



# Domestic Animal Management Plan

2022-2025

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2022-2025 Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) aims to guide Council and the community towards the goal of responsible animal ownership and management. Mount Alexander Shire Council DAMP has been developed in accordance with State Government requirements as outlined in the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* (the Act).

This DAMP continues to build on the substantial work undertaken by Council with the implementation of the two previous DAMPs. The relevant objectives of the new DAMP will continue to focus on the following themes:

- ensure Local Laws Investigations Officers are appropriately trained;
- encourage responsible dog and cat ownership;
- 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.

The Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions – Animal Welfare Unit has requested the Plan be developed using their preferred template that will enable improved auditing of all council plans.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. What is a Domestic Animal Management Plan?

All Victorian Councils are required by Section 68A of the Act to prepare and implement a four year Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) to guide decision making in relation to animal management for dogs and cats. The scope of the DAMP does not include activities for the management of wildlife, horses, livestock, or pest animals.

The DAMP must address the following:

- Set out a method for evaluating whether animal control services provided by council are adequate to give effect to the requirements of the *Act* and regulations.
- Outline programs for the training of authorised officers.
- Outline programs, services and strategies to:
  - Promote and encourage responsible pet ownership of dogs and cats;
  - Ensure that people comply with the *Act*, regulations and legislation;
  - Minimise risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals;
  - Address over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats;
  - Encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats;
  - Minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance; and
  - Effectively identify all dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs and ensure these dogs are kept in compliance with the *Act* and regulations.
- Provide for review of existing Orders of Council made under the *Act*.
- Provide for the review of any other matters related to the management of dogs and cats.
- Provide for periodic evaluation of any program, service, strategy or review outlined under the DAMP.

## 1.2. 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 is protected from any potential negative impacts of domestic animals.

The aim of the Mount Alexander DAMP 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.

Council plays an important leadership role in supporting and promoting responsible pet ownership, community safety and active and healthy lifestyles.

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
- teach responsibility, as pets require ongoing care.

For these reasons, 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.

## 1.3. How does the DAMP fit with the Council Plan?

Council in consultation with the community adopted the 2017-2021 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.

## 1.4. Consultation

Community consultation was undertaken by Council Officers via an online survey which was made also available in hard copy from the customer service counter for a month. Advertisements were placed in local media throughout the consultation period.

The consultation results are summarised in *Appendix 1*.

## 1.5. Acknowledgement to country

Council respectfully acknowledges the Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung as the traditional owners of the lands and waters of the Shire. Council recognises their ongoing living culture and the unique role that they continue to play in the life of this region.

## 1.6. 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, mostly from Melbourne, 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.

## 1.7. Review of the previous Plan

The 2017 – 2021 DAMP included a number of objectives:

- New pound tender awarded to Mount Alexander Animal Welfare (MAAW)
- 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
- On-line survey developed which received 444 responses on proposed a new Order of Council including a proposal for a cat curfew
- Annual dog and cat registration audit
- All Domestic Animal Businesses audited and compliant
- Annual media plan developed regarding registration, pet welfare and preventing dog attacks
- Number waste bag dispensers increased
- Audit conducted of declared dog properties

These objectives above were all achieved and some will continue to be objectives under this DAMP.

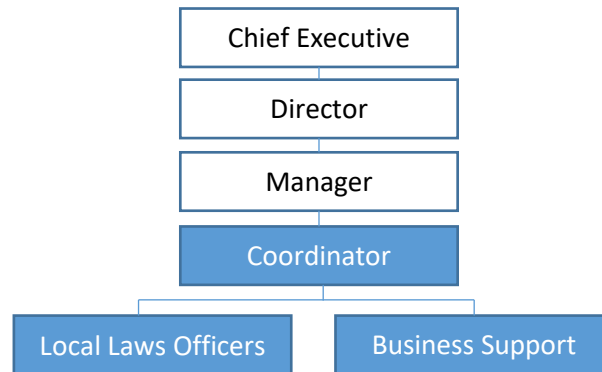
## 1.8 Review of current Plan

All objectives of this current DAMP and reported annually to the State Government and published in Council's Annual Report as required by the Act.

## 2. 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*.

### 2.1. Animal Management Staff Structure



### 2.2. Context

Effective 2021 we have three full time Authorised Officers (Coordinator and the Local Laws Officers) supported by one part time Business Support Officer.

Our Officers conduct a multi-disciplinary role involving parking, local laws, livestock control as well as domestic animal management.

