



Title of Policy	Companion Animals Policy		
This applies to	All Council staff		
Author	Michael Boyd	Date approved:	
Position of Author	General Manager	Authorised by:	
Legislation, Australian Standards, Code of Practice	Companion Animals Act 1998		
Related Policies/Procedures			

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this policy are:

- To comply with the provisions of the Companion Animals Act 1998 (the Act);
- To achieve a high level of responsible pet ownership through education, consultation and cohesive management within the community;
- To increase the number of animals microchipped and registered, to reduce the number of animals going to the pound.
- To increase the number of impounded animals being returned to owners, sold or rehomed;
- To reduce the negative impacts by companion animals in the community and the environment;
- To ensure adequate resources and facilities for the control, impounding, management and care of companion animals are established and maintained;
- To ensure procedures for enforcement of the Act are developed to educate animal owners and protect the broader community; and
- To establish guidelines for dealing with feral and infant animals.

POLICY

The priorities of Council's Companion Animals Policy are:

1. Promoting responsible pet ownership
2. Public Safety: Dangerous and menacing dogs and restricted breeds

3. Registration and identification
4. Nuisance animals and excessive barking
5. Impounding animals
6. Animal welfare
7. Management of feral or infant animals
8. Cat management

Council's Companion Animals Policy is reviewed every 4 years or as required.

In reviewing the policy, Council will invite input from companion animal stakeholders within the community, including Veterinary Practitioners, RSPCA, Police, local media and agencies that routinely access properties e.g. Australia Post and meter readers.

Priority 1: Promoting Responsible Pet Ownership

Objective

Achieve a high level of responsible pet ownership through education, consultation and cohesive management within the community.

Background

Council encourages all pet owners to be responsible for their pet's actions. Owning a pet comes with responsibilities for its care and to demonstrate respect for the animal and the impact it has on the community.

Council aims to assist by education and by promoting responsible pet ownership.

Council will also achieve compliance through law enforcement.

Being a responsible pet owner includes:

- Making sure the animal is properly identified and registered;
- Providing basic needs for health and welfare of the animal;
- Minimising nuisance behaviour and potential negative impacts on the environment and community;
- Keeping animals out of prohibited areas; and
- For dogs, ensuring they are under the effective control of a leash, while in public.

Community Education and Enforcement

The benefits of an extensive education program, supported by an appropriate level of law enforcement encouraging responsible community animal management, are well recognised.

The best outcome for the general community, companion animals and their owners will be achieved through a well-informed community, supporting Council's efforts to provide a sound animal management program.

Voluntary compliance is achievable through education, awareness programs and incentives supported by law enforcement. The whole community, whether companion animal owners or not, should be involved in the process to achieve success with companion animal management. The combination of education and law enforcement will be applied to achieve the required outcomes for responsible companion animal management.

Proposed actions

- Working with the media, schools and other agencies promoting responsible companion animals management by increasing the community's understanding of the negative impacts companion animals may have on the environment and in rural areas the impact on livestock from dog attacks.
- The adopting of a school education program to teach children how to behave around aggressive dogs.

Priority 2: Dangerous and menacing dogs and restricted breeds

Objectives

- Minimise the threat to public safety from dangerous dogs and restricted breeds.
- Reduce the number of dog attacks.
- Effectively monitor, manage and control the keeping of identified restricted breeds, declared dangerous dogs and menacing dogs

Background

Council receives a significant number of complaints of dog attacks each year. Council aims to effectively reduce the number of dog attacks.

As well as dogs attacking humans, there is also a problem with dogs attacking other animals and particularly in rural areas, where dogs too often attack livestock. Council acknowledges the impact that such incidents have on farmers and is committed to ensuring that dog owners recognise their responsibilities to prevent such attacks.

Council recognises its obligations under the Act to investigate reports of aggression in dogs and to use preventative powers under the Act to control and manage animal aggression.

Under the provisions of the Act, Council will:

- Declare a dog as dangerous or menacing if it attacks with or without provocation, or menaces a person or animal or repeatedly threatens to attack or repeatedly chases a person or animal;
- Conduct at least annual inspections of the premises where the restricted breeds and declared dangerous dogs are kept, to ensure compliance with the legislation; and
- Where appropriate and suitable, take legal action to ensure the safe keeping of restricted breeds and declared dangerous dogs to ensure public safety.

