



Domestic Animal Management Plan

2021-2025

DRAFT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Companion animals have been part of our lives since recorded history. Dogs and cats are imbedded in day to day activity for many Greater Bendigo residents and are considered part of society. Therefore, it is vital that Council undertakes sensible planning to ensure that pets, pet owners and non-pet owners can coexist in a harmonious way.

Over the past 4 years, more than 50% of Customer Service Requests received by the Health and Wellbeing Directorate are related to domestic animals, indicating that many Bendigo residents are impacted by the dogs and cats that reside in our community.

This will be Council's fourth Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP). The new Plan will build on the achievements and work from the previous Plans and establish a framework to guide future service programs and actions up to and including the year 2025 (appendix A).

The Plan has been prepared by the City of Greater Bendigo Animal Services Team in response to Council's responsibilities under the Domestic Animals Act.

Key Initiatives from past Plans and Programs

- Changed delivery of Animal Services from a contract provider to in-house staff
- Provided a flexible 24/7 service delivery model
- Introduced noise recorders and software to assess noise nuisance
- Introduced a designated Compliance Team
- Introduced policies to enable more dogs to be taken home instead of to the animal shelter
- Development of 4 dog parks
- Introduced laws to require dogs to be leashed at popular recreation areas, shopping areas and around children's play areas
- Introduced laws to prevent dogs from exercising on the playing surface of the QEO
- Introduced laws to require dog walkers to carry a bag to pick up their dog waste
- Introduced laws to regulate the keeping of animals according to regulatory planning land use principles
- Introduced a sunset to sunrise Cat Curfew to minimise wondering cats
- Developed a plan to deal with animals in emergencies
- Developed and implemented procedure to provide guidance to staff who may be working with victims of family violence
- Developed and introduced various work processes to assist in dealing with dog attack and nuisance complaints
- Introduced subsidised desexing and discounted micro-chipping for cats and dogs
- Introduced a rewards program for owners displaying responsible pet ownership
- Promoted the need to register not only dogs but cats as well
- Raised awareness in the community in relation to being a responsible pet owner
- Improved community safety in public areas
- Introduced GPS vehicle monitoring and duress alert process to assist with field officer safety and allocation of jobs to officers according to their location.

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1 INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

1.1 PURPOSE OF DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

The *Domestic Animals Act 1994* (the Act) requires council to prepare a Domestic Animal Management Plan every four years. The purpose of the new DAMP is to build on the achievements of the previous Plans and to provide the City of Greater Bendigo with a strategic framework that helps deliver policy direction, service programs, initiatives and action plans for animal management for the period 2021-2025. The Animal Services team have the aspirational goal that every domestic animal in the municipality is responsibly owned.

The plan sets out a method for evaluating whether the animal management services provided by council are adequate to give effect to requirements of the Act and the Domestic Animal Regulations 2015.

The Plan applies to any land within the City of Greater Bendigo where domestic animals are kept or proposed to be kept.

The Plan is informed by evidence, and action orientated. It sets priorities that are achievable and measurable within allocated resources.

The plan must also outline programs for the training of authorised officers along with programs, services and strategies to:

- ensure that people comply with the Act, the regulations and any related legislation; and
- minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals; and
- address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats; and
- encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats; and
- minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance; and
- 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
- 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
- provide for the review of any other matters related to the management of dogs and cats in the Council's municipal district that it thinks necessary; and
- provide for the periodic evaluation of any program, service, strategy or review outlined under the plan.

Council is also required to review and where appropriate amend the Plan and publish an evaluation of the implementation of the plan in the council annual report.

The following guiding principles will continue to underpin the delivery of domestic animal management services at The City of Greater Bendigo:

- Working towards achieving best practice in domestic animal management
- Achieving lasting improvements and rewarding responsible pet ownership
- Proactive animal management and education

- Balance the needs of pet owners with the needs of other members of the community and the environment
- Protecting the environment from any negative impacts from domestic animals
- Recognising the physical, mental and social benefits of pet ownership
- Reducing the number of unwanted animals in society
- Council to play a key leadership role in animal management
- Adopting a whole of community approach to animal management

1.2 PROCESS APPLIED IN DEVELOPING THE PLAN

Public consultation has provided the community with the opportunity to express their views on matters pertaining to how domestic animals are managed by The City. Residents were invited to participate in an online survey to provide feedback including experiences and opinions to help provide guidance on the direction of the next Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP).

The survey was open for almost four weeks, and received a record number of online responses, with a total of 1131 contributions from the community.

In addition, over 70 stakeholders, mostly organisations and businesses including domestic animal related businesses, land care groups, support for wildlife, and sporting associations were contacted in relation to the DAMP and invited to make a submission or provide feedback via the survey.

In excess of 50 notices with scannable QR codes were placed in public spaces to provide people with fast and direct access to information about the DAMP and the opportunity to contribute their feedback.

It was important to consider the views and opinions of people who do not own pets as well as those who do. Fortunately, the survey did identify a reasonable portion (20%) of people contributed who did not own a cat or a dog.

The information received through the community consultation will guide the City of Greater Bendigo in ensuring its service meets the expectations of the community, including the needs of pet owners, domestic animals, as well as those that who don't own pets but may be impacted by them.

Key findings from the community survey revealed that:

- 98% believe there are positive health and wellbeing benefits associated with owning a pet
- 71% feel public spaces are safe from nuisance pets
- 87% feel animals not used for breeding should be desexed
- 80% support a 24/7 cat containment law
- 8% are feeding community cats
- 76% support dogs on leads at all times unless designated otherwise

A Working Group was established with representatives across council, to ensure that all connections with our community were considered. This included staff from across the organisation in the Community Wellbeing, Parks and Open Spaces, Communications, Active and Healthy Lifestyles, and Safe and Healthy Environments Units.

Greater Bendigo City Council is committed to achieving better outcomes for everyone in the municipality, including both pet owners and non-pet owners.

1.3 DEMOGRAPHIC AND PROFILE OF COUNCIL

The City of Greater Bendigo is situated in Central Victoria and its geographical position provides links between the Melbourne metropolitan area and the north of the State. Greater Bendigo is approximately 150km from Melbourne. Bendigo is the major regional centre for north central Victoria.

Greater Bendigo covers almost 3,000 square kilometres and includes the urban centre of Bendigo and smaller towns such as Heathcote, Axedale, Huntly, Marong, Elmore, Goornong and Redesdale. The City of Greater Bendigo has a population of approximately 120,000 residents.

The Dja Dja Warrung and Taungurung are recognised as the Traditional Owners of the land. There are two appointed registered Aboriginal parties for the area – Dja Dja Warrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation and Taungurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation.

Bendigo is described as a city within a forest as it is surrounded by natural bushland and Box Ironbark forests. The area has a strong historical link to the mining of gold, since gold was discovered in the 1850s.

1.4 CONTEXT AND CURRENT SITUATION

Animal Services are provided as part of the Health and Wellbeing Directorate within the City. The Animal Services Team consistently reviews industry trends and animal management initiatives to keep abreast of new and improved ways of providing the service.

Animal Attendants working within the shelter facility (Bendigo Animal Relief Centre- BARC) provide industry acknowledged “fear free” housing and management of animals. The City of Greater Bendigo’s animal management staff have been recognised as being subject matter experts, and have been invited to participate and contribute to multiple external programs with a focus on animal welfare and animal ethics

The City’s service delivery includes:

Program/Service:	Service level for 2020/2021 period
Identification & registration.	Currently 19,801 cats and dogs registered.
Managing domestic animal complaints.	Received 4177 customer service requests.
Pound and shelter services.	BARC is open to the public for adoptions 7 days a week, excluding public holidays. In the last year it has provided care for 2671 animals and provided rehoming opportunities for 1086 of these animals.
Micro-chipping and/or desexing programs.	Discounts for micro-chipping are offered year-round when combined with a new pet registration. Discount cat desexing offered in partnership with National Deseing Network has sterilised 72 cats in the 20/21 period.
Responsible Pet Ownership (RPO) school information sessions.	Recent addition of in-house pound and shelter services has provided an opportunity to focus on RPO programs provided by the shelter. This has been heavily affected by COVID recently.
Animal management officer accessibility.	Two full time positions that provide “community patrol” and respond to customer requests, as well as an after-hours emergency service available outside of business hours, seven days a week.

