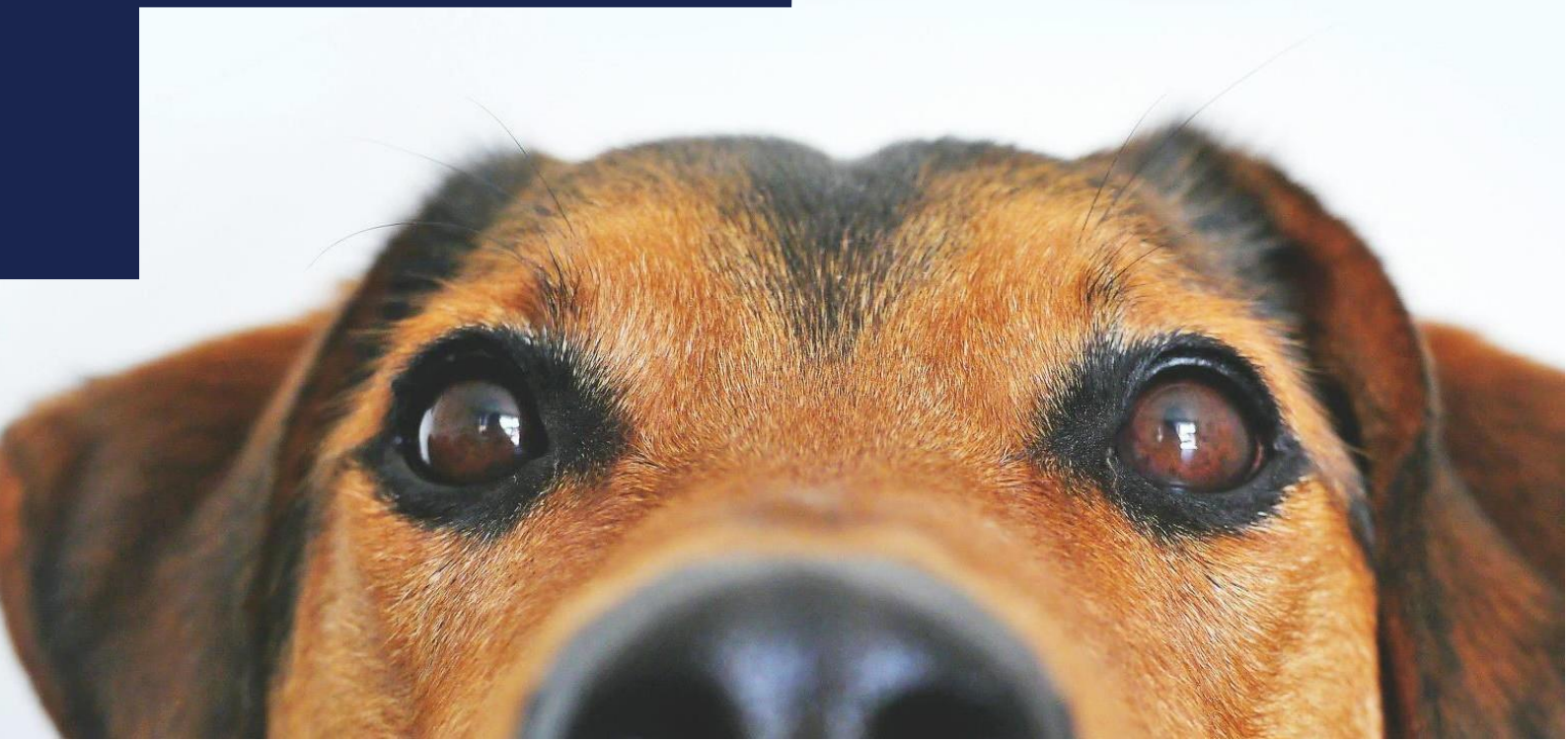




Rural City of
Wangaratta

Draft Domestic Animal Management Plan

2025 - 2029



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INTRODUCTION

Purpose of this Domestic Animal Management Plan

Councils in Victoria are required under Section 68A of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 (**“the Act”**) to prepare and implement a Domestic Animal Management Plan (the **“Plan”**) at four-year intervals with the objective of outlining Council’s plans for animal management. The Plan is sent to Animal Welfare Victoria part of Agriculture Victoria.

The purpose of the **“Plan”** is to:

- Document programs and strategies that will assist the Rural City of Wangaratta to meet its animal management responsibilities;
- Assist pet owners to increase their knowledge of responsible pet ownership, community safety and awareness;
- Maximise the number of cats and dogs registered within the municipality; and
- Comply with the relevant provisions of the Act.

DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLANS

Under **Section 68A of the Act**, every Council must prepare a Domestic Animal Management Plan, as follows:

Every Council must, in consultation with the Secretary, Agriculture Victoria, prepare at 4-year intervals, a Domestic Animal Management **“Plan”**.

A Domestic Animal Management Plan prepared by a Council must:

- Set out a method for evaluating whether the animal control services provided by Council in its municipal district are adequate to give effect to the requirements of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 and the Domestic Animals Regulations 2015;
- Outline programs for the training of authorised officers to ensure that they can properly administer and enforce the requirements of the Act in the Council's municipal district; and
- Outline programs, services and strategies which the Council intends to pursue in its municipal district—
 - to promote and encourage the responsible ownership of dogs and cats; and
 - to ensure that people comply with the Act, the Regulations and any related legislation; and
 - to minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals;
 - to address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats; and
 - to encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats; and
 - to minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance; and
 - 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 the Act and the Regulations; and

- Provide for the review of existing orders made under the Act and local laws that relate to the Council's municipal district with a view to determining whether further orders or local laws dealing with the management of dogs and cats in the municipal district are desirable; 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"

Every Council must:

Review its "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.

