

SOUTHERN GRAMPIANS SHIRE COUNCIL DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN 2021-2025



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1. Domestic Animal Management Plans

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 Economic Development Job Transport and Resources*), 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; and
 - ii. To ensure that people comply with this Act, the regulations and any related legislation; and
 - iii. To minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals; and
 - iv. To address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats; and
 - v. To encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats; and
 - vi. To minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance; and
 - 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; and
 - 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. Purpose of this Domestic Animal Management Plan

This Domestic Animal Management Plan (“DAMP”) has been prepared by the Southern Grampians Shire Council (“Council”) in accordance with the requirements and responsibilities under the Domestic Animals Act 1994 (“the Act”), Impounding of Livestock Act 1994, and Southern Grampians Shire Council Community Local Law No.1 of 2015 (“the Local Law”) and Council Policies.

The purpose of this document is to provide a guide for domestic animal management within the Southern Grampians Shire. The DAMP contains recommendations for a wide range of actions to be undertaken by the Council in a programmed approach. These actions will enable Council to maintain a balance between competing interests and to reposition animal management to accommodate new requirements.

The DAMP identifies a range of actions for animal management. The implementation of these Actions gives Council the opportunity to monitor the progress of actions and arrange further Improvements to promote and facilitate responsible animal management programs on a regular basis.

Council is committed to providing a high standard of animal management in accordance with legislative requirements. The objectives of the DAMP are to:

- Ensure Animal Management Officers are appropriately trained in all aspects of responsible animal management;
- Encourage responsible dog and cat ownership
- Reduce public and environmental nuisance caused by dogs and cats
- Promote the effective management of dogs and cats
- Effectively identify all dangerous dogs, menacing dogs and restricted breed dogs in the Shire
- Minimise the risk and prevalence of dog attacks
- Address any over population and high euthanasia rates of dogs and cats
- Provide welfare for pets during periods of emergency

There is an increasing public view that punitive enforcement of laws alone will not result in lasting voluntary changes in behaviour. Therefore, enforcement of the Act and Local Laws should be balanced with media and public education material for responsible animal management.

There is considerable evidence to support the social and health benefits of pet ownership, and it is easy to take for granted the role of pets in our society. The use and need of pets has expanded substantially as they are utilised not only as companions but as workers in an increasing number of ways. It is in appreciation of these various reasons that the Southern Grampians Shire Council has developed this plan with a clear direction on the education, welfare, promotion and enforcement of responsible pet ownership over a four year period concluding in 2025.

The strategies within DAMP have been developed to provide Council with a sound foundation from which it can build, plan and co-ordinate sound animal management and ensure that future decisions meet the needs of the community. In this progressively changing environment, it is essential that Council take a strategic approach to managing domestic pets.

The DAMP was developed in conjunction and consultation with relative stakeholders including members of the community, animal care professionals, domestic animal business operators and Council staff.

3. Southern Grampians Shire Council – Demographic and Shire profile

Council was formed in September 1994 by the amalgamation of the former Shires of Dundas, Mt Rouse, Wannon and the City of Hamilton. It is located in the centre of the Western District of Victoria, 290 kilometres west of Melbourne and 500 kilometres south east of Adelaide.

The Shire has a population of approx. 16,134 and covers an area of 6,652 square kilometres. Hamilton is the main retail and service centre supported by the nine smaller towns of Balmoral, Branxholme, Byaduk, Cavendish, Coleraine, Dunkeld, Glenthompson, Peshurst and Tarrington.

The Shire prospers from primary production. Agriculture, with associated industries, is the largest employment sector and the highly intensive agricultural production contributes significantly to the Victorian economy. The fertile soils and abundant water are also allowing for diversification. The economy and the availability of jobs and business enterprises is being considerably enhanced by this greater diversification of agriculture, more intensive use of land where sustainable, enhanced land management and new enterprises like mineral sands processing, horticulture, viticulture and forestry. Processing, manufacturing, research and development, engineering, retail, tourism, education, aged and health community services are also important employment sectors across the Shire.

The Shire is very well known both nationally and internationally for its wool production, which is approximately 14% of Australia's wool clip and 10% of the world's apparel wool. Considered to be the densest population of broad acre sheep farming per hectare in the world, the district is home to many fine sheep and cattle studs. The Shire's biggest annual event, Sheepvention, held in August, is a sheep show of national significance that aptly demonstrates the Shire's vital role in the sheep and wool industry.

Tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors, with the Grampians mountain range attracting many visitors both nationally and internationally. Many of our magnificent homesteads and gardens also open their doors to visitors each year. Other natural attractions include unique waterfalls and extinct volcanoes that form part of the Volcanic Trail encompassing western Victoria and south east South Australia. The Shipwreck Coast to the south and Coonawarra wine region to the west are also within a short drive for visitors to this region.



Southern Grampians Shire Council – Domestic Animal Profile

There are currently 1,918 dogs and 586 cats that are registered in the Southern Grampians Shire. Information relating to Registration and Identification is available from the Council Offices.

For the year of 2020/2021 there were 173 dogs and 103 cats impounded by the Council as a result of reports of dogs at large, the issuing of cat traps and patrols by Local Laws Officers.

Of the 173 dogs impounded in 2020/2021, 71% were returned to their owner, 10% were rehoused and 19% were deemed unsuitable for rehousing and were euthanized.

Of the 103 cats impounded, 10% were returned to their owner, 13% were rehomed and 77% were euthanized. Whilst the number of cats humanely destroyed appears to be disproportionately high, this is due to the large majority of these being feral animals.

The Southern Grampians Shire Council has no cases at Court currently in relation to Dog Attacks and has taken one case to Court for Dog Attack in the last four years with a successful Destruction Order granted. All complaints are treated seriously and thoroughly investigated. Council on occasion exercises its discretionary power to destroy dogs in certain circumstances.

Council currently has no declared dangerous dogs, menacing dogs or restricted breed dogs.

There are currently three Domestic Animal Businesses registered with the Council.

4. Training of Authorised Officers

There are currently 4 members in the Laws Unit consisting of 1 Team Leader, 1 permanent full time officer, 1 permanent part time officer and 1 permanent part time administration officer. Officers deal with animal management issues as part of their daily work activity. In addition to animal management all field officers also undertake a vast range of other duties including Parking and Local Laws enforcement.

Current and Planned Training

Authorised Officer Training	Current	Planned
Certificate IV in Animal Control and Regulation	1 current officer qualified	2 officers to commence/complete when available. 1 Officer 2022 1 Officer 2023
Arrange attendance at industry training – animal handling, animal assessment, Animal Welfare Victoria updates.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff to attend Animal Welfare Victoria training sessions including, additional specific animal training programs. • Attend animal courses/seminars as required.
Firearms training (Destruction of injured animals under Prevention of Cruelty of Animals Act 1986)	1 officer has current qualifications	Ongoing training as required.
Certificate IV in Local Government	1 current officer qualified	2 officers to complete when available 2022-2023
First Aid including use of Automated External Defibrillator (AED)	All officers	Ongoing training to be attended as required.
Customer Service	All officers	Ongoing training to be attended as required.
OH&S	All officers	Ongoing training to be attended as required.

Authorised Officer Training	Current	Planned
Canine Anatomy and Identification Training	Not yet attended by officers	Desirable all officers to attend when available post Covid
Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR) Training & Information Sessions	Ongoing	Desirable for all officers to attend when available
Animal Welfare Victoria training and information days	Ongoing	Desirable all officers to attend
Advanced driver training off road	Not yet attended by officers	Highly desirable – training to be attended as course becomes available
Investigative Services	Not yet attended by officers	Highly desirable – training to be attended when available

Objective 1: Develop an updated training plan to ensure ongoing competency of officers.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Identify minimum training requirements of officers in consultation with management.	Ongoing	Evaluation of training to be assessed during annual staff review process.
Training as advised/available via Organisational Development.	Ongoing	Updated as required and training value assessed through feedback received and content.

Objective 2: Ensure competent animal handling skills and evaluation.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Review current skills amongst team and identify training shortfalls.	Ongoing	Discuss on a regular basis to ensure effective development of newly acquired skills.
Animal management/handling in emergencies.	As available	Training content value assessed internally within local laws and organisational development for future improvement.
Attend any other relevant industry training and networking sessions.	As available	Discuss and advise course content during team meetings and assess suitability for future attendance.

Objective 3: Review current work procedures.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Update/remove/alter current work procedures to ensure effectiveness.	2021-23	Discuss with industry experts where available and internally within local laws unit and stakeholders.

