



DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022-2025

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Golden Plains Shire spans the traditional lands of the Wadawurrung and Eastern Maar people. We acknowledge them as the Traditional Owners and Custodians.

Council pays its respects to Wadawurrung Elders past, present and emerging. Council also respects Eastern Maar Elders past, present and emerging.

Council extends that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People who are part of the Golden Plains Shire.

*Image: Sunset over Bunjil's Lookout in Maude.
Artwork: 'Wabdallah' by Shu Brown*



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 2022-2025

Throughout the Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) review and community survey, the community were asked about their thoughts in a number of areas. The findings of the community engagement are detailed below.



Findings in animal ownership include:

- *the community is growing and changing;*
- *the total cost and value of animal management is not widely known;*
- *the community can play a crucial role in reducing domestic animal management costs; and*
- *un-authorized breeding of dogs is occurring in conditions that breach the Code of Practice for breeding and are impacting animal well-being.*

Trends in animal ownership include:

- *resource limitations are impacting service delivery and innovation;*
- *registration has declined since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic*
- *domestic animal management staffing resources have remained constant over the life of the last two Domestic Animal Management Plans;*
- *dog attacks on people, pets and livestock continues to impact the community;*
- *a majority of respondents want a cat curfew; and*
- *reporting of dog attacks to Council is low, relevant to the frequency of dog attacks.*

The challenges represented above are significant and the effort needed to overcome them should not be underestimated.

To achieve responsible pet ownership, the primary goal of Council's Domestic Animal Management Plan, requires the community and Council Officers to work together.

Council is committed to working with the community to address identified issues and to improve responsible pet ownership in the community through:

1. A consistent and considered approach to domestic animal management in the Golden Plains Shire;
2. Improved community engagement; and
3. Advocating for improved resourcing.

1. INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT



1.1 PURPOSE OF DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

The *Domestic Animals Act 1994* (the Act) requires every Victorian council to prepare a Domestic Animal Management Plan every four years.

The plan must set 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 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;
- minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals;
- address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats;
- encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats;

- minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance;
- 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;
- provide for the review of local laws that relate to the shire with a view to determining whether further local laws dealing with the management of dogs and cats in the municipal district are desirable;
- provide for the review of any other matters related to the management of dogs and cats in the shire 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's Annual Report.

1.2 PROCESS APPLIED IN DEVELOPING THE PLAN

This plan was developed by Golden Plains Shire Council after a survey was conducted electronically.

The survey questions were developed in consultation with several interested parties. The survey was promoted to the public for completion and engagement, including comments. The survey received 327 responses.

1.3 DEMOGRAPHIC AND PROFILE OF COUNCIL

Golden Plains Shire is a rural municipality with a low-rate base.

Like all services provided throughout the municipality, animal management services need to be strategically planned and targeted to address the main concerns and minimise the use of resources on matters considered of low concern or which would achieve a minor impact.

Golden Plains Shire comprises 2,705 square kilometres and is situated between two of Victoria's largest regional cities, Geelong and Ballarat.

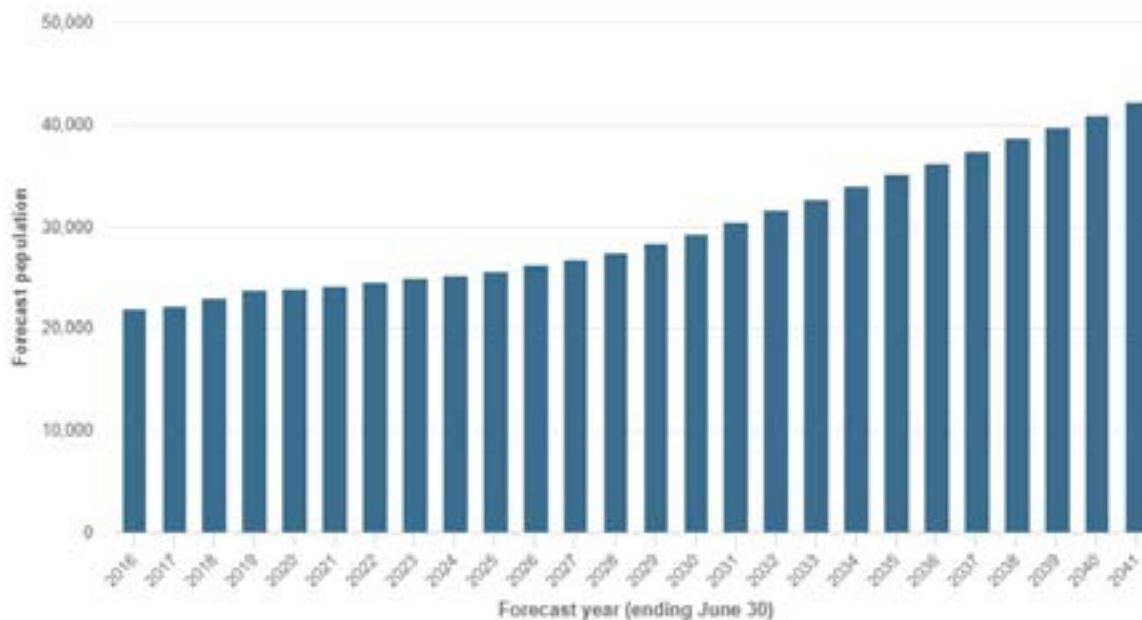
With 24,292 residents¹ across 52 communities including 16 townships, Golden Plains is one of the fastest growing municipalities in Victoria, with an average annual population growth rate of approximately 2.64%.