RURAL CITY OF WANGARATTA PROFILES

Demographic and Council Profile

The Rural City of Wangaratta is located in north east Victoria, with a total population of approximately 30,169 residents. The Rural City covers an area of 3,644 sq. km.

The municipality is truly diverse. As the start of Victoria's high country, Wangaratta is a tourist haven with an enviable food and wine offering, a multitude of tracks and trails to be explored and activities for those seeking adventure or a place to unwind.

Extensive waterways provide a stunning natural environment, important resources for agriculture as well as numerous recreational opportunities. Productive agricultural land is also a feature which is key to sustaining this unique food and wine region.

Key national road and rail routes pass through Wangaratta which provides exceptional access for the transport of goods and people. Wangaratta incorporates both the Hume Freeway and the North Eastern Railway Line, both critical links between Melbourne and Sydney.

While Wangaratta's traditional manufacturing base remains a key economic driver, other sectors of the economy are becoming increasingly important and supporting a more diverse economy.

Healthcare, education and administrative services are growing and providing additional local employment. Property services and construction have also been expanding and are major contributors to regional wealth.

With a growing population, diverse economic base, thriving tourism sector and stunning natural environment, the Rural City of Wangaratta will continue to deliver business, lifestyle and investment opportunities into the future.

DOMESTIC ANIMAL STATISTICS AND DATA

Category	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Dogs			
Number Registered	4258	4367	4074
Cats			
Number Registered	1453	1439	1253

As per the above table, the municipality is currently in a good position in relation to animal registrations. The rate of animals registered has remained steady over the past three financial years. This may be attributed to an increase in public education as well as the introduction of reminder messages being sent to mobiles along with pro-active registration follow-up.



ANIMAL MANAGEMENT STAFFING AND STRUCTURE

COMMUNITY COMPLIANCE TEAM OVERVIEW

Services provided to the community relating to Animal Management

The Community Compliance team is responsible for the animal management function provided by Council. Key activities include:

- impounding of domestic animals and livestock;
- managing of complaints relating to domestic animals and livestock;
- promoting responsible pet ownership in the community;
- investigating dog attacks;
- ensuring compliance with legislation and the various codes of practice relevant to domestic animals and livestock;
- domestic animal registration process;
- investigating animal welfare issues;
- management of domestic animal businesses;
- providing advice to owners and the general community in relation to domestic animals;
- after hours animal emergencies; and
- prosecute breaches of the Domestic Animals Act 1994, Impounding of Livestock Act 1994 and Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986.

Wangaratta Rural City Council's Local Laws relating to Animal Management

The relevant extract of Local Law No 1 Community Amenity 2025 is found in **Appendix 1** and relates to all aspects of animal management in the municipality. This includes limits on the number of animals that can be kept, the general keeping of animals (animal welfare) and fencing.

TRAINING OF AUTHORISED OFFICERS

Current and Planned Training

A variety of training is offered and provided for all Authorised Officers. Training options are annually reviewed to ensure relevant and up to date material is provided. The training options include animal handling courses, investigation and statement taking courses, prosecution courses, information technology courses and industry related seminars, conferences and briefings from the Agriculture Victoria, Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), Australian Institute of Animal Management (AIAM) and other relevant associations.

Objective 1:

Develop and maintain a training register for individual officers detailing completed and proposed training to maintain skills and knowledge.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Record each officer's name, completed training, along with proposed additional training opportunities in the HR training database	Ongoing	Annually review to ensure accuracy and to determine whether proposed training goals have been met for each Officer. This is achieved through the Council's annual review process.
Staff attendance at industry related seminars and training, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Breed Identification ▪ Agriculture Victoria ▪ Animal Welfare Victoria ▪ Seminars ▪ Dog Bite Minimization & Bite Stick Training 	As offered	Review attendance against individual officer's training record.

REGISTRATION AND IDENTIFICATION

All dogs and cats over the age of 3 months must be registered with the municipality as per Section 10 (1) of “The Act”. All animals must also be microchipped before registration can be accepted by Council.

New animal registrations for cats and dogs can be made in person at Council’s Customer Service Centre between 8.30am – 4.30pm Monday – Friday or by mail with the appropriate payment and copies of relevant proof required to: Rural City of Wangaratta, PO Box 238, Wangaratta VIC 3677.

Registration forms can be downloaded online from Council’s website <http://www.wangaratta.vic.gov.au> or collected from the Council’s Customer Service Centre.

Council has a contract with Albury City to provide pound facilities. Animals that are not registered and not micro-chipped must be micro-chipped at the Albury Animal Management Centre or Wangaratta Council prior to registration along with release of the animal when the appropriate fee has been paid by the owner.

Under Section 11 of “The Act”, animal registration periods expire on 9 April each year. Animal renewal notices are sent out every year in late February or early March, allowing pet owners to renew their animal’s registration via the internet or in person. The Council audits the registration renewal process every year to ensure animal registrations are renewed. The Albury Animal Management Centre will also receive registration payments for impounded animals being released.

Animals found unsecured or ‘at-large’ from their property that are identifiable by means of a microchip, Council registration and an allocated Council identification tag have a higher chance of being reunited with their owners. When dogs and cats are outside of the owner’s premises, Council identification tags must be worn as required under Section 20 of the Act.

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

Registration fees help fund the services provided by the Council in relation to animal management and the Animal Welfare Victoria’s responsible pet ownership campaigns and programs that are available within the municipality.

Council has entered into agreements under Section 84Y of “The Act” with all veterinary practices within the Municipality which allows for the veterinary surgery to scan animals for microchips and return the animals to their owners. Vets then notify council of the returned animals. Enquiries regarding animal registrations are then followed up by Authorised Officers at a later date.

