



DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022-2025

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Mount Alexander Shire Council respectfully acknowledges the Dja Dja Wurrung as the traditional owners of the lands and waters of Mount Alexander Shire. Council also recognises all other Indigenous people of the shire. We acknowledge the vital role that the local Jaara people and their forebears have played as custodians of this region for many centuries, their age-old ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal.

We respect and acknowledge their living culture and unique role in the life of this region.

MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

Our dogs and cats are an important part of our families and our community.

Pets provide opportunities for families to be more active; companionship to those who may be feeling isolated or lonely, assist people with a disability or illness to maintain independence and participate more fully in community life, and bring much joy to everyone around them.

The Mount Alexander Shire Domestic Animal Management Plan sets out the ways in which Council can support pet owners and the community, as well as providing objectives for improving the welfare of pets in our Shire.

The Plan identifies opportunities for Council to lead programs, to improve education and communication with pet owners and the community, to work closely with key stakeholders, including Mount Alexander Animal Welfare, who manage our local animal shelter, and to take appropriate regulatory and enforcement action where necessary.

The key focus of the Plan is responsible pet ownership. Responsible pet ownership is more than just simply feeding and playing with your pets, it ensures that pets socialised, exercised, and well behaved. This Plan aims to balance the expectations of our wider community, including both those with and without pets. It provides protection to our natural environment and wildlife, and makes our community better and safer for all pets, people, and the environment.

Finally, if you are considering bringing a new pet in your life and can provide it with the care and attention it deserves, then I ask you consider adopting, be it from Mount Alexander Animal Welfare or another shelter first. Animal shelters and rescue groups are brimming with happy, healthy pets just waiting for someone to take them home, and that way you are giving an animal a second chance. Dogs and cats adopted from our shelter are also desexed, wormed, vaccinated, and microchipped.

Councillor Bill Maltby
Mayor, Mount Alexander Shire Council

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INTRODUCTION

What is a Domestic Animal Management Plan?

This Domestic Animal Management Plan (2022-2025) is an important Council document that guides decision making in relation to dogs and cats within Mount Alexander Shire for a four-year period. This Plan outlines the services, programs, and policies to address the administration of the Victorian Domestic Animals Act 1994 ('the Act') and the management of dogs and cats in the community. The Act requires that every Victorian council prepares a Domestic Animal Management Plan every four years. This Plan has been developed to meet those requirements.

The Domestic Animal Management Plan covers all dogs and cats within the municipality. It does not, however, include the management of wildlife, horses, livestock, pest animals, or other domestic animals kept as pets.

This 2022-2025 Plan builds on Council's previous plans, and provides the framework for the planning, development and evaluation of animal management services and educational programs, while ensuring our operations comply with the requirements set out in the Act.

The objectives of the new Domestic Animal Management Plan continue to focus on the following themes:

- recognise and respect the role of pets in health, wellbeing, and socialisation;
- encourage responsible dog and cat ownership;
- ensure our animal management staff are appropriately trained;
- reduce nuisance caused by dogs and cats;
- promote effective management of dogs and cats;
- identify dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs in the Municipality and ensure they are kept in accordance with the Act and the Regulations;
- minimise the risk of attacks by dogs; and
- address over population and minimise euthanasia rates for dogs and cats.

Mount Alexander Shire's Community Safety and Amenity Unit and its partners delivers the Plan by providing a customer-focused service that strikes a balance between community expectations and compliance obligations through guidance, advice, and responsible enforcement. Council provides resources to implement this Plan through its annual business planning and budget processes.



THE DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

Why have a Domestic Animal Management Plan?

Council recognises that pets play an important role in the day to day lives of many people and strives to support pet owners and promote the health and social benefits of responsible pet ownership. This is done in conjunction with making sure that our environment and lifestyle are protected from any potential negative impacts caused by domestic animals.

Council plays an important leadership role in supporting and promoting responsible pet ownership, community safety, and active and healthy lifestyles. The aim of the Mount Alexander Domestic Animal Management Plan is to ensure that people and pets can live harmoniously in our community. The Plan recognises and carefully balances the needs of pets, pet owners, and those who don't own pets. The Plan is designed to respond strategically to the needs of the community as a whole.

Pets are increasingly kept for companionship both in families and sole person households. There is a wide range of benefits to owning a pet. The key benefits relate to health and wellbeing, responsibility, and companionship. Pets can prevent loneliness; motivate people to exercise regularly; create opportunities to meet people and make new friends; and teach responsibility, including to children, as pets require ongoing care. As such, it is important to ensure lost animals are reunited with their owner and responsible pet ownership is encouraged across the Shire. It is also important to provide regular education and information to residents on the positive benefits of pet registration and other important aspects of pet ownership.

How does the Domestic Animal Management Plan fit with the Council Plan?

