

SCHEDULED MEETING OF COUNCIL - 28 JULY 2021 ATTACHMENTS

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Murrindindi Shire Council
Domestic Animal Management Plan
2021-2025

May 2021

Murrindindi Shire Council

Domestic Animal Management Plan

2021-2025

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Authorisation

This Domestic Animal Management Plan has been prepared by and with the authority of the Murrindindi Shire Council. The plan has been prepared in accordance with Section 68A of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*.

This Plan:

Document Title: Murrindindi Shire Council
Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-2025

Version No.: 2.5

Date of Release: 22/2021

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Natalie Stewart
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Murrindindi Shire Council

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1 Introduction

The purpose of the new Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) is to outline Councils strategic approach to the delivery of animal management services throughout the municipality for the 2021-2025 period, building on the foundations and achievements of previous plans.

The DAMP has been developed in accordance with Section 68A of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* and will be reviewed annually.

The DAMP outlines programs, services and strategies which we will use to promote and encourage responsible pet ownership utilising a combination of educational and regulatory approaches.

1.1 Legislative Framework

The *Domestic Animals Act* outlines the requirements for all Councils to prepare and maintain a Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP). Section 68A of the *Act* states:

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

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

1.2 Community Consultation

From 15 March to 15 April 2021, a survey was made available to get an understanding of the current trends and issues that were important to the community. These findings have created the foundation for this DAMP. A report of these findings are attached.

During the month of August 2021, the draft DAMP is available for public comment. During this time the Community Safety Unit will host a number of information sessions seeking further feedback from the community.

1.2 About Councils Community Safety Unit

Councils animal management services and deliverables of this DAMP are carried out by Councils Community Safety Unit. The Community Safety Unit consists of four officers who are authorised under various legislation to deliver education and enforcement objectives throughout the Municipality.

Specifically, the Community Safety team are authorised under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986* and the *Impounding of Livestock Act 1994*, to undertake the following roles:

- Coordinate domestic animal registration and identification process
- Investigate dog attacks
- Investigate barking dog and other nuisance matters
- Investigate animal welfare issues
- Provide advice to pet owners and the community regarding the care of their animals
- Provide a 24-hour emergency response
- Implement Councils Community Local Law 2020
- Active patrols and collections to reunite dogs with their owners
- Impound domestic animals and livestock
- Investigate complaints relating to domestic animals and livestock
- Monitor compliance with Codes of Practice such as breeding, boarding and training.

1.3 Scope of the Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP)

The DAMP has been developed as required by section 68A of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* and consists of current processes and strategies relevant to:

Focus Area	Strategy	Legislative Requirement
Part 3		
Animals and Amenity (Nuisance)	<p>Increase pet owners' knowledge of the principles of responsible pet ownership to enhance community safety and awareness</p> <p>Minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance</p>	<p>Section 68A(2)(c)(vi) of the Act requires the Domestic Animal Management Plan to:</p> <p>“Outline programs, services and strategies to minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance”</p> <p>also addresses 68A(2)(a), (c)(i), (c)(ii), (d), (f)</p>
Part 4		
Registration, Identification, overpopulation and high euthanasia	<p>Maximise the number of dogs and cats that are registered within the Murrindindi Shire</p> <p>Address over population and euthanasia rates</p>	<p>Section 68A(2)(c)(v) of the Act states the Domestic Animal Management Plan should:</p> <p>“Outline programs, services and strategies to encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats”</p> <p>“Outline programs, services and strategies to address any over population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats”</p> <p>also addresses 68A(2)(a), (c)(i), (c)(ii), (d), (f)</p>
Part 5		
Community Engagement	<p>Communicate with the community and its visitors in an efficient and effective way</p>	<p>Additional to the requirements of The Act</p>
Part 6		

Dog Attacks	Minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals	Section 68A(2)(c)(iii) of the <i>Act</i> requires that the Domestic Animal Management Plan: “Outline programs, services and strategies to minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals” This also addresses Section - 68A(2)(a),(c)(i),(c)(ii),(d),(f) of the <i>Act</i> .
Part 7		
Compliance	Improve voluntary compliance with relevant legislation	Additional to the requirements of The <i>Act</i>
Part 8		
Authorised Officer Training	Identify training requirements for authorised officers	Section 68A(2)(b) of the <i>Act</i> requires the Domestic Animal Management Plan to; “Outline programs for the training of Authorised Officers to ensure that they can properly administer and enforce the requirements of this <i>Act</i> in the Council's municipal district.”
Part 9		
Animal health and welfare	Identify strategies to promote responsible pet ownership aimed at improving animal welfare Consider animals in planning for and responding to emergencies such as fire and flood	Additional to the requirements of The <i>Act</i>
Part 10		
Dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs	Ensure declared dogs are kept compliant with the Act and its regulations	Section 68A(2)(c)(vii) of the <i>Act</i> requires the Domestic Animal Management Plan to: “Outline programs, services and strategies to effectively identify all dangerous dogs,

		<p>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”</p> <p>This section also addresses Section 68A(2)(a),(c)(i),(c)(ii),(d),(f) of the <i>Act</i>.</p>
<p>Part 11</p>		
<p>Domestic Animal Management Plan Review</p>	<p>Ensure Council meets the legislative requirements under the <i>Act</i> regarding the review of its Domestic Animal Management Plan</p>	<p>Section 68A(3) sets out the following requirement;</p> <p>Every Council must;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - review its domestic animal management plan annually and, if appropriate, amend the plan; and - provide the Secretary with a copy of the plan and any amendments to the plan; and - publish an evaluation of its implementation of the plan in its annual report

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2 Animal Statistics and Data

Key Statistics 2020/2021	
Population	13,693
Area sq/kms	3,889
No. of animal management officers (Community Safety Officers)	4
No. of registered dogs	2,864
No. of registered cats	696
No. of registered dangerous dogs	0
No. of restricted breed dogs	0
No. of registered domestic animal businesses	6
No. of animal management requests	919
Total number of Community Safety Unit requests	3,141
No. of barking dog reports	57
No. of dogs impounded	90
No. of dogs returned to owner	79
No. of dogs rehoused	6
No. of cats impounded	149
% of cats returned to owner	8%
% of cats rehoused	32%

3 Animals and Amenity (Nuisance)

While dogs and cats play an integral role in the health and wellbeing of the population, they too have the ability to have a negative impact on the amenity of our residents and visitors. Common animal nuisance matters that are reported to Council include but are not limited to; wandering cats and dogs, barking dogs and excessive numbers of animals being housed at properties.

3.1 Current Situation

During the 2020/21 financial year, Council received 919 animal management requests from the community. A large majority of these were regarding lost / found and wandering pets. 57 of these requests related to barking dogs.

Councils recent survey found 45.92% of participants had concerns with wandering cats. A large majority of the issues recorded in the survey relate to the impact cats have on wildlife.

Council provide traps free of charge to community members who are experiencing issues with nuisance cats. A total of 149 cats were trapped by Council officers with the assistance of the community during this time.

Further, 35% of survey respondents had an issue with wandering dogs. These issues were primarily raised as a result of dogs being walked off lead.

3.2 Current Policy and procedure

In addition to the nuisance provision within the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*(s.32) and other relevant legislation, Councils Community Local Law 2020 provides the community with further guidance on animal ownership aimed at reducing the likelihood of amenity issues created by animals. These include:

- Restrictions on the number of various animals permitted to be housed on 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
- Requirements to contain animals

Where permit applications for additional animals are received, Council undertakes to obtain feedback from surrounding residents to ensure the issuing of permits for additional animals does not have negative impact on neighbourhood amenity.

Councils approach to education before enforcement is exercised in its procedure for wandering dogs. All dogs are returned directly to their owner free of charge if registered and found wandering for the first time.

Other Council policies for nuisance complaints include:

- Procedure regarding noise nuisance complaints for dogs and/or cats, the *Act*, s32
- Procedure associated with the surrender of dogs and/or cats by owners, the *Act* s33A
- Procedure associated with issuing notices to comply, infringement notices and filing charges for prosecution regarding dogs and cats causing a nuisance.

3.3 Current Activities

Murrindindi Shire Council conducts a number of education activities aimed at resolving nuisance animals reports. Communication on the management of nuisance animals is provided to the community via various media streams and officer interactions.

Council gives animal owners reasonable time and resources to resolve substantiated animal nuisance matters. Where required, enforcement action is undertaken to remedy any unresolved animal nuisance matters.

3.4 Strategy: Minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance

Cats

Timeframe	Action	Evaluation
Year 1	Implement community education programs for cat owners about the importance of keeping their animals secured for the protection of native wildlife.	Evidence of public education program developed and implemented
Year 2	Develop options for the introduction of cat curfew	Development of Project Plan
Year 2	Promote the 'Aussie backyard bird count'	Statistics on participant uptake and bird numbers
Year 3	Offer free first time registration of cats to encourage registration	Program developed, implemented and evaluated
Year 3	Promote the benefits of confining your cat	Competition and prizes for best cat enclosure
Year 4	Implement a requirement for cat owners to keep their cats confined to their property.	Action plan implemented
Year 4	First time offences for registered cats will receive an official warning.	Comparison with previous year statistics
Year 4	Promote the 'Aussie backyard bird count' following the introduction of a cat curfew aimed at the protection of native animals	Data comparison of bird numbers following implementation of cat curfew
Ongoing	Assist residents and businesses to deal with cat nuisance problems by maintaining and providing cat trapping programs	Cat trapping data Operational data .

Dogs

Timeframe	Action	Evaluation
Year 1	-Implement a requirement for all dogs to be on leash in public areas (excluding designated places) -Creation of designated off leash places off leash	order created under s.26 of <i>Domestic Animals Act 1994</i>
Year 2	Evaluation of on/ off leash areas	Report on effectiveness including statistics on wandering/ nuisance dogs and attacks reported
Year 1	Explore the creation of fenced off leash dog areas	Options identified
Ongoing	Promotion of 'First ride home free' procedure	Data comparison of first and multiple wandering instances ride home Review Standard Operating Procedure
Ongoing	Proactively monitor social media for reports of found/ missing/ wandering dogs to ensure officers are aware of unreported instances of wandering dogs	Update Standard Operating Procedure to include response to social media reports
Ongoing	Maintain dog poo bags in public areas	Audit of location and condition of dispensers.

4 Animal identification, registration, overpopulation and euthanasia

Animal identification and registration are a legal requirement under the *Act*. As well as being a legal requirement, registration and identification gives pets that are found a much higher chance of being returned to their rightful owner.

Animal registration also allow Council to better understand the number of pets that reside within our communities and provides valuable information to ensure that Councils animal management services are adequate and delivered appropriately.

4.1 Current situation

Under the Act, it is a requirement that all dogs and cats over the age of three months be registered with Council (S10(1)). Animals must also be microchipped before they are registered with Council (S12A(1)).

As well as being a legislative requirement, pet owners that microchip and register their animals increase the chance of being re-united with them should they become lost.

At the end of 2020, there were a total of 3554 animals registered with Council in comparison to a total of 3499 in 2019. In 2017 there were 3152 registered dogs and cats within the municipality. This is a 12% increase in animal registrations over a four year period.

There were a total of 532 new registrations during 2020. During this time a total of 377 cats and dogs were removed from the database due to leaving the municipality or passing away.

Key Statistics 2020/2021	
No. of registered dogs	2,864
No. of registered cats	696
No. of dogs impounded	90
No. of dogs returned to owner	79
No. of dogs rehoused	6
No. of cats impounded	149
% of cats returned to owner	8%
% of cats rehoused	32%
No. of registered desexed animals	2,844
No. of registered entire animals	716
No. of registered breeders	2

Recent survey results noted that on a scale of importance from 1 to 10, 93% of survey respondents believed that desexing cats was seen to be very important with an average rating of 9.2 out of 10.

Further, 89% of respondents stated that desexing dogs was seen to be also very important with an average rating of 8.5 out of 10.

The survey results revealed respondents two main areas of concern were:

- High euthanasia rates in cats (48%)
- People not desexing their animal (61%)

During 2020, 97% of dogs were returned to their owner or rehoused. In contrast only 31% of cats that were impounded were returned to their owner or rehoused. The remainder were euthanised on grounds of being wild, uncontrollable or diseased.

4.2 Current policy and procedure

Council has a Section 84Y agreement in place with Coldstream Animal Aid. This agreement allows Council to engage Coldstream Animal Aid for its pound and animal rehousing services. Further to this, the agreement allows Coldstream Animal Aid to act as an agent of registration for Council ensuring all animals are microchipped and registered before being returned to their owner or in the case of being re-housed that the animals are microchipped, registered and desexed prior to their release.

Under the *Act*, Council has the ability to euthanise cats that are seized in accordance with the legislation that are wild, uncontrollable or diseased and that do not bear an identification marker or permanent identification device.

4.3 Current Activities

Between 2017 and 2021 Council conducted two (2) reduced fee microchipping events. These events also included discounted registration fees for people who got their animal's microchipped on the day.

Registered pets found wandering in the first instance are returned home free of charge. On return of the pet, Officers will educate the pet owner on ways to avoid dogs and cats wandering, like ensuring that the fencing is adequate to confine their pet.

Unregistered pets found wandering are impounded and not released until registration requirements under the *Act* are achieved. Once registration is received, the pet is released to its owner. Officers use each interaction with its residents as an opportunity to promote the benefits of securely confining their pet.

Councils registration renewal program ensures all pet owners pay their registration renewals in a timely manner. Those who fail to renew their animal registrations during this renewal program may be subject to enforcement action.

Council Officers actively seek out unregistered pets and take appropriate measures to ensure that the registration of such animals is achieved. This includes targeted patrols and doorknocks, community member reports, domestic animal business reports and information received whilst undertaking other duties.

Council offer discounted registration for desexed animals in an effort to provide an incentive for desexing pets. A reduced registration fee also applies for registered foster carers, to promote compliance with registration requirements for animals in foster care.

4.4 Summary

There has been a substantial increase in dog and cat registrations between 2017 and 2021. Council's 2017-2021 DAMP estimated that in 2021 there would be 3200 registered cats and dogs within the municipality. As of 30 June 2021, there were 3560 registered cats and dogs within the municipality.

Following community consultation, it was highlighted that high euthanasia rates and owners who do not desex their animals is seen to be of key concern to residents of Murrindindi. There remains a portion of registered 'entire' animals within the municipality therefore education programs should be targeted at the owners of these animals to ensure they are refraining from desexing their animals for the correct reasons.

Feral and semi-owned cats are the main contributor to high euthanasia rates. These types of cats are not specifically owned, therefore are indefinable, but their survival and growth relies highly on residents feeding them. As a result, when caught these cats are unlikely to be claimed and due to their poor temperament resulting from limited socialisation and handling limit their likelihood of being rehomed.

4.5 Strategy: Increase registration and reduce overpopulation

Timeframe	Action	Evaluation
Year 1	Raise awareness about semi-owned cat population	Media campaign to educate the community on the semi-owned cat population.
Year 1	Develop desexing subsidy scheme to further support and promote responsible pet ownership.	Completion of Project Plan including funding approval
Year 2	Implement a desexing subsidy scheme	Data collection on uptake of scheme
Year 2 & 4	Reduced fee microchipping event.	Increase in the number of registered domestic animals
Year 2 & 4	Undertake a community pet event with a focus on promoting animal registration/ responsible pet ownership	Number of people attending the event and accessing information
Year 3	Implement a pilot project to provide free first time cat registration	Increase in the number of registered cats. Evidence of Increase in animals being returned to their owner
Ongoing	Maintain Section 84Y agreement with Coldstream Animal Aid	Current Section 84Y Agreement in place
Ongoing	Ensure compliance with pension, Foster Carer and desexing discount registration	Standard Operating Procedure and guidelines. Media developed.