Current Education Activities

Current education/promotion of registration and identification activities include:

- publicising the requirement to register pets over the age of three months in the Wangaratta Chronicle, Wangaratta Rural City Community Connect, social media and the Council’s on hold phone messages;
- animal registration renewal notices are mailed out in late February or early March each year for currently registered animals;
- pro-active registration door knocks take place following the registration period;
- council lifetime identification tags are obtained by pet owners on payment of the relevant registration fee; and
- brochures included in newly registered animal notices provide information regarding the importance and requirements of registration.

Current Compliance Activities

Current compliance activities for registration and identification include:

- SMS messaging to all non-renewed domestic animal owners advising of expiry of registration and possible penalties for failing to renew registration;
- “Warm” calling of non-renewed domestic animal owners with payment taken over the phone and advising of possible infringements if not renewed by certain date;
- door knock targeting properties with no animals registered to identify any unregistered animals at the premises;
- door knock audit conducted each year for animal registrations that have lapsed;
- ensuring impounded and unregistered animals are micro-chipped and registered prior to release;
- issuing notices and/or infringements for animals found unregistered and wandering at large;
- prosecuting owners of unregistered animals where infringements remain unpaid, and animals remain unregistered;
- investigating Domestic Animal Business (DAB) notifications of animals being sold or given away to residents in the municipality without a “Source” number;

Summary

The number of unregistered animals that enter Wangaratta Council's holding facility and Albury Animal Management Centre is still of a high rate, which suggests a large number of unregistered animals exist within the municipality.

The Council is currently recording data to determine the percentage of unregistered animals impounded and from where the owner resides. Such data will allow the Council to focus on education and compliance activities in the locations where higher rates of unregistered animals are found. These activities will include annual municipality wide door knocking of premises.



Our Plans

Objective 1:

To decrease / minimise the total number of properties required for the annual door knock audit.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Educate residents of the animal registration renewal period by means of advertising/media releases, mailing of renewal notices and by placing A Frame signs in areas where high levels of un-registered animals are kept.	March to May Annually	Review media release types available each year to determine most effective advertising.
Ensure each property is audited and infringements issued where animals found to be unregistered.	July to August Annually	Record total number of properties visited and infringements issued and compare to previous results.
Ensure animal registrations have been renewed and infringements paid. Lodge unpaid infringements with Fines Victoria or Magistrates Court.	September to October Annually	Record total number of infringements unpaid and animal registrations still unregistered and compare to previous results.
Seize animals still found to be unregistered where matter found proven in Court or infringement unpaid.	Month after the Date	Provide media releases to send the strong message for responsible pet ownership and compliance.
Mail out of infringements for failing to renew animal registrations where animals are not departed or deceased on council database following mail out of registration renewal notices.	May and throughout the year	Review of numbers of animals registered compared against infringements issued for failing to renew registration.

Objective 2:

Maintain or increase dog and cat registrations.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Ensure all seized and impounded animals are registered to their owner prior to release.	Prior to every release	Review annual registration numbers. Review number of dogs and cats being seized and impounded who are not registered to their owner.
Proactive door knocking in areas believed to have high number of unregistered animals via impound stats, to check for unregistered and un- identified dogs and cats Effective advertising prior to audit.	Annually	Review annual increase in registration numbers. Review number of dogs and cats being seized and impounded who are not registered to their owner.
Compare council animal database against lists of microchipped animals supplied by licensed database registries.	Annually	Review annual list of animals microchipped to Wangaratta address.
Conduct “warm” calling of all owners of animals with contact numbers to accept payment over phone and advise of infringements if not renewed by 1 July.	Annually	Review annual registration numbers for comparison against outstanding Registrations.
Distribute SMS messages to all outstanding domestic animal registrations advising of expiry of registration and possible issuing of infringements.	Annually	Review annual registration numbers for comparison against outstanding registrations.

NUISANCE

Current Situation

Type of Nuisance	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025
No. of barking dog complaints received	51	61	63
No. of cat traps hired	155	95	120

Council currently has 15 traps available for hire by the community. All traps are out on loan at any one time unless council officers are undertaking community cat trapping program to reduce feral cat numbers in identified problem areas.

Legislation/Local Law Overview

The Act regulates the dog and cat nuisance issues relating to noise, trespassing and wandering animals. In addition to the Act, the Local Law (No. 1 of 2025) helps to minimise nuisances occurring as outlined below.

Local Laws Relating to nuisance

Local Law No. 1 of 2025 – Community Amenity (and the supporting Local Laws Policies) outlines the requirements for the keeping of animals in residential areas and restricts both the number and type of animals that a resident can keep on a residential property without a permit. (*Appendix 1*).

This includes requirements regarding animal accommodation and the need for an owner or occupier of land to ensure that all animals on that land are housed in a clean, inoffensive and sanitary condition.

Council Policies for nuisance complaints

Barking Dogs

The Council acknowledges the impact barking dogs have on the lifestyles of residents and is continually seeking ways to shorten the barking resolution process. Officers consider the barking dog procedure to be a living document and they continually seek ways to improve processes. Council has trialled electronic barking monitors with varying success and will seek to improve on evidence gathering to reduce the onus on residents.

Electronic devices somewhat achieve this and have resulted in successful remediation in a couple of cases. Council also has a standard operating procedure for barking dog complaints to ensure all complaints received are handled in the same consistent manner by all Authorised Officers. The procedure steps out the required processes involved to investigate the complaint, liaise with the dog owner and surrounding neighbours. This process also involves the requirement of the complainant to agree to attend the Magistrates' Court to give evidence of the alleged offence, as well as contacting the Dispute Settlement Centre Victoria in the first instance to attempt mediation prior to council involvement.