The Council Plan outlines the key priorities for the next four years and sets out how Council will invest in services and facilities. The Domestic Animal Management Plan aligns with the broader strategic directions of the Council Plan - in particular improved health and wellbeing.

Development of the Domestic Animal Management Plan

Community consultation was undertaken by Council Officers via an online survey which was also available in hard copy from the customer service counter for a month. Advertisements were placed in local media throughout the consultation period. Written submissions received by email and post. All feedback received was considered as part of the preparation of this Plan.

The Domestic Animal Management Plan has been developed on the outcomes and learnings from the previous Plan. This has included a review of existing data in areas such as complaints, dog attacks, dog and cat registrations, and impoundments.

Background

Mount Alexander Shire is a diverse and unique community with much to offer. We have beautiful heritage streetscapes and picturesque towns, stunning natural surroundings, a thriving local economy and a creative and engaged community.

Our population of more than 19,754 (2019) live mostly in and around the townships of Castlemaine, Harcourt, Maldon, Campbells Creek, Newstead, Elphinstone, Guildford, Chewton, and Taradale.

Located within commuting distance of Melbourne and Bendigo, the popularity of the shire continues to grow as new residents move to the area. Picturesque rural land, rolling hills, granite outcrops and environmentally significant bushland add great beauty and are a drawcard to the area.

With a strong sense of community, our shire benefits from above average levels of volunteering, community engagement, and participation in artistic and cultural activity. Our people value the ability to interact with each other through a range of community groups and settings.

Like many regional areas, our community is ageing. We have a greater proportion of older residents compared to other parts of regional Victoria. We actively work with government, health agencies, and partner with community groups to support and achieve better outcomes.

Review of the Previous Plan

The 2017 – 2021 Domestic Animal Management Plan included a number of objectives:

- new pound tender awarded to Mount Alexander Animal Welfare;
- zero euthanasia rates for adoptable animals;
- strong community partnerships;
- new off lead dog park developed and operational;
- heavily discounted desexing program offered for cats;
- minimum training requirement identified and included in their Annual Performance Review;
- annual dog and cat registration audit;
- all Domestic Animal Businesses audited and compliant;
- annual communication plan developed regarding responsible pet ownership;
- the number of waste bag dispensers increased; and
- audits conducted of declared dog properties.

These objectives above were all achieved, and some will continue to be objectives under this Domestic Animal Management Plan.

Review of Current Plan

All objectives of this current Domestic Animal Management Plan are reported annually to the State Government and published in Council's Annual Report as required by the Domestic Animals Act.



TRAINING OF AUTHORISED OFFICERS

This section outlines programs for the training of authorised officers to administer and enforce the requirements of the Act in the Council's municipal district, compliant with Section 68A(2)(b) of the Act.

Context

Mount Alexander Shire Council's Community Safety and Amenity Unit is responsible for animal management operations under the Domestic Animals Act 1994, other applicable state laws, and Council's Local Law. Our officers are multi-skilled and work across parking, local laws, livestock control, in addition to their domestic animal management duties. Their responsibilities include Local Laws administration, approval of Local Laws Permits, preparation of infringement and prosecutions, and administration relating to fundraising and events.

All Authorised Officers are competent and trained perform the required duties under the appropriate legislation. This includes a mix of practical hands-on in-house training, through to structured courses and industry workshops. The training includes changes in community needs and legislation as they occur.

There is a growing community expectation that Council should be playing a greater role in fostering partnerships and supporting community education initiatives concerning pets. There is also an opportunity to offer education in partnership with other organisations.

Current and Planned Training

Council is committed to ensuring that the Community Safety and Amenity Unit has the capacity to achieve its objective to provide an effective and professional animal management service to the community.

Council has a strong focus on identifying professional development opportunities and building individual and team capabilities to enhance service delivery. Council offers many training opportunities through its corporate training program that offers a diverse range of developmental opportunities for authorised officers. To ensure staff are equipped to respond to the demands of their roles training requirements will be reviewed annually.

Council's corporate training program incorporates a diverse range of professional development and learning opportunities for employees. All Authorised Officers undergo an induction program to ensure familiarity with the relevant standard work practices and guidelines.

New staff are required to complete specific training including a Council induction on policies and procedures and introduction to Council's Animal Management procedures and programs. Regular team training and refresher courses and ongoing on the job training and coaching is provided. Staff are encouraged to represent the Shire on industry bodies and committees where appropriate.

Our Plans

Activity	Timeframe	Evaluation
Maintain database listing each officer's name and their completed and proposed training.	Ongoing	Annual review of database to ensure accuracy.
Develop Training Plan for each officer to enhance officer's skills and abilities.	Annually	Training plan developed during annual Performance Review.

REGISTRATION AND IDENTIFICATION

This section outlines programs, services and strategies to encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats consistent with Section 68A(2)(c)(v) of the Act, and also Sections 68A(2)(a),(c)(i),(c)(ii),(d),(f).

