
Domestic Animal Management Plan



2021 - 2025

Version 3.0



Northern Grampians Shire Council
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Domestic Animal Management Plan



Responsible director

Responsible officer

Functional area

Review date

Trenton Fithall

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Community Safety & Amenity

November 2025

CONTEXT STATEMENT

This version of the Northern Grampians Shire Council Domestic Animal Management Plan has been endorsed as a plan to enable and inform organisational and agency planning. It is recognised that strategies and deliverables outlined in this plan will develop further over the life of the plan with incremental versions of the plan to be produced and endorsed on an as required basis.

All comments should be forwarded to:

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents	Page
Context statement	1
Version control table	1
PART ONE - INTRODUCTION	4
1.1 Purpose	4
1.2 Council Plan	4
1.3 Council Profile	5
1.4 Municipal map	6
PART TWO - LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS	7
2.1 Legal Framework	7
2.2 Training of Authorised Officers	8
2.2.1 Our Plans	9
2.3 Registration and Identification	10
2.3.1 Current situation	10
2.3.2 Our plans	11
2.4 Nuisance	12
2.4.1 Current situation	12
2.4.2 Our plans	14
2.5 Dog Attacks	15
2.5.1 Current situation	15
2.5.2 Our plans	16
2.6 Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs	17
2.6.1 Current situation	17
2.6.2 Our plans	19
2.7 Overpopulation and High Euthanasia	20
2.7.1 Current situation	20
2.7.2 Our plans	21

2.8 Domestic Animal Business	24
2.8.1 Current Situation	24
2.8.2 Our Plans	25
2.9 Other Council Initiatives	26
2.9.1 Industry Leaders	26
2.9.2 Animal in Emergency	26
2.9.3 Northern Grampians Shire Council <i>General Local Law 2012</i>	27
3.1 Annual Review of Plan and Annual Reporting	29
3.1.1 Current Situation	29
3.1.2 Our Plans	29

PART ONE - INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE

Domestic animals play an integral role in the day to day lives of many in the Northern Grampians Shire community. Council recognises the significance of ensuring that pets, their owners, and non-pet owners can coexist in the community.

A Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) is a statutory requirement for all Victorian councils, prescribed by the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*. It is intended to provide the Northern Grampians Shire Council (NGSC) with a management plan for dogs, cats, and domestic animal businesses.

The purpose of the Domestic Animal Management Plan is to provide the Northern Grampians Shire Council with a strategic framework that delivers policy direction and action plans for animal management of the next 4 years. It aims to:

- Document current processes under NGSC animal management responsibilities.
- Increase pet owners 'knowledge of the principles of responsible pet ownership and enhance community safety and awareness.
- Strengthen relationships with animal rescue groups, vets, and other relevant services to respond to crisis situations and assist in rehoming animals.
- Reduce the number of dog attacks
- Balance the needs of those who own pets and those who do not.
- Decrease the numbers of dogs and cats being euthanized
- Maximise the numbers of dogs and cats that are registered in the NGSC municipality.
- Minimise the harmful effect of domestic pets on the population of native birds, mammals, and reptiles.
- Take community views on animal management matters into account.
- Comply with the relevant provisions of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*.

1.2 COUNCIL PLAN

The DAMP links with the Northern Grampians Shire Council Plan 2021-25 which aims to provide the organisation with a solid framework to ensure the services we provide and the infrastructure we deliver are done with a strategic purpose and offer the best possible value to the community.

Our Council Plan outlines eight pillars that sets the direction of the organisation over the next 4 years, including:

- Building More Housing
- Growing Local Businesses
- Boosting Tourism
- Wellness and Welfare
- Improving Connectivity
- Advancing Education
- Protecting the Natural Environment
- Being a Better Council

Council has previously identified four goals that incorporate into the Council Plan, including:

- Enhancing Lifestyle and Community
- Boost Economic Growth
- Provide Sustainable Infrastructure
- Improve Organisational Effectiveness

The DAMP aligns with the broader strategic direction of Council as outlined in the table below

Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021 - 2025

Council Goals	Strategic Directions	Business Objective
Enhance Lifestyle and Community	Foster A Safe Community	Reduce the impact of emergencies through the integration of community partnerships, science, and technology
		Set reasonable and manageable public health, safety and amenity requirements and monitor compliance
		Be proactive, inform, educate, support, and encourage community to understand and address noncompliance
		Take an escalating approach, holding people to account when they are deliberately resistant, evasive, or failing to account for risk to public health and wellbeing, in accordance with the law
	Protect And Enhance Our Natural and Cultural Environment	Prevent the further decline of our natural landscapes and cultural environment
Improve Organisational Effectiveness	Improve Our Organisational Effectiveness	Optimise the flow of services and products to customer by eliminating waste, creating robust, quality systems and committing to continuous improvement.
		Plan and review business requirements, staying current and evolving to the needs of the Organisation and the Community

1.3 COUNCIL PROFILE

The Northern Grampians Shire has a population of 11,403 (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] 2020) with much of the population situated in the following town centres (see figure 1 for map of shire):

Town	Location	Population
Stawell	Western Highway 233 km or 3 hours' drive from Melbourne	6,017 (ABS 2020)
St Arnaud	Sunraysia Highway 132 kms from Ballarat	2,154 (ABS 2020)
Halls Gap	29 km southwest of Stawell	734 (ABS 2020) (8,000-10,000 in peak periods)
Great Western & Stawell surrounds	14 km Southeast of Stawell, including the townships of: Navarre, Marnoo, and Glenorchy	1015 (ABS 2020)

Several smaller communities are scattered throughout the shire, and the remaining population reside on farming properties and lifestyle blocks. The shire has a diverse and growing economic base, and contains a range of industries, activities, and interests including agriculture, Landcare, tourism, and wine production. Commercial centres of Stawell and St Arnaud and tourism hub Halls Gap are vitally important to the region. The Grampians National Park is a major domestic and international tourist destination.