These services are provided by the following roles.

LOCAL LAWS OFFICERS

Local Laws Officers are responsible for functions including:

- Active patrols and pickups to reunite dogs with their owners and to discourage wandering at large
- Managing unwanted animals
- Patrolling popular walk areas for dog faeces management
- Impounding of livestock found or reported wandering
- Trespassing cats
- Animal registration and identification process
- Providing advice to pet owners and the community
- Providing an after-hours service
- Assisting victims of family violence in relation to managing their pets.

SENIOR LOCAL LAWS OFFICERS

The City has four Senior Local Laws Officers who are responsible for functions including:

- Investigating dog attacks
- Investigating problem barking and other nuisance issues
- Investigating animal welfare concerns
- Promoting responsible pet ownership
- Dealing with restricted breeds and dangerous dogs
- Auditing properties where dangerous, menacing or restricted breed dogs are kept
- Registration and management of domestic animal businesses
- Management of various neighbourhood issues and complaints relating to animals
- Ensuring compliance to various legislation and codes of practice relevant to pets and livestock.

ANIMAL ATTENDANTS

The Bendigo Animal Relief Centre (BARC) operates 7 days a week and has a team of animal attendants, including senior animal attendants specific to cattery and kennels, to ensure appropriate care is provided to animals every day of the week. Animal Attendants are responsible for:

- Cleaning animal housing areas
- Providing feed, medication and other daily requirements for animals in care
- Providing exercise and environmental enrichment
- Liaising with the public in relation to surrendering animals into care
- Assisting with reuniting stray animals with their owners
- Assessment of animals' suitability for adoptions including behavioural assessments
- Managing adoptions of animals
- Providing education to animal owners on how to best manage their pets.

VETERINARY NURSE AND STAFF WITH ASSOCIATED SKILL SET

Staff at the Bendigo Animal Relief Centre are required to provide medical care and attention to animals, including micro-chipping. A designated veterinary nurse is employed full time and is supported by other staff with veterinary nurse and animal technician experience. This ensures that the BARC has a team of people capable of providing a service which includes:

- Initial assessment of animal health and veterinary requirements
- Micro-chip implanting
- Dispensing medication under the direction of a vet
- Assessing and monitoring animals requiring intensive veterinary care.

THE ANIMAL SERVICES MANAGEMENT TEAM

The Animal Services Management Team consists of a Team Leader of Local Laws, Operations Manager for BARC, and an overarching Coordinator. The Animals Services Management team is responsible for:

- Planning service delivery
- Managing income and expenditure
- Developing work plans, policy and work instructions
- Managing risk and workplace health and safety
- Mentoring, coaching, training and supervising staff
- Maintaining a process for the issuing of permits where there are more than the prescribed number of animals being kept
- Developing a new Domestic Animal Management Plan on 4-year cycles
- Reporting of statistical data to the Attorney Generals Department and the Office of Local Government
- Maintaining a data base of all customer interactions and requests for service
- Promotion of health, leisure and social capital associated with pet ownership
- Managing dog access to public places (parks, reserves and streets)
- Maintaining a process for dealing with animals in the event of an emergency
- Managing the impacts of cats, including compulsory confinement
- Assessing and reviewing open space planning for dogs and associated laws and orders.
- Developing and maintaining a Health Management Plan for pound and shelter services
- Implementation of community focused programs to support responsible pet ownership
- Increasing reclaiming rates and rehoming rates of stray and surrendered animals.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

The City's Customer Service Charter is the guiding document for responding to requests for animal services. The average response time across the previous 12 months was following a request for service, for first contact

with the customer is approximately 1.32 days. The Local Government Performance Reporting Framework has a target of 2 days.

What customers can expect from our Customer Service team:

- We will listen carefully to them
- We will be friendly and professional, and treat them with courtesy, respect and understanding
- We will keep them informed
- We will provide accurate and consistent information delivered in a way that is easy to understand and in a timely manner
- We will respect and protect their personal information and adhere to privacy requirements
- We will provide a 24-hour emergency service
- We will provide a website which contains current, quality, easily accessible information.

What we expect from our customers:

- Being courteous and respectful to our staff
- Respecting the rights of other customers
- Providing us with complete and accurate information
- Working with us to resolve problems
- Providing feedback on our services.

1.5 DOMESTIC ANIMAL STATISTICS

Key statistics at a glance for the financial year period 2020/2021

Dogs	
Number of registered dogs	14,653
Number of impounded dogs (by Rangers & public)	757
Number of impounded dogs returned to owner	638
Number of dogs rehomed	295
Number of dogs euthanised	55
Number of active declared dogs (dangerous, menacing, restricted)	12
Cats	
Number of registered cats	5,148
Number of impounded cats: (by Rangers & public)	754
Number of impounded cats returned to owner	159
Number of cats rehoused	673
Number of domestic cats euthanised	44
Number of wild cats euthanised	472
Domestic Animal Businesses	
Breeding and/or rearing establishments	2
Dog training establishments	3
Pet shops	7
Shelters and pounds	2
Boarding establishments	10
Customer Service Requests and Complaints	
Dogs at large	428
Dog rush (person or animal)	80
Dog attack	185
Dog – barking	568
Request for collection dogs	932
Dog registration follow up	238
Management of Keeping of Animals Local Law enquiries	132
Cat management	934
Other, including, injured animals, restricted breed, loan of citronella collars, dog waste, livestock wondering and business registration	674
Prosecutions	6
Total requests for service	4177

2. TRAINING OF AUTHORISED OFFICERS

2.1 CONTEXT AND CURRENT SITUATION

The objective of training and development is to ensure all staff involved in animal management have the knowledge and skills necessary to carry out their work in a safe and professional manner. The City of Greater Bendigo is committed to ensuring all staff involved in animal management are equipped for the demands of their role and are competent in their job.

All Animal Management Officers receive extensive, on the job training. In addition, they receive additional formal training in:

- customer service including conflict resolution
- dog & cat handling
- bite prevention
- stock handling
- captive bolt use
- traffic control and driver safety
- self-preservation and harm reduction
- family violence
- first aid.

Additional training may be considered for Senior Local Laws officers, and may include:

- prosecutions
- statement taking and evidence gathering
- restricted breed dog identification
- aggressive dog apprehension.

2.2 OUR PLANNED TRAINING FOR AUTHORISED OFFICERS

Staff will continue to receive training in customer service, health and safety, workplace behaviours and the delivery of community education information and will be encouraged to attend industry related information sessions and seminars for networking opportunities and to keep up with latest trends and innovations.

An annual skills audit is undertaken to identify any gaps in the skills available within the Animal Management Team. A professional development plan is prepared each year arising out of this audit.

The annual performance reviews include a review of the staff member's skills and training undertaken in the previous year.

All new staff are taken through an induction program and receive regular updates offering opportunity to undertake training using the City's Learning Opportunities Program.

An inclusion as part of the formal training will now include recognising and responding to family violence. The training will ensure staff understand their interactions with the community to become competent in responding to family violence concerns. Consideration has been given to other avenues the City can respond to family violence situations including respite care for animals and assistance with managing ownership in accordance with recent legislative changes.

2.3 OUR PLAN

Considering above, the activities and objectives for the next 4 years are listed below:

Objective 1: Maintain a training register for individual officers detailing completed and proposed training.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Maintain a skills matrix for employed staff, to identify required and proposed training.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	6 monthly review of matrix, to ensure its accuracy and to determine whether proposed training goals have been met for each officer.

