality

Council collects data from the pound records to determine the percentage of unregistered animals impounded throughout the Shire. Such data allows Council to focus on education and compliance activities in these locations.

7.4 Key Performance Objectives

7.4.i Objective 1: To reduce the total number of properties required for the annual door knock audit activity.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Inform residents of the animal registration renewal period by utilising media releases and mailing renewal notices prior to 10 April.	March- May Yearly	Number of registration renewals received prior to the 10 April expiry. Review media release each year to determine the most effective advertising.
Ensure each property is audited and issued infringements where animals found to be unregistered	July – August Yearly	Record total number of properties visited and infringements issued and compare to previous results.
Ensure animal registrations have been renewed and infringements paid.	Sept – Oct Yearly	Record total number of infringements unpaid and animal registrations.

7.4.ii Objective 2: Increase and maintain dog and cat registrations

Activity	When	Evaluation
Ensure all seized and impounded animals are micro-chipped and registered by their owner prior to release. Note: Officers in conjunction with local vets undertake micro-chipping activities.	Prior to every release.	Review annual registration numbers. Review number of dogs and cats being seized and impounded.
Undertake a proactive door knock program in areas believed to have high number of unregistered animals to check for unregistered dogs and cats. Effective advertising prior to audit commencing.	Annually	Review annual increase in registration numbers. Number of unregistered animals picked up during door knocks.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Host biennial micro-chipping days at various locations throughout the shire. Make available the ability to register animals at same time.	2014 & 2016	Collect data on number of animals micro-chipped/registered at these days, to determine areas to be door knocked. Annual animal increase in animal numbers.

8 Management of Nuisance Animals

8.1 Current Situation

	2011	2012
No. of barking dog complaints received (All nuisance complaints are investigated and measures implemented to ameliorate the nuisance)	N/A*	N/A*
No. of cat traps provided to the community	50	58
No. of roaming dog complaints received (Council responds to roaming dog complaints where the situation has escalated to a nuisance. This is often the case on long weekends and school holidays placing additional demands on Council's After Hours Service).	N/A*	N/A*
No. of excess animal complaints.	3	2

*Information not available (N/A), A system for collecting statistical data will be developed and is identified as an objective in section 8.7.(ii).

The *Domestic Animals Act, 1994*, regulates the nuisance provisions for both dogs and cats relating to noise, trespassing and wandering animals. Council also has introduced a number of Local Laws to help minimise and prevent nuisances which are outlined below.

8.2 Local Laws relating to nuisance

Murrindindi Shire Council's Community Local Law Part 2 Clause 8.1, limits the number of dogs and cats on a residential property to 2 (two) without a permit.

Owners seeking permission from Council to keep more than the prescribed number of animals, requires the consent of neighbours and Council approval (via the Authorised Officer).

Where a permit has been issued and a proven nuisance complaint found, a permit can be revoked and owners made to remove the additional animal/s.

8.3 Council Policies for nuisance complaints

Council has a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) involving nuisance complaints to ensure all complaints received are handled in the same consistent matter by all Authorised Officers.

8.3.i Barking Dogs

The SOP outlines the required processes involved to investigate a complaint relating to nuisance barking dog issues, including the liaison with the owner of the dog, the complainant and surrounding neighbours.

Where nuisances are found to be substantiated pursuant to Section 32 of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, Council can issue notices to the owner of the dog to abate the nuisance, as well as issue infringements and/or have the matter heard in the Magistrates Court to seek an order from the Court for the owner to abate the nuisance.

SOPs are reviewed annually or in accordance with legislative amendments.

8.3.ii Cats and Dogs at large

Council Officers will endeavour to return cats and dogs found at large where the animals are registered with Council without incurring an infringement.

In circumstances where repeat wandering at large offenders (more than one offence) are found an infringement and relevant impoundment release fees are imposed on the owner.