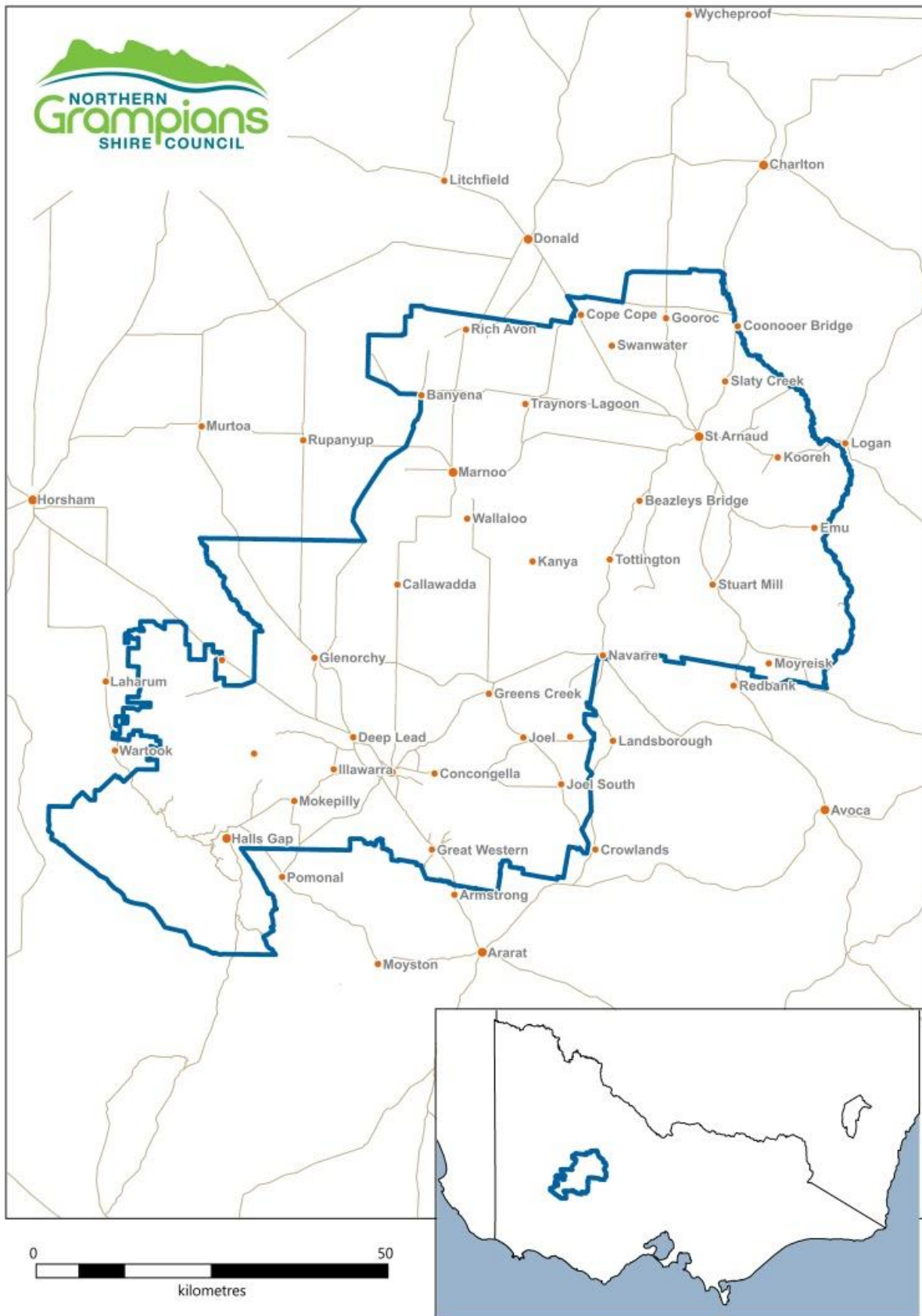


Figure 1 Map of Northern Grampians Shire.

PART TWO – LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

2.1 LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Under Section 68A of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, every Council must prepare a domestic animal management plan, as follows:

68A Councils to prepare domestic animal management plans

- (1) Every Council must, in consultation with the Secretary (*of the Department of Primary Industries*), prepare at 4-year intervals a domestic animal management plan.
- (2) A domestic animal management plan prepared by a Council must —
 - (a) set out a method for evaluating whether the animal control services provided by the Council in its municipal district are adequate to give effect to the requirements of this Act and the regulations; and
 - (b) outline programs for the training of authorised officers to ensure that they can properly administer and enforce the requirements of this Act in the Council's municipal district; and
 - (c) outline programs, services, and strategies which the Council intends to pursue in its municipal district—
 - (i) to promote and encourage the responsible ownership of dogs and cats.
 - (ii) to ensure that people comply with this Act, the regulations, and any related legislation.
 - (iii) to minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals.
 - (iv) to address overpopulation and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats.
 - (v) to encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats.
 - (vi) to minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance.
 - (vii) to effectively identify all dangerous dogs, menacing dogs, and restricted breed dogs in that district and to ensure that those dogs are kept in compliance with this Act and the regulations.
 - (d) provide for the review of existing orders made under this Act and local laws that relate to the Council's municipal district with a view to determining whether further orders or local laws dealing with the management of dogs and cats in the municipal district are desirable; and
 - (e) provide for the review of any other matters related to the management of dogs and cats in the Council's municipal district that it thinks necessary; and
 - (f) provide for the periodic evaluation of any program, service, strategy, or review outlined under the plan.
- (3) Every Council must —
 - (a) review its domestic animal management plan annually and, if appropriate, amend the plan; and
 - (b) provide the Secretary with a copy of the plan and any amendments to the plan; and
 - (c) publish an evaluation of its implementation of the plan in its annual report.