Ongoing	Promote half price (pro rata) animal registration from 1 January each year to encourage registration.	Communication/Media developed
Annually	Distribution and promotion of animal registration renewal notices within specified time frames	Renewal notices issued Media developed
Annually	Ensure all reminder notices are issued within specified time period	Reminder notices issued Communication/Media developed
Ongoing	Monitor local media for animal sale advertisements	Action non-compliant advertisements.
Ongoing	Implement animal registration renewal compliance program. Follow up properties where animal registration has lapsed	Report on the number of properties inspected. Increase in animal registrations as a direct result of the campaign
Ongoing	Ensure all impounded animals are registered to their owner prior to release	Standard Operating Procedure and guidelines reviewed.
Annually	Random door knocking properties in the municipality each year to check for unregistered and unidentified dogs and cats.	Report on the number of random properties inspected. Increase in animal registrations as a direct result of the door knock campaign

5 Community Engagement

5.1 Current Situation

The way Council engages and communicates with its community is integral to maintain community interest and input into its operations. It was identified in Council's DAMP review community survey, 41% of survey respondents were aware that Council provides a 'free ride home' program for registered dogs found wandering at large in the first instance. This is in comparison to 83% of survey respondents who knew how to contact Council if they had lost or found a pet. This information suggests that further focus is required on communicating with its residents and visitors.

5.2 Current Policy and procedure

In 2019 Council introduced a Customer First initiative designed to improve the customer experience when engaging with Council. The foundation of this project aims to seek feedback from each of its customer at the completion of an interaction to ensure ongoing service improvements.

The Customer Service Charter requires Council to return phone calls within 2 business days and acknowledge written correspondence within 2 working days.

5.3 Current Activities

The following communication activities are conducted to promote responsible animal management:

- Use of social media to reunite pets with their owners
- Use of media to promote current campaigns and legislative change

Extensive public consultation efforts such as attendance at community events, drop-ins, on-line seminars.

We currently operate a 24-hour 7 day a week emergency response service to respond to animal management issues such as dog attacks.

5.4 Summary

The role Councils play in communicating with the community cannot be underestimated. Many survey respondents acknowledge the role Councils play in ensuring the community is kept up to date. This was even more evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. As the community looks to Council for its information, it is important to ensure its media is clear, concise and relevant. Many survey respondents identified the need for more targeted media campaigns not only around animal management, but also other Council related matters.

5.5 Strategy: Ensure the community are kept well informed of Council services

Timeframe	Action	Evaluation
Ongoing	Targeted media campaigns prompting Council services and responsible pet ownership/ legislative changes – 4 a year	Communication/Media developed
Year 1	Evaluate after hours call centre service	Feedback on after hours customer experience Review referral processes
Year 2	'A day in the life of' – Community Safety Unit	Production of Community Safety Unit PR campaign
Ongoing	Support local obedience clubs through sponsorship and attendance at meetings to discuss and promote responsible animal ownership	Evidence of attendance and participation
Ongoing	Use of social media to promote Council services	Social media presence increased

6 Dog attacks

6.1 Current Situation

Although relatively uncommon, dog attacks do occur from time to time throughout the municipality. When they do occur, they can be highly traumatising for all involved. Attacks on livestock and other animals are much more prevalent than attacks on people. Of the 43 dog attacks that were reported during the 2020/21 financial year, three incidents involved dogs directly attacking people, whilst additional three people were also injured during attack that occurred on their dog or livestock. A breakdown of the dog attack reports for 2020/21 FY are as follows:

Dog Attack Reports 2020/21		
Attack Type	Serious	Non-serious
Dog attack on person	3	0
Combined – person and dog/stock	3	0
Dog attack on dog	3	6
Dog attack on stock	14	4
Dog rush	0	10

Survey respondents identified their main concern for dog attacks was in public areas where dogs are exercised and not appropriately controlled. This scenario was explored further in 3. 'Animals and Amenity'

6.2 Current Policy and procedure

The Community Safety Unit is available 24 hours a day to respond to reports of dog attacks. In accordance with its Compliance Policy, Councils response to dog attacks are outcome focused. That is, where an alleged dog attack has occurred, Council will seek to resolve the issue and work with relevant parties to reduce the likelihood of further incident.

6.3 Current Activities

Compliance activities include the following:

- Investigating dog attacks in accordance with the provisions of the Act
- Where required, seizing and holding dogs alleged to have been involved in an attack pending investigation/prosecution outcome
- Prosecuting matters pursuant to the Act
- Issuing infringements for dogs wandering at large
- Issuing infringements for minor attacks / dog rush incidents
- Declaring menacing or dangerous dogs where required

6.4 Summary

The majority of dog attacks within the municipality occur on livestock and other animals. As a result, it is important to acknowledge the detrimental impact these matters can have on both on business with regard to livestock loss and the emotional influence of being the victim of a dog attack.

Both the owner and animal who have been subject to a dog attack report increased levels of anxiety and lower confidence levels when in public with their animals.

As a result, priority is to be placed on the prevention of dog attacks. This can be achieved by specific patrols, targeted media, data analysis and the use of deterrence as a key tool for prevention.

6.5 Strategy: Reduce impact of dog attacks on community and business

Timeframe	Action	Evaluation
Year 1	Media campaign 'Confining your dog - Why it's important for you and your dog'	Develop campaign material and deliver campaign
Year 2	Raise awareness of livestock owner's rights and responsibilities in preventing and responding to dog attack	Evidence of implementation of campaign including response options for livestock owners when involved in dog attack scenarios
Year 3	Increase proactive patrols in locations identified through statistics as having higher risk of dog attack incidents	Data comparison of proactively patrolled areas and reactive response only
Year 4	Raise awareness of livestock owner's rights and responsibilities of preventing and responding to dog attack	Evidence of implementation of campaign Comparison of Year 2 and Year 4 data to identify effectiveness of campaign
Ongoing	Promote prosecution outcomes to the community to increase awareness.	Media developed
Ongoing	Advocate for the Responsible Pet ownership program in schools	Promote program to be implemented within Councils schools

7 Compliance

7.1 Current situation

Council aims to achieve voluntary compliance from its residents and visitors to promote the health and safety of the community. Both responsive and proactive compliance is centered on harm and risk reduction in accordance with these Policy principles.

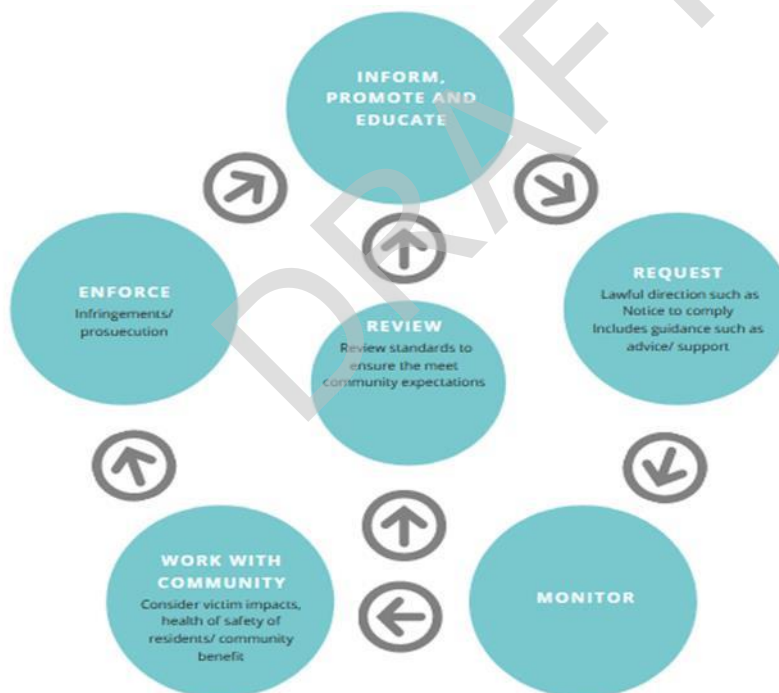
Compliance activities by Council are outcome focused. That is, when a non-compliant activity is identified, in the first instance Council will seek to resolve the issue and work with relevant parties to achieve compliance.

Prosecution is seen as a last resort for the mitigation of issues, however there is a need for prosecution of matters that present a risk a public safety and/or legislation determines the enforcement procedure. For example, dog attack causing serious injury s29(4) is not an infringeable offence and therefore a consequence is required to be determined by the Magistrates Court.

7.2 Current Policy and procedure

Council's approach to compliance aims to achieve the following objectives

- voluntary compliance
- consequences for repeat or culpable behaviour
- deterrence associated with enforcement



7.3 Current Activities

Council undertakes to promote voluntary compliance within the community by providing clear communication, consistent approaches and consideration of community expectation.

Council's obligation for enforcement action is reduced through achieving voluntary compliance.

Currently Council achieves voluntary compliance by providing:

- easy access to information about their rights and obligations under relevant legislation
- support to meet these obligations where appropriate
- an understanding of how Council will approach administration of this legislation and, in particular, how Council will approach compliance and enforcement and the consequences of non-compliance.

Where enforcement action is taken, Council ensures that all matters are followed up. Unpaid infringements are referred to Fines Victoria for further action.

7.4 Summary

Although Council undertakes to promote voluntary compliance, there is a need to issue infringements and official warnings to impose consequences for repeat or culpable behaviour and implement a deterrent element for the broader community. During 2020, 49 infringements and official warnings were issued for breaches of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*.

7.5 Strategy: Improve voluntary compliance

Timeframe	Action	Evaluation
Year 1	Increase community awareness of Councils Community Safety team by participating in 'Coffee with a cop'	Evidence of people attending the event and accessing information.
Year 2	Review internal review process	Undertake review and implement findings
Ongoing	Promote prosecution outcomes to the community to increase compliance	Media developed

8 Training of Authorised Officers

The Community Safety Unit is accountable for ensuring Council's responsibilities under the Act are met. Ongoing training and development within this role is a critical element in ensuring that officers involved in animal management have the necessary knowledge and skills to carry out their work in a safe, effective and professional manner.

Over the next four years, Council will continue to ensure officers are appropriately trained and experienced to educate and enforce the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* and to stay abreast of industry developments and best practice.

8.1 Current Activities

Officers currently undertake regular organisational focused training on customer service, workplace health and safety and workplace behaviour. Officers regularly attend industry related information sessions, seminars and industry specific training.

It is a requirement of the role to undertake CERT IV Animal Control and Regulation within the first 12 months of employment.

Refresher and specialised ongoing training is required to further build officer skills and knowledge.

8.2 Current Policy and procedure

Councils Community Safety Unit consists of a Coordinator Community Safety and three Community Safety Officers. Three of the four members of the Community Safety Unit have completed their CERT IV Animal Control and Regulation. The fourth Officer is currently undertaking this training.

8.3 Strategy: Ensure that all staff involved in animal management obtain and maintain the knowledge and skills necessary to carry out their work efficiently, effectively and safely

Timeframe	Action	Evaluation
Ongoing	Develop a training plan that clearly identifies minimum training requirements and any additional training needs that should be undertaken by Authorised Officers to ensure Officers can properly administer and enforce the DAA.	All staff meet performance standards in annual employee performance reviews.
Ongoing	Self-defence, conflict management, mediation skills, prosecutions training Research the implementation of Body Worn Cameras/ Policy development	Training plan updated and training completed Evidence of improved officer safety through use of cameras and other surveillance Production of Body worn cameras policy.
Ongoing	Maintain North East Authorised Officers Association membership and attend meetings and seminars.	Regular attendance at seminars and meetings.
Ongoing	Attend Bureau of Animal Welfare seminars and information days	Regular attendance at seminars and meetings
Year 3	Industry training – Prosecutions	Training complete and register updated
Ongoing	Complete annual development plan and review process for each staff member identifying training needs to deal with skill gaps and emerging issues or legislative changes	Training complete and register updated

Ongoing	Maintain s72A authorisations for contract Animal Management Officers	Authorisation register maintained
Ongoing	Annual firearms training for Authorised Officers	Officer training register maintained. All staff meet performance standards in annual employee performance reviews.

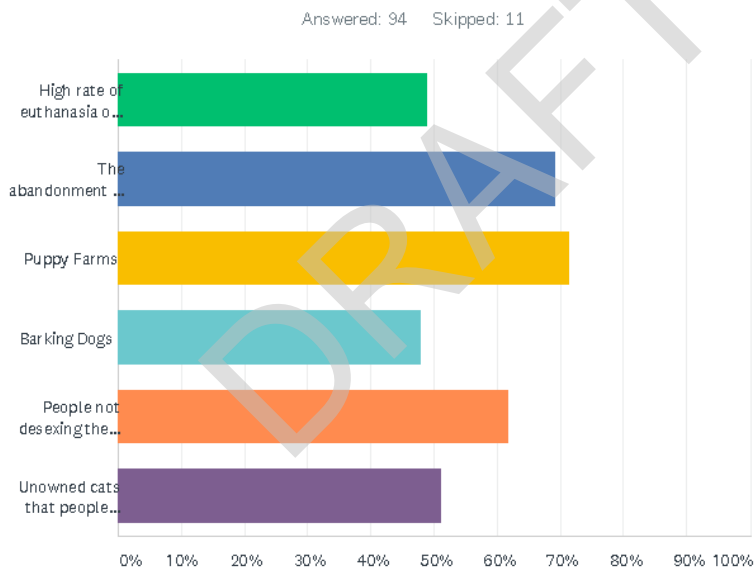
9 Animal Health and Welfare

9.1 Current Situation

Council received 73 reports of cruelty or injured animals in 2019-20.

Approximately 70% of survey respondents were concerned with animal welfare issues such as puppy farms and the abandonment of pets. 58 people chose to provide qualitative data and raised concern regarding wildlife and animal neglect / cruelty.

Q18 Are any of the following issues of concern to you?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
High rate of euthanasia of cats and kittens	48.94% 46
The abandonment of pets	69.15% 65
Puppy Farms	71.28% 67
Barking Dogs	47.87% 45
People not desexing their pets	61.70% 58
Unowned cats that people feed, but do not take full responsibility for	51.06% 48
Total Respondents : 94	

9.2 Current Policy and procedure

Community Safety Officers are authorised under S18 and S24 of *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986*, allowing the investigation and prosecution of matters under such legislation. A large portion of municipalities do not authorise officers under POCTA, therefore councils ability to respond efficiently and support RSPCA in cruelty matters is exemplary.

9.3 Current Activities

Council officers work closely with RSPCA to respond to and undertake primary investigation into reports of animal cruelty.

The Community Safety Unit play an active role in RSPCAs Million Paws Walk event by setting up stalls to promote responsible pet ownership. Reduced fee microchipping and registration has also been offered by Council at this event previously.

Although Murrindindi Shire Council has a relatively low rate of neglected animal reports, animal neglect was seen to be of concern to the DAMP survey participants.

Across Victoria the RSPCA received 10,745 animal cruelty reports during the 2019-2020 financial year (*RSPCA Australian National Statistics 2019-2020*). As such, there is need to further educate the community (both owners and non-owners) of minimum standards of care and housing for pets.

9.4 Strategy: Promote animal health, welfare and emergency planning

Timeframe	Action	Evaluation
Year 2	Review Murrindindi Shire Council Emergency Animal Welfare Plan Sub Plan	Complete review of MEMP Sub Plan – Murrindindi Shire Council Emergency Animal Welfare Plan
Annually	Ensure all Domestic Animal Business are compliant with relevant Codes of practice	Annual audits undertaken and documented.
Ongoing	Collaborate with RSPCA to effectively and efficiently resolve animal welfare matters	Maintain POCTA authorisation for Council Officers
Ongoing	Attend events to promote responsible pet ownership and emergency planning	Evidence of attendance and participation
Annually	Participate in RSPCA Million Paws Walk	Evidence of attendance and participation

10 Dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs

In accordance with *The Act*, Council may declare a dog dangerous if it has caused death or serious injury to a person or animal by biting or attacking that person or animal.

There are a number of requirements placed upon an owner of a dangerous dog which include but are not limited to:

- Confining the dog in a prescribed enclosure in accordance with *Domestic Animals Regulations 2005*)
- Muzzling the dog whilst in public
- Ensuring the dog is on a lead at all times whilst in public

A dog may be declared menacing if the dog has rushed or chased a person, or the dog bites any person or animal causing injury that is not in the nature of a serious injury.