Objective 2: Ensure all new Authorised Officers have completed their minimum training requirements within 12 months of appointment.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Identify minimum training requirements for Authorised Officers and record when officers have completed each course.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	Annually review spread sheet and ensure each officer has completed their minimum training requirements.

Objective 3: Provide opportunities for additional training each year.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Identify additional training opportunities e.g. prosecutions training, advanced conflict management and mediation.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	Annually review how many officers have undertaken training that was in addition to their minimum requirements.

Objective 4: Provide and maintain performance training / planning process for individual officers.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Complete annual development plan and review process for each staff member.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	Completion of annual development plan and review process with the intention of identifying training needs to deal with skill gaps and emerging issues or legislative changes.

3. PROGRAMS TO PROMOTE AND ENCOURAGE RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERSHIP AND COMPLIANCE WITH LEGISLATION

3.1 CONTEXT AND CURRENT SITUATION

On 1st July 2019, The City of Greater Bendigo brought the pound and shelter services back under direction of the council. This provided the opportunity to further develop a proactive approach to responsible pet ownership, tailored to the needs and desires of the community.

This Council delivered service (Bendigo Animal Relief Centre - BARC) has been operational since 1st July 2019. Council can utilise BARC to provide a platform to promote responsible pet ownership, and together they are able to deliver:

- Discount micro-chipping services 5 days of the week, if an animal is registered at the same time
- Assistance with updating microchip details or people who don't understand the requirements of the different microchip databases
- Discount cat desexing opportunities to eligible residents of Bendigo
- Education and assistance around choosing the right type of pet
- Linking people with online courses such as *Petcademy* to educate pet owners to understand their pets needs
- Online resources to assist with educating owners on their legal obligations

In 2020, BARC was independently audited and found to meet and exceed all industry standards and comply with all legislative requirements.

3.2 OUR ORDERS, LOCAL LAWS, COUNCIL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

CURRENT ORDERS:

Council permits dogs to be exercised off leash throughout the municipality except within the following designated on-leash areas where Council has invoked a s26 Order under the Act requiring dogs to be on a leash:

- Rosalind Park
- Lake Weeroona
- Strathdale Park & Kennington Reserve
- White Hills Botanic Gardens
- Rotary Park Strathdale
- Botanical Gardens Kangaroo Flat
- Barrack Reserve Heathcote
- Canterbury Gardens Eaglehawk
- Cooinda Park Golden Square
- Lake Neangar & Lake Tom Thumb Eaglehawk
- Council allows shared use of Rodda Field Strathdale
- Dogs must also be on a leash within 10 meters of any public barbeque or outdoor eating areas.

Council also has an order prohibiting dogs from the surface of the Queen Elizabeth Oval.

CURRENT LOCAL LAWS:

Community Local Law prohibits dogs from Crusoe Reservoir.

Local Law No 2 relates to the keeping of animals. It:

- Regulates the numbers of dogs and/or cats that can be kept at a property
- Ensures animals do not cause a nuisance to anyone by noise, dust, odour, or other condition, cause damage to flora or fauna or pollute any drain, watercourse or water catchment
- Keep land occupied by animals clear and clean of any waste, food scraps and excrement
- Ensures fencing is sufficient to contain animals
- Ensures the immediate collection and removal of any excrement left by animals in a public place
- Requires owners carry a bag or similar device to pick up excrement left by animals in a public place.

CURRENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:

Current policies and procedures include education and enforcement strategies associated with council's programs to promote and encourage responsible pet ownership.

3.3 OUR PLAN

Over the next 4 years, the City of Greater Bendigo intends to meet the following objectives by completing the associated actions.

Objective 1: Increase pet registrations

Activity	When	Evaluation
Continue with discounts for desexed pets.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	Increase in the number of newly registered pets and renewed registrations.
Provide education on the purpose of pet registration through increased community presence, and support owners to complete registration details (e.g. assist with sighting desexing tattoos, obtaining microchip numbers).	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	
Pound service discounts for registered pets.	2022.	
Online payment options for registrations.	2022.	
Review registration fees to encourage new registrations (e.g. free registration for pets under 6 months of age).	2022.	

Objective 2: Increase pet micro-chipping

Activity	When	Evaluation
Continue to provide discount micro-chipping 5 days a week, with the intention to increase the service to 7 days a week.	Ongoing, will continue, increased service delivery planned for late 2022.	Increase in the number of stray or surrendered animals received which carry a microchip.
Consider micro-chipping events to reach a wider range of pet owners.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	

Objective 3: Increase dog waste removal

Activity	When	Evaluation
Empower community to encourage owners to clean up after their dogs.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	Decrease in the amount of customer service requests received in relation to dog waste in public spaces.
Trial the provision of environmentally friendly dog waste bags through the council offices for owners to use, in line with Council's Single Use Plastics policy.	2022.	
Continue with Local Laws Officer presence at popular dog walking/exercise locations.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	

Objective 4: Increase the number of desexed pets not intended for breeding

Activity	When	Evaluation
Provide discount registration for desexed pets.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	Decrease in the number of unwanted litters, and increase the percentage of registered pets that are desexed.
Provide discount cat desexing to eligible residents.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	
Promote increased sociability and trainability of desexed pets.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	

Objective 5: Assist residents with choosing the right pet

Activity	When	Evaluation
Provide education sessions/presentations to help people analyse what pet might be right for them.	2022.	Decrease in the number of surrendered animals due to the animal not suiting the owner's needs.
Continue to provide advice and guidance for pets being adopted from the shelter.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	

Objective 6: Promote responsible pet ownership to the younger generation

Activity	When	Evaluation
Visiting local schools to educate the next generation of pet owners of the importance of responsible pet ownership.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	Aim to speak to a student cluster in 75% of local schools by 2025.

Objective 7: Increase cat containment

Activity	When	Evaluation
Promote and share existing resources from Safe Cat / Safe Wildlife campaign.	2022.	Decrease in the number of complaints relating to nuisance caused by wondering cats.
Provide flyers, information and advice on how to contain cats.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	

4. PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS OVER-POPULATION RATES AND ANY HIGH EUTHANASIA RATES

4.1 CONTEXT AND CURRENT SITUATION

Registration is seen as a solution to reduce high euthanasia rates as registered dogs and cats are almost always reunited with their owners, if picked up by City staff.

The City's promotion of registration requirements has a strong emphasis on the return of lost pets as a key reason to register.

Changes in legislation introduced mid 2018 required pet shops to only sell dogs and cats provided by a rescue group, pound or shelter to assist with the rehoming of animals. These animals are required to be desexed and micro-chipped before being made available to their new homes.

The Domestic Animals Regulation Amendment (2019) limits the number of female dogs a dog breeder may keep from April 2020. Victoria is the first state to introduce this cap on dog numbers and it severely affects the financial viability of puppy farms.

This amendment also saw the introduction of the Pet Exchange Register (PER), managed by Animal Welfare Victoria (DELWP). The PER improves traceability and accountability of all animals sold, providing the public with a means to search the register and check details of the seller.

4.2 OUR ORDERS, LOCAL LAWS, COUNCIL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

CURRENT ORDERS:

Currently, Council has a cat curfew under s25 of the Act from sunset to sunrise that applies across the municipality making it an offence for a cat to be outside the owner's property. This is to reduce incidence of breeding to decrease the number of unwanted cat litters in the community and reduce the occurrences of nuisance.

Council also are aware of several covenants placed on the title of properties within several recent residential estates which prohibits the keeping of greyhounds and cats whilst requiring dogs be on leash when outside the owner's property.

CURRENT LOCAL LAWS:

Local Law No 2 regulates the number of animals that can be kept at a property and provides the framework for compliance actions

CURRENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:

Compliance policy provides a framework for enforcement action such as issuing of caution and infringement notices for dogs/cats found at large or follow up of registration and identification requirements.