Council is committed to providing an ongoing development program to ensure staff are appropriately trained and able to enforce the requirements of the *Act*. To ensure staff are equipped to respond to the demands of their roles training requirements will be reviewed annually.

Current and planned training programs provided to staff are listed below. 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.

### 2.3. Current and Planned Training

Council is committed to ensuring that the Animal Management Team has the capacity to achieve goals and objectives and to provide an effective and professional animal management service to the community.

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

Their responsibilities includes Local Laws administration, livestock control, parking enforcement, approval of Local Laws Permits, preparation of infringement and offence prosecutions, litter control and administration relating to fundraising and events and asset protection.

Authorised Officer Training	Current (2021)	Planned
Certificate IV in Animal Control and Regulation	Officer 1	
Certificate IV in Animal Welfare (Regulation)	Officer 2	
Cert IV in Local Government	Officer 1	
Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions – Animal Welfare training and information day	All Officers	Officers rotate attendance
OH&S -Dealing with aggressive customers	All Officers	Refresher training upon course availability
Industry training - Prosecutions		December 2022
Industry training - Senior first aid	All officers	Refresher training upon course availability
Skill development - In-house training session	All Officers	Upon course availability

## 2.4. Our Plans

Objective 1: Maintain a training register for individual officers detailing completed and proposed training

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

Objective 2: Inform and empower front line Customer Service staff to understand regulatory requirements and increase their knowledge of animal control.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Sit with customer Service staff to develop their understanding of matters related to animal management.	Ongoing	Number of animal related enquiries referred to Officers
Assist and support Customer Service staff to help manage difficult customers		



### 3. 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).

#### 3.1. Current Situation

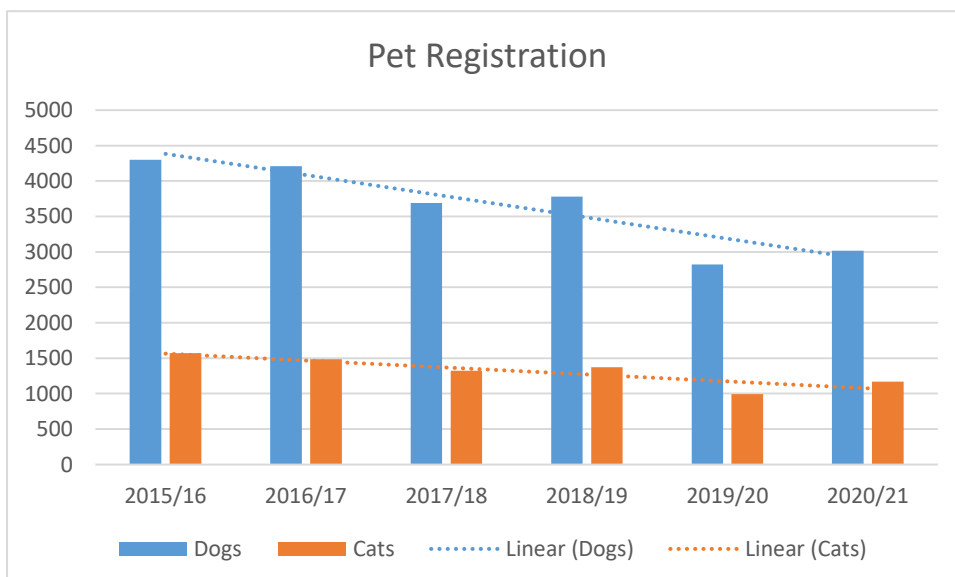
All cats and dogs over the age of three months must be implanted with a microchip and registered with the municipal council in which they reside. Registrations must be renewed annually by 10 April.

Council through the Local Laws team 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 (MAAW) 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
- Mandatory registration and microchipping of animals prior to release from the pound
- Education and information services provided
- Permanent identification number registration tags
- Investigation and compliance service

#### 3.2. Registered Animals

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/Jan2021
Dogs	4298	4207	3689	3780	2821	3017
Cats	1571	1486	1323	1373	995	1170



The drop in registration numbers 2019/2020 relates to inability of Council to accept registration payments due to Covid 19 restrictions.