An owner of a menacing dog must muzzle the dog whilst in public and ensuring the dog is on a lead at all times whilst in public.

A menacing dog may be declared a dangerous dog and its owner has received at least two infringement notices for failing to comply with the requirements of a menacing dog.

10.1 Current Situation

There are currently two (2) declared menacing dogs kept within the Municipality. There are currently no declared dangerous or restricted breed dogs kept within the Municipality.

Owners of declared dangerous, menacing or restricted breed dogs are required to abide by specific regulations to prevent the risk of attack.

10.2 Current Policy and procedure

Council currently has only one Order in place in relation to two (2) menacing dogs.

Council does not currently have any Local Law's in place in relation to dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs. Council's policies and procedures for dealing with dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs are conducted in compliance with the provisions of Council's legislative powers under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* and *Domestic Animals Regulations 2015*.

10.3 Current Activities

When responding to dog attacks, Council considers the process for declaring a dog dangerous or menacing as both a consequence and preventative measure for dog attacks. Currently, registration fees for dangerous, menacing or restricted breed dogs are 200% higher than non-declared dogs.

10.4 Summary

Although currently there are only two (2) declared menacing, dangerous or restricted breed dogs kept within the municipality, Council is aware of its responsibilities and authority to declare dog dangerous, menacing and restricted breeds. Recent survey data indicates the term 'dangerous dog' is used broadly and not within the definition of *The Act*.

As a result, it is important to increase the communities' awareness of dangerous dog legislation.

10.5 Strategy: Effective management of Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs

Timeframe	Action	Evaluation
Ongoing	Declare dogs dangerous in accordance with the Act	Annual audit conducted to ensure legislative requirements are being met.
Ongoing	Instigate declaration of Restricted Breed Dogs where appropriate	Ensure legislative requirements are being met.
Ongoing	Annual compliance inspections of properties with known dangerous, restricted breed or menacing dogs	Annual audit conducted to ensure legislative requirements are being met.
Ongoing	Maintain Victorian Declared Dog Registry data	Register updated as required
Ongoing	Provide media on legislation, changes and updates as required.	Media developed

11 Domestic Animal Management Plan Review

As required under the *Act*, Murrindindi Shire Council will review its Domestic Animal Management Plan annually to assess whether any amendments are necessary in order to ensure the plans relevance and to monitor Council's performance against the DAMP objectives. Any adjustments to the plan will be reported annually and, in the plans, final year Council will undertake a major review and commence preparations on the new DAMP.

In accordance with the *Act*, the Murrindindi Shire Council will review its Domestic Animal Management Plan annually to assess whether any amendments are necessary in order to ensure its relevance and to monitor Council's performance against the Domestic Animal Plans objectives.

In the final year of the plan, Council will undertake a major review and commence preparations for drafting the next Domestic Animal Management Plan.



Murrindindi Shire Council

Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-2025

Community Survey Report

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Survey Results

Introduction

From 15 March to 15 April 2021 the Community Safety Unit undertook a survey to ask the community about Councils current approach to animal management. The survey sought feedback on where its efforts should be focused over the next years as part of rewriting the 2021-2025 Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP). The *Domestic Animals Act 1994 (the Act)* requires Council to prepare a Domestic Animal Management Plan every four years. The next plan is due for renewal on 4 December 2021. The DAMP survey was used to assist in drafting Councils 2021-2025 DAMP.

Survey flyers were supplied to every registered owner of a dog or cat within the municipality (total of 3611 registered animals). In addition, media was used to promote the survey. Hardcopy surveys were also located at each of Councils Service Centres. A total of 109 surveys were completed (104 online/ 5 hardcopy).

Most respondents were from the areas of Alexandra, Yea and Kinglake Ranges however most communities throughout the shire were represented.

In accordance with *the Act*, a DAMP must do the following:

- set out a method for evaluating whether the animal control services provided by the Council in its municipal district are adequate to give effect to the requirements of this Act and the regulations; and
- outline programs for the training of authorised officers to ensure that they can properly administer and enforce the requirements of this Act in the Council's municipal district; and
- outline programs, services and strategies which the Council intends to pursue in its municipal district—
 - (i) to promote and encourage the responsible ownership of dogs and cats; and
 - (ii) (ii) to ensure that people comply with this Act, the regulations and any related legislation; and
 - (iii) to minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals; and
 - (iv) to address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats; and
 - (v) to encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats; and
 - (vi) to minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance; and
 - (vii) (vii) to effectively identify all dangerous dogs, menacing dogs and restricted breed dogs in that district and to ensure that those dogs are kept in compliance with this Act and the regulations; and
- 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.

As such, the survey had a primary focus on receiving feedback from the community on these matters.

In summary, some key findings were:

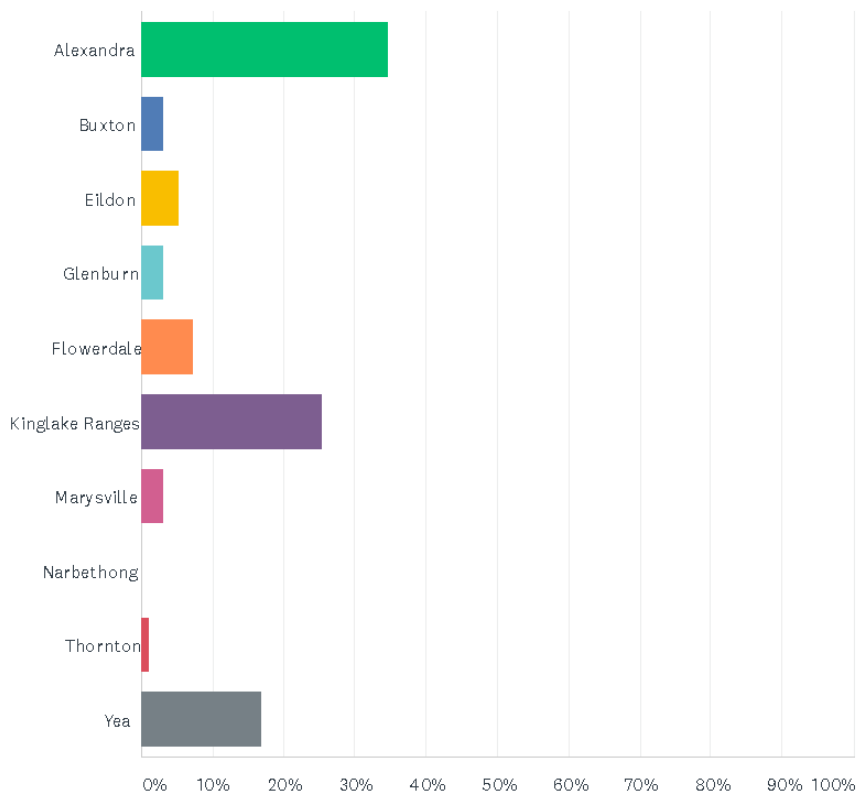
In the survey, there were some clear messages from the community. These included:

- 79% of respondents were dog owners and 42% were cat owners
- 93% of respondents believe it is 'most important' to desex animals
- 83% of respondents were supportive of a cat curfew
- 60% of people thought dogs should be always 'on-lead' unless in a designated 'off-leash' area.
- 83% of people knew how to Contact council if they had lost or found a pet. 82% of these people would prefer to contact Council via phone than any other method.

Survey Responses - About you

Q1 Where do you live?

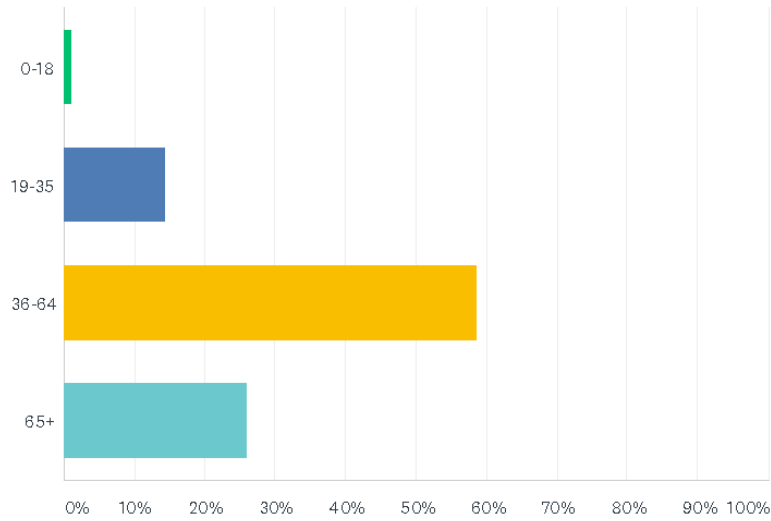
Answered: 95 Skipped: 10



The majority of respondents were from Councils main hubs of Alexandra (34%), Kinglake Ranges (24%) and Yea (16%), although most of its towns were represented. 10 people chose to skip this question which may suggest they are not residents within shire.

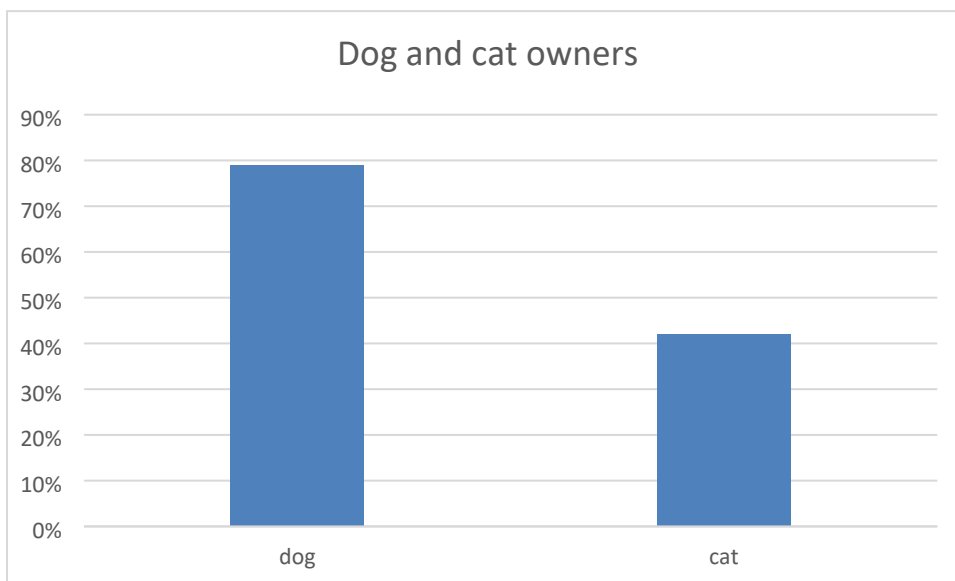
Q2 How old are you?

Answered: 104 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
0-18	0.96%	1
19-35	14.42%	15
36-64	58.65%	61
65+	25.96%	27
TOTAL		104

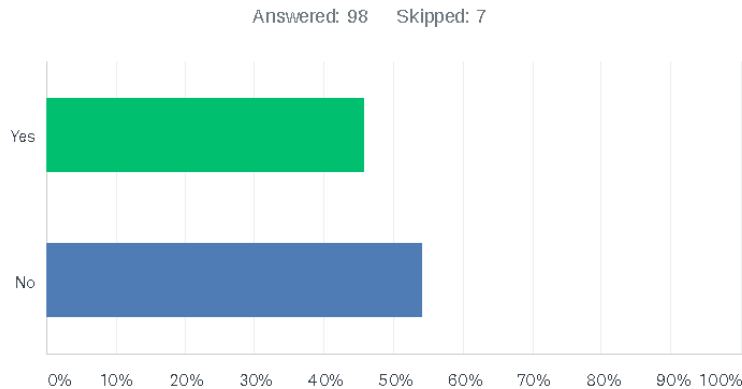
The majority of respondents were aged between 36-64. The low response rate from persons aged 0-18 is consistent with legislation that prohibits a dog or cat being registered to a person under 18 years.



79% of respondents were dog owners and 44% owned at least one cat. On average, each respondent that owned a dog had, one, and those who identified as owning a cat, averaged 1.3 cats. This information provides a solid indication that 'pet owners are speaking on behalf of pet owners'. As a result, the information obtained in the survey is a highly valuable contribution to the DAMP 2021-2025.

Survey Responses – Cats

Q7 Do you have an issue with wandering cats in your area and why?

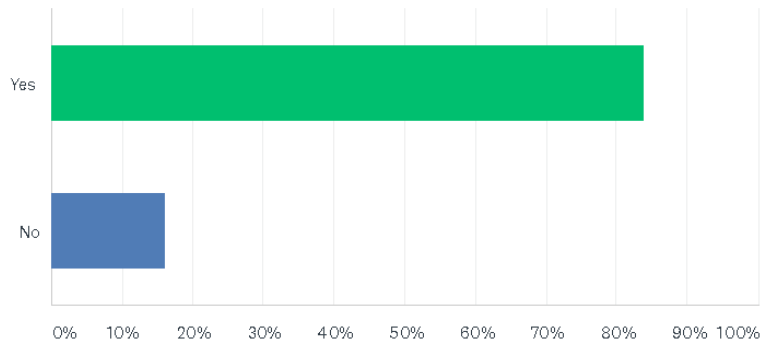


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	45.92%	45
No	54.08%	53
TOTAL		98

45% of respondents advised they have an issue with wandering cats in their area. Interestingly, although less than half of the respondents had an issue with wandering cats, over 83% of respondents believe Council should introduce a cat curfew.

Q9 Do you think Council should implement a cat curfew (a requirement for cats to be confined to their property during specified times)?

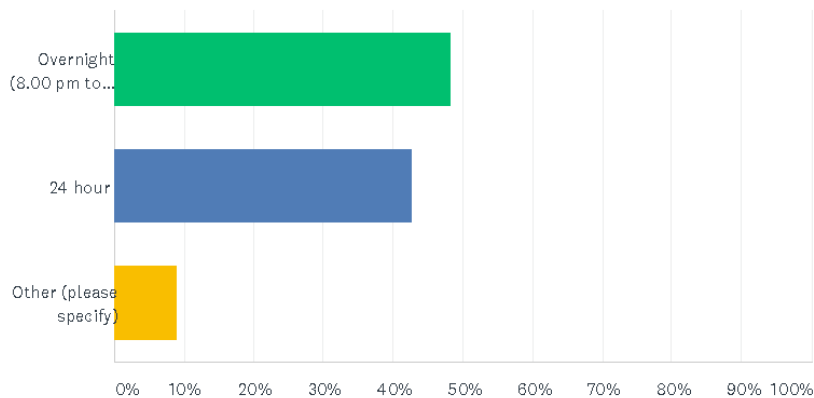
Answered: 99 Skipped: 6



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	83.84%	83
No	16.16%	16
TOTAL		99

Q10 If yes, please choose your preferred type of cat curfew

Answered: 89 Skipped: 16



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Overnight (8.00 pm to 6.00 am)	48.31%	43
24 hour	42.70%	38
Other (please specify)	8.99%	8
TOTAL		89

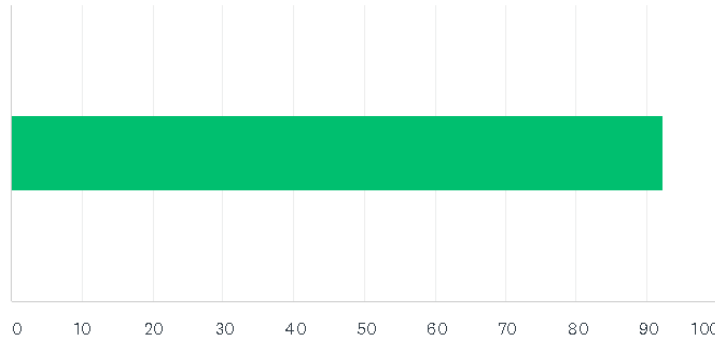
An overnight curfew was preferred however there was only a difference of five responses relating to overnight (48%) and 24 hour (42%)

Of the 9% that specified 'other' most suggestions were relevant to the timing of overnight i.e 10pm to 6am.