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



Cats and Dogs at Large

The Community Compliance Team have developed a Domestic Animal Procedure for dealing with domestic animals found at large. In circumstances where repeat offences for roaming/trespassing cats/dogs are found and the issuing of infringements and relevant impound release fees have not encouraged the pet owner to adequately secure the cat or dog to its property, Council will consider pursuing the matter in the Magistrates' Court. This may result in a Court Order to require the owner to carry out works to ensure the animal is not able to escape from the owner's premises.

Rural City of Wangaratta are planning to introduce an after-hours animal drop-off facility. Dogs that are found by the community are able to take the dog to this facility, place the dog in the secure cage and contact authorised officers. Prior to this facility being built, residents can continue to use veterinary facilities that allow and similar service. This has and will enable contact free dog drop off and collection.

Current Education/Promotion Activities relating to nuisance animals

- Providing barking dog information kits.
- Providing information relating to building cat enclosures.
- Information provided on the Council's website.
- Providing information brochures from Animal Welfare Victoria to the public.
- Articles in the Wangaratta Chronicle, Council website and social media.
- Encouraging the de-sexing of cats and dogs to reduce wandering and creating a nuisance.
- Encouraging dog owners to seek advice from professional dog trainers and trial barking dog citronella collars.

Current Compliance Activities relating to nuisance animals

- Investigating nuisance complaints in a timely manner to ensure minimal timeframes.
- Sending out barking dog formal complaint statements and barking dog log sheets with Statutory Declarations attached.
- Trial electronic bark detection and recording devices to speed up the resolution of barking dog complaints.

- Report outcomes of prosecutions when appropriate regarding each area of nuisance to local media to raise awareness in the community of the benefits of preventing dog and cat nuisance.
- Issuing notices to comply, notices of objection, infringements where necessary and taking the matter to the Magistrates' Court.
- Providing cat traps to residents.

Summary

In order to reduce animal nuisance problems in the community, the Council will continue promoting and providing education and compliance activities while striving to improve the activities and identify/trial new initiatives.

Council will continue the cat trapping program to ensure the program is promoted efficiently and provides assistance to residents and continue media releases relating to the Council's stance on compliance with nuisance type complaints.

Our Plans

Objective 1:

Investigate and develop a Cat Containment Policy

Activity	When	Evaluation
Investigate a Cat Containment policy	2025	Review similar guidelines and policies implemented by other Victorian Councils.
Seek Community Feedback	2025/2026	Seek community feedback on the proposed policy via surveys and direct community consultation. Gather responses and provide feedback to the policy.
Implement	2026/2027	Finalise and implement new policy and provide community support throughout the implementation.

Objective 2:

Investigate and develop a Mandatory Cat De-sexing Policy

Activity	When	Evaluation
Investigate Mandatory Desexing	2026	Review similar policies implemented by other Victorian Councils
Seek Community Feedback	2026	Seek community feedback on the proposed policy via surveys and direct community consultation. Gather responses and provide feedback to the policy
Implement Policy	2026/2027	Finalise and implement new policy and provide community support throughout the implementation

DOG ATTACKS**Current data**

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

The brief is then reviewed by the Compliance Coordinator who makes further recommendations to the Manager of Economic Development, Environment and Compliance in order for Council to decide on an appropriate course of action.

Possible courses of action include:

- infringements (where non-serious injuries sustained);
- menacing/Dangerous Dog Declaration;
- prosecution in Magistrates' Court;
- seek destruction/compensation orders by Magistrates;
- seek surrender of attacking dog;
- seek mediation between parties; and
- obtain a letter of no complaint from the complainant to allow Officers to take no further action.

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

Media releases of such results are also used to educate the community and promote responsible pet ownership. Animal registration fees include a subsidy to Agriculture Victoria, which help funds programs such as responsible pet ownership in schools, pre-schools, maternal health centres, hospitals.

Current Education/Promotion Activities

- Reporting outcomes of dog attack prosecutions to local media to raise awareness in the community of the need to report dog attacks and the Council's action in relation to attacks to promote responsible pet ownership.
- Media releases relating to livestock attacks.
- Providing new residents with animal registration information.
- Promoting the effective confinement and control of dogs.
- Promoting puppy socialisation and obedience training.

Current Compliance Activities

- Investigating dog attacks thoroughly.
- Seizing and holding attacking dogs pending investigation/prosecution.
- Providing an after-hours service to respond to reports of aggressive or attacking dogs.
- Prosecuting matters pursuant to the Domestic Animals Act 1994.
- Issuing infringements for wandering dogs.
- Issuing infringements for minor attacks where non serious injury sustained.
- Proactive declarations for Menacing or Dangerous Dogs. Seeking destruction Orders from Magistrates' Court where necessary.
- Seeking confinement Orders from Magistrates' Court for dogs continually found wandering or not confined to property.
- Proactive patrols of parks and streets for wandering dogs.
- Proactive patrols for guard dogs on non-residential premises.
- Recording data of reported dog attacks in the municipality.
- Seizing impounded dogs in circumstances where the owners' properties are believed to be unsecure and ensuring animal can be secured prior to the release of the dog back to the owner.

Summary

The Rural City of Wangaratta will continue administering the Act and ensure compliance is met where any breach is detected.