Current policies and procedures include:

- All cats and dogs over the age of 3 months must be registered and those being registered for the first time must also be micro-chipped
- Loaning of humane trigger plate traps under strict guidelines for residents to trap feral and trespassing domestic cats
- All dogs and cats are desexed prior to being adopted and rehomed through BARC
- All dogs and cats reclaimed from BARC are micro-chipped and registered
- All dogs and cats taken to BARC are held for 8 days for the owner to reclaim
- Unclaimed animals become property of the City and are rehomed or euthanised
- All dogs and cats to be rehoused must pass the appropriate temperament tests and veterinarian checks
- Investigate all reports of inappropriate breeders.

4.3 OUR PLAN

Considering above, the activities and objectives for the next 4 years are listed below:

Objective 1: Work with the community to further reduce euthanasia rates for impounded cats and dogs.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Raise awareness of the benefits of desexing pets.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	Increase shelter reclaim rates of cats and dogs found wondering.
Provide discounted registration costs for desexed pets.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	
Educate community on the effect that feeding un-owned cats has on over-population.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	
Promote lost/found pets online and on social media platforms to reunite them with their owner.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	

Objective 2: To provide transparency to our public in relation to overpopulation and high euthanasia rates

Activity	When	Evaluation
Provide access to statistics on the euthanasia rates at the shelter.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	Public awareness of the number of animals which are euthanised (published in the annual report).

Objective 3: Provide discount cat desexing to eligible residents, and encourage ownership of community cats

Activity	When	Evaluation
Continue to work with the National Desexing Network to provide low cost cat desexing to eligible residents.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	Increase in the number of cats entering the program from the previous comparable period.
Complete and lodge a grant application to run a low-cost desexing program to support disadvantaged Victorian families within our municipality.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	

Objective 4: Create more options for animals who are not suitable for adoptions through a shelter

Activity	When	Evaluation
Increase community foster carers to provide care for vulnerable animals such as neonatal kittens which are vulnerable to disease and ill-health in shelters.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	Increased opportunities for animals to enter foster care and options for rehoming.
Continue to expand our network of rescue organisations, providing the option to transfer animals to other organisations which may be better equipped to manage behavioural or medical requirements.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	

5. REGISTRATION AND IDENTIFICATION

5.1 CONTEXT AND CURRENT SITUATION

All dogs and cats over the age of 3 months must be micro-chipped and registered with the Council where it resides.

The registration fees help fund the animal management services provided by Council and the responsible pet ownership campaign and other education programs run by the State Government.

An animal found with a registration or microchip marker has a much higher chance of being reunited with its owner and not being taken to the animal shelter.

It has been identified that the number of registered animals has not increased alongside the estimated increase in pet ownership. Increasing awareness of registration requirements and the benefits of registration has been identified as a priority for the Animal Services team.

5.2 OUR ORDERS, LOCAL LAWS, COUNCIL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

CURRENT ORDERS:

Dogs and cats are required to be micro-chipped at time of renewal of registration (s.10C). All dogs and cats over the age of three months must be registered.

CURRENT LOCAL LAWS:

City of Greater Bendigo's Local Law No 2 as mentioned in previous sections regulates the number of dogs and cats that can be kept at a property.

CURRENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:

Fees for the registration of cats and dogs is undertaken as part of the City's annual budget process and is subject to the financial policies of Council including Hardship Policy.

City of Greater Bendigo's Local Laws No 2 regulates the number of animals to be kept at a property.

Instrument of delegation provides delegated authority to staff to register or refuse to register a dog or a cat or dangerous or restricted breed dogs.

Relevant procedures include Dog Seizure Procedure and After-Hours Response Procedure. The Compliance Policy provides a framework for enforcement action.

OUR CURRENT COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES

Compliance activities include:

- Conduct random door knocking each year to check for unregistered cats and dogs
- Ensuring all dogs and cats are registered and micro-chipped prior to their release from BARC
- All registered animals found wandering, where possible, are returned to their owners in the first instance
- All officers carry microchip scanners and public areas are patrolled regularly to undertake random checks for unregistered animals. Officers also have mobile access to registration data in the field to be more efficient in returning animals to their owners
- Registration checks are commonly undertaken on reports where it is suspected that unregistered animals may reside
- Follow up of failure to register or renew animal registration through the issue of caution notices and infringement notices in accordance with the City's Compliance Policy
- Unpaid infringement notices are lodged with Fines Victoria for follow up.

5.3 OUR PLAN

Considering above, the activities and objectives for the next 4 years are listed below:

Objective 1: Increase awareness of importance and benefits of pet registration

Activity	When	Evaluation
Use social media platforms to communicate the benefits of registration, such as increased chances of being reunited with owner.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	Increased animal registrations.
Provide clarity and transparency of how funding from pet registration is utilised by Council.	2023.	

Objective 2: Continue to remind people of the requirement to register their pets

Activity	When	Evaluation
Issue reminder notices to all pets who have been previously registered and not renewed.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	Increased animal registrations.
Send SMS reminders for all unpaid registrations, along with messaging of its importance.	2022.	

Objective 3: Increase convenience of registration payments

Activity	When	Evaluation
Provide online platform for pet owners to pay their registration renewal, update details, and submit new animal registrations.	2022.	Increased animal registrations.
Provide assistance to owners to complete their registration by assisting to gather the required information (e.g. microchip numbers).	2022.	

Objective 4: Consider additional incentives for registered pets

Activity	When	Evaluation
Consider further discounts for pets which have been consistently registered on time and have demonstrated responsible pet ownership (e.g. pay 3 years rego, get the 4 th for free).	2023.	Increased animal registrations.
Consider “no fee” reclaims of registered animals found lost/wondering (with certain time frame).	2022.	

6 NUISANCE

6.1 CONTEXT AND CURRENT SITUATION

The regulations for managing dog and cat nuisance, relating to noise, trespassing and wandering at large are contained within the Domestic Animals Act.

Three common types of nuisance complaints that Animal Management Services deal with are noise from barking dogs, dog faeces in public spaces, and trespass of cats.

EXCESSIVE BARKING

Barking dog complaints can be a source of great irritation within the community and are extremely time consuming and difficult for Officers to resolve. Responses to our recent survey indicate that 50% of residents are impacted by barking dogs, and 20% of these are reported to council.

Investigating such complaints can be a long process as Officers have to gather sufficient evidence to prove the nuisance exists. This is often subjective, and the problem can stop and then start again sometime later.

City Officers can issue notices to the dog owner to abate the nuisance, issue infringement notices or have the matter heard in the Magistrates Court to seek an order from the Court to abate the nuisance.

Excessive barking can have several causes including:

- Housing environment, including inadequate yard space and lack of stimulation
- Inadequate exercise and interactions with people and or other dogs
- Inadequate shelter from weather conditions
- Hunger or thirst
- A medical condition such as illness or injury
- Provocation or disturbance - movement outside the dog's property (e.g. passers-by, other dogs barking, possums, cats)
- Changes to the family structure, routine or territory
- Learned behavior – dogs often bark more if they learn that their owner makes a fuss over them when they bark
- Contact seeking - dogs are social animals, barking and howling are ways that dogs can communicate with each other over distance
- Territorialism (visitors to the property) and communication.

Not all barking dog complaints can be prevented. The objective is to resolve complaints as quickly and smoothly as possible. Sometimes the behaviour is so ingrained that professional advice is required. In these cases, advice from a veterinarian or referral to a qualified behaviourist is recommended. The City has established a list of behaviourists to whom owners of dogs with a barking problem can be referred.

The process for dealing with barking dogs tries to balance the interests and rights of both the dog owner and the resident affected by the noise. Often cases are resolved reasonably quickly after the initial complaint, but some require an investigation to be undertaken which may take some time to determine if a problem exists.