5. Registration and Identification

Southern Grampians Shire Council encourages the registration and identification of dogs and cats under S.68A(2)(c)(v) of the Act. This assists in fast identification and safe return of pets and ensures compliance with legislation.

Our Current Procedures

- Handling aggressive dogs
- Collection of dogs/cats
- Manual Handling - lifting and removing dogs from vehicles
- Manual Handling - transferral of feral cats
- Issue warnings/infringements for non-compliance

Our current Education/Promotion Activities

The Southern Grampians Shire promotes animal related events and animal registration renewals where possible. Council utilises web pages and social media to educate and address specific issues as they arise.

Information booklets on responsible pet ownership and fact sheets as supplied by the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR) are utilised where possible and are available from a variety of sources throughout the Shire.

Community groups and schools are engaged from time to time with the intent to educate when the opportunity presents itself.

Our current Compliance Activities

- Annual mail out of dog & cat registration renewal forms, followed up with reminder and final notice.
- Annual doorknock of all known animal owners to follow up of non-renewal of registration.

Action Plan – Registration and Identification

Objective 1: To ensure all cats and dogs which are over the age of three months that reside within the municipality are registered with the Council.

Activity	Frequency	Outcome
Conduct annual doorknock of all premises within the municipality and follow up on pet ownership and non-renewal of registration	Annually	Assists the public understand their responsibilities and helps encourage compliance.
Media releases through radio, Newspaper and Social Media	Minimum of 3 per year	Increase awareness of responsibilities of pet owners and promotes compliance.
Mail out of registration renewal forms	Annually	Provides opportunity for pet owners to register their pets or renew their registration before April 10.

Mail out final notices for registration renewals	Annually	Increases compliance with registration of animals.
Research and implement a reduced fee de-sexing program with local vet's	2022-2025	Reduction in registration costs to owners.
Distribution of animal literature pamphlets	Ongoing	To education pet owners and to ensure compliance with current legislative requirements.



Microchip compared to a grain of rice

Nuisance

Minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance under S68A (2)(c)(vi) of the Act. This is achieved through initiatives such as collecting animals which have wandered off their property, loaning cat traps and providing the community with a barking dog diary.

The Southern Grampians Shire Council continue to encourage and educate pet owners to manage their pets to protect the health and welfare of their pets, this is to maximise not only the companion benefits but to also minimise the potential for nuisance or harm to others.

Our current Orders, Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures

- All cats and dogs must be secured to the premises of the owner s. 25(1) of the Act.
- Requirement to carry faeces disposable bag in public and removal of dog excrement in all public areas of the municipality.
- Sections 30,31,32,33 and 35 of the Local Law.

Our Current Procedures

- Handling 'aggressive dogs'
- Collection of dogs
- Manual Handling - lifting and removing dogs from vehicles
- Manual Handling - transferral of feral cats
- Clean and caring of animals at our domestic animal pound facility
- Issue warnings/infringements for non-compliance.

Our current Education/Promotion Activities

- Notification to residents of any fireworks displays, by letter drop and media
- Provide information on Council's website to report barking dog complaints
- Verbal communication and supply of relevant brochures
- Information relating to nuisance animals is available from the Council Offices.

Our current Compliance Activities

- Coordinate barking dog complaints and take enforcement action where applicable
- Issue 'Warning Notices' and 'Notices to Comply'
- Issue Infringement Notices
- Regular patrolling of areas
- Provide 24 hour emergency service
- Annual inspection of excess animal permit holders

Action Plan - Nuisance

Objective 1: To provide readily available information to the public relating to animal nuisance.

Activity	Frequency	Outcome
Provide brochures regarding nuisance animals	Ongoing	Informs and educates per owners and the public.
Educate the community about requirements and systems to keep dogs and cats securely confined to their property.	Ongoing	Educates pet owners and the community and provides them with the skills to keep their pets and the community safe.
Provide information on Council's website	Ongoing	Allows the community to easily access information in relation to nuisance animals.
Notification of fireworks displays	Ongoing	Assists residents with being able to secure their pets prior to the event.
Advise residents of their responsibility after trapping cats.	Ongoing	Ensures that cats which are trapped by residents are treated humanely and handed to Local Laws Officers for return to owners or destruction.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information on the causes of excessive barking; and • Encourage owners of barking dogs to seek advice from professional dog trainers & behaviourist. 	When a barking dog complaint is received	Educates pet owners and the community and provides them with the skills to keep their pets and the community safe and happy.
Educate the Community about after hours services.	Ongoing	Ensures community safety outside normal business hours.