### 3.3. Animal Registration Timeline

March Information on registrations placed on council website and local media outlets



### 3.4. 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)
- dogs kept for working stock

Pensioners are eligible for a 50% discount on published fees

2020/2021	Standard rate	Pensioner rate
Full fee	\$147.00	\$73.50
Reduced fee	\$49.00	\$24.50

All fees and charges are approved by Council as part of the annual budget adoption process

### 3.5. Our Orders, Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures

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

	Flat / 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

\* Note: the above numbers do not include working dogs

Council has a procedure for the annual registration of dogs and cats and a process for following up unregistered animal and has 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 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
- Administration of the Act

### **3.6. Our Current Education/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 a registration renewal notice in advance of the due date (10 April) each year
- a reminder text followed by a reminder notice for unpaid registrations after this date
- a final notice.

If the final notice is not paid within the allotted time and the pet owner still resides at the address, infringement notices may be issued.

### **3.7. Summary**

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

This is further supported by a subsidised desexing campaign that council partners with the Mount Alexander Animal Welfare (MAAW – Council’s pound agent) and local veterinarians.

MAAW also runs several free desexing days for cats in the municipality throughout the year.

Council will continue to promote microchipping and desexing via the council website and with partners to keep unwanted animal numbers low. Ongoing promotion of the benefits of animal registration is also a priority.

### 3.8. Our Plans

Objective 1: Increase the number of dog and cat registrations within the municipality by 5% and to educate the community on the requirement for animal registration.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Targeted inspections of the municipality	July – August annually	Data to demonstrate new registrations after inspections
Cross reference Council's registration database with data from the State Microchip Register.	July 2022	Registration database updated

Objective 2: Educate community on requirement for registration

Activity	When	Evaluation
Media releases Website and social media Brochures Council newsletter Link to Department of Agriculture website Use registration and renewals to promote responsible pet ownership	March and September each year	Record number of media releases, social media posts, articles in local media

Objective 3: Work with MAAW and local vets to conduct desexing campaigns.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Ensure budget allocation for ongoing subsidised desexing campaign	Annually	Campaign proceeds each year

## 4. 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.

### 4.1. Current Situation

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 bag dispenser and rubbish bin.

It is an objective of the DAMP to explore additional off-leash dog areas to help manage nuisance behaviours.

Nuisance complaints	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/Jan2021
Dogs wandering	69	67	74	50
Barking dog complaints	37	32	21	6
Cat trespass	27	14	14	6

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 is delivering good outcomes for domestic animals across the shire.

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.

### 4.2. 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 section 25 of the Act effective (date adopted), cats within the municipality are to be controlled:

All cats within the municipality must be securely confined to their owners' premises at all times.

## On-Leash

Pursuant to section 26(2) of the Act effective (date adopted), dogs and cats within the municipality are to be controlled:

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 in:

- All **roads**\* in the localities of Campbells Creek, Castlemaine, Chewton and Maldon; and
- The Castlemaine Botanical Garden; and
- All other parks and reserves:
  - Between sunset to 6 am; and
  - When park maintenance is being performed; and
- The principle location of an organised public meeting, sporting or community event or festival when occurring or being prepared for; and
- A permanent barbeque or picnic area when in use.

\***Roads** as the meaning is ascribed to it in the Local Government Act 1989

A person may exercise a cat in a public place but must keep the cat on a chain, cord or leash held by the person attached to the cat at all times.

## Off-Leash

With the exception of the above, a dog may be exercised off-lead providing the person in control:

- Carries a chain, cord or leash sufficient to bring the dog under effective control if the dog behaves in a manner which threatens any person or animal; or
- Remains in effective voice or hand control of the dog so as to be able to bring the dog under effective control by placing the dog on a chain, cord or leash if that becomes necessary; or
- Is in a prescribed dog park and places the dog on-lead when exiting the park.

## Prohibited areas

Dogs are prohibited:

- Within any playground when in use; and
- on the playing surfaces of the following sporting fields
  - Camp Reserve Castlemaine
  - Castlemaine War Memorial Stadium
  - Sunken Oval Castlemaine
  - Western Reserve Castlemaine
  - Elsie Palmer Field Wesley Hill Castlemaine
  - Doug Powell Oval including the velodrome area Wesley Hill Castlemaine
  - Campbells Creek Recreation Reserve including the trotting track
  - Chewton Soldiers Memorial Park
  - Elphinstone Recreation Reserve
  - John Powell Recreation Reserve Guildford
  - Harcourt Recreation Reserve
  - Newstead Recreation Reserve
  - Bill Woodfull Recreation Reserve Maldon
  - Taradale Recreation Reserve

Pursuant to section 26(2A) of the Act effective (date adopted), dogs within the municipality are to be controlled by agreement with owner of private land

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 on:

149 Duke Street Castlemaine (Wesley Hill Market)

Pursuant to section 26(4) of the Act a condition as to the means of restraint of a dog does not apply to a dog in any circumstances listed in section 20(2) of the Act

#### Exemptions to Order of Council

Effective (date adopted) the following dogs are exempt from this Order.