DOG FAECES

The pollution of footpaths, parks and reserves by dog faeces is a concern raised by residents in recent surveys, with 72% of people feeling that dog waste on public streets was a significant issue.

It is generally accepted that dog faeces left in public spaces is smelly, unsightly and unpleasant to step in. However, it can also host disease and or parasites which can infect other dogs that come into contact with it, or worse, be transmitted to people.

Toxocara Canis is the roundworm that can be found in the faeces of infected dogs and can be passed onto humans.

Dog faeces is not a fertiliser and breaks down slowly. Leaving it lying around encourages other dogs to mark their spot. Dog faeces litter can lead to bacteria and algae in our water ways which can harm birds, fish, frogs and insects.

The City presently has a Local Law which requires dog owners to pick up their dog's faeces from public places. There is also a requirement that dog owners take a bag or other suitable device with them for picking up their dog faeces when walking their dog. It is not proposed to modify these requirements. 88% of survey respondents indicated that they are aware of these requirements.

CAT TRESPASS

There is currently a dusk-to-dawn cat containment requirement in The City of Greater Bendigo. Our survey responses show that a majority of residents are aware of the curfew (81%) however nearly the same number of residents observe cats breaking this curfew.

Cats can create a nuisance to residents by leaving faeces in gardens and children's play areas, spraying plants and buildings with their urine, fighting with other cats which often involve loud and disturbing vocalisation, and upsetting resident cats which reside on the property where the other cat is trespassing.

It is important to note that not all these cats would be owned. Research recently conducted by Monash University indicates that 22% of Victorians are feeding or otherwise caring for a community cat which they believe is not owned, but who the cat relies on for food and potentially other additional care.

Our survey supported these finding, with 8% of respondents admitting to feeding or providing care for a cat which was 'unowned' and lived within the community.

Cat trespass can be significantly reduced by increased containment requirements, and a reduction in the number of un-owned cats living among the community.

Cats have a major impact on Victoria's biodiversity, with wild cats being one of the most significant threats to the survival of the state's threatened wildlife. Around 46% of Australia's endangered wildlife can be found in towns and cities (Ives et al. 2015), so it is a topic that requires consideration for both urban and rural cats.

The main environmental impact of wondering cats is through direct predation, but cats also spread diseases that affect, humans, livestock and our wildlife. These diseases can cause abortions in livestock which reduced farmers' productivity and create scar tissue in livestock meat which reduces farmers' incomes.

6.2 OUR ORDERS, LOCAL LAWS, COUNCIL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

CURRENT ORDERS:

As per Chapter 4.2, Council currently has a cat curfew under s25 of the Act from sunset to sunrise that applies across the municipality making it an offence for a cat to be outside the owner's property. This is to reduce incidence of breeding to decrease the number of unwanted cat litters in the community and reduce the occurrences of nuisance.

As per Chapter 3.2, Council has Orders in place requiring dogs and/or cats to be restrained in a specific manner when in public places.

As per Chapter 3.2, Council also has an Order prohibiting dogs from the playing surface of the Queen Elizabeth Oval.

CURRENT LOCAL LAWS:

As per Chapter 3.2, Council's Local Law No 2 regulates the numbers of dogs and/or cats that can be kept at a property and requires dog owners remove and dispose of faeces deposited by their dogs in public places.

CURRENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:

Current policies and procedures relating to management of customer concerns relating to a nuisance caused by pets in the community includes:

- Nuisance Animals Policy
- Investigation Manual for Nuisance
- Compliance Policy
- After Hours Response Procedure
- Trespassing Livestock Procedure
- Issuing of Infringement and Caution Notices Procedure
- Internal Review Procedure
- Guidelines for Dealing with Animal Matters.

OUR CURRENT COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES

The City has a comprehensive manual and procedures for dealing with nuisance issues and has several trained staff dedicated to managing the nuisance issues that arise from animals. Our staff respond to over 500 barking dog requests per year.

6.3 OUR PLAN

Considering above, the activities and objectives for the next 4 years are listed below:

Objective 1: Manage dog nuisance complaints		
Activity	When	Evaluation
Maintain technology such as noise recorders for assessing nuisance.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	Reduction in the number of complaints in relation to a nuisance caused by dogs, including barking and faeces in public spaces.
Continue to use barking dog complaint/investigation policy/manual.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	
Review education material about managing dog nuisance issues on the website.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	

Objective 2: Manage cat nuisance complaints		
Activity	When	Evaluation
Provide education material about cat enclosures.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	Reduction in the number of complaints in relation to a nuisance caused by cats including trespass.
Review education material about managing cat nuisance issues on the website.	2022.	
Participate in the National Desexing Network programs to provide all eligible residents with discount cat desexing.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	
Provide accessible discount micro-chipping.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	
Provide affordable options for residents feeding/caring for community cats to become responsible cat owners.	2021.	
Provide cat traps for hire at no cost (refundable deposit required).	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	
Consider 24-hour cat containment to bring the requirement of keeping cats contained in line with that of keeping dogs contained.	2022.	

7 DOG ATTACKS

7.1 CONTEXT AND CURRENT SITUATION

There are several reasons why dogs will roam, including opportunity and boredom. Roaming dogs can be a problem as they can cause traffic hazards, act aggressively towards people and other animals, deposit faeces, be destructive, spread disease, can develop instinctive behaviours and act independently (disobedience). Dogs that are used to roaming and having freedom can develop behavioural problems and are likely to protest when confined, which in turn can lead to residential amenity issues.

Roaming dogs are more likely to be involved in a rush or an attack on a person or another animal. The City treats all dog attacks as a matter of priority and is a vital component of the Animal Management Officer's role.

A majority of dog attack investigations are for attacks on other dogs, followed by attacks on other animals (e.g. other pet animals or livestock).

Our Survey shows that 35% of respondents have experienced a dog rush or attack, however it most likely to go unreported to council for investigation. Development of a program to educate residents on how to identify a dog attack, and the process for reporting it, are considered in the Plan.

7.2 OUR ORDERS, LOCAL LAWS, COUNCIL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

CURRENT ORDERS:

Chapter 3.2 references the Orders requiring dogs to be restrained in a specific manner when in public places and from being present in specific areas of the municipal district.

CURRENT LOCAL LAWS:

There are currently no Local Laws relevant to dog attacks. Instead the provisions of the Domestic Animals Act are used when responding to reports of dog attack.

CURRENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:

Current policies and procedures relating to management of customer concerns relating to a nuisance caused by pets in the community includes:

- Dog attack procedure
- Destruction Procedure
- Dangerous Dog Declaration Procedure
- Menacing Dog Declaration Procedure
- Procedure for Prosecuting Dog Attack

- Dog Seizure Procedure
- After Hours Response Procedure
- Issuing of Infringements Procedure
- Nuisance Animals Policy
- Compliance Policy.

OUR CURRENT COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES

Officers respond to reports of dogs wandering at large as a high priority to reduce dog attacks.

All declared dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs are recorded on the Victorian Declared Dog Register (VDDR) including type of declaration.

7.3 OUR PLAN

Considering above, the activities and objectives for the next 4 years are listed below:

Objective 1: Increase awareness of safety around dogs and reduce number of attacks.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Maintain a designated dog attack consequence web page which explains the implications for dog and owner if the dog attacks. Also provide information on how to avoid dog bites.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	Reduction in number of dog attacks and increase in compliance of suitable restrain/containment of dogs.
Publicise key dog attack prevention messages (e.g.: confinement of dogs to property, leash laws etc.) through social media articles and website.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	
Undertake letter box drops in areas where a dog has attacked.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	
Ensure annual audits of properties where dangerous, menacing or restricted breed dogs are housed and properties where a Magistrate has imposed an order to contain.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	
Visit schools to educate children on how to be safe around dogs, minimising bites in the home and teaching them how to minimise being bitten or attacked by a dog.	2023.	
Develop an awareness program to increase dog attack reporting.	2023.	