2.2 TRAINING OF AUTHORISED OFFICERS

Section 68(A)(2)(b) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 requires Council to outline programs for the training of authorised officers to ensure that they can properly administer and enforce the requirements of this Act in the Council's municipal district.

Council's Community Safety unit manages all domestic animal matters. The unit consists of a Team Leader, 1 x Fulltime Officer, 1 x part time officer and 2 part time Pound Attendants. The unit is situated in the infrastructure directorate and reports to the Coordinator Environment and Community Safety.

It is important to note that in addition to animal management, the Community Safety unit is responsible for other activities including parking enforcement, litter control, and local law administration. Whilst this is the case, each officer undertakes animal management work as a portion of their overall workload.

The NGSC is committed to ensuring all staff involved in animal management are suitably trained and equipped with the knowledge and skills required to meet the demands of the role.

Authorised Officers are required to be suitably qualified with a sound understanding and knowledge of a range of legislation including the Domestic Animals Act 1994. Apart from being able to administer and enforce the legislation, officers need to be able to communicate with all members of the community, diffuse difficult situations and safely handle animals.

All Community Safety Officers receive ongoing training in animal management and a range of other fields that will continue to ensure they are equipped to manage the demands of the role. Training in health and safety, customer service and workplace behaviours is included in the team's training to ensure officers act professionally when dealing with the community.

Annual performance reviews are conducted to ensure that officers have opportunity to review their current performance and skill set to assist in identifying any training needs. Officers are encouraged to attend industry related information sessions and seminars for networking opportunities and to keep up with the latest trends, innovations, and legislation. With most training being held in Melbourne or other parts of the state, a substantial commitment to training is made in the annual budget.

The NGSC's minimum requirements for training of Community Safety Officers include the following skills:

- Contribute to the health and safety of self and others
- Manage conflict situations
- Comply with animal control and regulation requirements
- Apply regulatory powers
- Assess, investigate, and act on non-compliance
- Prepare a brief of evidence
- Assess and impound animals
- First Aid

2.2.1 OUR PLANS

Objective 1: To ensure all Community Safety Officers have adequate training.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Identify minimum and additional training requirements	Ongoing	Minimum training requirements identified and embedded into the recruitment process
Ensure authorised officers have completed minimum training requirements	Ongoing	Training gaps identified through annual training register reviews
Ensure authorised officers undertake additional training opportunities	Ongoing	Each officer to undertake additional training annually
Ensure casual staff employed meet minimum training requirements	Ongoing	Through recruitment process

Objective 2: Develop and maintain a training register for Local Laws Officers.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Update register as training is completed	Annually 30 June	Training register is reviewed annually by 30 June

2.3 REGISTRATION AND IDENTIFICATION

Section 68A(2)(c)(v) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 requires Council to outline programs, services, and strategies to encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats
- also addresses 68A(2)(a), (c)(i), (c)(ii), (d), (f)

2.3.1 CURRENT SITUATION

Our current data

Registration and identification of domestic animals is critical to the functions of Council's animal management. The registration and identification assist Council in identifying animal owners and being able to investigate serious animal related reports. Animal registration fees ensure Council can provide an effective service and other education programs run by the State Government.

Domestic animals have a greater chance of being returned home if found wandering and reduces the stress on the owners and the animal if it is registered and identified.

Council data shows that registration trends vary from year to year. The reasons for this are unknown but could mean that animals have passed away, moved to other shires, or remain unregistered.

REGISTRATIONS	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Number of dogs	2183	2006	1820	1961
Number of cats	731	620	553	636

Our current Local Laws, policies, and procedures

Council currently has in place a Registration of Restricted Breed and Declared Dangerous Dogs Policy which supports the refusal to register dogs declared dangerous (other than guard dogs), including those deemed to be restricted breed dogs whose importation into Australia is prohibited.

Council procedures relevant to domestic animal registration and identification include:

- Notice to comply
- Impound of animal
- Restricted breed dog declaration
- Returned/deceased/departed animal registration
- Infringement entry

Council's existing and relevant Local Laws under Council's General Local Law 2012 include:

- Excess animals in residential areas
- Excess animals in rural areas
- Cats in Halls Gap area

Our current education/promotion activities

NGSC sends shire residents animal registration renewal notices annually, and in their regular contact with the community, Officers take opportunities to discuss registration requirements with pet owners. Council's website contains a section dedicated to "Cat & Dog Registration", which explains registration requirements, fees, and restrictions in the Northern Grampians Shire.

Our current compliance activities

Officers issue Notices to Comply for lapsed or non-existent domestic animal registrations. Through Council's Local Laws after hours service, unregistered animals are often impounded. After hours animal service. Upon impoundment, animals are required to be registered on release.