93% of respondents stated that desexing cats was seen to be very important with an average rating of 92 out of 100.

Q11 On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the most important, how important do you think it is to desex your cat?

Answered: 98 Skipped: 7



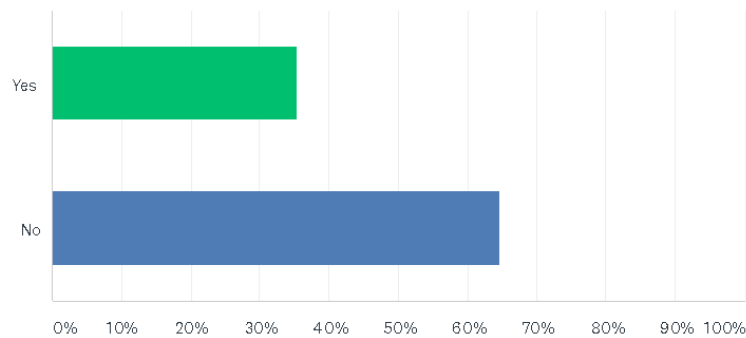
ANSWER CHOICES	AVERAGE NUMBER	TOTAL NUMBER	RESPONSES
	92	9,039	98
Total Respondents: 98			

Survey Responses – Dogs

Roughly 1/3 of respondents reported issues of wandering dogs in their area. Qualitative data identified that most of the reported issues related to dogs being walked off lead.

Q12 Do you have an issue with wandering dogs in your area?

Answered: 96 Skipped: 9



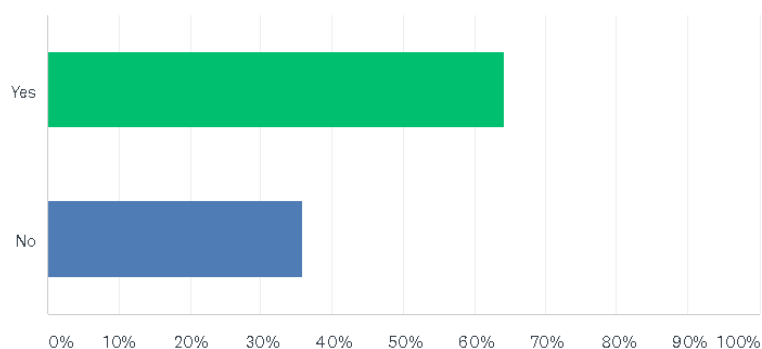
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	35.42%	34
No	64.58%	62
TOTAL		96

Just over 60% of respondents agreed that dog owners should be required to have their dogs on leads at all times.

Suggested locations for sites for off-leash areas were consistent with participant numbers. For example, Alexandra sites had a higher representation than Thornton. There was consensus on the use of existing sites such as reserves and parks rather than establish new sites.

Q16 Do you think dog off-leash areas should be fenced?

Answered: 95 Skipped: 10

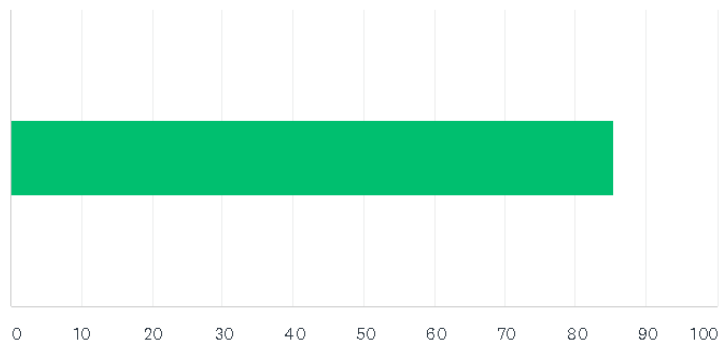


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	64.21%	61
No	35.79%	34
TOTAL		95

89% of respondents stated that desexing dogs was seen to be very important with an average rating of 85 out of 100. This is slightly lower than cats.

Q17 On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the most important, how important do you think it is to desex your dog?

Answered: 94 Skipped: 11

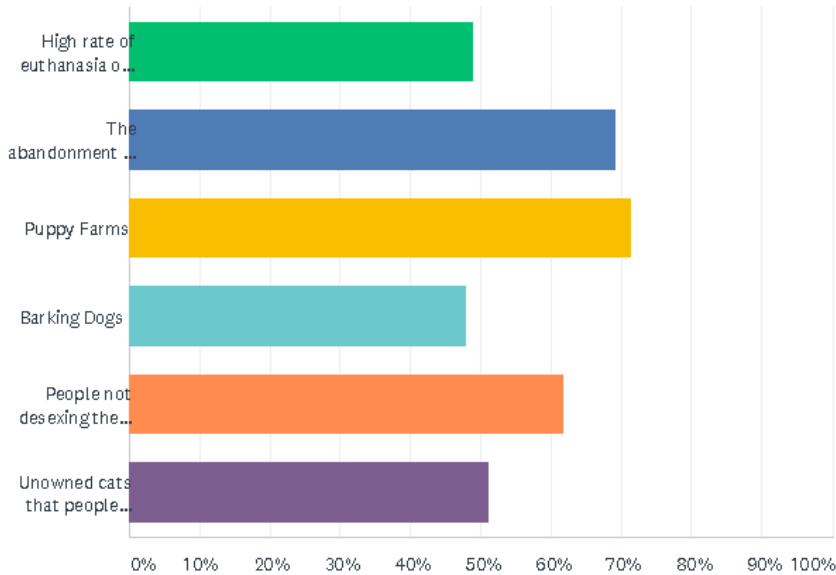


ANSWER CHOICES	AVERAGE NUMBER	TOTAL NUMBER	RESPONSES
	85	8,016	94
Total Respondents: 94			

Survey Responses - Animal Welfare

Q18 Are any of the following issues of concern to you?

Answered: 94 Skipped: 11



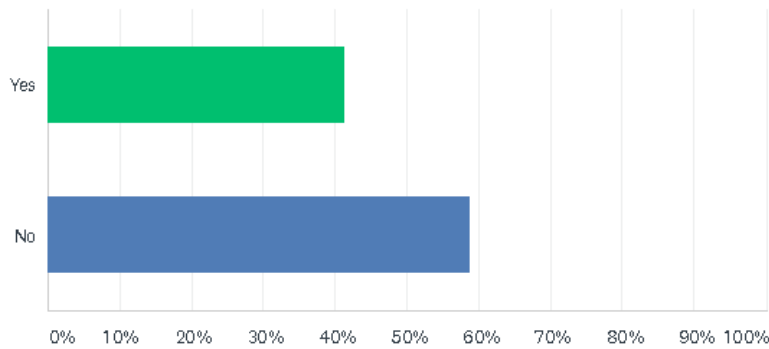
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
High rate of euthanasia of cats and kittens	48.94%	46
The abandonment of pets	69.15%	65
Puppy Farms	71.28%	67
Barking Dogs	47.87%	45
People not desexing their pets	61.70%	58
Unowned cats that people feed, but do not take full responsibility for	51.06%	48
Total Respondents : 94		

In addition to the above, respondents were asked to comment on any other animal welfare concern they have. 58 people chose to provide qualitative data and raised concern regarding wildlife and animal neglect/ cruelty.

Survey Responses – Council Communications

Q20 Prior to reading this, were you aware that Council will return your dog or cat to you, free of charge, if it is found wandering (only in the first instance and only if it is registered)?

Answered: 97 Skipped: 8

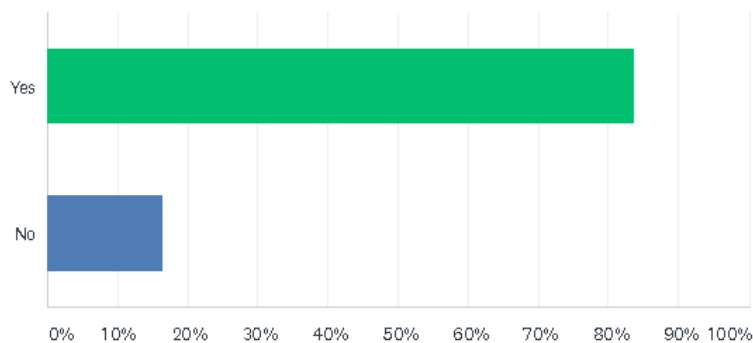


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	41.24%	40
No	58.76%	57
TOTAL		97

Only 41% of our community were aware that Council would return your pet free of charge in the first instance if it was registered and found wandering. In contrast, over 83% of respondents knew how to contact Council if they had lost or found a pet.

Q21 Do you know how to contact Council if you have lost or found a pet?

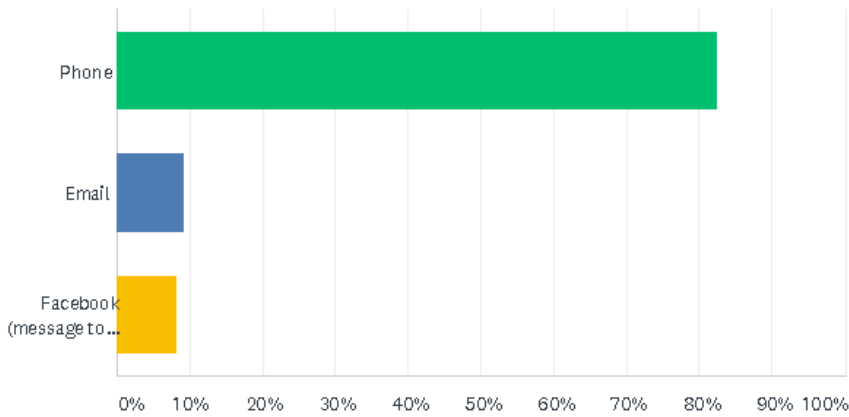
Answered: 98 Skipped: 7



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	83.67%	82
No	16.33%	16
TOTAL		98

Q22 How would you prefer to get in touch with Council to help reunite a lost animal? Please select your preferred method below.

Answered: 97 Skipped: 8

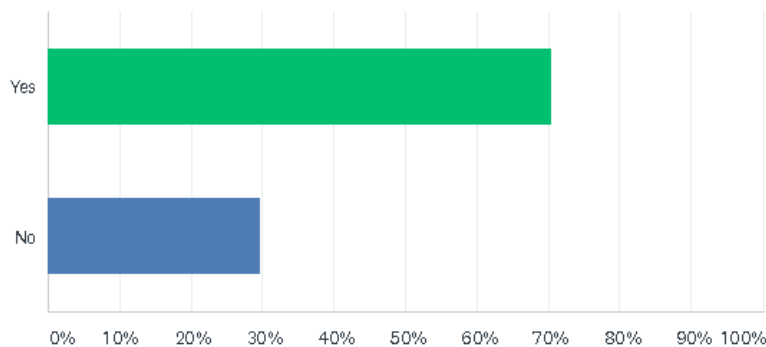


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Phone	82.47%	80
Email	9.28%	9
Facebook (message to Council's Facebook page)	8.25%	8
TOTAL		97

Over 80% of the community would prefer to contact Council via phone over any other method when dealing with lost animals.

Q23 Do you think Council's website provides sufficient information about animal management, including pet registration, barking dogs, lost and found animals?

Answered: 94 Skipped: 11



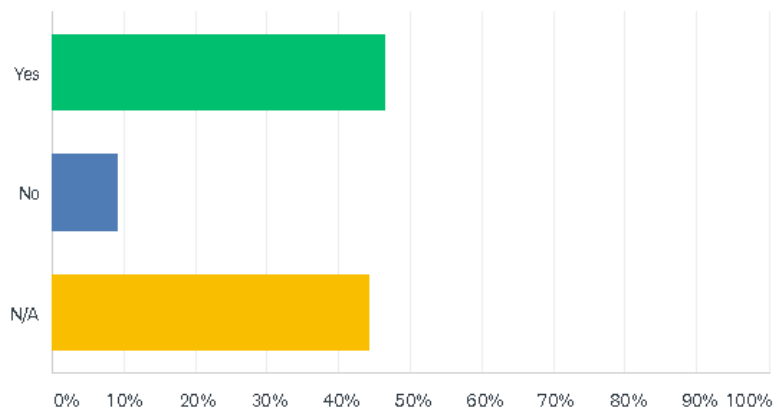
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	70.21%	66
No	29.79%	28
TOTAL		94

Some further qualitative suggestions were made on how Council could improve communication about animal management. Most suggestions were focused on raising awareness of trending issues and regular updates on non-compliance to achieve better deterrence.

Survey Responses – Your experience with Council

Q25 Have you had a positive experience when dealing Council about an animal management issue? E.g. lost or found pet, pet registration, etc.

Answered: 97 Skipped: 8



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	46.39%	45
No	9.28%	9
N/A	44.33%	43
TOTAL		97

90% of the community have had either a positive experience or no experience when dealing with Council regarding an animal management issue.

Approximately 10% of respondents have had a negative experience.

Survey Responses - Open Forum

50% of the respondents took the opportunity to provide further insight into their animal management needs and expectations. Some took the opportunity to reiterate previous responses and others provided new and diverse ideas. The below is a snapshot of the quantitative data received

Feedback	Category
Education - a booklet or brochure clearly outlining the responsibilities of those that own domestic animals. Also a guide to the process of dealing with a problem rather than causing a neighbour dispute.	Communication
I feel the best animal management plans are those that are the most humane and provide education for those in the community to better understand their options and be provided with assistance that is not only helpful for people but most importantly for the animals it is managing and caring for.	Communication
No except to bring about penalties for repeat offenders.	Enforcement
Educate the public that euthanasia isn't the first point of call when a found animal is handed into council. Often members of the general public are reluctant to report a found animal to council as they think or fear that the animal will simply be euthanised.	Communication
Short updates from the different council departments, to help the community to keep informed about what is going on. To be able to feel a part of this wonderful shire we live in and to bring the community to	Communication
Enforce bi laws and do not tolerate poor animal owners who leave dogs tied up and not exercised etc.	Enforcement
I suggest you collect the dogs you know are roaming and make people fix the house or yard not fine them.	Enforcement
Actually fine people for excessive dog barking	Enforcement
Allow council to have more rangers - it's a large area they look after, so it often takes time for them to collect animals	Officer training

Conclusion

The findings from the Community Survey in addition to Councils own data and experiences have created the foundation for the Draft 2021-2025 DAMP. Further feedback and submissions on the Draft DAMP will be sought during August 2021.



Murrindindi Shire Council

Domestic Animal Management Plan

2017-2021

October 2017

Murrindindi Shire Council

Domestic Animal Management Plan

2017-2021

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Authorisation

This Domestic Animal Management Plan has been prepared by and with the authority of the Murrindindi Shire Council. The plan has been prepared in accordance with Section 68A of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*.

This Plan:

Document Title: Murrindindi Shire Council Domestic Animal Management Plan

Version No.: 2.0

Date of Release: October 2017



Signed:

Date:

31/10/17

Mark Leitinger
 Manager Infrastructure Operations
 Murrindindi Shire Council

Version Control

Version Number	Date of Issue	Author/s	Brief Description of Change
2.0	2017	C. Price, A. Daly, C. Southurst	Plan re-drafted
1.0	2013	M. Parsons, A. Daly, C. Southurst	Plan written

1 Introduction

The purpose of this Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) is to set out a strategic framework to help deliver appropriate domestic animal management in the Shire of Murrindindi for the period 2017-2021.

The DAMP outlines how Murrindindi Shire Council will meet its obligations under the *Domestic Animal Act 1994 (Act)* and use a mix of educational and regulatory approaches to promote responsible pet ownership.

1.1 Our Approach to Domestic Animal Management

Our vision statement for the future of domestic animals within the Murrindindi Shire is:

“Residents are able to enjoy the companionship of their pets whilst ensuring that the community are able to maintain their quiet enjoyment of the safe rural lifestyle which Murrindindi Shire provides.”