Our Plans

Objective 1:

Provide targeted education and compliance campaigns in areas where data reporting shows higher numbers of dog attack incidents.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Collate and record data for dog attacks reported including date/time, suburb, dog type, dog attack on animal/person, dog unsecured/off lead, dog unregistered, gender.	Ongoing	Evaluate data annually to determine areas requiring specific education/compliance activities.
Initiate Education/Compliance Activities in the targeted areas to aim to reduce future incidents and to report roaming dogs etc. to prevent attacks occurring.	Annually	Evaluate this activity (and overall objective) by comparing number of dog attacks reported to council pre and post campaign.

Objective 2:

Education on the requirement to have all dogs on leash in public areas as noted in the Domestic Animals Act 1994 Section 26 (Dog on leash) Order.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Educate on Council's On-Leash Policy	Ongoing	Further promotion and education of the current legislation, policies, and on-leash and off-leash areas.

Objective 3:

To minimise the incidence of dog attacks in the community.

Activity	When	Evaluation
<p>Providing proactive education/Compliance activities in the targeted areas of higher dog attack incidents.</p> <p>Educating key dog attack prevention messages (e.g., confinement of dogs to property, leash laws) through media articles, mail outs, website information. Actively patrol areas for roaming, unsecure and/or unregistered dogs.</p>	Ongoing	<p>Compare number of reported dog attack incidents pre and post campaign.</p> <p>Consider a community survey pre and post campaign, to measure any changes in knowledge about dog attack prevention.</p> <p>Record type and number of education materials distributed.</p> <p>Numbers of campaign patrols conducted. Number of media articles published.</p>
Inform the community of outcomes of dog attacks prosecuted in Court.	Ongoing	As occurs.
Set key performance indicators for Officers to complete dog attack investigations within a 6-week timeframe	Ongoing	Review complaints annually to evaluate percentage completed within timeframe.

DANGEROUS, MENACING AND RESTRICTED BREED DOGS

Current situation – Declared dogs currently registered within the municipality

The Rural City of Wangaratta has the following declared dogs currently registered within the municipality as of 1 July 2025:

Registered restricted breed dogs	0
Registered declared dangerous dogs	0
Registered declared menacing dogs	2

The Act 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)

Owners of restricted breed dogs are required to abide by specific regulations, in particular; secure enclosures, warning signs on premises, having the dog muzzled and on a lead at all times in public, as defined by the Act and the Domestic Animals Regulations 2005 (the Regulations).

The Council must register all dangerous/menacing/restricted breed dogs with the Victorian Dangerous Dog Register (VDDR). This is a database that records all declared dogs for all relevant parties to see. Any dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dog entered into the VDDR is declared for the life of the animal and cannot be revoked by the Council. Microchip registries are also updated.

As of July 2025, there are two declared menacing or dangerous dogs in the municipality

Current Education/Promotion Activities

- Promoting the 'Dangerous Dog Hotline' (136 186).
- Media releases relating to legislation/changes/updates.
- Media releases relating to differences between Restricted Breed dogs and Dangerous Dogs.
- Providing information relating to declared, guard and menacing dogs.

Current Compliance Activities

- Ensuring all declared dogs are registered on the VDDR.
- Regularly conducting inspections on premises housing declared dogs to ensure compliance.
- Seizing dogs suspected of being Restricted Breed Dogs.
- Dog declarations made where applicable.
- Prosecution/Infringements issued for any determined breach.
- Assessing suspected restricted breed dogs via the gazetted standard
- Flagging certain breeds from registration database for assessment.
- Conduct proactive patrols after hours for unregistered guard dogs (dangerous dogs).

Our Plan

Objective 1:

Ensure declared dogs are compliant to relevant legislation and regulations.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Random property inspections of declared dogs to ensure compliance.	Ongoing	Review checklists as occurs.
Prosecute repeat offenders or serious breaches detected.	As occurs	As occurs.
Educate the community about what is a declared dog.	Ongoing	Review complaints received.

Objective 2:

Flag certain breeds on registration database for restricted breed assessment.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Assess certain breeds with the gazetted standard for potential restricted breed dogs.	Ongoing	Number of Restricted Breeds Declared from registration database.
Cross reference microchip database information for potential restricted breed dogs requiring assessment.	Ongoing	Number of declarations compared to number of assessments.