In the southern part of the shire, Halls Gap has been designated as a cat free zone due to its proximity to native wildlife in the Grampians National Park. Halls Gap became a cat free zone on 21 October 1993. No occupier of property in the Halls Gap area may keep a cat in their possession, unless the cat was living before this date. Council enforces this by issuing Notices to Comply and infringements as required to residents of Halls Gap caught housing cat/s in the cat free zone.

Summary

A high number of unregistered impounded animals indicates a high rate of unregistered animals within the shire. This highlights the requirement for ongoing community education and compliance for registrations.

2.3.2 OUR PLANS

Objective 1: Increase domestic animal registration rates in the Shire.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Ensure all impounded animals are registered prior to release	Ongoing	Review impoundment records on a regular basis
Issue Notices to Comply for non-registration	Annually	Increased compliance with animal registration
Provide responsible pet ownership literature	Ongoing	Compare total number of animals registered in NGS with previous year's registration data
Review fees and investigate options to make registration of animals an incentive, including pro rata arrangements	Annually	Fees reviewed
Monitor registration trends, including that of impounded animals	Ongoing	Number of animals registered
Identify and follow up on unpaid animal registrations	Annually	Number of Notice to Comply' issues
Ensure that animal complaints are checked for registration compliance as part of the process.	Ongoing	Number of Notice to Comply issued

2.4 NUISANCE

Section 68A(2)(c)(vi) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 requires Council to outline programs, services, and strategies to minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance

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

2.4.1 CURRENT SITUATION

Our current data

Nuisance animals cause unnecessary stress on the community and Council is committed to investigating and resolving any reports as soon as possible.

The number of reports received for domestic animals wandering uncontrolled remains high with approximately 3 reports received per week. Owners have a responsibility to ensure that this nuisance is abated, and Council works closely with owners to ensure compliance.

Feral and stray cats continue to be a problem for the community, just like the rest of Australia. Council continues to make available cat traps to the community and works with industry to manage the problem.

The table below gives a snapshot of the nuisance reports received over the past 4 years.

NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Barking dogs	41	60	33	45
Wandering at large (dogs & cats)	116	60	158	149
Cat trap requests	46	53	62	75

Our current Local Laws, Council policies and procedures

Council has in place a Registration of Restricted Breed and Declared Dangerous Dogs Policy which supports the refusal to register dogs declared dangerous (other than guard dogs) including those deemed to be restricted breed dogs whose importation into Australia is prohibited.

Council procedures relevant to domestic animal nuisance include:

- Notice to comply
- Impound of animal
- Barking dog complaint
- Infringement entry

Council's existing and relevant Local Laws under Council's General Local Law 2012 include:

- Excess animals in residential areas
- Excess animals in rural areas
- Cats in Halls Gap area
- Dogs on leash in all municipal places
- Clean up animal excrement

Additionally, Council has an internal Customer Request Management system which ensures that incoming enquiries and complaints are documented and managed. Council targets the shire's feral cat population through Officers setting cat traps in known problematic areas, as well as lending traps to shire residents for use on their own properties.

Our current education/promotion activities

Council seeks to educate the public on nuisance animal issues and processes via the website, which contains a copy of Council's General Local Law 2012, information on cat traps, barking dogs' advice and complaints process, and requirements and restrictions for excess/prohibited animal ownership. Council has also obtained state government brochures "Are you a cat owner?" and "Are you a dog owner?" with the plan to deliver further responsible pet ownership information to the community (figure 2).



Figure 2 Responsible pet ownership brochures.

Our current compliance activities

Council's current compliance activities relating to domestic animal nuisance include:

- Cat ban in Halls Gap area (as per Council's General Local Law 2012)
- Issuing of Notices to Comply and infringements where necessary
- Investigation of all nuisance complaints, including barking dogs and animals wandering at large
- Provision of cat traps on request
- Use of cat traps by Local Laws Officers to trap feral cats in known problem areas

Summary

To reduce nuisance complaints within the shire, Community Safety Officers will continue to deliver education and compliance programs, improve existing processes and, investigate new initiatives

2.4.2 OUR PLANS

Objective 1: Reduce nuisance complaints.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Promote responsible pet ownership in multiple mediums i.e., social media, print etc.	Ongoing	Reduced impoundments including repeat offenders, identified through annual review of data by 30 June
Cat traps used by Council and available to the public for capturing feral cats	Ongoing	Reduced number of wild/feral cats captured via trapping program, identified through annual review of data by 30 June
Monitor locations of complaints about wandering dogs	Ongoing	Reduced number of reports and impounded dogs

Objective 2: Improve efficiency of response to 'Wandering at Large' complaints.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Map process to identify inefficiencies and make improvements	June 2022	Evaluate resolution timeframes in Council's internal customer request program, identified in Council's Annual Report
Undertake proactive patrols in known problem areas where possible	Ongoing	Reduced number of reports

Objective 3: Review of policies and strategies relating to animals

Activity	When	Evaluation
Review General Local Law to ensure it is consistent with the community expectations and environment	2022	Local Law Reviewed

2.5 DOG ATTACKS

Section 68A(2)(c)(iii) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 requires Council to outline programs, services, and strategies to minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals
- also addresses 68A(2)(a), (c)(i), (c)(ii), (d), (f)

2.5.1 CURRENT SITUATION

Our current data

Dog attacks are the greatest risk to the community, including our farming community. Livestock attacks continue to occur, and the increased number of wandering dogs as noted previously plays a big part. Many dog attacks go under reported as a result of the Shire being a small community. Unfortunately, dog attacks are often reported to Council after the 2nd or 3rd attack.

Council actively works with affected dog owners and farmers to reduce the chances of further incidents occurring.