Current Situation

All cats and dogs over the age of three months must be implanted with a microchip and registered with the municipal council in which they reside. Registrations must be renewed annually by 10 April.

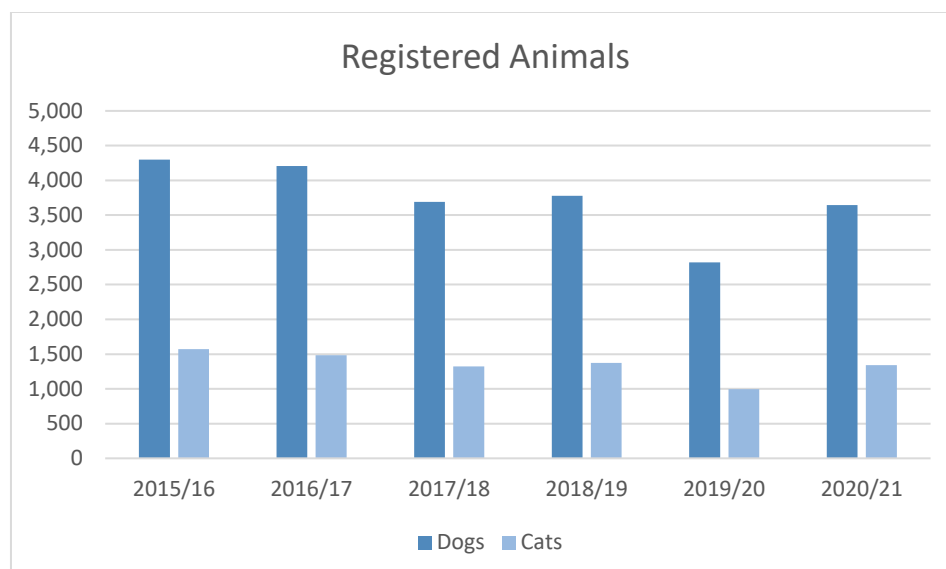
Council's Community Safety and Amenity Unit provides the following domestic animal services to the local community:

- registration and identification for domestic dogs and cats;
- registration renewal notices sent in March with follow up reminders sent in April;
- follow up audit of owners who fail to renew animal registration;
- follow up on registration of animals adopted from Mount Alexander Animal Welfare (Mount Alexander Animal Welfare) or Domestic Animal Businesses;
- education of pet owners to continually check and update contact details on microchip registries;
- follow up and correction of all information in animal database;
- registration and identification of menacing, dangerous and restricted breed dogs;
- education and information services provided;
- permanent identification number registration tags; and
- investigation and compliance service.

Registered Animals

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Dogs	4,298	4,207	3,689	3,780	2,821	3,647
Cats	1,571	1,486	1,323	1,373	995	1,341

The drop in registration numbers 2019/2020 relates to inability of Council to accept in-person registration payments, which are preferred by a large cohort of the community, due Covid 19 restrictions.



Animal Registration Timeline

In addition to sending out registration renewal notices, information on registrations is placed on Council's website and social media channels and promoted through local media outlets.

Dog and Cat Registration Fees

A reduced fee is payable for dogs or cats:

- if they are desexed;
- over 10 years old;
- kept for breeding purposes;
- registered with an approved canine or feline organisation;
- dogs that have undergone obedience training, (not puppy training); and
- dogs kept for working stock.

Pensioners are eligible for a fifty per cent discount on published fees.

Fees and charges are approved by Council each year, and current fees and charges published on Council's website.

Our Orders, Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures

Council has adopted the Mount Alexander Shire Council General Local Law 2020 which regulates the numbers of dogs and/or cats that can be kept at a property.

	Flat or Unit	Under 4,046 sqm	0.404 to 2 hectares	2 to 8 hectares	8 hectares or over
Dogs	1	2	2	3	5
Cats	2	2	2	3	5

Council has a procedure for the annual registration of dogs and cats and a process for following up unregistered animals, as well as a Compliance and Enforcement Policy which guides enforcement action. Council issues a lifetime registration tag on application for registration.

Council pays part of each registration received as a levy to the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions annually as per the requirements of the Act. The levy contributes to the development of programs and materials used for:

- promotion of responsible dog and cat ownership and animal welfare;
- community education in primary schools;
- research into domestic animal management; and
- administration of the Act.



Our Current Education and Promotion Activities

Council utilises its website combined with regular media releases on domestic animal related matters including education, promotion and compliance activities.

The enforcement of registration checks and renewals includes:

- regular park patrols, including random checks of registration and tag details;
- use of microchip scanners on patrols;
- issuing of registration renewal notices in advance of the due date (10 April) each year;
- a reminder text followed by a reminder notice for unpaid registrations after this date; and
- a final notice being issued.