When appropriate Council will withdraw Infringements and pursue the matter in the Magistrates Court. Council may seek an order from the Court to require the owner to carry out works to ensure the animal is not able to escape from the owner's premises.

8.4 Current Education/Promotion Activities relating to nuisance animals

The Responsible Pet Ownership program assists Councils with up to date information brochures for numerous issues relating to nuisance animals and methods to deal with the specific nuisance.

Council may also investigate the following:

- Providing information relating to the building of cat enclosures;
- Providing information brochures from the DEPI to the public at all of Council's Customer Service Centres and Council's website;
- Encourage the de-sexing of cats and dogs to reduce wandering;
- Encourage dog owners to seek advice from professional dog trainers and trial dog citronella collars to reduce issues of barking.

8.5 Current compliance activities relating to nuisance animals include:

- Investigate nuisance complaints in accordance with Council's complaint policy guidelines.
- Issuing notices to comply/abate; notices of objection; infringements; and where appropriate taking the matter to the Magistrates Court;
- Providing cat traps to residents;
- Provide animal excrement bags at parks/stipulated areas to ensure dog owners comply with Council's Local Laws for the removal of animal excrement; and
- Report outcomes of any enforcement action/prosecutions when appropriate to raise awareness in the community of the benefits of preventing dog and cat nuisance

8.6 Summary

In order to reduce animal nuisance problems in the community, Council officers will continue to promote and provide activities that achieve improved pet owner compliance, community amenity, awareness and safety.

8.7 Key Performance Objectives

8.7.i Objective 1: Investigate Council's current position relating to the control of dogs in public places pursuant to Section 26 of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Assess the feasibility and benefits of 'dedicated dog park' areas.	2014	Assess public feedback and feasibility in specific locations This new initiative has budget implications that would require further Council consideration.
Educate dog owners and include Responsible Pet Ownership brochures in Council's 'new owners' package.	Ongoing	Increase in animal registrations. No increase in complaints relating to dogs in public places
Erect signage in parks where appropriate	2015	Record data relating to notices/warnings issued versus decreased number of animal litter and dog wandering complaints in surrounding park areas

8.7.ii Objective 2: Decrease the timeframe in resolving barking dog nuisance complaints/investigations.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Set key performance indicators for Officers to complete barking dog nuisance complaints within a maximum 10 week timeframe.	June 2014	Review complaints annually to evaluate percentage completed within timeframe
Implement barking dog SOP and revise annually	Ongoing	Review complaints to ensure SOPs were followed
Assess the benefits of current practice of issuing citronella collars to residents free of charge, to hiring the collar out to dog owners where complaints are received.	June 2014	Review the effectiveness of citronella collars in reducing dog barking where implemented.
Develop a system for the collection of statistical data for all barking dog and roaming dog nuisances	Monthly	Data to be collected in the operational Key Performance Indicator reporting cycle.

9 Dog Attacks

9.1 Current data

Authorised Council Officers investigate dog attack reports thoroughly. Evidence pertaining to the incident is collated to formulate a prosecution brief. This includes the taking of statements from all parties involved, vet/medical reports, photographs and development of recommendations.

A brief is prepared by the Coordinator Local Laws and makes further recommendations to the Manager Development & Environmental Services in order for Council to decide on an appropriate course of action.

Possible courses of action Council may choose include:

- Infringements (where non-serious injuries sustained);
- Menacing/Dangerous Dog Declaration ;
- Prosecution in Magistrates Court ;
- Seek destruction/compensation orders by Magistrates;
- Seek mediation between parties; and
- Investigate whether further action is required.

Where injuries have occurred to a person or another animal by a dog that is of a serious injury (as defined by the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*), Council will strive to have the matter heard in the Magistrates Court.

Media releases of any successful prosecutions should be published to educate the community and promote responsible pet ownership.

Animal registration fees include a subsidy to the State Government's Bureau of Animal Welfare (BAW) that help fund programs such as responsible pet ownership in schools, pre-schools, maternal and child health centres and hospitals.