A dog actively engaged as a guide / assistance animals and under the effective control of their handler / patient.

A dog may be temporarily tethered to a post or pole on a short leash or chain while the person in control of the dog conducts a short term activity provided the dog's behaviour is monitored and immediate action is taken to bring the dog under control.

#### Prescribed dog parks

The following is a prescribed off leash dog park:

- Wesley Hill Dog Park

### **4.3. Our Current Education/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
- Brochure on alternatives to cat trapping

### **4.4. 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.
- Heavily discounted cat desexing program

### **4.5. 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 for the past 3 years.

## 4.6. Our Plans

Objective 1: Investigate additional off-leash dog areas.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Get approval for budget allocation for project	Dec 2023	Budget allocation approved
Scope project and identify suitable location for dog off leash areas	Dec 2024	Project developed and available for implementation

Objective 2: Reduce dog nuisance complaints by 5% per year.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Review further options for reducing dog barking complaints	Annually	Number of reduced dog barking complaints
Increase information on website and other channels on responsible dog ownership and minimising barking	Annually	Number of reduced dog barking complaints
Review and promote numbers of dog waste bag dispensers in municipality	Annually	One new dispenser added per year
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	When	Evaluation
Conduct community consultation regarding the proposal to adopt a cat curfew	July 2022	Order of Council adopted and implemented
Educate the community to contain cats securely to their property	Annually	Website information updated Social media campaign



Promote the availability of cat traps and alternatives to cat trapping	Annually	Website information updated Social media campaign
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## 5. 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.

### 5.1. 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), the Council may elect to have the matter heard in the Magistrate's Court, where sufficient evidence is available to form a prosecution.

	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/Jan2021
Reported dog attacks	6	18	23	10
Reported dog rush	11	14	14	6
Infringements	6	7	8	3
Court action	1	1	2	1

### 5.2 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.

### 5.3. Current programs in place to minimise the incidence of dog attacks

Immediate respond to notification of dog attacks including 24 after hour emergency service

Encourage local vet clinics to report dog attacks to Council

Promote and encourage dog desexing of dogs to reduce aggression and wandering.

## 5.4. Our Current Education/Promotion Activities

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

- Media releases
- Council website information
- Brochures and information available from customer service

## 5.5. Our Current Compliance Activities

Council treats reports of dog attacks very seriously. Council undertakes the following compliance activities in support of dog attack offences:

All reported dog attacks are investigated immediately including those received after hours.

Regular patrols of the municipality to identify and collect wandering dogs helps reduce 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* – in relation to a dog, means to approach a person to a distance of less than 3 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 before a court enforcement action can be limited

Enforcement action can result in the issuing of a notice to comply, infringement notices and if necessary court prosecution.

## 5.6. 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 and from customer service.



## 5.7. 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	When	Evaluation
Media release, website content	Annually	Number of media releases
Include information with registration and renewal mail outs		Additional mail out undertaken

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

Activity	When	Evaluation
Media release, website content	School holiday periods	Number of media releases
		Hits on web page

## 6. 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.

### 6.1. 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.

A council may declare a dog dangerous because it has caused death or serious injury to a person or animal by biting or attacking, or because it is kept as a guard 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

### 6.2. Our Orders, Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures

Dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs are controlled by the Act. Council has a Compliance and Enforcement Policy which guides enforcement action.

### 6.3. Our Current Education/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.

### 6.4. 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.

## 6.5. 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.

## 6.6. Our Plans

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

Activity	When	Evaluation
Review procedures for dealing with dangerous dogs and restricted breeds	Year 2	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.

## 7. 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.

### 7.1. 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 MAAW Council has adopted a principle of no euthanasia of any adoptable pet.

Euthanasia is only used on incurably diseased, feral or uncontrollable cats, dogs surrendered because of a serious attack.