Objective 2: Reduce harassment and wandering by dogs.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Conduct a feasibility study on the requirement to keep dogs on leashes in public areas unless designated otherwise.	Commence 2022.	Reduced rate of impounded dogs as a result of wandering, and decreased reports of harassment caused by wandering dogs.
Promote the importance of desexing at an early age.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	
Identify and patrol properties where containment is not sufficient and other high-risk areas.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	
Benchmark data of dog attack against previous years to identify trends or useful information.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	
Educate the community about dog confinement and penalties for owners not keeping their dog confined.	2022.	
Increase the use of media to educate the community on the importance of preventing their dog from wandering.	2023.	

8 DANGEROUS, MENACING AND RESTRICTED BREED DOGS

8.1 CONTEXT AND CURRENT SITUATION

The Domestic Animals Act 1994 provides that Council must outline programs, services and strategies to effectively identify all Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed dogs in the district and to ensure that these dogs are kept in compliance with the Act and Regulations.

A dog is considered a **Dangerous Dog** regardless of its breed or actions if it is left to guard non-residential premises, or it has been trained to attack or bite a person or clothing attached to or worn by a person.

Any dog, regardless of its breed or size, can be declared Dangerous if the dog has attacked and bitten a person or other animal and caused serious injury, or has menaced people more than once.

A dog can be declared **Menacing** if the dog causes a non-serious bite injury to a person or animal, or the dog rushes at, or chases a person in an aggressive manner.

Restricted Breed Dogs (RBD's) are five specific breeds of dogs that are considered a higher risk to community safety than other breeds of dogs.

In 2003 the Government introduced Restricted Breed Dog Legislation into Victoria to regulate the ownership and keeping of dogs whose importation is prohibited under the Customs (Prohibited Imports) Regulations 1956 of the Commonwealth.

The following dog breeds are restricted:

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

Only the American Pit Bull Terrier (or Pit Bull Terrier) and Dogo Argentino are known to be in Victoria.

The State Government has developed a Standard for identifying RBDs and all dogs fitting the Standard including part breeds, except where exemptions are given by the Standard, are considered an RBD. RBDs not registered prior to 30 September 2011 are not allowed to be kept in Victoria.

At July 2021 the City had a total of 8 Dangerous Dogs, 3 Menacing Dogs and 1 Restricted Breed Dog (Pit Bull).

8.2 OUR POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

CURRENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:

Current policies and procedures relating to the management of Dangerous, Menacing and RBDs in the community includes:

- Dangerous and Restricted Breed Dogs Inspection Procedure
- Dog Seizure Procedure
- Destruction Procedure
- Dangerous Dog Declaration Procedure
- Menacing Dog Declaration Procedure
- Procedure for Prosecuting Dog Procedure
- Issuing of Infringements Procedure
- Compliance Policy details the enforcement framework for decision making with issuing notices to comply, infringement notices, or filing charges for prosecution.
- Internal procedure requiring two officers to be present when visiting a property where a Dangerous Dog is kept
- Officers are duly authorised and delegated via Council's Instrument of Delegation the provisions to destroy a Dangerous or an RBD under certain circumstances, declare a dog to be Dangerous or Menacing or to register/refuse the registration of an RBD.

CURRENT COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES:

Staff are trained in identifying RBDs and respond to community reports with inspections conducted of industrial areas for dogs guarding premises.

The City has implemented a formal registration and annual audit program for properties where declared Dangerous or restricted breed dogs reside. Unannounced audits are also undertaken during this time or in response to reports from the community. Any serious breaches of audit requirements are dealt with by enforcement actions.

PRESCRIBED REQUIREMENTS FOR KEEPING DANGEROUS, MENACING AND RESTRICTED BREED DOGS

There are a clear set of requirements which must be met to appropriately house and contain a Dangerous or RBD, and to prevent incidents caused by Menacing Dogs.

The prescribed requirements for keeping RBDs include:

- Desexing
- Microchip identification
- Warning signs on property
- Muzzled and on leash outside property
- Must wear a prescribed collar at all times
- Registered on the Victorian Declared Dog Register (VDDR)
- Housed in an enclosure or secured yard
- Annual inspection by a City Officer
- Requirement to notify the City of change of address, ownership or if the dog dies or goes missing
- Higher rate of registration with no pension concession
- Harsh penalties (Crimes Act) for attacking a person, including 10 years jail if the dog kills a person or 5 years jail if the dog endangers someone's life.

The prescribed requirements for keeping a Dangerous Dog are similar to RBD requirements, however there are colour difference of the warning signs and they also must be in an enclosure on a residential property (not secured yard) or within prescribed perimeter fencing when guarding nonresidential property.

The City may require a declared Menacing Dog to be muzzled when outside the owner's premises to prevent the dog from being able to bite. The City may also require the dog to be under effective control of a person by means of a chain, cord or leash whenever it is outside the owner's premises.

A Menacing Dog Declaration can be upgraded to a Dangerous Dog Declaration if the owner of the Menacing Dog has been issued with two infringement notices for failing to comply with requirements such as leashing or muzzling their dog while in public places.

8.3 OUR PLAN

Considering above, the activities and objectives for the next 4 years are listed below:

Objective 1: To reduce the risk of dog attack by ensuring that all Declared Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs investigations are managed quickly and efficiently.		
Activity	When	Evaluation
Respond to complaints regarding Menacing, Dangerous and RBDs as a matter of priority.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	All complaints are actioned in accordance with the customer service charter, resulting in successful compliance action.
Review policies and delegations in relation to declaring a dog Dangerous or Menacing.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	
Benchmark data of dog attack against previous years to identify trends or useful information.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	

Objective 2: To reduce the risk of dog attack by ensuring that all Declared Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs are kept in compliance with the Domestic Animals Act requirements.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Ensure that all properties where Declared dogs and RBDs are kept have random, unannounced inspections annually, and inspect industrial properties where guard dogs may be kept.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	100% of required properties audited annual, with an increase in compliance of suitable restraint/containment of dogs.
Ensure all Declared Dogs are accurately registered on the Victorian Declared Dog Registry.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	

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9 DOMESTIC ANIMAL BUSINESSES

9.1 CONTEXT AND CURRENT SITUATION

The City of Greater Bendigo has several registered Domestic Animal Businesses (DABs). These businesses operate under approved Codes of Practice and are subject to regular audit.

Under the provisions of the Domestic Animal Act 1994 a Domestic Animal Business is:

- An animal shelter
- A Council pound (operated by the Council or a contractor on behalf of Council);
- A pet shop;
- A dog and/or cat breeding establishment where there are three or more fertile females and the proprietor is not a member of an applicable organisation. If the proprietor is a member or an applicable organisation, they are allowed up to nine fertile females;
- A dog training establishment (where the business is run for profit); or
- An establishment that is rearing dogs or cats (where the business is run for profit); or
- A dog and/or cat boarding establishment (where the business is run for profit to provide overnight, day-care or homecare boarding).

9.2 OUR POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

CURRENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:

Current policies and procedures relating to a Domestic Animal Business include the Instrument of Delegation which provides delegation to staff to implement the DAB provisions of the Act regarding:

- Refuse to register or renew the registration of the premises
- Refuse to transfer the registration to a new premises
- Suspend the registration of the premises; or impose terms, conditions, limitations or restrictions on the registration of a premises
- Revoke the registration of a premises.

Compliance Policy provides the framework to guide compliance and enforcement action including but not limited to issuing notices to comply, infringement notices, refuse to register or revoking the registration or filing charges for prosecution regarding DABs.

In addition, Domestic Animal Business must be audited annually, and must comply with relevant legislation mentioned previously relating to the number of animals which can be kept at a property, and animal registration requirements.