Dogs On-Leash Policy

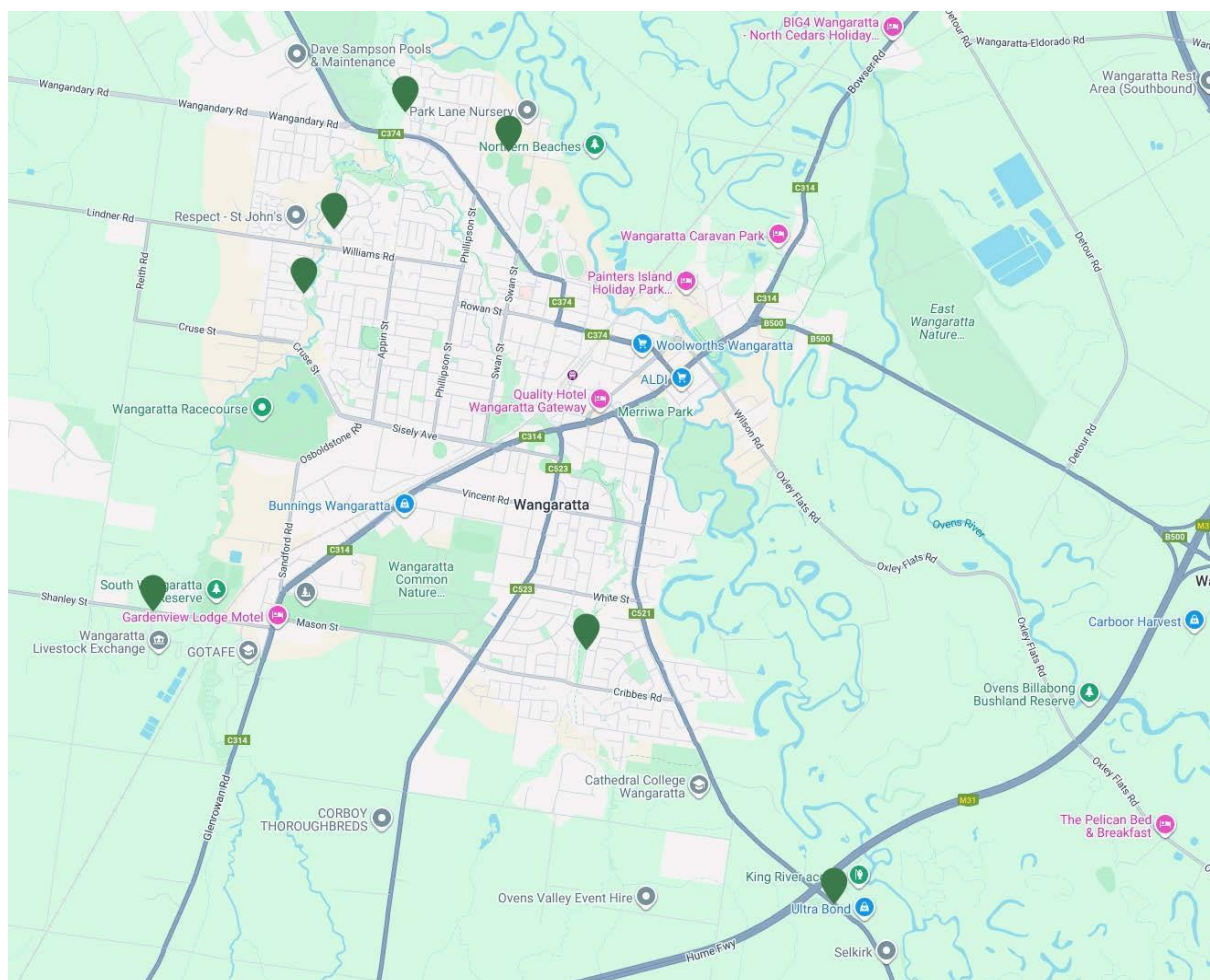
In the Rural City of Wangaratta, the dog on-leash policy plays a vital role in promoting responsible pet ownership and ensuring public safety. Section 26 of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 states that councils are empowered to designate where dogs must be leashed and enforce requirements through local laws.

Dogs must be kept on a leash in all public areas unless explicitly designated as off-leash zones. This requirement helps prevent incidents involving uncontrolled dogs and supports harmonious community interactions and protects local wildlife. Council Compliance Officers actively monitor compliance, and infringements may be issued for breaches of this policy.

The following are Wangaratta's designated off-leash areas:

- Collyn-Dale Drive Parkland
- Creek View End Reserve
- Mitchel Avenue Dog Park
- Northern Beaches
- South Wangaratta Reserve
- Targoora Park
- Willow Park Reserve

Map View:



To support dog owners, the Council provides clearly marked off-leash parks where dogs can freely exercise under supervision.

The policy is reinforced through community education, signage, and ongoing engagement to encourage respectful and lawful behaviour.



OVERPOPULATION AND HIGH EUTHENASIA

Current situation

Category	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025
Dogs			
Brought in by Council	130	113	115
Brought in by public*	53	17	20
Adopted for the year	52	35	21
Euthanised for the year	16	20	23
Reclaimed for the year	115	95	88
Category	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025
Cats			
Brought in by council	240	210	224
Brought in by public*	205	52	29
Adopted for the year	232	29	40
Euthanised for the year	102	139	195
Reclaimed for the year	49	44	19

**Includes animals surrendered by members of the public*

Council is experiencing a large stray cat problem, particularly in relation to rural properties. Pro-active trapping programs at rural locations has seen a large increase in the number of feral cats impounded by council officers and subsequently being euthanised due to health issues and the effects of inbreeding amongst the local population. This has seen an increase in the euthanasia rate amongst cats in the Municipality. While cat euthanasia rates are slightly higher than the average, the percentage of cats euthanised will continue to be relatively high due to the amount of stray and/or feral cat population which breed out of human control.

Current Education/Promotion Activities

- Promoting benefits of de-sexing to decrease wandering animals.
- Promoting appropriate pet selection for the owner and accommodation.
- Promoting cat enclosures and build your own cat enclosures.

Current Compliance Activities

- Cat trapping program - traps are available to all residents within the municipality and are free of charge.
- Enforcement of current Legislation in relation to Cats found trespassing.
- Investigating unregistered breeding establishments.
- Micro-chipping all unregistered impounded animals prior to release to the owner.
- Enforcing the Local Laws relating to prescribed number of animals on a property.

Our Plans

To complement our research and potential implementation of Cat Containment and Mandatory Desexing policies.

Objective 1:

Continue encouraging desexing of animals.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Discount registration fees for cats and dogs that are desexed to encourage registration of animals over 3 months of age.	Ongoing	Number of new animals registered in category each year.

Objective 2:

Identify illegally operated Domestic Animal Breeding (DAB) Establishments in the municipality and ensure compliance and/or close down.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Media campaigns to raise awareness of DAB definition and code of practices that must be adhered to.	Ongoing	Evaluate number of complaints received and properties identified during inspection or otherwise.
Investigate advertisements of pets for sale.	Ongoing	Mandatory microchipping of animals from breeding establishments.
Audit DAB's randomly to ensure compliance.	Ongoing	Number of audits compared to number of follow ups required.