1.2 Purpose of the Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP)

The vision above has helped guide the development of this DAMP and will continue to guide on domestic animal activities. The DAMP has been developed as required by the *Act* and is intended to:

- Outline proactive animal management and education strategies
- Increase pet owners’ knowledge of the principles of responsible pet ownership and enhance community safety and awareness
- Raise awareness and minimise the harmful effect of domestic pets
- Balance the needs of pet owners with the needs of other members of the community and the environment
- Maximise the number of dogs and cats that are registered within the Murrindindi Shire
- Assist Murrindindi Shire Council to reduce the numbers of dogs and cats being euthanised
- Identify strategies to promote responsible pet ownership and deal with issues of non compliance which impact on the community at large and the welfare of animals
- Increase compliance with the *Act*
- Document current processes and practices on the population of native birds, mammals and reptiles
- Take Community views into account in finalising the plan.

1.3 Animal Management Services Provided to the Community

The Murrindindi Shire Council delivers the following animal management services:

- Promotion of the ‘Responsible Pet Ownership’ program
- Coordination of domestic animal registration processes
- Investigation of dog attacks
- Investigation of animal welfare issues

- Provision of advice to the general community and owners of domestic animals on the care of their animals
- Response to afterhours animal emergencies
- Development and maintenance of animal management strategies and Local Laws
- Impounding of domestic animals and livestock when required
- Managing complaints relating to domestic animals and livestock
- Enforcement of compliance with legislation and the various codes of practice relevant to domestic animals and livestock
- Management of compliance issues for domestic animal businesses.

1.4 Requirement for a DAMP

The *Act* outlines the requirements for all Councils to prepare and maintain a Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP). S68A of the *Act* states:

“(1) Every Council must, in consultation with the Secretary (Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources), prepare at 4 year intervals a domestic animal management plan.

(2) A domestic animal management plan prepared by a Council must—

- (a) set out a method for evaluating whether the animal control services provided by the Council in its municipal district are adequate to give effect to the requirements of this Act and the regulations; and
- (b) outline programs for the training of Authorised Officers to ensure that they can properly administer and enforce the requirements of this Act in the Council's municipal district; and
- (c) outline programs, services and strategies which the Council intends to pursue in its municipal district—
 - (i) to promote and encourage the responsible ownership of dogs and cats; and
 - (ii) to ensure that people comply with this Act, the regulations and any related legislation; and
 - (iii) to minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals; and
 - (iv) to address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats; and
 - (v) to encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats; and
 - (vi) to minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance; and
 - (vii) to effectively identify all dangerous dogs, menacing dogs and restricted breed dogs in that district and to ensure that those dogs are kept in compliance with this Act and the regulations; and
- (d) provide for the review of existing orders made under this Act and Local Laws that relate to the Council's municipal district with a view to determining whether further orders or Local Laws dealing with the management of dogs and cats in the municipal district are desirable; and
- (e) provide for the review of any other matters related to the management of dogs and cats in the Council's municipal district that it thinks necessary; and

- (f) provide for the periodic evaluation of any program, service, strategy or review outlined under the plan.
- (3) Every Council must—
 - (a) review its domestic animal management plan annually and, if appropriate, amend the plan; and
 - (b) provide the Secretary with a copy of the plan and any amendments to the plan; and
 - (c) publish an evaluation of its implementation of the plan in its annual report.”

1.5 Fines and Enforcement

Murrindindi Shire Council places a strong emphasis on community education and a responsible approach to animal management and pet ownership.

Council also has access to a range of compliance and enforcement options, including penalties for failing to comply with the *Act*, and will use these options where necessary and appropriate. In doing so, Council’s objective is to promote compliance either in a specific case or more generally.

During 2016, a total of 47 fines were issued under the *Act* for various offences relating to animal ownership. A total of 7 charges were also bought for offences under the *Act*.

1.6 Murrindindi Shire Council’s Strategic Framework

The Murrindindi Shire Council Plan 2017 - 2021 outlines four key objectives which aim to drive the work we do, and the services we deliver over the next four years, in partnerships with the community.

Our People

Together we will celebrate and encourage diverse, caring and connected communities.

People value the sense of belonging to a caring and well connected community in Murrindindi Shire. We will build on this strength by encouraging collaboration and involvement, whether among our valued volunteer-based community groups, through supporting cultural, artistic or celebratory events, or ensuring that opportunities and services are available that support inclusion, participation and access for all.

Our Place

We will maintain and enhance places to be attractive and liveable, in balance with our natural environment.

The unique character, history, scenic beauty and ambience of our places and spaces and the health of our natural environment are highly valued by our communities. We will ensure our built environments are well planned to enable sensible growth that does not compromise the natural environment, nor the liveability, accessibility and character of our towns and localities.

Our Prosperity

In partnership with the community we will promote an environment in which business and community can thrive.

We recognise that prosperity within our communities is key to supporting individual aspirations and community growth. We will ensure that opportunities to encourage economic development within our Shire are pursued. We will support business development and new investment, promote tourism, facilitate access to training, and advocate for improved infrastructure and services that meet our business and community needs.

Our Promise

We will all work in collaboration with our communities to deliver the best possible outcomes in all that we do.

'Our Promise' is the core of what we do to ensure our community's needs and priorities are well represented in our actions and services. Our promise is to provide strong advocacy, transparent governance, two-way communication and engagement, stewardship of our community's resources and relevant, responsive and efficient service delivery.

The DAMP helps achieve elements of each of the four Council Plan objectives. It supports 'Our People' in highlighting the health and community benefits of ownership of domestic animals. The DAMP examines the potential for supporting domestic animal recreational activities such as off lead exercise areas and animal friendly walking trails.

Responsible ownership of domestic animals will also lead to a better 'place' to live.

Strategy six in 'Our Place' is directly related to the implementation of the DAMP:

"Enhance community safety, resilience and liveability through improved planning, community engagement, and a fair and transparent approach to compliance"

The elements of 'Our People' and 'Our Place' are directly tied to 'Our Prosperity'. The DAMP examines how we will actively support and assist local domestic animal businesses and highlights the importance of proper community education in relation to responsible pet ownership.

The delivery of the DAMP is part of 'Our Promise' to support and work collaboratively with communities in the management of domestic animals.

2 Responsible Pet Ownership

In s68A(2)(e) the Act states that Council's DAMP should:

“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”

2.1 Context

Victoria has one of the highest rates of pet ownership in the world with around 70% of households owning a pet¹. Having pets can be a lot of fun, and pets can provide people with company, stress relief and unconditional love. Pet ownership also teaches children responsibility and helps them develop their social and nurturing skills.

Cats and dogs can live for over 10 years, so it's important that animal owners understand the responsibilities associated with owning pets over their entire life span. Responsible pet ownership involves choosing the right pet that matches a person's lifestyle. There are also responsibilities like complying with the law, caring for a pet's health and ensuring pets don't cause problems in the community. Being a responsible owner ensures owners and pets can enjoy a long and happy relationship.

Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR) 'Responsible Pet Ownership' program also assists Councils with up to date information brochures for numerous issues such as nuisance animals and methods to deal with these issues.

2.2 Promotion of Responsible Ownership

By encouraging responsible pet ownership residents can ensure the welfare of all animals. Residents can:

- Help reduce unwanted animals, many of which become strays and cause great damage to native animals. Those residents that can no longer look after their pets should take time to find them a happy new home, or take them to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), or Murrindindi Shire Council or an animal shelter
- Always report suspected cruelty of animals. Animal cruelty or potential cruelty should be reported to either Murrindindi Shire Council or the RSPCA in the first instance
- Not release domestic animals into the bush. Besides the impact they have on native animals and their habitat if they become feral, animals dumped in the bush may not survive and will suffer needlessly. Even returning native animals to the bush creates problems. Once native animals have been kept in captivity they may no longer know how to fend for themselves in the wild. There is also the risk that there may not be sufficient food and shelter for them because of other animals in the area
- Ensure that their dogs are kept under control. Put dogs on leashes in nature reserves or bushland where native animals are likely to be vulnerable. Residents should keep dogs confined in their yard, particularly when not at home. It is preferable to keep dogs in rear yards as legally visitors must have “safe” access to your front door without being stopped by your dog.

¹ <http://www.environment.gov.au/resource/protecting-our-wildlife-responsible-pet-ownership>

- Keep cats inside, in cat runs or confined overnight - particularly at dawn and dusk. Even well fed cats roaming at night hunt and can kill possums and other small native mammals. Birds are often cat targets at dawn and dusk when they are most active. Keeping cats inside or confined overnight will reduce the risk of cat injury from fights with animals and subsequent infection and disease.

2.3 The Real Cost of Domestic Animal Ownership

Too often animals are bought without an understanding or comprehension of costs. Many of these animals are ultimately destroyed, become isolated and aggressive and a potential burden on community groups, Council and charities.

The latest Bankwest Social Indicator Survey, 'Family Pooch Index', revealed the average Australian family outlays \$2,452 per year for the care of their dog:

- Pet food and dog treats
- Veterinary costs
- Additional dog care, such as grooming, dog walking, dog dieticians and a dog trainer.

This is on top of their initial purchase of the puppy of \$585. Over the average life span of ten years for a dog this equates to more than \$25,000.

The research also revealed that half of pet owners consider their pet to be equally important as their children. 96% of respondents consider their pet as a member of their family.

Cheaper alternatives for a family pet include fish and birds. Average costs per year are:

- Fish \$61.00
- Bird \$810.00
- Cat \$1,772.00

2.4 Local Laws Relating to Responsible Pet Ownership

Murrindindi Shire Council's Community Local Law 2012 has a number of clauses which specifically relate to the principles of responsible pet ownership. They include:

- Restrictions on the number of various animals permitted to be housed on either residential or rural land (s5(1))
- General housing requirements for domestic animals and livestock (s6)
- Responsibility of owners of domestic animals and livestock for removal of excrement in a public place (s7)
- Fencing requirements for containing livestock on properties (s9)
- Restrictions placed on owners of livestock when moving or grazing livestock (s10-12)

2.5 Current and Planned Activities - Responsible Pet Ownership

Education activities relating to responsible pet ownership include:

- Support the promotion of the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR) Domestic Animal Branch's 'Responsible Pet

Ownership' program in maternal health centres, pre-school/kindergartens and in primary schools through payment of registration levy

- 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 requests to provide information regarding the importance and requirements of registration.

Animal registration fees include a subsidy to the State Government's Domestic Animal Branch. These fees help fund programs such as responsible pet ownership in schools, pre-schools, maternal and child health centres and hospitals.

Murrindindi Shire Council is also active in the following areas of responsible pet ownership:

- Monitoring Domestic Animal Businesses registered within the municipality
- Monitoring local media advertisements relating to animals being offered for sale
- Prosecuting owners of animals which are involved in nuisance complaints or attacks
- Patrols by Murrindindi Shire Council officers to enforce the provisions of the *Act* and Council's local laws regarding domestic animals
- On-going commitment to the afterhours animal service program

2.6 Objectives - Responsible Pet Ownership

Objectives for responsible pet ownership over the next four years of the plan are listed below.

2.6.1 Objective 1 – Investigate options for controlling wandering cats and promoting responsible cat ownership

Activity	When	Evaluation
Implement a community education programs for cat owners about the importance of keeping their animals secured for the protection of native wildlife.	Jan 2018 to May 2019	Evidence of public education program developed and implemented
Evaluation of the community education program on cat ownership	June 2019	Report on effectiveness including statistics on wandering cats reported etc completed
Engage further with responsible cat ownership programs with relevant agencies. This could include projects like the RSPCA in the "Who's for Cats?" project which is aimed at creating behavioural change in the community and reducing cat euthanasia rates.	Ongoing	Initiatives supported

2.6.2 Objective 2 –Dog Control Issues

Activity	When	Evaluation
Explore the idea of creating off-lead dog parks including further community engagement and the need for supporting education programs. Scoping of potential locations and infrastructure requirements	December 2019	Options developed for Council to consider
Implement a community education program for dog owners about the importance of keeping their animals on leads in public areas.	Jan 2018 to May 2019	Evidence of public education program developed and implemented
Evaluation of the community education program on dog ownership	June 2019	Report on effectiveness including statistics on wandering dogs and attacks reported etc completed

3 Training of Authorised Officers

s68(A)(2)(b) of the *Act* requires that the DAMP:

“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.”

3.1 Context

Murrindindi Shire Council's Local Laws Unit consists of a coordinator and two local laws officers. The coordinator reports to the Manager Infrastructure Operations. During an emergency or crisis, additional delegated Council officers are available from other Council departments to assist the Local Laws Unit.

The coordinator role oversees both local law and animal management issues including Council's after hours emergency service.

The objective of training and development is to ensure all officers involved in animal management have the knowledge and skills necessary to carry out their work in a safe, effective and professional manner. Council is committed to ensuring all officers involved in animal management are equipped for the demands of their role and are competent in their job.

All local laws officers receive formal training in conflict resolution, traffic control, driver safety, dog and cat handling, bite prevention, stock handling, self-preservation and harm reduction and first aid.

Council local law officers will continue to receive training in:

- Customer service
- Health and safety
- Workplace behaviours and the delivery of community education information
- Attend industry related information sessions and seminars for networking opportunities to keep up with latest trends and innovations.

Table 1: Murrindindi Shire Animal Key Statistics at a Glance

Year	2014	2016	2021 (est)
Population	13,595	13,732	14,125
Households	5,362	5,401	5,571
Area (square kilometres)	3,889		
Number of animal control officers	2	2	2.5
Hours training per officer annually	20	30	40
Number of registered dogs	2,493	2,591	2,650
Number of registered cats	475	489	550
Registered animal businesses	6	6	8

3.2 Current and Planned Training

A variety of training is offered and provided for all authorised officers. Training needs are reviewed annually for a training plan to be developed and implemented.

Training courses have included:

- Animal handling
- Aggressive dog handling
- Investigation and statement taking
- Prosecution and exercising legislative powers
- Utilising information technology in daily operations
- Identification of restricted breeds
- DNA collection
- Enforcement training
- Collection of evidence.

Officers regularly attend industry related seminars, conferences and briefings run by the following groups:

- Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR)
- Australian Institute of Animal Management
- Municipal Association of Victoria
- Other relevant Associations.

3.3 Objectives - Officer Training

Murrindindi Shire Councils' training plans for the relevant officers over the next four years are listed below.

3.3.1 Objective 1 - Develop and maintain a training register

Activity	When	Evaluation
Develop and maintain register of Officer training	January 2018	Training register for individual Officers completed
Develop minimum training requirements for any officers including those 'on call'	June 2018	All officers to meet minimum training requirements

3.3.2 Objective 2 – Develop a job skills matrix

Activity	When	Evaluation
Identify minimum skill requirements	December 2018	Skills matrix finalised by December 2018
Identify additional training opportunities	December 2018	Opportunities identified and scheduled for inclusion into future budget allocation by December 2018

3.3.3 Objective 3 – Ensure Officer training completed

Activity	When	Evaluation
Ensure training is undertaken as soon as is practicable	December annually	Aim for each Officer to complete minimum training requirements within a year.

4 Registration and Identification

The *Act* s68A(2)(c)(v) states the DAMP should:

“Outline programs, services and strategies to encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats”

- also addresses 68A(2)(a),(c)(i),(c)(ii),(d),(f)

4.1 Context

Under the *Act*, it is a requirement that all dogs and cats over the age of three months be registered with Council (S10(1)). Animals must also be micro chipped before they are registered with Council (S12A(1)).

Animal registration rates in Murrindindi Shire remain constant, around 80% for dogs and 40% for cats, despite recent programs aimed at increasing animal registration levels. As a result, this DAMP proposes a number of new programs to attempt to raise the proportion of registered animals within the municipality.

4.2 Current Situation

The following tables summarise key statistics in relation to dogs and cats in the municipality since 2012.