9.3 OUR PLAN

Considering above, the activities and objectives for the next 4 years are listed below:

Objective 1: Identify and register all Domestic Animal Businesses in the municipality and ensure that they are in compliance with the Domestic Animals Act.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Inspect and audit all registered domestic animal businesses annually.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	100% of registered DABs inspected annually, with reduced number of non-compliance.
Investigate any reports/complaints of unregistered DAB within 48 hours.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	Number of reports actions within 48 hours.
Provide relevant Code of Practice to proprietors of existing and proposed DABs.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	Relevant information distributed.
Monitor newspapers and online advertisements to identify unregistered businesses and compare information to the Pet Exchange Register.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	Number of new businesses identified and registered.

10 OTHER MATTERS

10.1 CONTEXT AND CURRENT SITUATION

POPULATION OF UN-OWNED CATS

Both community consultation and survey feedback highlighted the many issues caused by an over-population of cats in the community.

There is evidence that community cat populations can be realistically and affordably managed through Trap, Neuter, Release programs (TNR). These programs are not aligned with Council's legislative requirements under the Domestic Animals Act and therefore unable to be realistically considered for inclusion in the 2021-2025 DAMP. It has been suggested that there are similar programs operating in areas across Victoria which would warrant further investigation and possible collaboration.

Desexing is an effective management strategy to reduce stray cat population. The Bendigo Community Cat Program offered by BARC, which provides low cost desexing options for eligible people caring for community cats, aims at reducing community cat populations via the same principal as NTR programs and can be done while meeting compliance under the Domestic Animals Act.

Similar programs have been implemented at Banyule City Council and have demonstrated that free cat desexing has resulted in a significant decrease in not only stray cat admissions to the contracted shelter, but also neighbourhood complaints in relation to the nuisance caused by cats.

The City has also partnered with the National Desexing Network (NDN) to provide discounted cat desexing to eligible residents. This program has proved popular with 72 cats desexed in the last 12 months. This included 42 female cats, of which 5 were pregnant or in-season, and 30 male cats.

As a conservative measure, desexing these 72 cats has prevented at least 720 kittens in the first year, with each female cat able to produce on average 10 kittens and male cats being able to contribute to even more kittens by mating with more than one female.

78% of survey respondents would like support in the form of discounted desexing, and so the partnership with the NDN will continue.

EMERGENCY HOUSING PROVISIONS FOR PETS

There are many situations that might call for emergency housing for an animal when an owner is not able to care for them. In many of these situations, it is best practise to not encourage "surrendering" an animal for rehoming, as the bond between the owner and the pet is vital in supporting the owner through the experience they are managing, which has led to the requirement for emergency boarding. Situations may include escape from Family violence, homelessness, or the requirement for medical treatment or rehabilitation.

Emergency housing for pets has been identified as a need and will be further considered and addressed under the service delivery model for BARC.

THE CONTRIBUTIONS PETS MAKE TO HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

98% of respondents to our survey recognised that pets, especially dogs and cats, can improve their owner's health. Benefits of owning a pet have been proved to include a reduction in stress, anxiety, and depression. They can ease loneliness, encourage exercise and playfulness, and even improve your cardiovascular health. Caring for an animal can help children grow up more secure and active. Pets also provide valuable companionship for older adults.

The importance of pets has been widely identified by the City's Health and Wellbeing Directorate and future consideration is being made into how further support can be provided to isolated and vulnerable residents to support a desire for pet ownership.

10.2 OUR POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

CURRENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:

The shelter service provided by BARC currently works with several other organisations to provide emergency accommodation to animals whose owners might be experiencing family violence, homelessness, or other significant disruption which threatens the relationships they have with their pet.

There currently is an existing Emergency Animal Welfare Plan that sits as part of the Integrated Municipal Emergency Management Plan that contains Council's actions and responses for animal management and welfare in an emergency.

CURRENT COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES:

All processes fit within the Victorian Code of Practice for the management of Shelter and Pounds, as well as the Health Management Plan for the Bendigo Animal Relief Centre.

Discount cat desexing is delivered in accordance with the Domestic Animal Act by ensuring that all desexed cats are micro-chipped and registered.

10.3 OUR PLAN

Considering above, the activities and objectives for the next 4 years are listed below:

Objective 1: Support the community to manage community cats responsibly

Activity	When	Evaluation
Provide support to residents who are feeding/caring for a community cat by providing affordable desexing, micro-chipping and registration.	2021-2022.	The Bendigo Community Cat Program has commenced trial and aims to provide a desexing, micro-chipping and registration service for 50 cats being cared for by eligible residents.
Continue to partner with the National Desexing Network to provide discount cat desexing.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	
Provide education and resources on the effect feeding a stray cat can have to increased disease transmission and over population.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	

Objective 2: Establish a community centric emergency management plan for animals

Activity	When	Evaluation
Investigate options to support people experiencing homelessness who own pets.	2023.	Successful service provision.
Increase community awareness and promote services available for people and animals exposed to family violence.	2022.	
Consider support options for people and pets required to evacuate (e.g. flood, fire).	2024.	

Objective 3: Encourage pet ownership as a means of health and wellbeing of the City's residents

Activity	When	Evaluation
Provide assistance to people seeking companionship with an animal by providing guidance and assistance on choosing the right animal.	Ongoing, will continue for 2021-2025 Plan.	Increase pet ownership, especially by those living in isolation and those living with disabilities.
Increase community awareness and of the benefits of owning a pet through targeted campaigns.	2022.	

11 ANNUAL REVIEW OF PLAN AND ANNUAL REPORTING

Under section 68A (3) of the Domestic Animals Act, Council must:

- Review its DAMP annually and, if appropriate, amend the Plan;
- Council must provide the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions Secretary with a copy of the plan, including any amendments to the Plan;
- Publish an evaluation of its implementation of the Plan in its annual report.

The actions of the Domestic Animal Management Plan will be reported and monitored via the City's business planning software which assists in monitoring strategic plan actions.

The DAMP will continue to be monitored annually against several key performance indicators. A number of these indicators form part of the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework (LGPRF) and infringement activity is reported to the Attorney General. All performance indicators are reported in the City's annual report. The performance indicators are:

- Number of dog and cat registrations
- Number of dogs and cats entering BARC
- Number of dog and cats reclaimed from BARC
- Number of dogs and cats rehoused from BARC
- Number of dogs and cats euthanised
- Number of dog management requests
- Number of cat management requests
- Total requests for animal services
- Number of prosecutions undertaken
- Number of successful prosecutions
- Number of infringement notices
- Response times for service delivery.

EVALUATION OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

Activity	When	Evaluation
Conduct annual review of Domestic Animal Management Plan.	Annually as part of Plan.	Ensure actions are delivered as per Plan and the content remains current with the needs of the Community and the Act.
Update DAMP as required.	As required.	Provide the DAMP to Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions including if amendments are undertaken.
Report on the implementation of the DAMP in Council Annual Report.	Annually.	Report completed.

APPENDIX A – ACTIVITY SUMMARY

2. TRAINING OF AUTHORISED OFFICERS

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITY
1: Maintain a training register for individual officers detailing completed and proposed training.	Maintain a skills matrix for employed staff, to identify required and proposed training.
2: Ensure all new Authorised Officers have completed their minimum training requirements within 12 months of appointment.	Identify minimum training requirements for Authorised Officers and record when officers have completed each course.
3: Provide opportunities for additional training each year.	Identify additional training opportunities e.g. prosecutions training, advanced conflict management and mediation.
4: Provide and maintain performance training / planning process for individual officers.	Complete annual development plan and review process for each staff member.