9.2 Current education initiatives include the following:

- Providing the new owner package to all new animal owners;
- Media releases promoting the effective confinement and control of dogs;
- Promoting the Bureau of Animal Welfare Responsible Pet Ownership Schools Programs;
- Promoting local obedience training;
- Reporting outcomes of all dog attack prosecutions to local media where appropriate to raise awareness in the community of the need to report dog attacks; and
- Media releases relating to dog attacks on livestock

9.3 Current compliance activities include the following:

- Investigating dog attacks in accordance with the provisions of the *Domestic Animals Act, 1994*;
- Seizing and holding dogs alleged to be involved in an attack pending investigation/prosecution outcome;
- Providing an after-hours service to respond to reports of aggressive or attacking dogs;
- Prosecuting matters pursuant to the *Domestic Animals Act, 1994*;
- Issuing infringements for wandering dogs;
- Issuing infringements for minor attacks where non serious injury is sustained;
- Proactive declarations for Menacing or Dangerous Dogs;
- Seeking destruction Orders from Magistrates Court where necessary;
- Seeking confinement Orders from Magistrates Court for dogs continually found wandering;
- Proactive patrols of parks and streets for wandering dogs;
- Recording data of reported dog attacks within the municipality; and
- Ensuring that any impounded dogs when released will be securely confined to the property where they are housed.

9.4 Summary

Council will continue to conform to the provisions set out in the *Domestic Animals Act, 1994* and ensure compliance is achieved through effective administration of the DAMP and related Council Local Laws. Where breaches are detected Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) have been developed guide the investigation and any enforcement action.

9.5 Key Performance Objectives

9.5.i Objective 1: Provide targeted education and compliance campaigns in areas where data reporting shows higher numbers of dog attack incidents.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Collate and record data for reported dog attacks including, date/time, suburb, animal type, victim, dog unsecured/off lead, dog unregistered, sex, entire/de-sexed	Ongoing	Evaluate data annually to determine areas requiring specific education/compliance activities
Initiate education and compliance activities in the targeted areas with the aim of reducing future incidents. Encourage public to report incidents of 'dogs wandering to reduce likelihood of attacks occurring.	Annually	Evaluate this activity (and overall objective) by comparing number of dog attacks reported to council annually.

9.5.ii Objective 2: To minimise the incidence of dog attacks in the Community.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Providing proactive education/Compliance activities in areas of higher dog attack reports. Communicating key messages for dog attack prevention (eg confinement of dogs to property, leash laws) through media articles, mail outs, website information. Actively patrol areas for roaming, unsecure and/or unregistered dogs.	Ongoing	Compare number of reported dog attack incidents pre and post education campaign. Number of media articles published
Inform the community of outcomes of dog attacks prosecuted in Court	Ongoing	As appropriate
Set key performance indicators for Officers to complete dog attack investigations within a 6 week timeframe.	2013	Review complaints annually to evaluate percentage completed within timeframe

10 Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs

10.1 Current Situation

10.2 Murrindindi Shire Council has the following declared dogs currently registered within the municipality:

Registered restricted breed dogs	None
Registered declared dangerous dogs	None
Registered declared menacing dogs	None

The *Domestic Animals Act 1994* defines restricted breed dogs as any one of the following breeds:

- Japanese Tosa
- Fila Brasileiro
- dogo Argentino
- Perro de Prasa Canario (or Presa Canario)
- American Pit Bull Terrier (or Pit Bull Terrier)

Council currently has no restricted breed dogs registered within the Shire and actively discourages them from being housed within the municipality.

Owners of restricted breed dogs are required to abide by specific regulations, in particular; secure enclosures and warning signs on premises.

Prospective owners of these breed of dogs are informed by Council Officers of associated expenses that will be incurred with regards to the costs of housing facilities, fencing of the property and increased registration fees.