If the registration is not renewed following the final notice being issued, and the pet and its owner still resides at the address, an infringement notice may be issued.

Summary

Registrations remain consistent for domestic animals in the municipality. The number of animals microchipped and desexed reflect compulsory microchipping for non-exempt animals and discounts on registrations for microchipped and desexed animals.

Ongoing promotion of the benefits of animal registration remains a priority for Council. This is further supported by a subsidised desexing campaign that council partners with the Mount Alexander Animal Welfare (as the operator of Council's animal shelter) and local veterinarians. Mount Alexander Animal Welfare also runs several free desexing days for cats in the municipality throughout the year.

Council will continue to promote microchipping and desexing information via the Council website and to work with our partners to keep unwanted animal numbers low and unreturned.

Our Plans

Objective 1: Increase the number of dog and cat registrations within the municipality and educate the community on the requirement for animal registration.

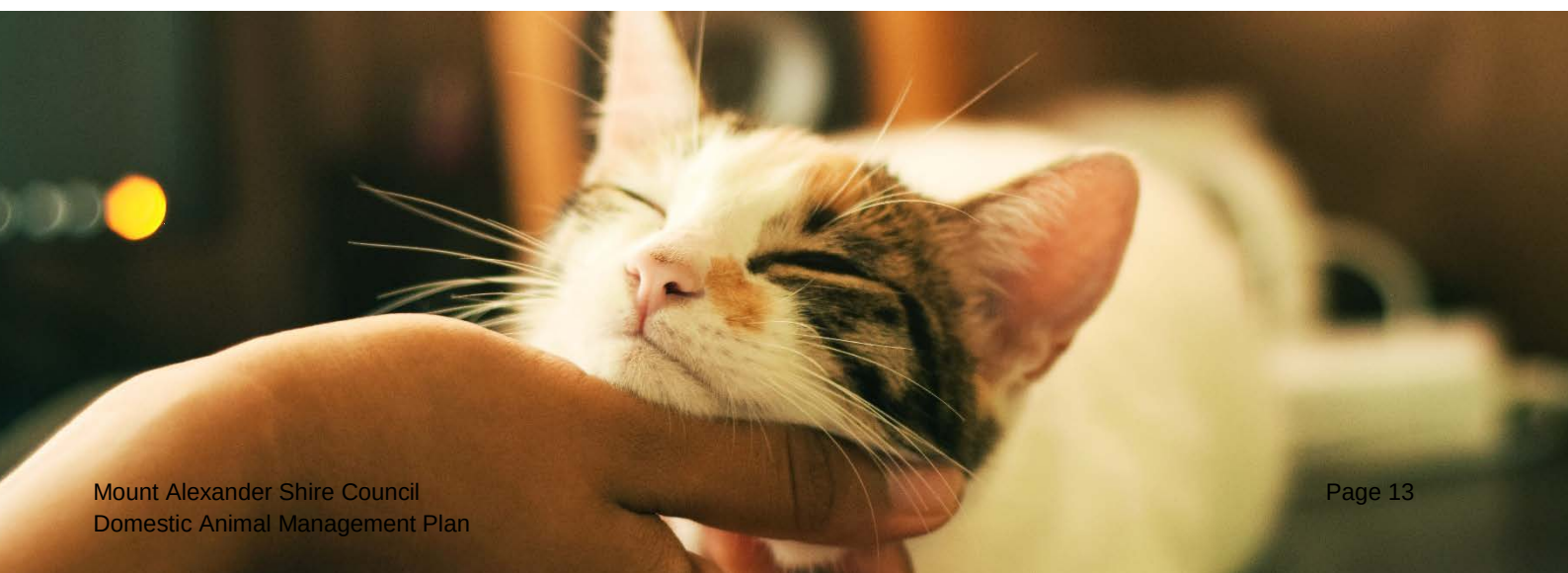
Activity	Timeframe	Evaluation
Targeted inspections of the municipality	July – August annually	Data to demonstrate new registrations after inspections
Validate Council's registration database with data from the Microchip Registry	July 2022	Registration database updated

Objective 2: Educate community on requirement for registration.

Activity	Timeframe	Evaluation
Media releases supporting responsible pet ownership	Minimum two per year	Number of media releases
Social media posts supporting responsible pet ownership	Minimum four per year	Number of Social Media posts

Objective 3: Work with Mount Alexander Animal Welfare and local vets to conduct desexing campaigns.

Activity	Timeframe	Evaluation
Ensure budget allocation for ongoing subsidised desexing program	Annually	Campaign proceeds each year
Advertise the subsidised desexing program via media and social media	Annually	Three advertisements per year.



NUISANCE ANIMALS

This section outlines programs, services and strategies to minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance and is consistent with Sections 68A(2)(c)(vi), 68A(2)(a),(c)(i),(c)(ii),(d),(f) of the Act.

