



WEDDIN SHIRE COUNCIL

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LOCAL COMPANION ANIMALS MANAGEMENT PLAN

Adopted: 21 September 2017

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1. Executive Summary

The development and implementation of a comprehensive and effective local companion animal management plan is essential to enable Weddin Shire Council to provide a balanced and common sense approach to the emotive issue of animal management within the Shire.

The new legislative reform provides for additional enforcement while acknowledging that community education and responsible pet ownership is of paramount importance and must be pursued in partnership with the legislation strategies.

This Plan identifies the advantages, disadvantages and the perceived community concerns relating to pet ownership and sets out a series of objectives directed towards a proactive approach with deliverable outcomes in relation to the management of companion animals.

Continued review and improvement of the Plan after its implementation is critical to ensure that the best interests of the entire community are served and that the quality of life of the citizens of the Weddin Shire is enhanced.

2. INTRODUCTION

While this Plan has been prepared with due consideration of national data and trends, it is designed to provide a strategic framework and a balanced management system specific to the Weddin Shire which will serve the needs of both pet-owners and non-pet owners alike.

2.1 Background

The NSW Dog Act 1966 was introduced to regulate the keeping of dogs in the urban environment. However there is a need for more comprehensive legislation and more effective animal management methods. The legislative need has been met by the introduction of the NSW Companion Animals Act 1998, which was assented to on 15 July 1998.

This Act endeavours to address the concerns of the modern community as they relate to the keeping of dogs and cats, and makes provision for the introduction of legislation at a later date in regard to other companion animals.

The NSW Department of Local Government, as part of its support for the implementation of the new legislation, promotes community education and encourages Councils to develop and implement local Companion Animals Management Plans and to work with the community for better management methods. In Australia, it has been estimated that 57% of households own a dog or a cat or both.

Should this estimate be applied to Weddin Shire, with around 2,400 rateable portions of land, there could be up to, or possibly more than 1,200 households with an estimate in excess of 5,000 companion animals around half of which would be urban. This is a very significant proportion of the population and it is apparent that a need exists for the development and implementation of an action plan for the proper management of companion animals in the Weddin Shire urban environment.

A SWOT analysis of Council's existing Ranger Service has been undertaken and is attached as **Appendix A**, in an endeavour to determine service level provisions that need to be incorporated in the management plan.

In the development of this management plan it has been essential to determine the relevant issues, to research information from all available sources and to seek input and involvement from key community stakeholders.

2.2 Councils Goal

To develop and implement a Local Companion Animals Management Plan to achieve a harmonious relationship between companion animals, humans and the environment.

3. OBJECTIVES

3.1 Community Education and Responsible Pet Ownership

The privilege of owning and enjoying the companionship of a pet carries with it the dual responsibilities of care for the animal, and care for the community. However not all pet owners recognise these obligations.

Ownership and owner responsibility is central to any attempt to improve urban companion animal management, and responsible pet ownership includes not only proper housing, feeding, control and care, but also includes responsible breeding controls. Responsible pet owners accept the potential for problems if their cats or dogs are allowed to roam.

The NSW Animal Welfare League estimates that 90% of animals in pounds are unidentified. The NSW Companion Animals White Paper estimated that 80,000 companion animals are euthanased across NSW every year.

The Australian Companion Animal Council has produced two help brochures, 'Renting with Pets' and 'Tenants with Pets' to try to address the issue of responsible pet ownership in rental properties.

Council's objectives are to:

- 3.1.1 Prepare and distribute a "Responsible Pet Management" brochure to every residence in Weddin Shire.
- 3.1.2 Council identify or develop community education and responsible pet ownership brochures that emphasise:
 - the importance of owner-animal matching e.g. by promoting PIAS "Select A Pet"
 - the importance of early desexing of pets
 - the importance of training & socialisation of pets

3.2 Environmental Protection

Community awareness of protection of air and water quality and our much-valued native flora and fauna is growing rapidly and the community at large expects areas of environmental sensitivity to be protected.

Community education and responsible pet ownership programs should emphasise that dumping of unwanted pets in bushland, garbage tips, industrial estates or nature reserves is irresponsible, cruel and potentially environmentally destructive.

It is well known that feral cats and free-ranging domestic cats are responsible for a significant number of wildlife deaths every year. It is therefore important that appropriate emphasis be placed upon the care and control of domestic cats especially to limit their nocturnal wanderings.