DOMESTIC ANIMAL BUSINESSES

Current Data

In Victoria, the Domestic Animals Act 1994 defines Domestic Animal Businesses as any of the following:

- (a) an animal shelter, Council pound or pet shop; or
- (b) an enterprise which carries out the breeding of dogs (other than GRV greyhounds) to sell, if the enterprise has 3 or more fertile female dogs and the proprietor is not a recreational breeder; or
- (c) an enterprise which carries out the breeding of cats to sell, if the enterprise has 3 or more fertile female cats and the proprietor is not a recreational breeder; or
- (d) an enterprise which trains or boards dogs (other than GRV greyhounds) or cats for the purpose of profit; or
- (e) an enterprise which rears or keeps dogs (other than GRV greyhounds) or cats—
 - i. for the purpose of profit or sale; or
 - ii. for a fee or for exchange of services.

There are currently seven registered domestic animal businesses within the municipality as of July 2025. These include 3 boarding establishments, 3 breeding establishments.

The Albury Animal Care Centre manage the Council animal pound for Wangaratta. The contract for this service is due to expire on 30 June 2027. Council will consider in 2026 how the service is to be provided into the future.

Registered domestic animal businesses are audited both randomly and on receipt of complaints.

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

Current Education/Promotion Activities

- Providing information to registered domestic animal businesses.
- Promoting Animal Welfare Victoria information and codes of practices.
- Advertising new legislation amendments.

Current Compliance Activities

- Annual audits.
- Random audits during peak seasons for particular businesses.
- Investigating reports.
- Monitoring advertising sites.
- Renewal / Registration process.
- Inspecting suspected unregistered domestic animal businesses.
- Liaising with Planning Department to ensure planning conditions are adhered to practice.

Objective 1:

Ensure domestic animal businesses are compliant with relevant legislation and codes of practice.

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

EMERGENCIES AND ANIMAL MANAGEMENT

The Rural City of Wangaratta is committed to creating and implementing an Animal Management Welfare Plan. This will outline Council's approach to managing animal welfare during emergencies, including bushfires, floods, disease outbreaks, and evacuations. It will compliment the Municipal Emergency Management Plan and supports the Victorian Emergency Animal Welfare Plan.

Council's Compliance Team plays a central role in implementing the plan, supported by agencies such as Agriculture Victoria, DEECA, RSPCA, and the Australian Veterinary Association. Emergency Relief Centres are equipped to temporarily house and care for displaced animals, with procedures for identification, veterinary triage, and containment.

Animal owners retain primary responsibility for their animals, and the plan will encourage proactive emergency planning, including evacuation kits and safe relocation options. Council staff are trained annually, and inter-agency collaboration ensures a coordinated response.

Our Plans

Objective 1:

To implement an Animal Management Welfare Plan

Activity	When	Evaluation
Create and implement an Animal Management Welfare Plan	2026/28	Have a clear plan for domestic animals in the event of an emergency.

ANNUAL REVIEW OF "PLAN" AND ANNUAL REPORTING

As per 68A (3) of the Act, the Council will review its Domestic Animal Management Plan annually to assess whether any amendments are necessary in order to ensure the Plan is relevant and can be completed within the required timeframes.

In the final year of the Plan (2029), the Council will undertake a major review and prepare the next domestic animal management Plan for the 2031-2035 period.

APPENDIX 1 – Local Law 1 of 2025**PART G – ANIMAL MANAGEMENT****40. APPLICATION OF THIS PART**

- 40.1 This Part does not apply to:
- 40.1.1 an Animal Shelter owned or contracted by Council;
 - 40.1.2 a registered Animal Hospital or Veterinary Surgeon Practice;
 - 40.1.3 any Animal keeping permitted by the Municipal Planning Scheme; or
 - 40.1.4 any Animal in respect of which a Permit has been issued by another public authority.

41. LIMITS ON NUMBER OF ANIMALS KEPT

- 41.1 A Person must not, without a Permit, on any land in a Residential Area or a Commercial Area:
- 41.1.1 keep or allow to be kept any more of each species or group of Animals than is stated in Table 1 in this Clause 41; or
 - 41.1.2 keep or allow to be kept any more than three (3) different species or groups of Animals listed in Tabel 1 in this Clause 41, at any time.

PENALTY: MAXIMUM TWENTY (20) PENALTY UNITS**TABLE 1**

Type of Animal or Bird	On land Less than 399m ² In Townhouse, Apartments, Flats, Units	On Land 400-999m ²	On Land 1000-3999m ²	On Land 4000m ² and Over (excludes Farm Zone)
Dogs	2	2	2	2
Cats	2	2	2	2
Poultry (except Roosters)	Prohibited	3	10	10
Roosters	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited	0
Caged Birds (excluding Racing Pigeons)	3	5	10	20
Rabbits	1	2	4	4
Guinea Pigs, Ferrets and Hamsters	2	5	5	5
Reptiles	2	5	5	5
Racing Pigeons	Prohibited	20	20	20
Horse, Donkey, Alpacas or Similar	Prohibited	Prohibited	0	1 per 4,000m ²

Cattle	Prohibited	Prohibited	0	1 per 4,000m ²
Sheep & Goats	Prohibited	Prohibited	2	2 per 4,000m ²
Pigs	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited	1 per 4,000m ²
Other Agricultural Animals	Prohibited	Prohibited	2	2 per 4,000m ²

**where (0) is nominated animal allowed but permit required.*

42. RACING PIGEONS

42.1 A person must not keep or allow to be kept any Racing Pigeons on any land in a Residential Area or a Commercial Area unless the Racing Pigeons are housed in a properly constructed pigeon loft or similar structure which is:

42.1.1 of a height not exceeding two (2) metres;

42.1.2 at least one point five (1.5) metres from the boundary of any adjoining premises; and

42.1.3 at least ten (10) metres distance from any dwelling whether on the same or on adjoining premises.