3. PROGRAMS TO PROMOTE AND ENCOURAGE RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERSHIP AND COMPLIANCE WITH LEGISLATION

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITY
1: Increase pet registrations.	Continue with discounts for desexed pets.
	Provide education on the purpose of pet registration through increased community presence, and support owners to complete registration details (e.g. assist with sighting desexing tattoos, obtaining microchip numbers).
	Pound service discounts for registered pets.
	Online payment options for registrations.
	Review registration fees to encourage new registrations (e.g. free registration for pets under 6 months of age).
2: Increase pet micro-chipping.	Continue to provide discount micro-chipping 5 days a week, with the intention to increase the service to 7 days a week.
	Consider micro-chipping events to reach a wider range of pet owners.
3: Increase dog waste removal.	Empower community to encourage owners to clean up after their dogs.
	Trial the provision of environmentally friendly dog waste bags through the council offices for owners to use, in line with Council's Single Use Plastics policy.
	Continue with Local Laws Officer presence at popular dog walking/exercise locations.

4: Increase the number of desexed pets not intended for breeding.	Provide discount registration for desexed pets.
	Provide discount cat desexing to eligible residents.
	Promote increased sociability and trainability of desexed pets.
5: Assist residents with choosing the right pet.	Provide education sessions/presentations to help people analyse what pet might be right for them.
	Continue to provide advice and guidance for pets being adopted from the shelter.
6: Promote responsible pet ownership to the younger generation.	Visiting local schools to educate the next generation of pet owners of the importance of responsible pet ownership.
7: Increase Cat Containment.	Promote and share existing resources from Safe Cat / Safe Wildlife campaign.
	Provide flyers, information and advice on how to contain cats.

4. PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS OVER-POPULATION RATES AND ANY HIGH EUTHANASIA RATES

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITY
1: Work with the community to further reduce euthanasia rates for impounded cats and dogs.	Raise awareness of the benefits of desexing pets.
	Provide discounted registration costs for desexed pets.
	Educate community on the effect that feeding un-owned cats has on over-population.
	Promote lost/found pets online and on social media platforms to reunite them with their owner.
2: To provide transparency to our public in relation to overpopulation and high euthanasia rates.	Provide access to statistics on the euthanasia rates at the shelter.
3: Provide discount cat desexing to eligible residents and encourage ownership of community cats.	Continue to work with the National Desexing Network to provide low cost cat desexing to eligible residents.
	Complete and lodge a grant application to run a low-cost desexing program to support disadvantaged Victorian families within our municipality.
4: Create more options for animals who are not suitable for adoptions though a shelter.	Increase community foster carers to provide care for vulnerable animals such as neonatal kittens which are vulnerable to disease and ill-health in shelters.
	Continue to expand our network of rescue organisations, providing the option to transfer animals to other organisations which may be better equipped to manage behavioural or medical requirements.

5. REGISTRATION AND IDENTIFICATION

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITY
1: Increase awareness of importance and benefits of pet registration.	Use social media platforms to communicate the benefits of registration, such as increased chances of being reunited with owner.
	Provide clarity and transparency of how funding from pet registration is utilised by Council.
2: Continue to remind people of the requirement to register their pets.	Issue reminder notices to all pets who have been previously registered and not renewed.
	Send SMS reminders for all unpaid registrations, along with messaging of its importance.
3: Increase convenience of registration payments.	Provide assistance to owners to complete their registration by assisting to gather the required information (e.g. microchip numbers)
	Provide online platform for pet owners to pay their registration renewal, update details, and submit new animal registrations.
4: Consider additional incentives for registered pets.	Consider further discounts for pets which have been consistently registered on time and have demonstrated responsible pet ownership (e.g. pay 3 years rego, get the 4 th for free).
	Consider “no fee” reclaims of registered of animals found lost/wondering (with certain time frame).

6 NUISANCE

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITY
1: Manage dog nuisance complaints.	Maintain technology such as noise recorders for assessing nuisance.
	Continue to use barking dog complaint/investigation policy/manual.
	Review education material about managing dog nuisance issues on the website.
	Provide accessible discount micro-chipping.
2: Manage cat nuisance complaints.	Provide education material about cat enclosures.
	Review education material about managing cat nuisance issues on the website.
	Participate in the National Desexing Network programs to provide all eligible residents with discount cat desexing.
	Provide accessible discount micro-chipping.
	Provide affordable options for residents feeding/caring for community cats to become responsible cat owners.
	Provide cat traps for hire at no cost (refundable deposit required).
	Consider 24-hour cat containment to bring the requirement of keeping cats contained in line with that of keeping dogs contained.

7 DOG ATTACKS

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITY
1: Increase awareness of safety around dogs and reduce number of attacks.	Maintain a designated dog attack consequence web page which explains the implications for dog and owner if the dog attacks. Also provide information on how to avoid dog bites.
	Publicise key dog attack prevention messages (e.g.: confinement of dogs to property, leash laws etc.) through social media articles and website.
	Undertake letter box drops in areas where a dog has attacked.
	Ensure annual audits of properties where dangerous, menacing or restricted breed dogs are housed and properties where a Magistrate has imposed an order to contain.
	Visit schools to educate children on how to be safe around dogs, minimising bites in the home and teaching them how to minimise being bitten or attacked by a dog.
	Develop an awareness program to increase dog attack reporting.
2: Reduce harassment and wandering by dogs.	Conduct a feasibility study on the requirement to keep dogs on leashes in public areas unless designated otherwise.
	Promote the importance of desexing at an early age.
	Identify and patrol properties where containment is not sufficient and other high-risk areas.
	Benchmark data of dog attack against previous years to identify trends or useful information.
	Educate the community about dog confinement and penalties for owners not keeping their dog confined.
	Increase the use of media to educate the community on the importance of preventing their dog from wandering.

8 DANGEROUS, MENACING AND RESTRICTED BREED DOGS

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITY
1: To reduce the risk of dog attack by ensuring that all Declared Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs investigations are managed quickly and efficiently.	Respond to complaints regarding Menacing, Dangerous and Restricted Breed dogs as a matter of priority.
	Review policies and delegations in relation to declaring a dog Dangerous or Menacing.
	Benchmark data of dog attack against previous years to identify trends or useful information.
2: To reduce the risk of dog attack by ensuring that all Declared Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs are kept in compliance with the Domestic Animals Act requirements.	Ensure that all properties where Declared and Restricted Breed Dogs are kept have random, unannounced inspections annually, and inspect industrial properties where guard dogs may be kept.
	Ensure all Declared Dogs are accurately registered on the Victorian Declared Dog Registry.

9 DOMESTIC ANIMAL BUSINESSES

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITY
1: Identify and register all Domestic Animal Businesses in the municipality and ensure that they are in compliance with the Domestic Animals Act.	Inspect and audit all registered domestic animal businesses annually.
	Investigate any reports/complaints of unregistered DAB within 48 hours.
	Provide relevant Code of Practice to proprietors of existing and proposed DABs.
	Monitor newspapers and online advertisements to identify unregistered businesses and compare information to the Pet Exchange Register.

10 OTHER MATTERS

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITY
1: Support the community to manage community cats responsibly.	Provide support to residents who are feeding/caring for a community cat by providing affordable desexing, micro-chipping and registration.
	Continue to partner with the National Desexing Network to provide discount cat desexing.
	Provide education and resources on the effect feeding a stray cat can have to increased disease transmission and over population.
2: Establish a community centric emergency management plan for animals.	Investigate options to support people experiencing homelessness who own pets.
	Increase community awareness and promote services available for people and animals exposed to family violence.
	Consider support options for people and pets required to evacuate (e.g. flood, fire).
3: Encourage pet ownership as a means of health and wellbeing of The City's residents.	Provide assistance to people seeking companionship with an animal by providing guidance and assistance on choosing the right animal.
	Increase community awareness and of the benefits of owning a pet through targeted campaigns.

11 ANNUAL REVIEW OF PLAN AND ANNUAL REPORTING

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITY
1: Evaluation of implementation of the Domestic Animal Management Plan.	Conduct annual review of Domestic Animal Management Plan.
	Update DAMP as required.
	Report on the implementation of the DAMP in Council Annual Report.

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