Council has no declared dangerous dogs (includes guard dogs or dogs trained to attack). Owners of declared dangerous dogs must abide by specific regulations of the *Act*, in particular; secure enclosures, warning signs on premises and restrictions when outside where the dog is normally housed at.

There is currently one training facility within the municipality where dogs are trained for protection. This facility obtained planning approval for the facility and abides by the permit conditions. Authorised Officers continually monitor the facility for compliance issues relating to declared dangerous dogs.

Council has no declared menacing dogs within the municipality. Owners of menacing dogs must abide by conditions specified by Council namely; when the dog is outside the premises it must be muzzled and leashed at all times

Council must register all dangerous/menacing/restricted breed dogs with the Victorian Declared Dog Register (VDDR), this is a database that records all declared dogs for all relevant parties to see. Any dangerous and restricted breed

dog that is entered into the VDDR is declared for the life of the animal and cannot be revoked by Council.

10.3 Current education activities include the following:

- Promoting the 'Dangerous Dog Hotline' (1300-101-080);
- Media releases relating to legislation/changes/updates;
- Media releases relating to differences between Restricted Breed Dogs and Dangerous Dogs; and
- Providing information relating to declared dogs.

10.4 Current compliance activities include the following:

- To discourage the housing/registration of any Restricted Breed/Dangerous Dogs within the municipality;
- Conduct inspections on premises housing declared dogs to ensure compliance if required;
- Proactive patrols during afterhours for unregistered guard dogs;
- Seizing dogs suspected of being Restricted Breed Dogs;
- Ensuring any declared dogs are registered on the VDDR;
- Prosecution/Infringements issued for any determined breach;
- Assessing suspected restricted breed dogs via the gazetted standard; and
- Flagging certain breeds from the animal registration database for assessment.

10.5 Summary

Murrindindi Shire Council will continue administering the *Domestic Animals Act, 1994* to ensure compliance is met where any breach is detected involving any restricted/dangerous/menacing dogs.

10.6 Key Performance Objectives

10.6.i Objective 1: Ensure declared dogs are kept in a manner compliant with relevant legislation and regulations.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Random property inspections of declared dogs to ensure compliance	As required	No registered dangerous dogs within Municipality (October 2013)
Prosecute repeat offenders or serious breaches detected	As required	No registered dangerous dogs within Municipality (October 2013)
After hours patrols for unregistered guard dogs in industrial areas	As required	No registered 'guard' dogs within Municipality (October 2013)

10.6.ii Objective 2: Flag certain breeds on registration database for restricted breed assessment.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Assess certain registered dogs with the gazettal standard for potential restricted breed dogs	ongoing	Number of Restricted Breeds declared from registration database
Cross reference microchip database information for potential restricted breed dogs requiring assessment	2014	Number of declarations compared to number of assessments

11 Overpopulation and High Euthanasia

11.1 Current Situation

	Murrindindi Shire Council	
	2007	2011/12
No. of dogs returned to owner	167	96
No. of dogs rehoused	40	24
No. of dogs euthanised	5	2
No. of cats returned to owner	2	5
No. of cats rehoused	22	16
No. of cats euthanised	131	124

As per the above table, Murrindindi Shire Council has continued in its approach to reduce euthanasia rates of dogs. While cat euthanasia rates have increased slightly, this trend is likely to continue due to a large feral cat population.

Dog euthanasia rates are particularly low due to the high numbers of dogs being returned to their owners or re-housed at the Victorian Animal Aid Shelter at Coldstream.

Where Council has impounded dog(s) involved in stock attacks and no owner claims the dog(s); the dog is euthanised after the statutory holding period.

Cats that are impounded and determined by Authorised Officers to be feral are immediately euthanised.

The DEPI also deal with feral dogs and cats within the municipality, in an attempt to reduce the numbers of nuisance animals.

11.2 Current education initiatives include the following:

- Encouraging de-sexing of animals by offering reduced registration fees;
- Promoting benefits of de-sexing;
- Promoting appropriate pet selection; and

- Promoting cat enclosures and build your own cat enclosures.