Table 2: Murrindindi Shire Council Key Statistics – Dogs*

Year	2012	2014	2016	2021 (est.)
Number of dogs registered	2493	2591	2602	2650
Estimated dog population	2966	3088	3111	3180
Estimated number of unregistered dogs	473	497	508	550
Estimated % of dogs registered	84	84	84	84
Number of dog impoundments	98	77	116	120
Number of dogs returned to owners	72	54	112	110
% of dogs returned to owners	73	70	96	85
Number of dogs rehoused (Coldstream Animal Aid)	24	19	13	20
Number of dogs euthanised	2	4	4	8

Table 3: Murrindindi Shire Council Key Statistics – Cats*

Year	2012	2014	2016	2021 (est.)
Number of cats registered	475	489	518	550
Estimated cat population	1133	1180	1188	1215
Est. Number of unregistered cats	660	691	671	665
Estimated % of cats registered	41	41	43	45
Number of cat impoundments	140	N/A	111	120
Number of cats returned to owners	2	3	2	6
Number of cats rehoused (Coldstream Animal Aid)	16	33	19	70
Number of cats euthanised	124	116	90	30

*Calculations of animal registration in table 7 and 8 above are drawn from McMurray (2004)². This benchmarking exercise states that in Victoria:

- 40% of households own one or more dogs at a rate of 1.44 dogs per household.
- 26% of households own one or more cats at a rate of 1.47 cats per household.

As shown in Table 2 above the estimated rates of dog registration in Murrindindi Shire are quite high compared with the estimated dog population. This contrasts significantly with the projected registration numbers for cats. Registration percentages for dogs are above 80%. In contrast, cat registration rates are around 40% (Table 3 above). These figures are comparable with the national averages.

² McMurray, R. (2004) *Victorian Council Animal Control Benchmarking Exercise*. Report to the Domestic Animal Management Implementation Committee. Victoria, Australia: Bureau of Animal Welfare, Department of Primary Industries. Melbourne

Figure 1: Registered Dogs versus Estimated Dog Population

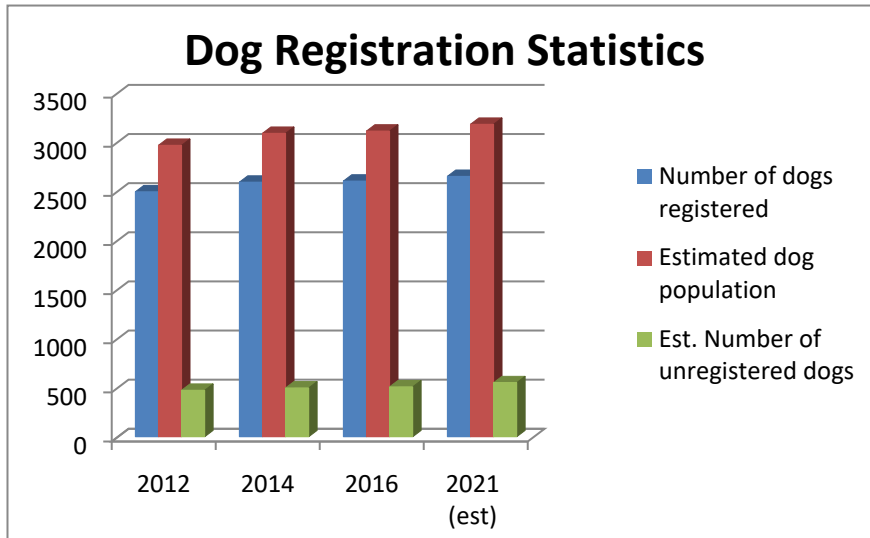
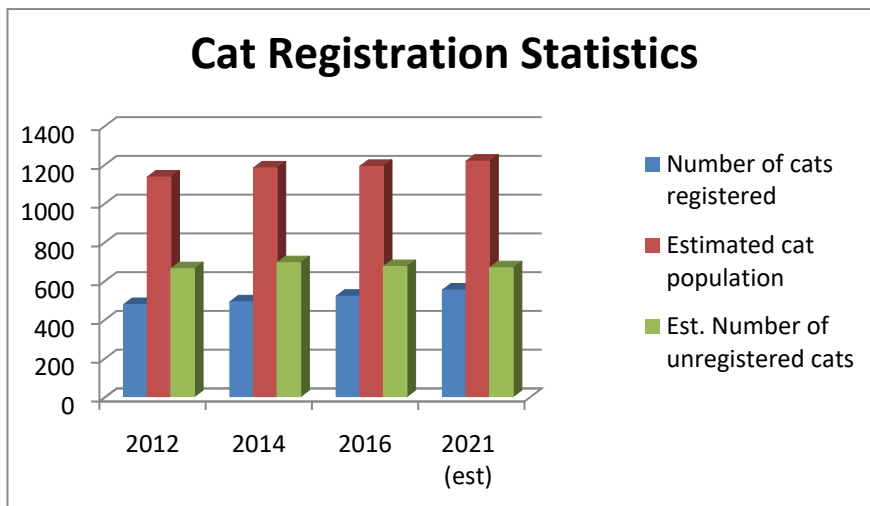


Figure 2: Cat Registration Statistics

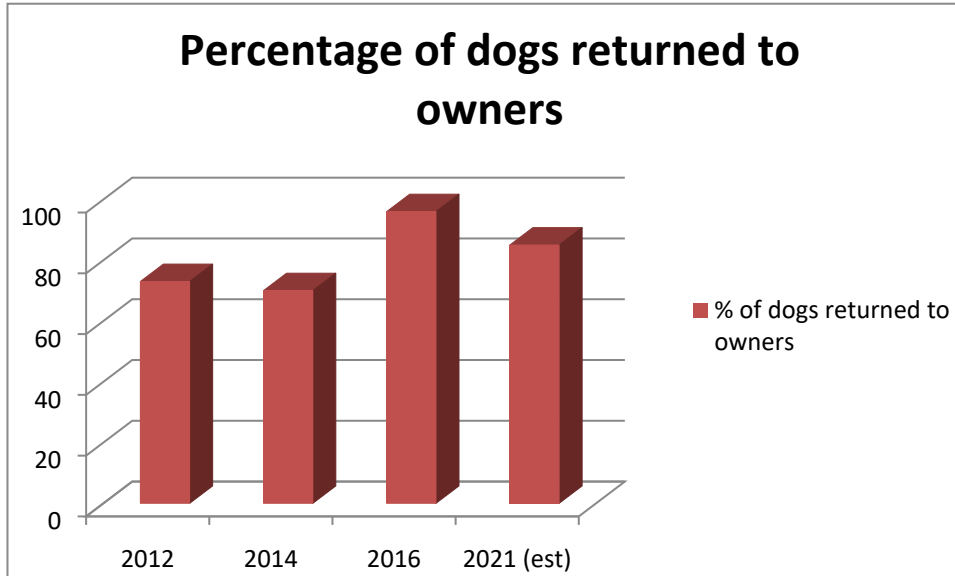


The majority of cats destroyed in Murrindindi Shire fall into the category of feral and/or nuisance animals. Dogs destroyed are predominantly dogs involved in attacks. The number of cats rehoused via Animal Aid at Coldstream is predicted to rise due to a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Animal Aid (signed in 2017). Animal Aid will assess and potentially re-home unregistered and non-micro chipped cats on behalf of Murrindindi Shire Council. Council does not currently have suitable pound facilities to house cats and the majority of them are transferred to Animal Aid.

Currently around 17% of cats presented to Animal Aid are re-homed compared with 15% nationally. 82% of cats in the pound are euthanised compared with the national figure of 74%. Unfortunately, only around 1% of cats are reclaimed in Murrindindi Shire due to low registration rates and large numbers of feral cats.

This is in direct contrast to the numbers of dogs euthanised. In 2016, 96% of dogs that entered the pound system were returned to their owners, see figure 3 below. Previously this has averaged around 70-80%. The increase in dogs being returned in 2016 is probably a statistical anomaly as registration rates have generally hovered around 84% for a number of years. It is estimated that the percentages of dogs reunited with their owners are significantly higher when dogs are registered.

Figure 3: Percentage of Dogs Returned to Owners



4.3 Current Council Policies and Procedures

Current policies and procedures include:

- Application for registration and renewal of registration of dogs and cats (the *Act*, s14)
- Procedure associated with seizure and impounding of unregistered and/or unidentified dogs and cats
- Procedure associated with issuing notices to comply, infringement notices and filing charges for prosecution regarding unregistered and/or identified dogs and cats.

4.4 Current Education Programs - Registration

Murrindindi Shire Council focuses on promoting the positive elements of animal registration and only uses compliance measures as a last resort. Council actively promotes the following registration advice:

- Registered pets are much more likely to be reunited with their owners.
- The first time registered pets are found wandering they are returned to their owners free of charge.
- Unregistered pet owners' are liable for a fine for an unregistered animal and a fine for a wandering dog. Currently both fines together are over \$500.00.

Council actively seeks to negotiate and resolve issues with concerned parties before any compliance activities are pursued.

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 Murrindindi Shire Council's website and via social media (Facebook)
- Displaying handouts on responsible ownership at all offices and having them in Local Laws officer's vehicles to hand out to residents.

4.5 Current Compliance Activities - Registration

To ensure that registrations are paid, Murrindindi Shire Council currently conducts the following activities:

- Registration forms are sent out by early March annually
- Late reminder letters follow in late April
- During June, follow up phone calls are made to all owners of unregistered animals
- If required, a targeted door knock of properties with known unregistered animals is conducted annually
- Ensuring all impounded and unregistered animals are micro chipped and registered prior to release.

At any stage of the year Murrindindi Shire Council also conducts the following:

- Issues notices and/or infringements for animals found unregistered
- Prosecutes owners of unregistered animals where infringements remain unpaid and animals remain unregistered.

4.6 Objectives - Registrations

The majority of dogs and cats that enter Council's pound facility or Animal Aid at Coldstream are unregistered. In contrast the estimated number of registered animals in our shire remains relatively high at around 80%. This suggests that unregistered animals are much more likely to wander than those that are registered.

Murrindindi Shire 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. An action of the previous DAMP was the implementation of a Council electronic pound register.

4.6.1 Objective 1 – Registrations Paid in a Timely Manner

Activity	When	Evaluation
Inform residents of the animal registration renewal period by utilising media releases and mailing renewal notices prior to 10 April	March	Number of registration renewals received prior to the 10 April expiry. Review media releases each year to determine the most effective advertising
Send out reminder letters to those that haven't yet paid outstanding registrations	May	Examine payment rates compared to last year
Phone residents with outstanding registrations	June	Examine payment rates compared to last year

Activity	When	Evaluation
Ensure random property audit takes place. Offer on the spot payment with mobile EFTPOS.	July – August	Record total number of properties visited and compare to previous results
Issue fines for those people who have not paid registrations	31 July	Determine if fines reduce and improve compliance rates
Ensure animal registrations have been renewed and infringements paid	September – October	Record total number of infringements unpaid and animal registrations

4.6.2 Objective 2 – Increase Cat and Dog 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 and Animal Aid undertake micro chipping activities.	Prior to every release.	Review annual registration numbers and the number of dogs and cats being seized and impounded
Areas that have a high number of unregistered dogs and cats, undertake a proactive door knock or 'blitz' program and 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
Host biennial micro chipping days at various locations throughout the shire.	2018 and 2020	Increased number of micro chipped animals

4.6.3 Objective 3 – Registration and Identification - Increase Young Animal Registrations

Activity	When	Evaluation
Examine methods of increasing young animal registration e.g. upon presentation of booked desexing operation or upon signing of a statutory declaration, a discounted registration rate is applied*.	Ongoing	Increased numbers of young animals being registered

* Many owners do not want to desex their pet at three months of age. By allowing them to present proof of booking for a desexing operation or upon signing a statutory declaration, a discounted registration rate could be offered.

5 Management of Nuisance Animals

S68A(2)(c)(vi) of the Act requires the DAMP to:

“Outline programs, services and strategies to minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance”

- also addresses 68A(2)(a),(c)(i),(c)(ii),(d),(f)

5.1 Context

Animal nuisance is essentially a complaint driven process at Murrindindi Shire Council. Council resources allow a reactive based service so that officers can respond as required.

Common animal nuisance reported to Council includes wandering cats and dogs, barking dogs and excessive animal numbers.

5.2 Current Situation

The following table highlights the nuisances as reported to Council. Council recently implemented a barking dog register which means that data is not available pre 2016.

Table 4: Nuisance Animal Statistics - 2016

Type of Nuisance	2016
Number of barking dog complaints received	42
Number of barking dog prosecutions	1
Number of requests for/ pick up of cat traps	115
Number of wandering dog complaints received	105
Number of excess animal complaints	3

A system for collecting statistical data was implemented in November 2015.

The Act regulates the nuisance provisions for both dogs and cats relating to noise, trespassing and wandering animals. Council also has introduced a number of clauses in the Community Local Law to help minimise and prevent nuisances which are outlined below.

5.3 Current Orders, Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures

5.3.1 Community Local Law 2012 - Clauses Relating to Nuisance

Murrindindi Shire Council's Community Local Law Part 2 s5(1), limits the number of dogs and cats on a residential property to two of each 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.

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.

Council also require owners of domestic animals and livestock to remove excrement in a public place (s7).

Council policies for nuisance complaints include:

- Procedure regarding noise nuisance complaints for dogs and/or cats, the *Act*, s32
- Procedure associated with the surrender of dogs and/or cats by owners, the *Act* s33A)
- Procedure associated with seizure and impounding of dogs and cats causing a nuisance
- Procedure associated with issuing notices to comply, infringement notices and filing charges for prosecution regarding dogs and cats causing a nuisance.

5.4 Current Education - Nuisance Animals

Murrindindi Shire Council conducts a number of education activities regarding nuisance animals. Community communication on the proper management of nuisance animals is provided to the community via direct officer contact, through social media, traditional print and radio media and through Councils' website. Activities include:

- Providing information relating to the building of cat enclosures
- Providing information brochures and links from the DEDJTR to the public
- Encourage the desexing of cats and dogs to reduce wandering
- Encourage dog owners to seek advice from professional dog trainers and trial dog citronella collars and other relevant methods to reduce issues of nuisance such as barking.

5.5 Current Compliance Activities - Nuisance Animals

Council has specific policies relating to animals at large and barking dogs to ensure all complaints received are handled in a consistent matter by all authorised officers.

Officers will endeavour to return cats and dogs found at large. If registered, Council officers will return wandering dogs and cats free of charge in the first instance. At these times Council officers will discuss with owners ways to avoid dogs and cats wandering. This can include ensuring fencing is adequate for example.

In circumstances where owners continue to allow animals to wander, as a last resort the *Act* allows Council to charge owners with an 'at large' infringement. Similarly, pound release fees can also be imposed on owners for secondary wandering events.

If wandering matters continue to escalate, court proceedings can be implemented. This can result in court orders requiring owner's to carry out works to ensure the animal is not able to escape from the premises.

Murrindindi Shire Council will seek to resolve issues of nuisance by working with the parties but can, where necessary, can and will take enforcement action. Where nuisances are found to be substantiated pursuant to s32 of the *Act*, Council can issue notices to the owner of the dog to take all efforts to stop the nuisance.

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

In relation to nuisance, Murrindindi Shire Council will also:

- Investigate nuisance complaints as required
- Issue notices to comply/abate, objection, infringements and where appropriate takings matters to the Magistrates Court
- Providing cat traps to residents as requested
- Provide animal excrement bags at parks/stipulated areas to ensure dog owners comply with Council's Local Laws for the removal of animal excrement
- Report outcomes of any enforcement action/prosecutions when appropriate to raise awareness in the community of the benefits of preventing dog and cat nuisance
- Investigate the use of a cat curfew to reduce wandering cats.

5.6 Objectives - Nuisance Animals

Murrindindi Shire Council has developed the following objectives for the management of nuisance animals in Murrindindi Shire.