The below table notes the reported dog attacks received by Council over the past 4 years.

Number of dog attack (type)	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Livestock	7	3	4	7
Dogs / cats	2	3	4	3
Human	1*	4*	8*	4*
Other	0	0	3	2
TOTAL	10	10	19	16

NOTE: ATTACKS ON HUMANS DOES NOT INCLUDE RUSHING, CHASING ETC.

Our current Local Laws, Council policies and procedures

Council has in place the following policies related to the management of dog attacks within Northern Grampians Shire.

- Dog attack policy
- Registration of restricted breed and declared dangerous dogs' policy

Council procedures relevant to dog attacks include:

- Dog attack response
- Impound of animal
- Infringement entry
- Evidence gathering - points of proof

Council's existing and relevant Local Laws under Council's *General Local Law 2012* include:

- Dogs on leash

Our current education/promotion activities

Council's stance on dangerous and restricted breed dogs within Northern Grampians Shire is detailed on the website. Council promotes responsible pet ownership through regular Local Laws Officer contact with pet owners residing in the shire. Council also delivers responsible pet ownership information through the brochure "*Are you a dog owner?*" (Figure 3), which includes advice on property confinement, training and socialisation, and dog attacks.

Our current compliance activities

Council's current compliance activities relating to dog attacks include:

- Issuing of Notices to Comply and infringements where necessary
- Investigation of all dog attacks reported to Council
- Animal impoundment
- Procedure to declare Menacing and/or Dangerous Dogs

Summary

Dog attacks are taken seriously by Council and reducing the number of attacks remains a priority for the team. Local Laws Officers will continue to deliver compliance activities and improve existing processes to further reduce the occurrence of dog attacks within the Northern Grampians Shire.

2.5.2 OUR PLANS

Objective 1: Reduce the number of dog attacks.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Promote responsible pet ownership in multiple mediums (i.e., social media, print etc.)	Ongoing	Reduced number of dog attacks reported annually, identified through annual review of data by 30 June
Provide solutions to owners of ways to contain wandering dogs	Ongoing	Reduced number of dog attacks reported
Actively patrol areas of nuisance wandering dogs	Ongoing	Reduced number of reports
Review data in relation to dog attacks to identify trends or useful information to assist in improving awareness	Ongoing	Data reviewed and annual programs set
Review the General Local Law to ensure it is consistent with community expectations	2022	Local Law Reviewed

2.6 DANGEROUS, MENACING AND RESTRICTED BREED DOGS

Section 68A(2)(c)(vii) of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* requires Council to outline programs, services, and strategies to effectively identify all dangerous dogs, menacing dogs and restricted breed dogs in that district and to ensure that those dogs are kept in compliance with this Act and the regulations

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

2.6.1 CURRENT SITUATION

Our current data

Menacing and dangerous dog declarations are an effective method to reduce the risk of further incidents. Once declared, the powers of Council and the penalty to the dog owner increase which reduces the number of repeated offences.

Council has declared 4 dogs dangerous in the past 12 months as a result of dog attack investigations and will continue to use this measure in order to inform the community how serious we will treat dog attack reports.

DOGS	2018/19	2020/21
Number of menacing declarations	1	1
Number of dangerous declarations	0	4

Our current Local Laws, Council policies and procedures

Council's existing and relevant Local Laws under Council's *General Local Law 2012* include:

- Dogs on leash
- Excess animals in residential area
- Excess animals in rural area

Council has in place a 'Registration of Restricted Breed and Declared Dangerous Dogs Policy', which provides for the safety and wellbeing of residents and visitors through the right of refusal to register restricted breed dogs and dangerous dogs. in the Northern Grampians Shire.

The policy is a discretionary directive available to Council under the *Domestic Animal Act 1994*, enabling Council to instruct Council Officers not to register or renew the registration of restricted breed dogs or declared dangerous dogs in this municipality. This will have the effect of banning these dogs within this municipality, as all dogs must be registered with Council (*Domestic Animal Act 1994*).

Pursuant to Section 3 (1) of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* a restricted breed dog is defined as any one of the following breeds:

- Japanese Tosa
- Fila Brasileiro
- Dogo Argentino
- Perro De Presa Canario (or Presa Canario)
- American Pit Bull Terrier (or Pit Bull Terrier)

Dogs may be declared dangerous by Council if the dog;

- Causes a serious injury to or kills a person or another animal
- Is a declared menacing dog and its owner has received at least two infringement notices for offences of being outside the owner's premises not muzzled or controlled on a lead
- Declared dangerous in another state or territory

Council procedures relevant to the management of dangerous, menacing, and restricted breed dogs include:

- Impound of animal
- Infringement entry
- Evidence gathering - points of proof
- Restricted breed dog declaration
- Menacing/dangerous dog declaration

Our current education/promotion activities

Information can be found on Council's website regarding the registration of dangerous and restricted breed dogs within Northern Grampians Shire.

Our current compliance activities

To increase compliance relating to dangerous, menacing, and restricted breed dogs, Council Officers undertake the following actions.

- Provide an after-hours server to assist with managing dog attacks and aggressive dogs.
- Thoroughly investigate dog attacks
- Issue Menacing/Dangerous Dog Declarations
- Hold dogs that have been involved in attacks during the course of the investigation

Summary

In July 2005 Council supported the move for Council Officers to decline to register dogs declared dangerous (other than guard dogs) including those deemed to be a restricted breed dog.

Declared dangerous dogs and restricted breed dogs (including Pit Bull Terriers) may not be approved to be registered with NGSC. This policy ensures the safety of our community by removing dangerous dogs from our municipality.