¹ <http://forecast.id.com.au/golden-plains>

1. INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

Forecast population

Golden Plains Shire



New residents, including many young families, have taken advantage of the proximity to services and employment opportunities available in Ballarat and Geelong. Despite rapid growth in the north-west and south-east corners of Golden Plains, the Shire's rural economic base and natural environment dominate the landscape. New families bring pets that not only have the potential to impact on the township residents and their pets, but on native wildlife and livestock in the surrounding landscape. With so many townships dispersed amongst large farms and rural lifestyle properties, there is increased opportunity for pet dogs to attack livestock.

Golden Plains Shire, with its relatively low number of domestic animal impoundments, contracts its pound services. The alternative, often employed by larger councils,

is to develop and coordinate their own pound facilities. City of Greater Geelong (Geelong Animal Welfare Shelter - GAWS) and City of Ballarat (Ballarat Animal Shelter) are two Council's that manage their own facilities. Councils often offset the cost of managing these facilities by contracting these services to councils with less capacity.

Council currently contracts its pound services through both the GAWS in Geelong and the City of Ballarat Animal Shelter. This arrangement contributes towards providing a convenient service to residents at each of the major cities in the north and south of the Shire where residents access most of their services. The cost of impounding a dog or cat exceeds \$250 per animal in these facilities so promoting animal registration and a free first ride home policy is required to reduce the costs to Council.

As the community grows, Council will be assessing and considering the cumulative costs of animal attacks and the impacts of domestic animals in the rural landscape.

As a growing rural municipality, the impact of dogs in the community is more apparent than that of cats. However, while cat problems tend to be less obvious, there is evidence to suggest cats are having a negative impact on wildlife and residents.

Companion animals, other than cats and dogs, are important to members of the community. Council will advocate that companion animals, such as rabbits, are desexed and vaccinated for their safety. If Council become aware of any welfare concerns relating to companion animals, these will be investigated by Council officers, working closely with RSPCA.



1.4 DOMESTIC ANIMAL STATISTICS

Attribute	2012/13 Value	2016/17 Value	2018/19 Value	2019/20 Value	2020/21 Value
Population	19,000	22,145	23,384	24,001	24,292
Area	2705km ²				
No. of EFT Authorised Officers (Animal Control)	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5
Hours training per officer annually	7.6	15.2	15.2	10	10
No. of Registered Dogs	5240	5029	6360	6324	5917
No. of Registered Cats	1103	1073	1509	1459	1336
No. of Registered Declared Dogs (Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed)	7	11	19	20	18
No. of impoundments (dogs)	220	190	93	70	39
No. of impoundments (cats)	312	258	150	111	70
% of dogs returned to owner	64%	38.50%	53.8%	63%	57.1%
% of cats returned to owner	2%	14.10%	2%	12.6%	4.3%

During the 2020/21 financial year, Golden Plains Shire Council had the following:

Domestic Animal Businesses	12
Number of calls to Community Safety Staff relating to Animal Management	1939

1. INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

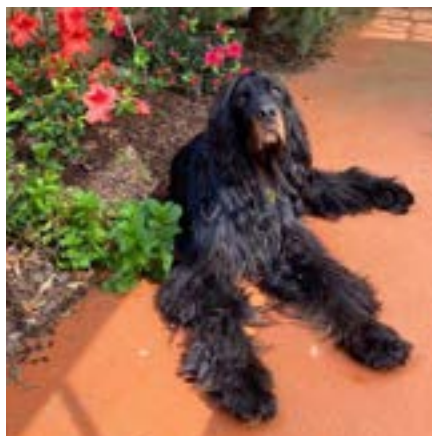
1.5 SURVEY RESULTS

The Domestic Animal Management Plan survey was open from Monday 23 August to Monday 13 September, 2021, with community members invited to complete the survey to help shape the development of Council's new Domestic Animal Management Plan.