11.3 Current compliance activities include the following:

- Cat trapping program;
- Investigating unregistered breeding establishments;
- Ensure the micro-chipping of all unregistered impounded animals prior to their release to the owner;
- Enforcing the Local Law relating to prescribed number of animals on a property; and
- Assessing excess animal permit applications, factoring in number of entire de-sexed animals.

11.4 Key Performance Objectives

11.4.i Objective 1: Continue encouraging de-sexing of animals

Activity	When	Evaluation
Discount registration fees for cats and dogs that are de-sexed	Ongoing	Number of new animals registered in category yearly
Reduced registration for cats and dogs as per DAA obligations	Ongoing	Number of new animals registered in category yearly

11.4.ii Objective 2: Identify illegally operated Domestic Animal Business (DAB) in the Municipality.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Media campaigns to raise awareness of DAB definition and code of practices that must be adhered too. Investigate advertisements of pets for sale	2014 Ongoing	Evaluate number of complaints received and properties inspected.
Audit DAB randomly to ensure compliance	Ongoing	Annual Inspection as required by the Act.

12 Domestic Animal Businesses

12.1 Our current data

Domestic Animal Businesses are defined by the Domestic Animals Act 1994 as:

Domestic animal business means-

- An animal shelter, Council pound or pet shop: or
- An enterprise which carries out the breeding of dogs or cats to seek, where-
 - In the case of an enterprise whose proprietor is a member of an applicable organisation, the enterprise has 10 or more fertile female dogs or 10 or more fertile female cats; or

- II. In the case of an enterprise whose proprietor is not a member of an applicable organisation, the enterprise has 3 or more fertile female dogs or 3 or more fertile female cats; or
- III. An enterprise that is run for profit which carries out the rearing, training or boarding of dogs or cats;

Murrindindi Shire Council has 5 registered domestic animal businesses which include boarding/ breeding and training establishments along with Council's pound facilities.

Registered domestic animal businesses are inspected annually and on receipt of any complaints.

Council actively investigates the presence of animal businesses to ensure compliance with the relevant codes of practice and legislation.

Council's animal pound meets the required DEPI's '*code of practice*' and is audited by the DEPI's Bureau of Animal Welfare to ensure compliance with the *Act*.

Council will continue to work with local veterinary clinics and animal businesses in relation to the Section 84Y agreements that have been entered into, to ensure compliance with the *Act*.

12.2 Current education initiatives include the following:

- Providing information to registered domestic animal businesses;
- Promoting DEPI - BAW information and codes of practices; and
- Advertising new legislation amendments.

12.3 Current compliance activities include the following:

- Annual audits;
- Random audits during peak seasons for particular businesses;
- Investigating complaints;
- Monitoring advertising sites;
- Renewal / Registration process;
- Inspecting suspected unregistered domestic animal businesses; and
- Liaising with the Planning Unit to ensure planning conditions are complied with.

12.4 Key Performance Objectives

12.4.i Objective 1: Council will review Section 84Y agreements with affiliated animal businesses/ organisations in accordance with any legislative change to ensure a continued compliance with the *Act*.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Identify all relevant legislation change to Section 84Y of the <i>Act</i> to ensure compliance	2014	Ensure legislative changes to Section 84Y agreements are included in annual audit of agreements with affiliated animal businesses/organisations

12.4.ii Objective 2: Ensure domestic animal businesses are compliant with relevant legislation and codes of practice

Activity	When	Evaluation
Monitor Council's registration database for owners with more than 3 fertile females	Ongoing	Compliance with local laws and related legislation
Encourage de-sexing of animals by reducing registration fees	Ongoing	Relevant registration accepted
Conduct searches for unregistered domestic animal businesses via internet/media/news papers	Ongoing	Relevant action taken

13 Annual Review of Plan and Annual Reporting

As per 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 to monitor officers' performance against the plan objectives. Any adjustments are to be reported as part of the Local Laws Business Plan annual review cycle.