Current Situation

Council has experienced a drop in stray animals owing to a strong campaign on registrations and desexing for cats. Using regular education activities via the council website and media releases along with proactive compliance activity good outcomes for domestic animals across the shire are being delivered.

	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021
Dogs Wandering	69	67	74	73
Barking Dog Complaints	37	32	21	13
Cat Trespass	27	14	14	11

Nuisance Complaints

Council has created a fully fenced off-leash dog park at Wesley Hill Recreation Reserve in Castlemaine. The dog park is located at the northern corner of the reserve, adjacent to the lower / stadium carpark off McGrath Street.

The fully fenced dog park provides residents with an enclosed area to exercise and socialise their dogs. The site has a number of shade trees and access to off-street car parking, and includes a drinking fountain, gated entry points, seating, local law and etiquette signage, a doggie waste bag dispenser, and rubbish bin.

It is an objective of the Domestic Animal Management Plan to explore additional off-leash dog areas to help manage nuisance behaviours. Feedback obtained during the consultation supported the need for further fully fenced off-leash dog parks, including those suitable for larger dogs.

Community feedback indicates wandering cats continue to be a concern. There is a lack of containment with owners allowing their cats to be outside during the day and night wandering neighbourhoods and having an impact on flora and fauna.

Our Orders, Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures

Mount Alexander Shire Council General Local Law 2020 includes maximum numbers of domestic animals on certain size allotments, excess animal permits, and appropriate animal accommodation including nuisance provisions and removing animal excrement on council land. Extensive community consultation was undertaken in the preparation of this local law.

Council has a Compliance and Enforcement Policy which guides enforcement action for registration defaulters.

Cat Curfew

Pursuant to an Order of Council made under section 25 of the Act, all cats within the municipality must be securely confined to their owners' premises at all times.

Prohibited Areas

Within Mount Alexander Shire, dogs are prohibited at all times:

- within five metres of any playground;
- within the Wesley Hill Recreation Reserve velodrome area; and
- within the Elsie Palmer Field at Wesley Hill Recreation Reserve.

Control of Dogs

The person in control of any dog must keep the dog in effective control by means of a chain, cord or leash held by the person and attached to the dog while the dog is at;

- all roads in the scheduled areas of Campbells Creek, Castlemaine, Chewton, and Maldon;
- the Castlemaine Botanical Garden;
- all other parks and reserves between sunset to 6 am and when maintenance is being performed;
- the principal location of an organised public meeting, sporting or community event, or festival when occurring or being prepared for;
- within five metres of a permanent barbeque or picnic area when in use; and
- 149 Duke Street, Castlemaine (Wesley Hill Market).

Our Current Education and Promotion Activities

Council currently undertakes the following educational and promotional activities in support of nuisance offences:

- barking dog information for owners and complainants;
- availability of brochures and educational information;
- Council's cat trapping program; and
- brochure on alternatives to cat trapping.

Our Current Compliance Activities

Council treats the issues of animal nuisance seriously and undertakes the following compliance activities in support of nuisance offences:

- patrols and nuisance complaint response;
- cat trap hire service;
- barking dog information;
- issuing Notices to Comply, infringements and prosecutions of non-compliance; and
- heavily discounted cat desexing program.



Summary

Barking dog complaints can be a source of great irritation within the community and are extremely time consuming and difficult for Officers to resolve. Investigating such complaints can be a long process as officers have to gather sufficient evidence to prove the nuisance exists. This is often subjective and the problem can stop and then start again sometime later.

Officers can issue notices to the dog owner to abate the nuisance, issue infringement notices, or have the matter heard in the Magistrates' Court to seek an order from the Court to abate the nuisance. Complaints of wandering cats and dogs and strays presenting at the pound have significantly reduced each year over the past three years.

Our Plans

Objective 1: Explore additional off-leash dog areas.

Activity	Timeframe	Evaluation
Explore suitable locations for additional dog off-leash areas in the Shire for consideration by Council	December 2023	Options presented to Council

Objective 2: Reduce dog nuisance complaints by five per cent per year.

Activity	Timeframe	Evaluation
Review and benchmark further options for reducing dog barking complaints	Annually	Reduced dog barking complaints
Increase information on website and other channels on responsible dog ownership and minimising barking	Annually	Reduced dog barking complaints
Investigating producing an information brochure for distribution by estate agents to new tenants with pets about responsible pet ownership within Mount Alexander	By December 2022	Brochures provided to estate agents for distribution
Encourage puppy/dog socialisation and obedience training through social media and other appropriate methods	Ongoing	Number of messages provided to the community about puppy/dog socialisation
Review and promote numbers of dog waste bag dispensers in municipality	Annually	Review undertaken
Ensure ongoing promotion of health benefits of owning dogs and promote responsible pet ownership	Annually	Media releases and participation at relevant events

Objective 3: Investigate options to reduce cats wandering from the owner's property

Activity	Timeframe	Evaluation
Educate the community to contain cats securely to their property	Annually	Education activities undertaken
Promote the availability of cat traps and alternatives to cat trapping	Annually	Education activities undertaken

DOG ATTACKS

This section outlines programs, services and strategies to minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals and is consistent with Section 68A(2)(c)(iii) and Sections 68A(2)(a),(c)(i),(c)(ii),(d),(f) of the Act.