Community members were able to complete the online survey or a hard copy of the form, which was available online and at Council's Customer Service Centres.

During the consultation period, 326 people completed the survey online, and there was only 1 submission via email. Of the 327 respondents, 89.9% were owners of 1 or more domestic pets, with 57.80% owning a dog, 7.34% owning a cat and 24.77% owning both a dog and a cat.

There were 270 dog owners that responded to the survey, with 45% of dog owners having 1 dog, 44% having 2 dogs, and 9% have between 3 and 6 dogs. There were 2 respondents with 10 or more dogs, 1 with 11 dogs and 1 with 20 dogs.

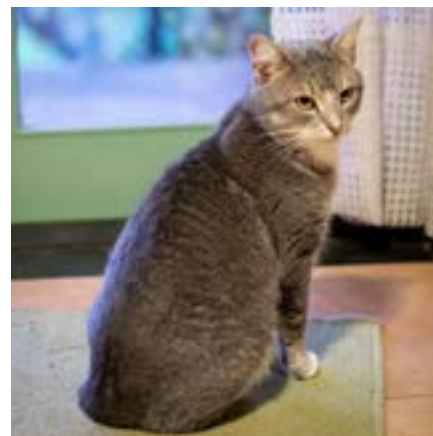


From the 327 respondents, there were 105 cat owners. Of these 105 cat owners, 52% has 1 cat, 46% has 2 cats and 11% has 3 or 4 cats.

There was one respondent who has 10 cats. The survey asked participants to share how they were connected to Golden Plains Shire, their age group and the structure of their household.

Of the 327 respondents, 98.47% live in Golden Plains Shire, 17.74% work in the Shire and 30.89% use the Shire's parks and recreation facilities. There were also 14 (4.28%) respondents who identified themselves as veterinarians, 13 (3.98%) who are part of community organisations in the Shire, and 8 (2.45%) who are visitors to the Shire.

The age of survey respondents varied, with 30.28% aged 45 to 59 years, 28% aged 35 to 44 years and 20.49% aged 20 to 34 years. There were 52 (15.90%) respondents aged between 60 and 74 years, 3 (0.92%) aged 15 to 19 years and 7 (2.14%) over 75 years. There were also 5 (1.53%) respondents who chose not to provide their age.

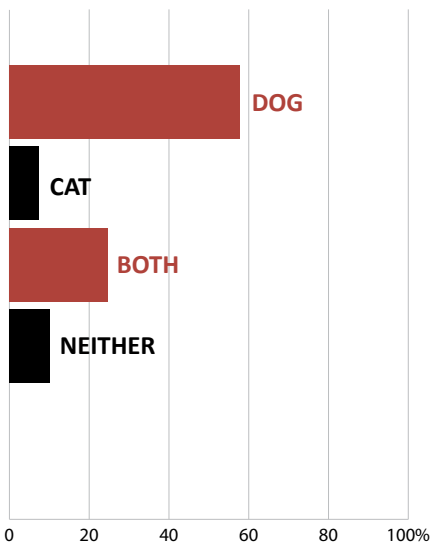


The most common household structures for respondents were couple only households (33.33%) and couple or sole parent households with dependent children (40.67%). There were also 33 (10.09%) respondents from sole person households and 32 (9.79%) from couple of sole parent households with adult children living at home. Only 8 (2.45%) respondents were from a group household, and 12 (3.67%) were from households with extended or multiple families.

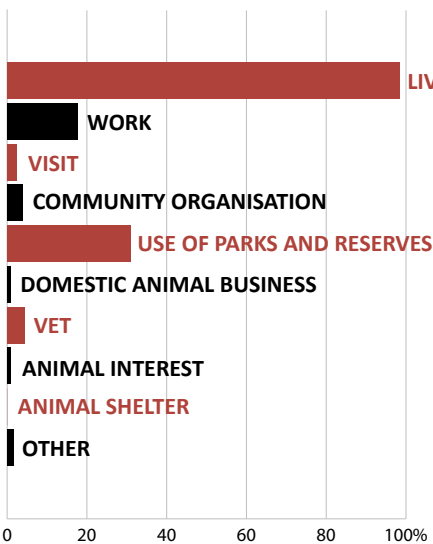
The survey asked a number of questions relating to the knowledge of animal management in the Shire, the repercussion of having unregistered animals, the impacts of dangerous unrestrained dogs, and puppy schools in Golden Plains Shire.

Of the 315 participants who responded to the question, 94.29% knew that dog and cats are required to be microchipped and registered with Council at the age of three months, 5.71% (18 respondents) did not know. There were 76 (24.13%) respondents who knew someone who lives locally that has an unregistered dog or cat, while 239 (75.87%) did not know anyone.