	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021 DEC
Dogs IN	163	135	77
Dogs Reclaimed	125	115	63
Dogs Adopted	26	20	14
Dogs Euthanised	5 (3%)	5 (4%)	0
Cats IN	183	203	69
Cats Reclaimed	21	26	8
Cats Adopted	119	130	44
Cats Euthanised	22 (12%)	36 (17%)	6 (8.6%)

### 7.2. 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 MAAW 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 associated with 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.

### **7.3. Our Current Education/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:

- Zero cost release fee if animal collected within 3 days.
- Subsidised microchipping services
- Subsidised desexing services in partnership with local vet clinics with a heavy subsidy available for the desexing of cats
- Free annual desexing campaigns for cats in partnership with MAAW and local vet clinics

### **7.4. 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
- Use of notice to comply, infringements where required, prosecution of owners with unregistered dogs and cats

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

### **7.5. Summary**

Cat adoption continues to be a challenge for Council and MAAW. 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 vet clinics and the MAAW to subsidise cat desexing. Council funding along with the partnership will be a priority of this Domestic Animal Management Plan.



## 7.6. 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	When	Evaluation
Follow up complaints relating to breeding establishments and monitoring of advertisements and excess pet registrations	Annually	Compare number of registered breeding establishments before and after campaign

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

Activity	When	Evaluation
Continue to offer subsidised cat desexing program	Ongoing	No adoptable animals euthanised
Partner pound facility operator in rehoming programs		

## 8. 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.

### 8.1. Current Situation

Domestic Animal Business	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

### 8.2. 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. Council has delegated duties in regard to the registration and operation of a DAB to the Manager Development Services, Coordinator Community Safety and Amenity or Local Laws Officers.

### 8.3. Our current Education/Promotion Activities

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

### 8.4. 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 DABs

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

## 8.5. 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.

## 8.6. Our Plans

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

Activity	When	Evaluation
Identify all businesses that should be registered DABs in the municipality, using yellow pages (or similar, including online sites) identify businesses selling pets / pet products / services in the municipality.  Follow up to determine whether they are and should be registered with council.	Annually	Compare number of registered DABs before and after activity
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	When	Evaluation
Audit all registered businesses	End of March each year	Rate of compliance of registered businesses.

## 9. Other Matters

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.

### 9.1. Emergency Animal Management Plan

#### 9.2. Current Situation

Council has in recent years experienced a range natural emergencies includes bushfires and flooding. This is an ongoing concern for council and emphasis on animal management in the event of an emergency.

An Emergency Animal Welfare Plan which is a sub-plan of the Northern Victorian Integrated Municipal Emergency Management Plan (IMEMP) for each of the Northern Victorian Emergency Management Cluster Councils consisting of Mount Alexander Shire, Central Goldfields Shire, Loddon Shire, Campaspe Shire and City of Greater Bendigo Council (NVEMC). The plan was developed in consultation between the NVEMC, the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR) and other agencies as required.

While responsibility for domestic animals in all circumstances rests with the owner of the animal, council needs to consider issues of domestic animal management when considering evacuation procedures and the establishment of emergency relief centres.

Housing and feeding animals may become an important issue when they accompany their owners to relief centres. These considerations are accentuated should a domestic animal business be required to evacuate.

#### 9.3. Our Current Council Policies and Procedures

Provision for emergency management planning for domestic animals is included in the Municipal Emergency Management Committee (MEMC) and any subplans. Council should ensure all procedures and contact lists are kept up to date on an annual basis. All relevant information and updates provided by the MEMC are to be incorporated into the policies and procedures.

#### 9.4. Our Current Education/Promotion Activities

Council provides information via the website on the available services and the obligations of pet owners. In the event of an emergency, media releases are utilised to provide this information.

#### 9.5. Summary

Domestic animal management is a significant logistical issue in the event of an emergency, even though primary responsibility rests with the owners of the animals. Confusion, conflict and diverted resources can all result from a failure to consider domestic animals in an evacuation and/or the establishment of an emergency relief centre. These challenges are elevated when a domestic animal business is evacuated. Council needs to utilise social media, the website and other channels to communicate its role and the responsibilities of pet owners should an emergency be declared.

## 9.6. Our Plans

Objective 1: To ensure consideration is given to the management of domestic animals during emergencies.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Review all emergency management plans relevant to domestic	Ongoing	Review results and feedback after an emergency.
Officers to maintain involvement in emergency management groups within the region to ensure the needs of domestic animals are met in the event of an emergency.	Ongoing	Officers attend relevant meeting and provide input into relevant plans relating to domestic animals