In the final year of the plan, Council will undertake a major review and prepare drafting the next domestic animal management plan for the 2017–2021 period.

14 Attachments

Attachment 1: Community Local Law Part 2 Section 5 - Keeping of Animals in Residential Areas

- (1) An owner or occupier of land must not, without a permit, keep, allow to be kept or remain on any land, any more animals or birds other than is stated in the following table:

Type of Animal	Maximum allowed in residential areas.
Dogs	2
Cats	2
Chickens	10
Pigs	None Allowed
Ducks, Geese ,Turkeys	2
Ferrets	2
Guinea Pigs	2
Domestic Birds	50
Pigeons	Permit Required/ Registered with accredited organisation
Rabbits	2
Other animal types	None allowed except where otherwise determined by Council in each individual application for a permit
Roosters	None Allowed.

- (2) Clause(1) does not apply where a planning permit has been obtained for land used for the purposes of animal boarding or breeding.
- (3) For the purpose of calculating the maximum number of dogs or cats kept on any land, any offspring may be lawfully kept, without a permit, for 12 weeks after birth.
- (4) An owner or occupier of land in a residential area may apply to Council for a permit to keep more than the maximum number of animals referred to in clause 48(1).
- (5) Any sheep, goat, horses or cattle except if the land is more than 0.5 hectares, in which case the number that may be kept without a permit is 2

Attachment 2: Community Local Law Part 2 Section 6 – Animal Housing

- (1) An owner or occupier of land on which animals are kept must ensure that they are securely confined to the property at all times.
- (2) An owner or occupier of land on which animals are kept must provide housing which is adequate and appropriate to the animal.

Attachment 3: Service Levels

Council's Local Laws Department deals with a broad range of issues associated with the management of domestic animals in our community. Including:

- Providing advice to the community in relation to animal matters;
- Responding to customer enquiries and complaints;
- Educating residents and promoting responsible animal ownership;
- Maintaining a register of dogs and cats;
- General patrols to reduce wandering animal complaints;
- Conducting investigations into barking dog complaints;
- Conducting investigations into allegations of dog attack;
- Conducting inspections of animal businesses, dangerous dog premises for compliance with legislation;
- Issuing infringement notices and undertaking court prosecution for serious matters;
- Re-housing of unclaimed animals to the VAAT complex at Coldstream;
- Pound maintenance duties;
- Use of available IT (Palm Pilot, GPS);
- After-hours emergency response service;
- Electronic micro-chipping identification; and
- Ensuring Council fulfils its statutory legislative duties.

Responses to all customer enquiries and complaints will comply with Councils Customer Service Charter.

The following table shows the current service levels provided by Council.

Response	Service Level
Dog attack investigations (24/7)	Commenced within 15 minutes – all days*
Dog 'rush' investigation (24/7)	Commenced within 15 minutes – all days*
Investigation of dangerous/aggressive dogs at large complaints (24/7)	Commenced within 15 minutes – all days*
Inspection of non-compliance /complaints of declared dogs	Commenced within 2 business days
Barking dog investigations	Commenced within 2 business days
Investigation of general domestic animal complaints (unregistered /unsecured)	Commenced within 2 business days
Registration of dogs and cats	June / July annually
Declared dog property inspections	Conducted annually
Domestic Animal Business inspections	Conducted annually
Door-knock registration campaign	Annual inspection program from July to October
Pound – operating hours	Monday to Friday – business hours

Response	Service Level
Micro-chipping program for animals	Programs completed in partnership with micro-chip company – biannually
Community Education (Media items)	As deemed necessary
Feral Cat trapping program	Ten cages are available to the public (no charge)
Stock wandering on roads/highways (24/7)	Commenced within 15 minutes
NOTE *: ‘All Days’ includes after hours services provided for dog attacks, stock on roads and other emergency matters.	