Similarly, stray and free-ranging dogs together with introduced predators such as foxes pose a threat to wildlife. They generally struggle for a poor quality of life, evoking both environmental and welfare considerations.

Pollution of domestic yards, footpaths, parks and reserves by animal faeces, and the consequent pollution of waterways by stormwater run-off is of great environmental concern. Pet droppings contribute to the high levels of phosphorous and other potentially harmful nutrients in our waterways.

Stray dogs' faeces and the failure of owners to collect and properly dispose of their animals' faeces, pose a potential health threat to the community, as well as an environmental hazard. There is a potential for infections to be passed to humans from animals, particularly from Hookworm and Roundworm. Eggs from these worms may in fact, remain dormant in the environment for up to a year.

Council's objectives are to:

3.2.1 identify or develop community education and responsible pet ownership brochures that emphasise:

- the problems of dumping unwanted litters (Dob in a Dumper)
- the benefits of proper collection and disposal of pet faeces
- the importance of confining pets.

3.3 Identification and Registration of Companion Animals

The NSW Department of Local Government has advised that identification and registration requirements for dogs and cats under the Companion Animals Act 1998 are:

- Microchipping and Registration

The Act requires animals to be microchipped from 12 weeks of age or at time of sale and lifetime registration from 6 months of age. The new microchipping and registration system applies to all new puppies and kittens and animals which change owners from 1 July 1999.

Greyhounds registered with Greyhound Racing Authority are exempted from permanent identification by microchip but will pay a one-off State fee for the duration of their registration with the Authority. If a greyhound is no longer registered with the Authority and is rehoused the new owner will be required to identify it by microchip.

- Registration Fees

The lifetime registration fees are set by regulation. Lifetime registration fees are the same for cats and dogs. The lifetime registration fee for a desexed animal is \$35 and for entire animals is \$100. The lifetime fee for a desexed animal owned by pensioners is \$15. Registered breeders pay the same fee as for desexed animals (\$35).

- State wide Register

The Act provided for the establishment of a state wide register, which has replaced individual councils existing registers. Authorised council staff will be provided with access codes so they may access the information contained on the register.

- Council Income

Councils retain approximately 85% of all one-off lifetime registration fees. Other income for councils will come from fines and pound charges.

Weddin Shire statistics are found in **Appendix B**.

Council's objectives are to:

- 3.3.1 prepare appropriate best practice protocols to ensure that operational procedures are commensurate with legislative reform and community expectations.
- 3.3.2 establish and implement community education and responsible pet ownership programs that emphasise:
 - the importance of permanent identification of pets.
 - the importance of lifetime registration of pets.
 - the importance to the whole community of pet owners complying with their legislative responsibilities.
- 3.3.3 pursue an ongoing random program of shire wide registration checks with priority in Grenfell and the village areas.

3.4 Community Amenity

The co-existence of humans and animals in the community does not always run smoothly. Urban consolidation has resulted in the close proximity of neighbouring dwellings exacerbating noise and other nuisance animal problems. The three principal generators of dog related complaints are barking dogs, defecating dogs and dogs unleashed in public places.

Stray and unconfined cats cause community nuisance with their propensity for predatory aggression and their intrusive territorial and noisy nocturnal behaviour. Although complaints regarding noise problems created by cats are far less than those related to dogs, they are still a concern to the community.

Poorly controlled companion animals cause many community problems including predation on livestock, scavenging from waste receptacles, intrusive and aggressive behaviour. Unleashed dogs in public places are not only potential polluters, but are likely to cause noise nuisance and be a risk to public safety.

A safe public realm for everybody is a high priority and particular attention needs to be paid not only to the safety of children but to safety for all persons in public places and to the plight of the vulnerable guide dogs and their elderly owners with relevance to nuisance dogs.

Weddin Shire Council has now established two (2) off-leash dog exercise areas at Grenfell and will consider establishing other areas throughout the Shire in an endeavour to provide a facility for dog owners to exercise their dogs freely, but under controlled conditions to minimise interference with the general public or local wildlife.