5.6.1 Objective 1 – Nuisance Animals – Faeces

Activity	When	Evaluation
Erect 'Please Clean Up After Your Dog' signage in parks where appropriate	June 2019	Record rates of warnings or infringements issued for not removing faeces from public spaces and examine trends

5.6.2 Objective 2 – Nuisance Animals – Barking Dogs

Activity	When	Evaluation
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	Ongoing	Review the effectiveness of citronella collars in reducing dog barking where implemented
Supply citronella refills to pet owners who have purchased a barking collar to allow the required continued responsible maintenance of collars	December 2017	Community use of collars
Develop a system for the collection of statistical data for all barking dog and roaming dog nuisances	Monthly	Build upon data in barking dog records from November 2015

5.6.3 Objective 3 – Nuisance Animals – Assist Community with Managing Cats at Large

Activity	When	Evaluation
Purchase additional cat traps and make them available for hire by the community	December 2018	Reduce the number of wandering cats and record community use of cat trap hire

Murrindindi Shire Council has 12 traps that are constantly utilised throughout the year. Currently there are extensive waiting lists for traps.

See section 2 above on responsible animal ownership.

6 Dog Attacks

S68A(2)(c)(iii) of the *Act* requires that the DAMP:

“Outline programs, services and strategies to minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals”

- also addresses 68A(2)(a),(c)(i),(c)(ii),(d),(f)

6.1 Context

Dog attacks, although relatively uncommon, occur throughout the municipality to varying degrees. The mix of rural and urban environments in Murrindindi Shire means that most often dog attacks are upon livestock. In built up areas, other dogs, cats and small livestock such as chickens and rabbits are often impacted by attacks. Although Murrindindi Shire Council does receive reports of dog attacks on people, often the attack is the result of human intervention with an attack on an animal.

Wandering dogs are an issue that Council will be focussing on throughout the period of this Plan.

6.2 Current Situation

Current reporting of dog attacks in Murrindindi Shire is summarised below in table 5. These are reported dog attacks by community members - Council response is to investigate each of these thoroughly.

Table 5: Dog Attack Statistics, Murrindindi Shire

Reported Dog Attacks*	2016
Reported dog attacks on people	0
Reported dog attacks on stock	9
Reported dog attacks – non serious injury or no injury	17
Reported menacing dogs	6

Data on dog attacks has been recorded since November 2015

It is predicted that over time trends in dog attacks can be determined using Murrindindi Shire Council’s online reporting systems. This will allow officers to implement strategies to reduce dog attacks.

Possible courses of action Council may choose include:

- Working with owners to ensure that dogs cannot escape properties
- Recommend having the dog destroyed where serious or repeat attacks occur
- Seek mediation between parties
- Investigate whether further action is required.

As a last resort, Council may also undertake the following:

- Issue infringements (where non-serious injuries sustained)

- Declare dogs as menacing/dangerous
- Seek prosecution in Magistrates Court
- Seek destruction/compensation orders through the Magistrates Court.

6.3 Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures Relating To Dog Attacks

Council's Community Local Law 2012 Part 2 s5(1), limits the number of dogs and cats on a residential property to two of each without a permit.

Current policies and procedures include:

- Procedure relating to seizure of dogs found at large or not secured to owner's premises, the *Act*, s24
- Procedure relating to dog attacks, the *Act*, s29
- Procedure for serving notices of seizure relating to seizing of identified dogs, the *Act*, s84H
- Procedure for owners when recovering dogs that have been seized by Council, the *Act*, s84M
- Procedure associated with registration of dogs and the fee structure for registration, Schedule to the *Act*
- Procedure associated with seizure and impounding of dogs after a dog attack
- Procedure associated with issuing notices to comply, infringement notices and filing charges for prosecution regarding dog attacks.

6.4 Current Education - Dog Attacks

Current education activities include the following:

- Providing the new owner package to new animal owners
- Media releases promoting the effective confinement and control of dogs
- Promoting the Domestic Animal Branch's' Responsible Pet Ownership Schools Program
- Reporting outcomes of dog attack prosecutions to local media where appropriate to raise awareness in the community of the need to report dog attacks.

6.5 Current Compliance Activities - Dog Attacks

Compliance activities include the following:

- Investigating dog attacks in accordance with the provisions of the *Act*
- Seizing and holding dogs alleged to have being involved in an attack pending investigation/prosecution outcome
- Seized aggressive dogs are transferred to Animal Aid at Coldstream who have facilities to appropriately manage aggressive dogs
- Providing an afterhours service to respond to reports of aggressive or attacking dogs
- Prosecuting matters pursuant to the *Act*

- Issuing infringements for wandering dogs
- Issuing infringements for minor attacks where non serious injury is sustained
- Declaring menacing or dangerous dogs where required
- Seeking destruction orders from the 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
- Ensuring that any impounded dogs when released will be securely confined to the property where they are housed.

6.6 Objectives - Dog Attacks

The following objectives regarding dog attacks have been developed for this DAMP.

6.6.1 Objective 1 – Dog Attacks – Education and Compliance

Activity	When	Evaluation
Collate and record data for reported dog attacks including, date and time, location, animal type, victim, dog unsecured/off lead, dog unregistered, sex, entire/desexed	Ongoing	Evaluate data annually to determine areas requiring specific education and compliance activities
Initiate education and compliance activities in 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

6.6.2 Objective 2 – Dog Attacks – Minimisation of Dog Attacks

Activity	When	Evaluation
Provide proactive education and compliance activities in areas of higher dog attack reports Actively patrol areas for roaming, unsecure and/or unregistered dogs Communicating dog attack prevention through media articles, mail outs and website information	Ongoing	Compare the 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

7 Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs

Under the *Act*, DAA s68A(2)(c)(vii) requires the DAMP to:

“Outline programs, services and strategies 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”

- also addresses 68A(2)(a),(c)(i),(c)(ii),(d),(f)

7.1 Context

Dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs are defined in Part 3 of the *Act*.

7.2 Current Situation

Murrindindi Shire Council has no declared dogs currently registered within the municipality.

Table 6: Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dog Statistics

Type	Number
Registered restricted breed dogs **	None
Registered declared dangerous dogs **	None
Registered declared menacing dogs **	None

** Data as of July 2017.

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).

Murrindindi Shire Council actively discourages residents in the municipality from owning dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs by imposing a higher registration fee.

7.3 Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures Regarding Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Dog Breeds

Murrindindi Shire Council Policies and Procedures include:

- Council may declare a dog to be dangerous (the *Act*, s 34) through correct procedure (the *Act*, s35)
- A dog may be considered dangerous if it is a guard dog or has been trained to attack or bite, the *Act*, s34A
- Under the *Act* (Part 3) owners of any dangerous, menacing or restricted breed dogs must be registered with Council

- Council can declare a dog to be menacing if it has rushed or chased a person, the *Act*, s41A
- Council must register all dangerous, menacing and 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.

7.4 Current Education - Dangerous Dogs

Potential owners of restricted breed dogs are required to abide by specific regulations, in particular prescribed enclosures and warning signs on premises.

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

As of July 2017, Murrindindi Shire Council has no registered declared dangerous (includes guard dogs or dogs trained to attack) or restricted breed dogs. 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 and abides by the permit conditions. Authorised officers monitor the facility for compliance issues relating to declared dangerous dogs.

As of July 2017 Murrindindi Shire 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.

Current Murrindindi Shire Council education activities regarding dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs include:

- Developing media releases relating to legislation, changes and updates as required
- Developing media releases relating to differences between restricted breed dogs and dangerous dogs as required
- Providing information relating to declared dogs to the community on Council's website.

7.5 Current Compliance Activities - Dangerous Dogs

To discourage the housing/registration of any restricted breed and dangerous dogs within the municipality, Council will:

- Inspect premises housing declared dogs to ensure compliance if required
- Conduct proactive patrols during afterhours for unregistered guard dogs
- Seize dogs suspected of being restricted breed dogs
- Ensure any declared dogs are registered on the VDDR
- Prosecute for any determined breaches
- Assess suspected restricted breed dogs.

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

7.6 DAMP Objectives - Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs

A number of objectives for the management of dangerous, menacing and restricted breeds are proposed below.

7.6.1 Objective 1 - Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs – Containment and Management Arrangements

Activity	When	Evaluation
Randomly audit properties with dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs to ensure they are being kept appropriately, enclosures etc.	As required	Increased compliance with requirements
Prosecute repeat offenders or serious breaches detected	As required	Determine if prosecution results in corresponding reduced offending
Afterhours patrols for unregistered guard dogs in industrial areas	As required	Ensure unregistered guard dogs, if found, become registered

7.6.2 Objective 2: Assessing Restricted Breed Dogs

Activity	When	Evaluation
Assess certain registered dogs against the approved standard for determining restricted breed dogs	As required	Restricted Breeds identified from registration database

8 Overpopulation and Euthanasia

In s68A(2)(c)(iv) that *Act* says that the DAMP should

“Outline programs, services and strategies to address any over population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats”

- also addresses 68A(2)(a),(c)(i),(c)(ii),(d),(f)

8.1 Context

Through the DAMP, Murrindindi Shire Council continues to aim to reduce euthanasia rates in both dogs and cats. Recently Murrindindi Shire Council signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Animal Aid in a direct effort to rehouse unwanted cats and dogs and remove the need to euthanise where unnecessary.

8.2 Current Situation

The following table summarises statistics regarding animal reuniting with owners, re-homing and euthanasia rates in Murrindindi Shire.

Table 6: Current Statistics – Overpopulation and Euthanasia

Year	2012	2014	2016
Number of dogs returned to owner	72	54	112
Number of dogs re-homed	24	19	13
Number of dogs euthanised	2	4	4
Number of cats returned to local owners	0	0	2
Number of cats rehoused by Animal Aid	16	33	19
Number of cats euthanised	124	116	90

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

8.3 Current Education Regarding Euthanasia

The following activities are undertaken by Murrindindi Shire Council to attempt to reduce high euthanasia:

- Encouraging desexing of animals by offering reduced registration fees
- Promoting benefits of desexing
- Promoting appropriate pet selection
- Promoting cat enclosures.

8.4 Current Compliance Activities - Euthanasia

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 (8 days).

Cats that are impounded and determined by authorised officers to be feral are immediately euthanised. Cats and kittens that are not considered wild, uncontrollable or diseased are transferred to the Animal Aid in Coldstream.

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) have active wild dog programs within the municipality.

Murrindindi Shire Council undertakes the following:

- Annual cat trapping program. Council cat cages are available for hire free of charge by community members for trapping feral or unwanted cats
- Investigate unregistered breeding establishments
- Ensure the micro chipping of all unregistered impounded animals prior to their release to the owner
- Enforce the Local Law relating to the number of animals on a property
- Assess excess animal permit applications, factoring in number of entire desexed animals.

8.5 Objectives - Overpopulation and Euthanasia

8.5.1 Objective 1 – Overpopulation and Euthanasia – Promotion of Desexing of Dogs and Cats

Activity	When	Evaluation
Discount registration fees for cats and dogs that are desexed	Ongoing	Number of new animals registered in category yearly
Investigate agreements with veterinarians to join the National Desexing Network (NDN) where veterinarians offer reduced desexing rates to animal owners	June 2020	Reduced desexing rates for animal owners

9 Domestic Animal Businesses

In s68A(2)(c)(ii) the Act states that the DAMP should:

“Outline programs, services and strategies which the Council intends to pursue in its municipal district to ensure that people comply with this Act, the regulations and any related legislation”
- also addresses 68A(2)(a),(c)(i),(d),(f)

9.1 Context

Domestic Animal Businesses are defined by s3(1) of the Act as:

“Domestic animal business means-

- a) An animal shelter, Council pound or pet shop: or
- b) An enterprise which carries out the breeding of dogs or cats to seek, where-
 - I. In the case of an enterprise whose proprietor is a member of an applicable organisation³, 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”

9.2 Current Situation

Murrindindi Shire Council has seven registered domestic animal businesses which include boarding, breeding and training establishments.

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.

9.3 Current Education - Domestic Animal Businesses

Current education initiatives focused at domestic animal business include the following:

- Providing information to registered domestic animal businesses
- Advertising new legislation amendments
- Promoting DEDJTR – Domestic Animals Branch information and codes of practices.

9.4 Current Compliance - Domestic Animal Businesses

All domestic animal businesses must be registered annually with Council and comply with the appropriate mandatory Code of Practice. The following also applies to domestic animal businesses:

³ The minister determines ‘applicable organisations’ under s5(A) of the Act. A current list of applicable organisations can be found at: <http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/pets/registration-legislation-and-permits/domestic-animal-legislation-and-latest-news/notice-of-declaration-of-applicable-organisations>

- Council requires an annual inspection and audit of the Domestic Animal Business facilities prior to registration each year
- Councils are required to report the number of domestic animal businesses registered with them to DEDJTR on an annual basis.

Murrindindi Shire Council when required will also:

- Investigate complaints against animal businesses
- Monitor advertising sites to see if animal businesses are operating outside the regulations or without permission
- Inspect suspected unregistered domestic animal businesses
- Liaise with the Planning Unit to ensure planning conditions are complied with.

9.5 Objectives - Domestic Animal Businesses

Murrindindi Shire Council has developed the following objectives regarding Domestic Animal Businesses.

9.5.1 Objective 1 – Domestic Animal Business – Review Agreements

Activity	When	Evaluation
Ensure that domestic animal businesses comply with the need to release only animals that are known to be registered (<i>Act</i> , s84y) and hand unregistered animals over to Council	August 2019	Agreements between domestic animal businesses and Council developed to only release registered animals to owners

9.5.2 Objective 2 – Domestic Animal Business - Compliance

Activity	When	Evaluation
Monitor Murrindindi Shire Council's registration database for owners with more than three fertile females	Ongoing	Compliance with Local Laws and related legislation
Encourage desexing of non-breeding animals by promotion of reduced registration fees	Ongoing	Relevant registration accepted
Conduct searches for unregistered domestic animal businesses via internet, media and news papers	Ongoing	Relevant action taken

10 Livestock Management

10.1 Context

Management of livestock has not traditionally been included in the DAMP. Its inclusion aligns the management of livestock with the management of cats and dogs.

10.2 Current Situation

In previous years livestock management monitoring has targeted landholdings with large numbers of stock. However in recent years farm animals are becoming more popular with owners of smaller properties. Common animals include sheep and goats to keep the grass down or a pony.

Regardless of the landholding size, there are Council regulations and State requirements that all livestock owners must comply with.

10.3 Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures Relating to Livestock Management

Murrindindi Shire Council's Community Local Law 2012 has a number of clauses which specifically relate to agriculture and the management of livestock. They include:

- Restrictions on the number of various animals permitted to be housed in either residential or rural land (s5(1))
- General housing requirements for domestic animals and livestock (s6)
- Responsibility of owners of domestic animals and livestock for removal of excrement in a public place (s7)
- Fencing requirements for containing livestock on properties (s9)
- Restrictions placed on owners of livestock when moving or grazing livestock (s10-12).

10.3.1 Grazing, Stock Movement and Other Permits for Livestock

Murrindindi Shire Council currently issue a number of permits relating to livestock. These include:

- Grazing permits on land managed by Council
- Roadside grazing permits, allowing roadside grazing where practicable
- Stock movement permits, for the movement of stock between properties etc.
- Additional animal permits, for those that wish to have more animals than are stipulated in s5(1) of the Community Local Law 2012.

There are detailed requirements for each of these permits. Safety of the community, livestock and owners is always a priority in officer's assessment when granting, reviewing or examining potential livestock permits.

All permits granted are required to comply with VicRoads statutory requirements where applicable.

Public liability insurance is also required for any livestock permits.

Murrindindi Shire Council has a number of other responsibilities in the management of livestock in legislation. These include:

- Trespassing and impounding of livestock, requirements to prevent stock from wandering and impounding wandering stock (*Impounding of Livestock Act 1994*)
- Council officers are General Inspectors under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986*. This gives a number of powers such as emergency powers to deal with animals, the ability to search and seize animals and issue fines in relation to offences under the *Act*.

10.4 Current and Planned Education Activities - Livestock Management

Current activities regarding livestock management in the shire are centred on ensuring that landholders are aware of their responsibilities when owning or managing livestock.

Education activities include informing owners of:

- State and legal compliance with livestock identification
- Requirements of the National Livestock Identification Program
- How to obtain a Property Identification Code (PIC) for the purpose of farming and owning animals.