Council has taken a stronger stance in recent years as a result of dog attacks which has resulted in more animals being declared. These measures are put in place to protect the community.

2.6.2 OUR PLANS

Objective 1: Ensure declared dogs are compliant with relevant legislation and regulations.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Conduct random property inspections of declared dogs to ensure compliance	Ongoing	Supporting documentation No repeat incidents with declared dogs
Repeat menacing dog offenders are escalated to declared dangerous dogs in line with legislation	Ongoing	Supporting documentation
Complete review of menacing dog compliance	Annual	Review property inspection data and impound register
Investigate complaints about menacing, dangerous or restricted breed dogs	Ongoing	Investigations completed
Ensure all declared dogs are accurately registered on the Victorian Dangerous Dog Registry	Ongoing	All declared dogs registered

Objective 2: Identify and register all Declared Dogs in the municipality.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Officers to undertake Restricted Breed dog training to ensure easy identification	When available	Training completed
Review Council's Restricted Breed Dog Registration Policy	2023	Policy Reviewed

2.7 OVERPOPULATION AND HIGH EUTHANASIA

Section 68A(2)(c)(iv) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 requires Council to outline programs, services, and strategies to address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats
- also addresses 68A(2)(a), (c)(i), (c)(ii), (d), (f)

2.7.1 CURRENT SITUATION

Our current data

An ongoing feral cat problem at local industrial sites, low reclaim rates and low numbers of cats microchipped in the Northern Grampians Shire continues to contribute to a high rate of euthanasia in cats impounded by Council.

It is important to note that over the past 4 years, the number of animals reclaimed (51% in 2020/21) has steadily increased and the percentage of animals euthanised (17% in 2020/21) has decreased. Council will endeavour to return all animals to their owners where possible and work with animal rescue groups to reduce the number of animals euthanised.

ANIMALS IMPOUNDED	DOMESTIC ANIMALS			
	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Adopted	83	30	116	78
Reclaimed	86	82	113	138
Euthanasia	47	32	36	45
Deceased	0	0	0	6
TOTAL	216	144	265	267

Our current Local Laws, Council policies and procedures

Council's existing and relevant Local Laws under Council's *General Local Law 2012* include:

- Excess Animals in residential area
- Excess Animals in rural area
- Cats in Halls Gap area
- 84Y Agreements

Council procedures relevant to overpopulation and high euthanasia include:

- Impound of animal
- Animal attendant procedure
- Health Management Plan for pounds
- Animal impound information sheet

As part of a strong commitment to rehoming animals, Council has 84Y agreements in place with 21 animal rescue groups. This extensive network of rescue groups enables Council to rehome many of its impounded animals.

Our current education/promotion activities

Council Officers facilitate adoption directly from the Council Pound and support 84Y Agreement participants to assist with rehoming animals. Officers promote animals available for adoption through Council’s website and social media channels. Council initiatives including animal rehoming are also promoted in all staff’s outgoing emails as a footer advertisement (see example in figure 3 below).



Figure 1 NGSC staff email footer promoting adoption of impounded animals.

Our current compliance activities

Current Council activities delivered by Local Laws Officers to reduce overpopulation and euthanasia include:

- Excess animal application assessments and enforcement
- Investigating reports of illegal and unregistered puppy farms
- Issuing of Notices to Comply for animal registrations
- Desexing all domestic animals prior to release from the pound*
- Cat traps available for the public
- Vehicle patrols and response to nuisance complaints

*Not including animals released under 84Y Agreements.

Summary

Council’s pound and euthanasia policies are guided by the *Domestic Animal Act 1994*. Council operates under its own pound and policies and procedures in accordance with the *Domestic Animal Act 1994* and the *Code of Practice for the Operation of Shelters and Pounds*.

The number of animals reclaimed is increasing and Council will continue to work with the community and animal rescue groups in order to reduce the overpopulation and euthanasia rates in the Shire.

2.7.2 OUR PLANS

Objective 1: Identify reasons for euthanasia

Activity	When	Evaluation
Develop and improve Council’s internal database to identify reasons for euthanasia	Ongoing	Compare euthanasia statistics annually, identified through annual review of data by 30 June

Objective 2: Reduce number of feral cats within the Shire

Activity	When	Evaluation
Work with animal rescue groups to identify and address problem areas	Ongoing	Reduction in complaints relating to feral cats Reduction in requests for cat traps Identified through annual review of data by 30 June
Work with animal rescue groups to rehome friendly and healthy cats with suitable people	Ongoing	Reduction in the number of cats euthanised
Continue cat trapping program as needed, providing traps to the public as well as Officers trapping in identified problem areas	Ongoing	Reduced number of wild/feral cats captured via trapping program, identified through annual review of data by 30 June
Encourage desexing by providing a reduced registration fee for desexed animals	Ongoing	Increase in desexed animals within the Shire, identified through annual review of data by 30 June
Increased community education on the issue of feral cats	Ongoing	Reduction in complaints relating to feral cats Reduction in requests for cat traps Identified through annual review of data by 30 June

Objective 3: Identify all illegal breeding establishments* within Shire.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Investigate known breeding establishments	Ongoing	Increased number of registered breeding establishments, identified through annual review of data by 30 June
Monitor social media	Ongoing	Increased number of registered breeding establishments, identified through annual review of data by 30 June
Encourage the public to provide information to Council regarding known breeding establishments and investigate	Ongoing	Increased number of registered breeding establishments, identified through annual review of data by 30 June