6. Dog Attacks

It is the dog that pays the heaviest price for irresponsible owners who have not taken the required actions to socialise, train or adequately confine their dog.

Council has a strong focus on public safety and responsible pet ownership. Council is constantly advocating the public report all attacks, rushes or chases when they take place. All complaints are treated seriously and are thoroughly investigated.

Our current Orders, Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures

- Dogs must be on leash at all times within the Lake Hamilton Reserve, Sporting Reserves/Grounds and Botanical Gardens.
- Issue warnings/infringements for non-compliance.

Our current Education/Promotion Activities

- Media releases
- Signage (on leash only)
- Information relating to Dog Attacks is available from the Council Offices

Our current Compliance Activities

- Investigate all complaints of attack/rush/chase
- Enforcement action - issue infringements, seek animal destruction as appropriate
- Proactive patrolling to ensure compliance with legislation and Local Law.
- Seize any animal involved in an attack until completion of investigation.

Action Plan – Dog Attacks

Objective 1: To provide readily accessible information to the public to help prevent any occurrence of dog attacks.

Activity	Frequency	Outcome
Raise awareness of risk of dog attacks in the home, street or parks and how to reduce the risks through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • regular patrols • brochures • promotion of responsible pet ownership • providing information to Vets/Pet Shops/ Breeders to display/hand out • speaking with pet owners • School based education program 	Ongoing	Reduces the number of dog attacks, dogs and cats at large, and complaints of nuisance animals.
Promote and encourage the reporting of dog attacks whether on private or public land.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educates pet owners and the community and provides them with the skills to keep their pets and the community safe. • Ensures that animals are destroyed if appropriate.
Promote effective confinement and control of dogs.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educates pet owners and the community and provides them with the skills to keep their pets and the community safe. • Reduces the number of dog attacks, less dogs and cats at large, and fewer complaints of nuisance animals.

7. Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs

Southern Grampians Shire Council is very committed to maintaining public safety and responsible pet ownership. All complaints are thoroughly investigated along with on the spot checks and formal inspections to ensure compliance and public safety. An essential part of this is the identification of dangerous dogs, menacing dogs and restricted breed dogs in the municipality and to ensure that they are kept in compliance under Section 68A(2)(c)(viii) of the Act.

Our current Orders, Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures

- Daily patrolling to monitor dog behaviours and possible breaches of the Act or the Local Law.
- Investigation when the public reports possible restricted breed dogs.
- Random inspections of the premises of any declared dog to ensure compliance with the Act.
- Information relating to Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs is available from the Council Offices
- Issue warnings/infringements for non-compliance of the Act

Action Plan – Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs

Objective 1: To provide readily accessible information to the public relating to Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs.

Activity	When	Outcome
Provide information to residents on types of dangerous, menacing and restricted dog breeds and the responsibility of owners of these dogs.	Ongoing	Educates pet owners and the community and provides them with the skills to keep their pets and the community safe.
Promote the Dangerous Dog Hotline	Ongoing	Provides the community with the appropriate reporting information in relation to dangerous dogs.

Objective 2: To provide readily accessible information to the public relating to Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs.

Activity	When	Outcome
Ensure that Council's declaration policies and procedures are followed correctly.	Ongoing	Ensures consistency of handling of restricted breed dog complaints and issues.
Ensure all declared dogs are accurately registered and all responsibilities of the owner are adhered to.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures consistency of handling of restricted breed dog complaints and issues. • Insures accurate record keeping in relation to restricted breed dogs.
Respond to complaints regarding Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed dogs as a matter of priority.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures community safety is a priority. • Assists the public understand their responsibilities and helps encourage compliance.
Follow up all non-compliance	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures community safety is a priority. • Assists the public understand their responsibilities and helps encourage compliance.
Media promotion of the DJPR Restricted Breed and Dangerous dog Hotline.	Ongoing	Educates pet owners and the community and provides them with the skills to keep their pets and the community safe.

8. Overpopulation and High Euthanasia

The Southern Grampians Shire Council currently has a total of 2504 dogs and cats registered. Council encourages all animal owners to de-sex their animals to help reduce the overpopulation and high euthanasia rate. One way this is done is through a reduced registration fee for de-sexed animals. This helps address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats under S.68A(2)(c)(iv) of the Act.