Proposed actions

In order to reduce the number of animal attacks and minimise threat to public safety:

- Council will place a high priority on managing reports of animal attacks.
- Rangers will promptly respond to reports of animal attack.
- Rangers will declare dogs as "dangerous" or menacing, where necessary under the

- Act.
- Council will ensure that owners of restricted breeds, declared “dangerous” dogs and menacing dogs comply with any specified conditions (such as keeping their dog in a childproof enclosure) as required by the Act.

Priority 3: Registration and Identification

Objectives

- To encourage the permanent microchip identification of companion animals.
- To facilitate the prompt return of lost or stray companion animals to their owners.
- To provide an efficient service, for customers updating or registering details on the NSW Companion Animals Register.

Background

The management of companion animals is highly dependent on the animals being properly identified. Identification also leads to the ability to return animals to their owners and for the owners to be made accountable under the Act.

Appropriate identification and registration is integral to the management of companion animals. Microchipping and registration allows lost or straying animals to be identified and returned to their owners as quickly as possible, generally avoiding the need for the animals to be impounded.

Council encourages pet owners to:

- Make sure their animal is microchipped and registered and have a collar and a tag;
- Microchip their animal before 12 weeks of age and register by 6 months of age pursuant to the Act; and
- Notify Council of certain changes and events, such as changes to registration or identification information or if the animal goes missing or dies.

Proposed actions

- Community education programs to promote the benefits of microchipping and greater understanding of the 2-step identification process (being 1 – microchipping and 2 – registration).
- Conduct monthly microchip dog days, where microchipping is offered at discounted rates.
- Encouraging companion animal owners to notify Council of changes of contact details.

Priority 4: Nuisance animals and barking dogs

Objectives

- Reduce the number of reasonable complaints received due to barking dogs and take necessary action to reduce noise pollution.
- Develop strategies of management that reduce the incidence of nuisance animals and barking dogs.

Background

Council recognises that noise created by animals can be the cause of aggravation, discomfort and conflict with neighbours. Complaints about barking dogs account for a large proportion of the noise complaints received by Council.

Council aims to resolve animal noise complaints efficiently and effectively and always attempts to reach an amicable outcome for all parties involved.

Under Section 32A of the Act, a dog is a nuisance if it:

- Is habitually at large; or
- Makes a noise by barking or otherwise, that persistently occurs or continues to such a degree or extent that it unreasonably interferes with the peace, comfort or convenience of any person in any other premises; or
- Repeatedly defecates on property (other than a public place) outside the property on which it is ordinarily kept; or
- Repeatedly runs at or chases any other person, animal (other than vermin and in relation to an animal, otherwise than in the course of droving, tending, working or protecting stock) or vehicle; or
- Endangers any other person or animal (other than vermin and in relation to an animal, otherwise than in the course of droving, tending, working or protecting stock); or
- Repeatedly causes substantial damage to anything outside the property on which it is ordinarily kept.

Proposed actions

- Rangers trained to understand animal noise behaviours/problems.
- Providing advice and work with animal owners to reduce animal noise.
- Developing education packages in relation to nuisance animals.

Priority 5: Impounding Animals

Objectives

- To reduce the number of animals impounded and increase the rate of return to owners.
- To facilitate prompt returns to owners of seized animals.
- To minimise or eliminate the number of unwanted pets having to be euthanased.
- To provide appropriate pound facilities and services for the surrender of animals.

Background

A large number of companion animals are impounded each year. Council aims to reduce the number of animals impounded and increase the number returned to their owners or rehomed.

Animals collected or impounded that are not properly microchipped or registered, shall be taken to the Council's pound. All injured animals shall receive veterinary care to alleviate their suffering.

Council provides a service for the surrender of animals. Council aims to encourage the surrender of animals for reasons of aggression, but does not encourage the surrender of animals where simple behaviour modification shall suffice. Owners seeking the advice of

companion animals staff on behaviour modification for their pets, may be offered brief, experiential, verbal advice in good faith and with no liability attached. Animals which are surrendered for reasons of aggressive behaviour will not be resold to the community. Such animals may be euthanased following the statutory period of impoundment.

Council has limited storage facilities for animals and overcrowding is not permitted, due to the risks which animals can pose to each other in crowded situations. Animals that are not collected or adopted are held for statutory periods, following which time elapses, animals are humanely euthanased. Council would welcome the circumstances which see every impounded animal finding a new, responsible and caring owner. Animals requiring euthanasia are listed for treatment in sequence based on the date of their initial impoundment.