Current Situation

The Council's first priority in regard to dog attacks is to take steps to protect the community from future attacks by the same dog. The Council will in some circumstances, if considered appropriate, negotiate the surrender of a dog with an owner and in return reduce penalties imposed on the owner.

Where injuries have occurred to a person or another animal by a dog that is of a serious nature (as defined by the Act), Council may elect to have the matter heard in the Magistrates' Court, where sufficient evidence is available to form a prosecution.

	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021
Reported Dog Attacks	6	18	23	17
Reported Dog Rush	11	14	14	8
Infringements	6	7	8	7
Court Action	1	1	2	1

Our Orders, Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures

Council has orders made under Section 26 of the Act which outline the requirement for dogs to be under effective control by means of a chain, cord or leash in designated areas and for areas which are designated as prohibited for dogs to be present. Council has a Compliance and Enforcement Policy which guides enforcement action.

Current programs in place to minimise the incidence of dog attacks include:

- immediate response to dog attacks including provision of a twenty-four-hour emergency service;
- encourage local vet clinics to report dog attacks to Council;
- education for dog owners as to the risks of dog attacks and preventing them; and
- promote and encourage dog desexing of dogs to reduce aggression and wandering.

Our Current Education and Promotion Activities

Council undertakes the following educational and promotional activities in support of dog attack issues:

- community education, including media releases and social media posts;
- Council website information
- brochures and information available from customer service.

Our Current Compliance Activities

Council treats reports of dog attacks very seriously. Council responds to dog attacks immediately, including after hours and on weekends, as well as undertaking regular patrols of the municipality to identify and collect wandering dogs, reducing the potential for dog to attack.

The legislation is very specific in what constitutes dog attack and has classified the offence as:

- | | |
|---------|--|
| Serious | Causing death or serious injury requiring medical or veterinary attention in the nature of a laceration; or a partial or total loss of sensation or function in a part of the body; or an injury requiring cosmetic surgery. |
| Minor | Causing a minor bite, nip or a scratch. |
| Rush | Approaching a person to a distance of less than three metres in a menacing manner, displaying aggressive tendencies that may include snarling, growling, and raised hackles. |

A number of complaints received upon investigation do not fit into these categories and can relate to a person being scared of the dog or the dog just barking at them. Additionally, because of some people's reluctance to appear in court as a witness, enforcement action can be limited. Enforcement action can result in the issuing of a notice to comply, infringement notices, and if necessary, court prosecution.



Summary

Dog attacks remain an issue for council, particularly in rural areas and dogs attacking stock.

Confinement of dogs is a priority because instances of wandering dogs increase the risk to other pets, livestock and people. Wandering dogs can take up considerable officer time while they are caught, identified and returned to the owner or transported to the pound. As desexed animals are less likely to wander council will continue to encourage owners to have their dogs desexed.

Council will ensure information on the importance of animal confinement is available online through the Council website, from customer service, and, where possible, through partner organisations.

Our Plans

Objective 1: Awareness campaign for both property/stock owners and dog owners about the consequences for dogs found in paddock with stock.

Activity	Timeframe	Evaluation
Social Media Posts	One annually	Number of social media posts
Include information with registration and renewal mail outs	Annually	Information provided
Make arrangements with partner organisations to share information on preventing dog attacks	By July 2022	Information provided

Objective 2: Education regarding responsible pet ownership regarding dog containment/dogs at large.

Activity	Timeframe	Evaluation
Social Media Posts	Two annually	Number of social media posts
Make arrangements with partner organisations to share information on preventing dog attacks	By July 2022	Information provided

DANGEROUS, MENACING AND RESTRICTED BREED DOGS

This section outlines 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 Sections 68A(2)(c)(vii) and Sections 68A(2)(a),(c)(i),(c)(ii),(d),(f) of the Act.

Current Situation

Council enforces the provisions of the Act through identification and control of dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs. The Act identifies breeds of dogs that are considered a higher risk to community safety than other breeds of dogs. These dogs are called 'restricted breed dogs' and in September 2011, new state government legislation was introduced in relation to the keeping of these dogs. Restricted breed dogs, under the Act, may be registered with Council and must comply with housing and ownership requirements such as:

- desexing;
- microchipping;
- prescribed collar worn at all times;
- warning signs displayed at entrances;
- prescribed enclosure; and
- muzzled and on leash when off the owner's premises.