Cats that are caught at large or through Councils trapping programs are rarely reclaimed or identifiable. Accidental cat breeding is significantly higher than dogs due to the capacity of cats ability to have multiple litters per year, in turn this reality means more dumped/unwanted litters as well as a high percentage of feral breeding within the municipality.

Our current Orders, Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures

- All cats must be secured to the premises of the owner in accordance with s25 of the Act.
- Issue warnings/infringements for non-compliance.

Our current Education/Promotion Activities

- Make available accessible information through brochures and fact sheets from the DJPR relating to the keeping of animals. Local Laws Officers are available for advice at all times.
- Media releases promoting responsible pet ownership and responsibilities of breeders.
- Information relating to Overpopulation and High Euthanasia is available from the Council Offices.
- Reduction in registration fees for de-sexed animals.

Our current Compliance Activities

- Cat traps available from the Local Laws Officers
- All cats and dogs must be secured to the owners premises
- Infringements for dogs and cats found at large

Action Plan – Overpopulation and High Euthanasia

Objective 1: To provide readily accessible information to the public relating to Overpopulation and High Euthanasia.

Activity	Frequency	Outcome
Promote the responsibility of pet owner to confine their pets to their premises.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educates pet owners and the community and provides them with the skills to keep their pets and the community safe. • Reduces cats and dogs at large. • Reduces the number of unwanted cat and dog litters.
Promote adoption from the pound	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces the number of animals which are euthanized.
Continue to engage with Foster Groups	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the number of cats held by Council • Lower the Euthanasia rate by long term fostering
Supply cat traps	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces the number of cats at large. • Encourages cat owners to ensure their cat remains on their property. • Facilitates destruction of feral cats.
Implement Cat Curfew	2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the impact of cats roaming freely • Reduces the number of unwanted cat litters
Research and implement mandatory de-sexing for any new registrations over 3 Months of age. (potentially cats and dogs)	2022-2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce accidental litters • Reduce the number of abandoned / dumped kittens and puppies
Research and implement a reduced fee de-sexing program with local vets.	2022-2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces the number of unwanted cat and dog litters. • Encourages the community to de-sex their cats and dogs.

9. Domestic Animal Businesses

Council has a strong focus on ensuring that all Domestic Animal Businesses are operating in accordance with the requirements of the Act.

Our current Orders, Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures

- Southern Grampians Shire currently has no orders in place relating to Domestic Animal Businesses. Council acts in accordance with the requirements of the Act.
- All Domestic Animal Businesses must be registered with Council as per the Act.
- All Domestic Animal Businesses are audited annually.
- All Domestic Animal Businesses are subject to random audits.
- Any new Domestic Animal Businesses must hold a Planning Permit.
- Issue warnings/infringements for non-compliance
- Councils Planning Scheme

Our current Education/Promotion Activities

Information relating to Domestic Animal Businesses is available from the Council Offices

Our current Compliance Activities

- Registration and renewal of all Domestic Animal Businesses located within the municipality on an annual basis.
- Conduct annual audits of all Domestic Animal Businesses.

Action Plan – Domestic Animal Businesses

Objective 1: Annually inspect and audit all registered Domestic Animal Businesses.

Activity	Frequency	Outcome
Conduct annual inspections of Domestic Animal Businesses within the municipality.	Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure that all Domestic Animal Businesses comply with the Code of Practice.• Ensure the humane treatment of animals.
Follow up complaints of non-compliance and assist with a resolution	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure that all Domestic Animal Businesses comply with the Code of Practice.• Ensure the humane treatment of animals.

10. Annual Review of Plan and Annual Reporting

In accordance with the Act every Council must:

- (a) Review its domestic animal management plan annually and, if appropriate, amend the plan.
- (b) Provide the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions Secretary with a copy of the DAMP and any amendments to the DAMP.
- (c) Publish an evaluation of its implementation of the DAMP in its annual report.

Action Plan – Annual Review of DAMP and Annual Reporting

Objective 1: To achieve compliance with the Act.

Activity	Frequency	Outcome
Conduct annual reviews of the Domestic Animal Management Plan	Annually in October	To ensure the content of the DAMP meets the current needs of the community and the requirements of the legislation.
Update DAMP as required	Annually in November	Provide DJPR with a copy of the updated DAMP.