Council's objectives are to:

- 3.4.1 establish and implement community education and responsible pet ownership programs that promote:
 - good pet ownership to help reduce nuisance dog and cat problems
 - understanding of other peoples rights to avoid escalation of neighbourhood disputes
 - efforts to minimise noise nuisance from companion animals
 - strategies to prevent dog attacks.
- 3.4.2 Review off-leash areas annually with particular regard to safe use, effectiveness and provision of additional areas and facility improvements

3.5 Animal Welfare

The estimated average life span for a dog is 5 years and for a cat is 4 years. An estimated 80,000 companion animals are euthanased in NSW every year. Unwanted litters are mainly a product of people's ignorance, neglect and lack of planning.

The NSW Companion Animal Act 1998 assists to protect the domestic dog and cat by granting legal status and recognition, however it also makes provision for the control of nuisance animals. Care needs to be taken with the development of cat trapping protocols to ensure the welfare and humane treatment of animals whether they are nuisance animals or not.

Council's objectives are to:

- 3.5.1 establish and implement a cat trapping and a cat surrender cage protocol with strict animal welfare guidelines
- 3.5.2 establish and implement community education and responsible pet ownership programs that emphasise:
 - owning a pet 'for the term of its natural life'

3.6 Service Provision to the Community

Weddin Shire currently provides a Shire wide animal control service to the community. This incorporates administration of current legislation, servicing of community complaints and provision of a companion animal ownership education program.

Availability of resources is a major factor in the provision of adequate service levels to the community and consequently without sufficient funding, it is impractical to fully implement all of the desirable programs. With the implementation of the companion animal registration procedures under the new legislation, together with the possible imposition of an approved rates levy for Animal Management, Council can seek to provide improved services that will be able to cope with modern community needs and fulfill legislative requirements.

Many residents expect both an immediate response, and an immediate resolution to a companion animal complaint. However, it is very difficult to provide this level of service given the availability of resources and the often, intense and complicated nature of incidents. For some problems, such as barking, there is rarely an immediate resolution and often prolonged investigation is necessary.

Council's objectives are to:

- 3.6.1 consider application to the Minister for Local Government to implement a companion animal management rate levy, if required.
- 3.6.2 Review animal control personnel role statements and OHS protocols to incorporate cat management.

- 3.6.3 Provide accredited training for animal control staff in the understanding, handling and welfare of animals and in the education of the community in responsible pet ownership.
- 3.6.4 Review signage provision relevant to companion animals at nature reserves and open space areas, across the Weddin Shire, to comply with NSW Companion Animal Act

3.7 Facilities Provision

In addition to the pound facility, where residents are able to privately impound any stray or unwanted animals Council staff will accept any unwanted dog within normal working hours for transfer to the pound.

There is currently no cat impound facility to serve this Shire. Under the NSW Companion Animals Act from 1 July, 1999 it is necessary for Council to review the present facilities and to ensure that provision is made to provide pound facilities for cats, as well as dogs, and it will also be necessary for attention to be paid to cages and transportation of cats seized by Council.

Council's objectives are to:

- 3.7.1 Council review and update its facilities and resources to adequately provide for the trapping, seizure, handling, conveyance and impounding of cats as well as dogs.

3.8 Review and Amendment

- This policy shall be reviewed at four (4) yearly intervals, to ensure it meets all statutory requirements and the needs of Council.
- This policy may be amended or cancelled by Council at any time without prior notice or obligation.

3.9 Adoption

- This policy commences as from the date of adoption by Council, being 21 June 2013 and replaces any previous policy.

3.10 History

Version Number	Details
1.	Adopted 17 April 2003
3.1.1	Adopted 18 December 2008
16.6.1	Adopted 21 June 2013

Animal Control Services

SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS

- Documented and achievable objectives
- Community involvement
- Annual performance review
- Experienced and knowledgeable staff

WEAKNESSES

- Inadequate resources to meet legislative requirements
- Need for improved public facilities
- Increased community expectation

OPPORTUNITIES

- Co-ordination with affiliated organisations
- Enhanced community education programs
- Improved staff training and competence
- Creation of public interest and involvement
- Reduction of nuisance complaints
- Improved animal welfare
- Improved Environmental Sustainability

THREATS

- Non-compliant animal owners
- Public apathy
- Legislative changes

STATISTICS FOR WEDDIN SHIRE COUNCIL

ANIMAL NUMBERS

Estimated domestic dogs	1100
Estimated working dogs	2000
Estimated domestic cats	1000
Estimated farm cats	900
Total	5,000