10.5 Objectives - Livestock Management

Our plans for livestock management over the next four years of the plan are listed below.

10.5.1 Objective 1 – Livestock Permit Compliance and Review

Activity	When	Evaluation
Ensure grazing permits reflect Council's Rural Roadside Management Guidelines requirements	June 2019	All permits are updated to include requirements
Spot checks for livestock permits to ensure permit holders are meeting requirements	Ongoing	Permits reviewed, cancelled and suspended as a result of permit holder action

10.5.2 Objective 2 – Livestock – Wandering Animals

Activity	When	Evaluation
Emergency call outs for stock on roads	Ongoing	Stock removed from roads
Work with farmers to develop ways to reduce repeat stock wandering	Ongoing	Reduced number of stock on roads, reduction in call outs

11 Annual Review of Plan and Annual Reporting

Under s68A(3) of the Act:

“Every Council must—

- (a) review its domestic animal management plan annually and, if appropriate, amend the plan
- (b) provide the Department of Primary Industries⁴ Secretary with a copy of the plan and any amendments to the plan
- (c) publish an evaluation of its implementation of the plan in its annual report.”

11.1 Murrindindi Shire Council Review of DAMP

Murrindindi Shire Council reviews its DAMP annually to assess whether any amendments are necessary in order to ensure it is relevant and to monitor Council’s performance against the DAMP objectives. Any adjustments are to be reported annually as part of the Council Plan review cycle.

In the final year of the DAMP, Council will undertake a major review and prepare drafting the next DAMP for the 2022–2026.

11.2 Objectives - Annual Review

Objectives for annual review of the DAMP are listed below

11.2.1 Objective 1 – Annual Review

Activity	When	Evaluation
Review the DAMP annually	April annually	DAMP reviewed
Conduct community engagement activities to discuss the DAMP and future activities	July-August 2021 for DAMP 2022-2026	Meetings and engagement activities completed

⁴ Now the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR), incorporating the Domestic Animal Branch.

12 Attachments

12.1 Summary of DAMP survey

Council used both an online survey and paper survey to ask the community of Murrindindi Shire about their thoughts on domestic animal management in the Municipality. There were 237 responses received to the survey during the open period. The following is a summary of that data.

There was a good geographical spread of data entries. Most respondents were from the areas of Alexandra, Yea and Kinglake but a number of responses were received from most communities in the Shire.

The data created by this survey will be used to assist Council in making decisions about animal management.

In the survey, there were some clear messages from the community. These included:

- 90% of respondents would like some form of cat curfew implemented in the Shire
- 82% of people thought dogs should be always 'on-lead' unless in a designated 'off-leash' area.
- Around 90% of respondents want to see some form of dog park or off lead area.
- 65% of respondents recommended these off-lead areas should be fenced in some way.

Question No.	Question	%	Number
1	What is your town/locality?		
	Alexandra	34.85	69
	Buxton	3.03	6
	Eildon	5.05	10
	Glenburn	2.02	4
	Flowerdale	2.53	5
	Kinglake Ranges	18.69	37
	Marysville	3.54	7
	Narbethong	1.52	3
	Thornton	2.53	5
	Yea	13.13	26
	Other (Rubicon, Limestone, Taggerty, Murrindindi, Strath Creek, Homewood, Cathkin, Acheron)	13.13	
2	What is your age?		
	0-18	0	0
	19-35	19.90	39

Question No.	Question	%	Number
	36-64	63.27	124
	65+	16.84	33
3	Are you a cat owner?		
	Yes	34.36	67
	No	65.64	128
4	How many cats do you own?		
	One	63.24	43
	Two	30.88	21
	More than two	5.88	4
	Total		68
5	Do you think a cat curfew (where a cat must be kept inside for a specific timeframe is a good idea in Murrindindi Shire?		
	Yes	89.12	127
	No	10.88	21
6	If yes to the above, how long should cats be kept inside in Murrindindi Shire		
	Just Overnight (8pm until 6am)	51.98	92
	Permanently	30.51	54
	Other -Incl. permanent (14), overnight with different times (14), kept on property at all times (7), other (3)	17.51	31
7	Is there anything else you would like to say about how Council manages Cats?		
	Increased feral cat control and cat traps	17.33	13
	More education	5.33	4
	Criticise Council	6.66	5
	Praise Council	1.33	1
	Cat numbers should be reduced, mandatory neutering	18.66	14

Question No.	Question	%	Number
	Prevent cats from wandering	9.33	7
	Support cat enclosures and cat curfews	8	6
	Increase protection for wildlife	16	12
	Greater enforcement and presence	17.33	13
	Total	100	75
8	Are you a dog owner?		
	Yes	71.66	134
	No	28.34	53
	Total	100	187
9	How many dogs do you own?		
	One	53.73	72
	Two	38.06	51
	More than two	8.21	11
10	Do you think dogs should be on leads except in specified "off-leash" areas?		
	Yes	81.08	150
	No	18.92	35
	Total	100	185
11	Do you think we should have dog parks where dogs are allowed to be off leash (but in control)?		
	Yes	90.76	167
	No	9.24	17
	Total	100	184
12	Do you have any locations in mind for dog parks?		
	Alexandra (Leckie Park, UT Creek Path, Heli Pad, Racecourse/golf club, Tennis Courts, Briggs Oval	54.05	40
	Buxton (Meeting of the waters, Buxton Reserve	4.05	3

Question No.	Question	%	Number
	Eildon (Pondage, Community Centre/Basketball court, Cricket Oval)	8.18	6
	Flowerdale (Spring Valley Rec Reserve Oval)	1.35	1
	Kingklake (Old Timber Mill site, Frank Thompson Reserve, K'west rec reserve, Council offices)	12.16	9
	Marysville (Gallipoli Park)	1.35	1
	Toolangi (Toolangi Reserve)	1.35	1
	Yea (Recreation Reserve/Railway Reserve, Main St, Golf Course)	17.56	13
	Total	100	74
	Other comments in Q12 Dog parks are dangerous, away from recreation areas/playgrounds, near recreation areas/playgrounds, bushland, nowhere near bushland, no need for dog parks, where are they now?		
13	Should these dog parks be fenced?		
	Yes	69.49	123
	No	15.25	27
	Other (Dog parks shouldn't exist, depends, fencing costs are high, away from pedestrians, this is more for inner city areas not the country, real issue is unsupervised dogs not dog parks, some fenced some not, half fenced/half not)	15.25	27
14	Is there anything else you would like to say about how Council manages dogs?		
	Menacing dogs – need to contain, prevent rushing at pedestrians	5.05	5
	Education/Training – for both dogs and owners, promotion of responsible animal ownership, dog obedience (use established club)	12.12	12
	Enforcement and Patrolling – more patrolling and fining, 24 hour wandering dog patrols, easier barking dog process, being proactive and consistent, following up fines/warnings, impounding more animals, more done on dog attacks on sheep	21.21	21
	Dog parks – please create some, fence them,	10.10	10

Question No.	Question	%	Number
	benefits of dog parks,		
	Praise – Council has been helpful, thanks for opportunity to participate	2.02	2
	Criticism – it doesn't, expletive filled response	2.02	2
	On lead – dogs should always be on lead, dogs off lead constantly run at people/dogs	8.08	8
	Off lead – dogs should be allowed to run free if well behaved	2.02	2
	New pound – currently facility is “cold and unforgiving”	1.01	1
	Other – shut down illegal breeders, more dogs for bigger blocks, dogs that attack should be muzzled, don't tether your dog at the shops	5.05	5
	Cleaning up after your dog – more poo bags, fine owners who don't clean up,	14.14	14
	Wandering dogs – dogs not secured, roaming dogs	4.04	4
	Fencing on private property – create fencing requirements, ensure people keep dogs restrained to their property	4.04	4
	Desexing – make it mandatory, desexing coupons	6.06	6
	Registration – reduced rate, cheaper rates for old pets, once off registration fee	3.03	3
	Total	100	99

12.2 Action Plan – General Objectives

Section	Objective	Activity	When	Evaluation
Responsible Pet Ownership	Investigate options for controlling wandering cats and promoting responsible cat ownership	Implement a community education programs for cat owners about the importance of keeping their animals secured for the protection of native wildlife.	Jan 2018 to May 2019	Evidence of public education program developed and implemented
		Evaluation of the community education program on cat ownership	June 2019	Report on effectiveness including statistics on wandering cats reported etc completed
		Engage further with responsible cat ownership programs with relevant agencies. This could include projects like the RSPCA in the “Who’s for Cats?” project which is aimed at creating behavioural change in the community and reducing cat euthanasia rates.	Ongoing	Initiatives supported
	Dog Control Issues	Explore the idea of creating off-lead dog parks including further community engagement and the need for supporting education programs. Scoping of potential locations and infrastructure requirements	December 2019	Options developed for Council to consider
		Implement a community education programs for dog owners about the importance of keeping their animals on leads in public areas.	Jan 2018 to May 2019	Evidence of public education program developed and implemented
		Evaluation of the community education program on dog ownership	June 2019	Report on effectiveness including statistics on wandering dogs and attacks reported etc completed
Training of Authorised Officers	Develop and maintain a	Develop and maintain register of Officer training	January 2018	Training register for individual Officers completed

Section	Objective	Activity	When	Evaluation
	training register	Develop minimum training requirements for any officers including those 'on call'	June 2018	All officers to meet minimum training requirements
	Develop a job skills matrix	Identify minimum skill requirements	December 2018	Skills matrix finalised by December 2018
		Identify additional training opportunities	December 2018	Opportunities identified and scheduled for inclusion into future budget allocation by December 2018
	Ensure Officer training completed	Ensure training is undertaken as soon as is practicable	December annually	Aim for each Officer to complete minimum training requirements within a year.
Registration and Identification	Registrations Paid in a Timely Manner	Inform residents of the animal registration renewal period by utilising media releases and mailing renewal notices prior to 10 April	March	Number of registration renewals received prior to the 10 April expiry. Review media releases each year to determine the most effective advertising
		Send out reminder letters to those that haven't yet paid outstanding registrations	May	Examine payment rates compared to last year
		Phone residents with outstanding registrations	June	Examine payment rates compared to last year
		Ensure random property audit takes place. Offer on the spot payment with mobile EFTPOS.	July – August	Record total number of properties visited and compare to previous results
		Issue fines for those people who have not paid registrations	31 July	Determine if fines reduce and improve compliance rates
		Ensure animal registrations have been renewed and infringements paid	September – October	Record total number of infringements unpaid and animal registrations

Section	Objective	Activity	When	Evaluation
	Increase Cat and Dog Registrations	Ensure all seized and impounded animals are micro chipped and registered by their owner prior to release - note: officers in conjunction with local vets and Animal Aid undertake micro chipping activities.	Prior to every release.	Review annual registration numbers and the number of dogs and cats being seized and impounded
		Areas that have a high number of unregistered dogs and cats, undertake a proactive door knock or 'blitz' program and 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
		Host biennial micro chipping days at various locations throughout the shire.	2018 and 2020	Increased number of microchipped animals
	Registration and Identification - Increase Young Animal Registrations	Examine methods of increasing young animal registration e.g. upon presentation of booked desexing operation or upon signing of a statutory declaration, a discounted registration rate is applied*.	Ongoing	Increased numbers of young animals being registered
Nuisance Animals	Faeces	Erect 'Please Clean Up After Your Dog' signage in parks where appropriate	June 2016	Record rates of warnings or infringements issued for not removing faeces from public spaces and examine trends
	Barking Dogs	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	Ongoing	Review the effectiveness of citronella collars in reducing dog barking where implemented
		Supply citronella refills to pet owners who have purchased a barking collar to allow the required continued responsible maintenance of collars	December 2017	Community use of collars

Section	Objective	Activity	When	Evaluation
		Develop a system for the collection of statistical data for all barking dog and roaming dog nuisances	Monthly	Build upon data in barking dog records from November 2015
	Assist community with managing cats at large	Purchase additional cat traps and make them available for hire by the community	December 2018	Reduce the number of wandering cats and record community use of cat trap hire
Dog Attacks	Education and Compliance	Collate and record data for reported dog attacks including, date and time, location, animal type, victim, dog unsecured/off lead, dog unregistered, sex, entire/desexed	Ongoing	Evaluate data annually to determine areas requiring specific education and compliance activities
		Initiate education and compliance activities in 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
	Minimisation of Dog Attacks	Provide proactive education and compliance activities in areas of higher dog attack reports Actively patrol areas for roaming, unsecure and/or unregistered dogs Communicating dog attack prevention through media articles, mail outs and website information	Ongoing	Compare the 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
Dangerous, Menacing and	Containment and	Randomly audit properties with dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs to ensure they are being kept appropriately, enclosures etc.	As required	Increased compliance with requirements

Section	Objective	Activity	When	Evaluation
Restricted Breed Dogs	Management Arrangements	Prosecute repeat offenders or serious breaches detected	As required	Determine if prosecution results in corresponding reduced offending
		Afterhours patrols for unregistered guard dogs in industrial areas	As required	Ensure unregistered guard dogs, if found, become registered
	Assessing Restricted Dog Breeds	Assess certain registered dogs against the approved standard for determining restricted breed dogs	As required	Restricted Breeds identified from registration database
Overpopulation and Euthanasia	Promotion of Desexing of Dogs and Cats	Discount registration fees for cats and dogs that are desexed	Ongoing	Number of new animals registered in category yearly
		Investigate agreements with veterinarians to join the National Desexing Network (NDN) where veterinarians offer reduced desexing rates to animal owners	June 2020	Reduced desexing rates for animal owners
Domestic Animal Businesses	Review Agreements	Ensure that domestic animal businesses comply with the need to release only animals that are known to be registered (<i>Act, s84y</i>) and hand unregistered animals over to Council	August 2019	Agreements between domestic animal businesses and Council developed to only release registered animals to owners
	Compliance	Monitor Murrindindi Shire Council's registration database for owners with more than three fertile females	Ongoing	Compliance with Local Laws and related legislation
		Encourage desexing of non-breeding animals by promotion of reduced registration fees	Ongoing	Relevant registration accepted
		Conduct searches for unregistered domestic animal businesses via internet, media and news papers	Ongoing	Relevant action taken
Livestock Management	Livestock Permit Compliance and	Ensure grazing permits reflect Council's Rural Roadside Management Guidelines requirements	June 2019	All permits are updated to include requirements

Section	Objective	Activity	When	Evaluation
	Review	Spot checks for livestock permits to ensure permit holders are meeting requirements	Ongoing	Permits reviewed, cancelled and suspended as a result of permit holder action
	Wandering Animals	Emergency call outs for stock on roads	Ongoing	Stock removed from roads
		Work with farmers to develop ways to reduce repeat stock wandering	Ongoing	Reduced number of stock on roads, reduction in call outs
Annual Review		Review the DAMP annually	April annually	DAMP reviewed
		Conduct community engagement activities to discuss the DAMP and future activities	July-August 2021 for DAMP 2022-2026	Meetings and engagement activities completed

12.3 Attachment 1: Community Local Law 2012 Part 2 s5 - 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 organization
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"

12.4 Attachment 2: Community Local Law 2012 Part 2 s6 – 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.

12.5 Attachment 3: Service Levels

Murrindindi Shire Council's Local Laws Unit deals with a broad range of issues associated with the management of domestic animals in our community. These Include:

- 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 Animal Aid at Coldstream
- pound maintenance duties
- afterhours emergency response service
- electronic microchipping identification
- ensuring Council fulfils its statutory legislative duties.

Responses to all customer enquiries and complaints will comply with Councils Customer Service Charter⁵.

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

Table 7: Service Level for All Incidents

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	10 April annually
Declared dangerous dog property inspections	Conducted annually

⁵ For a copy of the charter see <http://www.murrindindi.vic.gov.au/Our-Services/Customer-Service>

Response	Service Level
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
Community education (media items)	As deemed necessary
Feral cat trapping program	Cages are available to the public at no charge
Stock wandering on roads/highways (24/7)	Commenced within 15 minutes - all days*

All Days* includes after hours services provided for dog attacks, stock on roads and other emergency matters