Objective 4: Review current local laws and policies relating to animals.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Review General Local Law to ensure measures are in place to reduce overpopulation	2022	Local Law reviewed

***Registration requirements for breeding/rearing businesses**

As specified in the *Code of Practice for the Operation of Breeding and Rearing Businesses*:

- Any dog or cat breeding business with 3 or more fertile female dogs, or 3 or more fertile female cats, must register as a Domestic Animal Business with the local council in the municipality that it resides.
- Where the breeder is a member of an Applicable Organisation**, the proprietor must only register as a Domestic Animal Business with their local council when they have more than 9 fertile female dogs or cats, or more than 2 are NOT registered with the Applicable Organisation.
- Applicable Organisation members with 10 or more fertile females or 3-9 fertile females where 2 or more are NOT registered with the applicable organisation, must register as a Domestic Animal Business with their local council.
- A rearer is an enterprise that is run for profit and carries out the rearing of dogs and cats and must register as a Domestic Animal Business with their local council.

**Information on Applicable Organisations can be found at the Agriculture Victoria website www.agriculture.vic.gov.au.

2.8 DOMESTIC ANIMAL BUSINESS

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

2.8.1 CURRENT SITUATION

Our current data

Council has a small number of domestic animal businesses within the municipality. Each business is audited annually to ensure they comply with the legislation. Where a business fails to comply, Council will actively work with them to ensure that they can reach a satisfactory level of compliance.

There are no domestic animal breeding businesses within the municipality and Council works with the RSPCA to investigate all reported illegal breeding businesses.

The Community Safety team also work alongside Council's Planning Department in managing any enquiries relating to any proposed domestic animal businesses.

Domestic Animal Businesses are defined by the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* as:

- a) *An animal Shelter, Council pound or pet shop, or*
- b) *An enterprise which carries out the breeding of dogs or cats to seek, where:*
 - i. *In the case of an enterprise whose proprietor is a member of an applicable organisation, the enterprise has 10 or more fertile female dogs or 10 or more fertile female cats, or*
 - ii. *In the case of an enterprise whose proprietor is not a member of an applicable organisation, the enterprise has 3 or more fertile female dogs or 3 or more fertile female cats, or*
- c) *An enterprise that is run for profit which carries out the rearing, training, or boarding of dogs or cats*

DOMESTIC ANIMAL BUSINESS	2017/19	2019/21
Shelter/Pounds	2	2
Boarding Facilities	1	0
Pet Shops	1	2

Our current Local Laws, Council policies and procedures

Domestic Animal Business registration is controlled by the *Domestic Animal Act 1994*. Council will continue to investigate all reports on Domestic Animal Breeding Businesses and seek compliance for any non-registered Domestic Animal Business by conducting property inspections.

Our current education/promotion activities

Council provides information and guidance to Domestic Animal Businesses on the necessity of registration, and the procedure and requirements to be fulfilled under the *Domestic Animal Act 1994*.

Our current compliance activities

Council currently undertakes the following activities to ensure compliance with businesses registered and the identification of unregistered businesses:

- Annual audits of registered businesses
- Follow up on properties identified through complaints regarding suspected Domestic Animal Businesses

Summary

There are a low number of Domestic Animal Businesses located within the Northern Grampians Shire. Council is obliged to ensure that each establishment complies with the relevant mandatory codes of practice for the operation of breeding and rearing establishments, boarding establishments, shelters, and pounds, such as the *Code of Practice for the Operation of Shelters and Pounds*.

Council will continue to investigate all reported illegal domestic animal businesses to ensure full compliance within the municipality.

2.8.2 Our plans

Objective 1: Increase Domestic Animal Business Registration within the shire

Activity	When	Evaluation
Identify through social and print media all Domestic Animal Businesses and determine whether registration is required	Annually	Increase in Domestic Animal Business registration, identified through annual review of data by 30 June
Community education on definition of Domestic Animal Business	Annually	Increase in Domestic Animal Business registration, identified through annual review of data by 30 June

Objective 2: Ensure all registered Domestic Animal Businesses are compliant with legislation

Activity	When	Evaluation
Annually inspect and audit all registered domestic animal businesses	Annually	All registered Domestic Animal Businesses are audited by 31 August
Investigate all complaints relating to domestic animal businesses to ensure compliance	Ongoing	Investigations complete
Investigate animal registration data to ensure properties with excess animals are not a breeding business	Annually	Investigations complete

2.9 OTHER COUNCIL INITIATIVES

Section 68A(2)(e) requires Council to provide for the review of any other matters related to the management of dogs and cats in the Council's municipal district that it thinks necessary

2.9.1 INDUSTRY LEADERS

NGSC is committed to facilitating continuous improvement with all departments, by identifying long term goals and working towards being industry leaders of our individual fields.

The industry leader goal identified for Council's Local Laws unit is to improve accessibility to the pound and process to adopt animals, and covers the following tasks:

- Identify the internal process to list animals for adoption
- Update animal shelter page on Council's website
- Advertise good news stories
- Identify pound site requirements including safe access
- Create site plan for the pound and identify improvements

Objective 1: Improve accessibility to pound and process to adopt animals

Activity	When	Evaluation
Create a customer friendly and accessible electronic medium	Ongoing	Increase in animal adoptions and reduced time spent at pound, identified through annual review of data by 30 June
Identify and implement improvements to pound site	June 2021	Completion of identified improvements by June 2022
Investigate options to impound animals after hours	2022	Investigation complete
Investigate options for a temporary holding facility for lost animals in St Arnaud	2022	Investigation complete

2.9.2 ANIMALS IN EMERGENCY

Council prioritise urgent animal welfare needs in emergencies and have identified the following animal welfare service recovery activities in the Northern Grampians Shire Municipal Emergency Management Plan.