Proposed actions

- Ensuring identified animals are returned as quickly as possible to their owners.
- Regularly liaising with the RSPCA about re-homing of selected animals.
- Ensuring animals in the care of Council's pound are well cared for and the euthanasia of animals where it is necessary is conducted in an ethical and humane manner in accordance with standards and codes of practice.

Priority 6: Animal Welfare

Objectives

- Promote responsible pet ownership.
- Encourage companion animal owners to provide appropriate mental and physical challenges for their animal, to improve animal welfare and reduce adverse impacts on the general community.

Background

Many pet problems arise from animals experiencing frustration or boredom, causing reactions such as barking, chasing and jumping up. By providing environmental enrichment such as the addition of cognitive, dietary, physical, sensory and social stimuli, physiological and psychological wellbeing can be improved.

Animal welfare is defined as providing appropriate nutrition, shelter, exercise and interaction to enhance the physical and mental wellbeing of the animal.

Council aims to work with local veterinary clinics and companion animal stakeholders to ensure animal welfare issues in the community are addressed.

Proposed actions

- Regularly encourage animal owners to provide basic needs for the health and welfare of their pets.
- Promote de-sexing of non-breeding companion animals to reduce the number of unwanted pets.
- Ensure Council staff regard animal welfare as a high priority in all dealings with the community and companion animals that come under their control.

Priority 7: Management of feral and infant animals

Objectives

- To minimise or eliminate the amount of infant companion animals being euthanased.
- To manage the numbers of feral animals within the community.

Background

Councils that seize animals are empowered by the Act to either sell or destroy an animal after the statutory holding period has passed (seven days for unidentified animals and fourteen days for identified animals). The Act also permits councils to develop policy guidelines for the management of feral or infant companion animals before the end of these standard statutory periods.

A feral animal under this policy is defined as an untamed or wild cat or dog whose owner is unidentified and has been living in undomesticated circumstances.

Feral animals can pose a health and safety risk to people and other animals and are not suitable for re-homing. To confine a feral animal for an extended period of time would cause stress and is considered to be cruel.

An infant animal under this policy is defined as a cat or dog less than eight (8) weeks of age.

Proposed Actions

FERAL ANIMALS

Animals accepted into Council's pound facility suspected of being feral must be assessed by a veterinarian and the results of that assessment documented. Should the animal be deemed as feral and reasonable investigations into its identification have been made, then Council will authorise the euthanasia prior to the standard statutory holding period.

INFANT ANIMALS

Animals identified as infant that are accepted into Council's pound facility are to be assessed by a competent and trained duly appointed Ranger or veterinarian at the earliest opportunity.

If the infant animal is considered to be of a size and age that survival is possible through intensive care external to the pound, or it is the best interest of the animal to warrant early release, then Council must make appropriate enquiries with registered rescue organisations such as the RSPCA as to whether they have the capacity to care for them.

Should the infant animal be in a condition that survival in the long term would be remote, or should external agencies not have the capacity to take on the animal after reasonable enquiries, Council will in consultation with the competent and trained duly appointed Ranger or veterinarian authorise euthanasia.

Priority 8: Cat Management

Objectives

- To increase the number of identified, registered and de-sexed cats.
- To minimise the adverse impact of cats on wildlife and public amenity.

Background

There is a continuing concern about the number of stray cats and unwanted kittens in the community.

Council aims to educate the community about the benefits of de-sexing their cats and to address issues associated with straying cats.

Cats can be a nuisance to surrounding neighbours and when outdoors they also threaten native wildlife.

Under Section 31 of the Act, a cat is a nuisance if it:

- Makes a noise that persistently occurs or continues to such a degree or extent that it unreasonably interferes with the peace, comfort or convenience of any person in any other premises;
- Repeatedly damages anything outside the property on which it is ordinarily kept.

Council recognises that cats are more difficult to confine to a property than dogs. It is envisaged that each complaint about cats will need to be examined on a case by case basis. Distinctions also need to be made between stray and domestic cats. For the purpose of applying this policy, Council Rangers will make that distinction as required.

Cats born after 1998 are required to be identified and registered under the Act.

Note: Under the terms of the legislation, there is no definition for 'stray or feral cat'.

Proposed actions

- Promoting the de-sexing of cats.
- Educating cat owners about the benefits of keeping cats confined at night, to protect both the cat and wildlife.
- Increasing public awareness of the need to identify and register cats and responsible cat ownership.