Council may declare a dog menacing if:

- the dog has rushed at or chased a person;
- the dog bites any person or animal causing injury that is not a serious injury; or
- the dog has been declared dangerous under a law of another State/Territory.

Council may declare a dog dangerous if:

- it has caused the death of or serious injury to a person or animal by biting or attacking;
- the dog is already declared as a menacing dog and its owner has received at least two infringement notices for failing to comply with menacing dog requirements;
- the dog has been declared dangerous under a law of another State/Territory; or
- for any other reason prescribed under the Domestic Animal Act.

An owner of a Declared Dangerous dog must comply with requirements for keeping such a dog.

	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021
Restricted Breed Dogs	0	0	0	0
Declared Dangerous Dogs	2	2	2	1
Declared Menacing Dogs	2	2	2	2

Our Orders, Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures

Dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs are controlled by the Domestic Animals Act and the Domestic Animals Amendment (Restricted Breed Dogs) Act 2017.

Our Current Education and Promotion Activities

Council undertakes the following education and promotion activities:

- information regarding declared dogs on website
- brochures available on declared dogs

All declared dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs listed on the Victorian Declared Dog Registry.

Our Current Compliance Activities

Council treats all dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs very seriously. Council undertakes the following compliance activities:

- declaration of dogs in appropriate situations;
- audits of potential areas housing dangerous dogs;
- registration and identification of dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs including audits of properties containing declared dogs;
- updating of Declared Dog Database;
- ensure compliance with requirements for keeping dangerous dogs.

Council has a Compliance and Enforcement Policy which guides enforcement action.

Summary

There are three declared dogs in the Shire, monitoring of compliant accommodation and strict adherence to all relevant conditions are regularly undertaken. A focus on information for owners and the broader community will be a priority over the next four years.

Our Plans

Objective 1: To improve the overall management and control of dangerous dogs, menacing dogs and restricted breed dogs.

Activity	Timeframe	Evaluation
Review procedures for dealing with dangerous dogs and restricted breeds	Year Three	Standard work guidelines reviewed and updated annually
Inspect all registered dangerous, restricted and menacing dogs	Annually	Demonstrate minimum of one annual audit of owner's premises

OVERPOPULATION AND HIGH EUTHANASIA

This section outlines programs, services and strategies to address any overpopulation and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats in accordance with Section 68A(2)(c)(iv) and Sections 68A(2)(a),(c)(i),(c)(ii),(d),(f) of the Act.

Current Situation

Desexing is a major factor contributing to a reduction in the unwanted animal population. There is also general agreement that desexing will have the following benefits:

- reduces the burden and cost to the community of having to care for unwanted puppies and kittens in pounds and shelters;
- pets are less prone to wander, fight and are less likely to get lost or injured;
- pets are less likely to suffer from anti-social behaviours. They become more affectionate and become better companions;
- eliminates 'heat' cycles in female cats and their efforts to get outside in search for a mate;

In partnership with Mount Alexander Animal Welfare Council has adopted a principle of no euthanasia of any adoptable pet. Euthanasia is only used on pets not suitable for adoption (such as pets that are incurably diseased, feral or uncontrollable, and dogs surrendered because of a serious attack).

Dogs

	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021
Dogs Taken into Shelter	163	135	156
Dogs Reclaimed	125	115	121
Dogs Adopted	26	20	58
Dogs Euthanised	5 (3%)	5 (4%)	0

Cats

	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021
Cats Taken into Shelter	183	203	136
Cats Reclaimed	21	26	8
Cats Adopted	119	130	91
Cats Euthanised	22 (12%)	36 (17%)	15 (13%)

Our Orders, Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures

Council's pound and euthanasia policies are guided by the Act. Council's pound service is provided by Mount Alexander Animal Welfare, which operates under its own policies and procedures in accordance with the Act and the Code of Practice for Shelters and Pounds.

All dogs and cats as part of the adoption process at the pound are behaviour tested, vaccinated and desexed. Any prospective owner is interviewed and matched with the most appropriate pet.

Mount Alexander Shire Council General Local Law 2020 regulates the numbers of dogs and/or cats that can be kept at a property.

Procedures have been developed in relation to the seizure and impounding of dogs and cats in the community and the issuing notices to comply, infringement notices and filing charges for prosecution.

Council has a Compliance and Enforcement Policy which guides enforcement action.

Our Current Education and Promotion Activities

Council's promotion of registration, microchipping and desexing strongly emphasises the return of lost pets.

Council currently undertakes the following educational and promotional activities:

- subsidised microchipping services;
- subsidised desexing services in partnership with local vet clinics with a heavy subsidy available for the desexing of cats; and
- free annual desexing campaigns for cats in partnership with Mount Alexander Animal Welfare and local vet clinics.