- Assist/destroy injured stock/wildlife
- Coordinate disposal of dead stock
- Coordinate emergency feed/fodder supplies
- Identify holding areas for stock/pets
- Provide cages/leads etc. for animals and relief/recovery centres
- Round up escaped stock

Objective 1: Ensure DAMP links with relevant Council emergency plans

Activity	When	Evaluation
Ensure the Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) links to relevant Council emergency plans including the Municipal Emergency Management Plan (MEMP) and the Emergency Animal Welfare Plan (EAWP)	September 2022	Update DAMP, MEMP and EAWP to reflect relevant animal management considerations in emergencies by 30 September 2022

2.9.3 NORTHERN GRAMPIANS SHIRE COUNCIL GENERAL LOCAL LAW 2012**Clauses impacting on domestic animals****38. EXCESS ANIMALS IN RESIDENTIAL AREA**

1. Without a Permit, an owner or occupier of premises in a residential area must not keep, or allow to be kept, any animals in excess of the number specified below:
 - a. 2 cats.
 - b. 2 dogs.
2. Without a Permit, an owner or occupier of premises in a residential area must not keep, or allow to be kept, more than four different types of animals at the premises.
3. Progeny of animals kept will not be considered for the purpose's subclause (1) or subclause (2) until they are 12 weeks of age.

40. EXCESS ANIMALS IN RURAL AREA

1. Without a Permit, an occupier of rural land must not keep, or allow to be kept, more than:
 - a. 4 cats; and
 - b. 4 dogs

41. CATS IN HALLS GAP AREA

1. A person in the Halls Gap area (Maps 35, 36 and 37 of the Northern Grampians Planning Scheme as identified in Schedule 3) must not keep a cat which was not in their possession and being kept in the Halls Gap area before 21 October 1993.

Penalty: 2 penalty units

2. The owner of a cat which is exempt under section 41(1) must ensure:
 - a. that the cat is confined totally indoors or in an escape proof enclosure on the owner's premises; and
 - b. when outside the owner's premises the cat must be confined to an enclosed vehicle.

43. DOGS ON LEASH

1. The owner or person in charge of a dog in a municipal place must at all times keep the dog under control by a leash, chain or cord connecting the dog to the owner or person in charge of it.

Penalty: 2 penalty units

2. The owner of the dog must ensure that the person in control of the dog in a municipal place has the physical capabilities of controlling the dog in all circumstances.

Penalty: 2 penalty units

3. Sub clause (1) does not apply to a person in charge of a dog that is under their effective control while working with livestock.
4. For the purposes of Sub clause (1) and (2) if the owner of the dog is under 17 years of age, the parent or guardian of that person is deemed to be the owner.
5. Subclause (1) does not apply in a municipal place which is designated by Council signs to be an area where dogs are permitted off-leash

44. ANIMAL EXCREMENT

1. A person in charge of an animal in a municipal place must:
 - a. Carry a device suitable for the collection of any excrement from that animal and produce the device on demand by an Authorised Officer.

Penalty: 2 penalty units

- b. Immediately collect and dispose of any excrement from that animal into a waste receptacle.

Penalty: 2 penalty units

2. An Authorised Officer may direct the person in charge of an animal to collect and dispose of any excrement from the animal deposited contrary to subclause (1) (b) in an approved manner and that person must do so.

Penalty: 2 penalty units

3.1 ANNUAL REVIEW OF PLAN AND ANNUAL REPORTING

In accordance with section 68A (3) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 every Council must—

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

3.1.1 CURRENT SITUATION

An annual review of the Domestic Animal Management Plan is included in Council's Annual Report and includes statistics of animal impounds and resultant actions. These statistics drive the assessment of current orders and Local Laws for adequacy and are a basis for identifying the urgency of any changes required.

Annual reviews include:

- A collation of information from like and neighbouring councils to identify trends in animal control as well as assessment of current methods used.
- The number and frequency of animal-based complaints recorded on Council's complaint system or received directly by Councillors.
- Investigation of inexplicable substantial gaps in animal control statistics. Statistics that fall below or rise above the average are the first indicator of Council's animal control efficiencies and deficiencies.
- Information sharing with like councils to identify trends and methods that are effective or ineffective.

Community feedback is sought by the community prior to the adoption of this plan by Council to ensure that this plan is consistent with the communities' expectations.

A copy of the NGSC Domestic Animal Management Plan is provided to the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources for review following adoption by Council.

3.1.2 OUR PLANS

Objective 1: Engage and consult with the community in development of the NGSC DAMP.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Consult with industry stakeholders in the draft stages of an updated DAMP	2020	Stakeholders consulted, feedback considered and incorporated into plan where appropriate

Objective 2: Develop internal processes to ensure annual review of DAMP is triggered.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Investigate internal trigger for review of plan by appropriate officer/s	June	DAMP is reviewed annually by 30 June

Objective 3: Create system to easily access data required for use in future versions of the DAMP.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Work with Council's Information Communications Technology team to develop electronic storage system	Dec 2022	Data easily available for next major DAMP review in 2025

Objective 4: Provide transparency regarding the effectiveness of the NGSC DAMP.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Publish an evaluation of the DAMP's implementation in Council's Annual Report	Annually	DAMP evaluation appears in each of Council's Annual Reports