42.2 A person must not, on any land in a Residential Area or a Commercial Area, construct or use or cause or suffer or permit to be constructed or used any pigeon loft unless it has adequate roofing, drainage and a floor paved with impervious material to the satisfaction of an authorised officer and is constructed in such a way as to be rat proof.

PENALTY: MAXIMUM TWENTY (20) PENALTY UNITS

43. REMOVAL OF ANIMAL FAECES

43.1 A person in charge of an Animal must:

43.1.1 remove any of that Animal's faeces that is deposited on any Road or Council Land; and

43.1.2 dispose of the Animal's faeces in a manner which does not cause any nuisance or health hazard to any person or detriment to the environment.

43.2 A person in charge of an Animal on any Road or Council Land must carry a Litter Device suitable to clean up any faeces left by any Animal under their care or control and must produce such device upon being requested to do so by an Authorised Officer.

PENALTY: MAXIMUM TWENTY (20) PENALTY UNITS

44. ANIMAL HOUSING

44.1 The owner of an Animal and the Owner or Occupier of the land on which the Animal is housed must ensure that:

44.1.1 the animal housing is kept in a clean and sanitary condition to the satisfaction of an Authorised Officer;

44.1.2 the size of the enclosure or other form of housing is adequate to house the number of animals;

44.1.3 the animal housing meets the welfare needs of the Animal;

44.1.4 the animal housing is maintained in good repair so as to not cause nuisance to neighbouring premises;

44.1.5 the animal housing is constructed to prevent wastewater from entering into the stormwater system or discharging to adjoining premises; and

- 44.1.6 the land surrounding the animal housing is kept clear of materials which may harbour vermin.

PENALTY: MAXIMUM TWENTY (20) PENALTY UNITS

45. PROVISION OF EFFECTIVE FENCING TO CONTAIN ANIMALS

The owner of an Animal and/or Livestock and the Owner of the land upon which that Animal is kept must ensure that the land is adequately fenced so as to prevent any and all Animals and/or Livestock being kept on the land from escaping from that land and straying onto any Council Land or Road or otherwise being at large.

PENALTY: MAXIMUM TWENTY (20) PENALTY UNITS

46. POWER TO IMPOUND ADDITIONAL ANIMALS

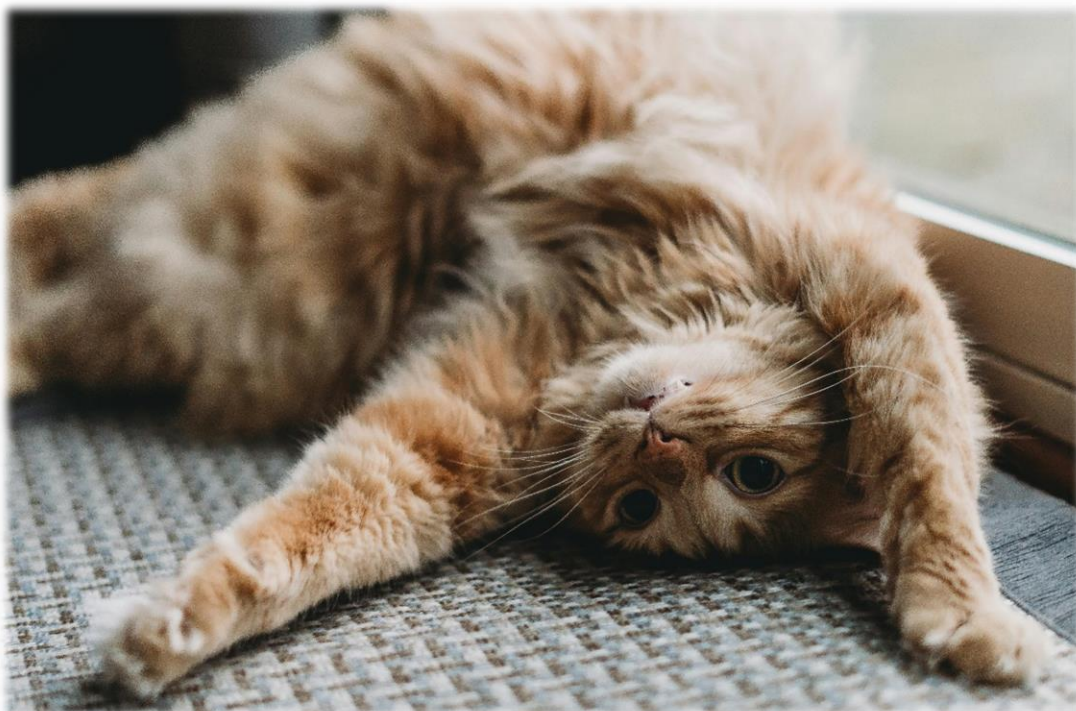
Where a Magistrate has found a person to be in breach of Clause 41 and a Permit for additional Animals has not been granted, Council may enter the land on which the Animals are being kept and seize and dispose of any Animals being kept on land in breach of Clause 41 for the purpose of sale, re-homing or destruction.

PENALTY: MAXIMUM TWENTY (20) PENALTY UNITS

47. WANDERING ANIMALS

- 47.1 The owner and person in charge of an animal must not allow that animal to wander from the property it is normally kept.
- 47.2 The owner and person in charge of an animal must ensure that the land in which the animal is normally kept is adequately fenced to prevent the animal from wandering at large.

PENALTY: MAXIMUM TWENTY (20) PENALTY UNITS





Rural City of
Wangaratta