Our Current Compliance Activities

Council currently undertakes the following compliance activities to increase registrations and therefore reduce euthanasia rates:

- renewal follow ups for registration and identification for dogs and cats;
- cat traps available for hire;
- vehicle patrols in response to nuisance complaints;
- registration of animals released from the pound;
- follow up of registration for animals notified as sold by domestic animal businesses; and
- use of Notices to Comply, infringements, and prosecutions where required.

Council has a Compliance and Enforcement Policy which guides enforcement action.

Summary

Cat adoption continues to be a challenge for both Council and Mount Alexander Animal Welfare. The number of cats presented to our pound can vary from year to year.

Significant work has been done by Council in partnership with local veterinary clinics and the Mount Alexander Animal Welfare to subsidise cat desexing. Council funding along with the partnership will be a priority of this Domestic Animal Management Plan.



Our Plans

Council intends to continue to reduce the euthanasia rates of dogs and cats by increasing the registration rates which will lead to higher reclaims from the pound. Budget funding will also continue to be sought to subsidise desexing campaigns.

Objective 1: Identify all illegal domestic animal breeding establishments in the municipality.

Activity	Timeframe	Evaluation
Follow up complaints relating to breeding establishments, monitoring of advertisements, and excess pet registrations	Annually	Continued monitoring of social media and other advertising to identify illegal breeders

Objective 2: Maintain a principle of no euthanasia for adoptable animals

Activity	Timeframe	Evaluation
Partner with our municipal pound facility operator in rehoming programs	Ongoing	No adoptable animals euthanised

DOMESTIC ANIMAL BUSINESSES

This section outlines 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 relevant to domestic animal businesses (DAB) in compliance with Part 4 of the Act.

Current Situation

	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021
Shelter / Pound	1	1	1	1
Breeding and Rearing Establishments	1	0	1	1
Pet Shops	2	2	2	2
Dog Training Establishments	0	0	0	0
Boarding Establishments	3	3	3	3

Domestic Animal Business

Our Orders, Local Laws and Council Policies and Procedures

Domestic animal business registrations are controlled by the Act and operate under Code of Practices and are subject to annual audits.

Mount Alexander Shire Council General Local Law 2020 regulates the numbers of dogs and/or cats that can be kept at a property. There is an enforcement strategy associated with issuing notices to comply, infringement notices and filing charges for prosecution regarding domestic animal businesses.

Our Current Education and Promotion Activities

Council provides information and guidance to every domestic animal business on the necessity of registration, and requirements under the Act.

Our Current Compliance Activities

Council currently undertakes the following compliance activities for domestic animal businesses:

- annual audits of registered businesses
- production of work plans to ensure DABs meet the requirements of the relevant Code of Practice.
- follow up of properties identified with excess animals and any complaints regards suspected unregistered Domestic Animal Businesses.

Council has a Compliance and Enforcement Policy which guides enforcement action.

Summary

Mount Alexander Shire has a variety of domestic animal businesses. There are mandatory codes of practice for the operation of breeding and rearing establishments, boarding establishments and shelters and pounds. Council is obliged to ensure each establishment complies with the relevant code of practice by conducting annual audits.

Our Plans

Objective 1: Identify and register all Domestic Animal Businesses in the municipality.

Activity	Timeframe	Evaluation
Follow up complaints relating to breeding establishments and monitoring of advertisements and excess pet registrations	Annually	Continued monitoring of social media and other advertising to identify illegal breeders
Media release to advise the public of the definition of a domestic animal business	Annually	Identified non-compliant businesses are investigated

Objective 2: Annually inspect and audit all registered domestic animal businesses.

Activity	Timeframe	Evaluation
Audit all registered businesses	March/April each year	All premises inspected



OTHER MATTERS - EMERGENCY ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

Section 68A(2)(e) of the Act provides 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.



Current Situation

Council has in recent years experienced a range of natural emergencies includes bushfires and flooding. This is an ongoing concern for Council, and we have a strong focus on the welfare of animals in an emergency.

Victoria's emergency management arrangements identify the Department of Jobs, Precincts, and Regions as the primary agency for domestic animal welfare support services during emergency response, however, as the closest level of government to the affected community, local government also has a key role in supporting emergency animal welfare activities.

As part of our emergency management arrangements, Council has an Emergency Animal Welfare Plan. This Plan is a sub-plan of the Northern Victorian Integrated Municipal Emergency Management Plan for each of the Northern Victorian Emergency Management Cluster Councils, consisting of

- Mount Alexander Shire Council;
- Central Goldfields Shire Council;
- Loddon Shire Council;
- Campaspe Shire Council; and
- City of Greater Bendigo Council.

The plan was developed in consultation between the Northern Victorian Integrated Municipal Emergency Management Plan, the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions, and other animal welfare and emergency services organisations.