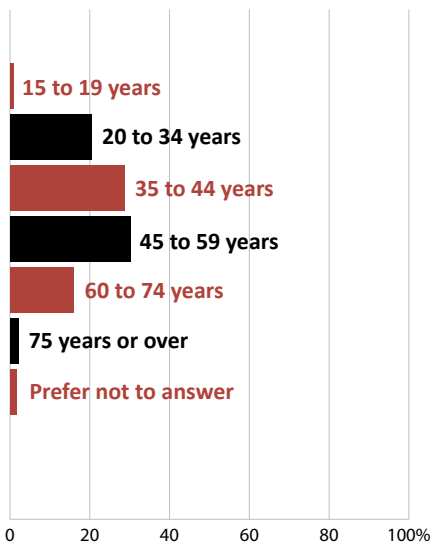
Are you a pet owner?



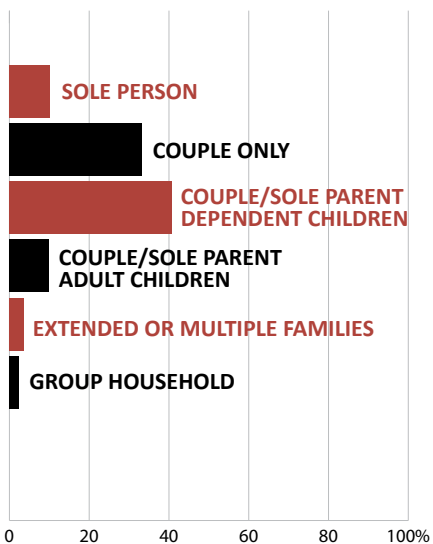
What is your connection with Golden Plains Shire?



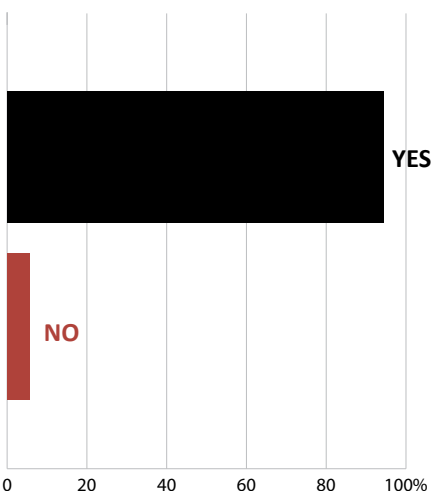
What is your age group?



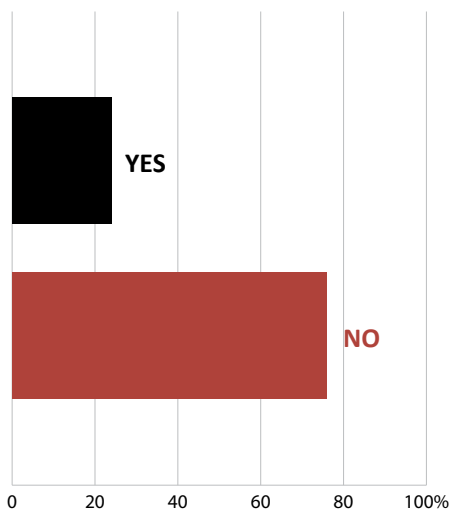
What is the structure of your household?



Did you know that dogs and cats are required to be microchipped and registered with Council at the age of three months?



Do you know anyone who lives locally, who has an unregistered dog or cat?



1. INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

There were 253 respondents (80.32%) who did not know that Council offers a free ride home to registered animals when they are found outside for the first time, while 19.68% of respondents were aware. There were also 159 (50.48%) respondents who did not know that the fine for owning an unregistered dog is \$363, while 49.52% of respondents were aware of the cost of the fine.

Of the 313 respondents who answered the question, 58.79% did not know that Council offers humane cat trap hire for free to help residents trap cats wandering on private land, while 41.21% were aware. There were also 257 (82.64%) respondents who knew the impact on the livelihood of farmers that dog attacks from unrestrained dogs cause, while 51 (17.36%) respondents did not know the impacts.

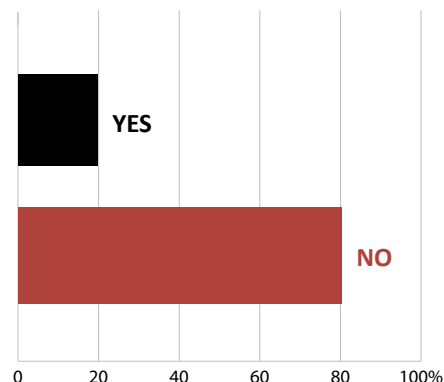
There were 288 (93.20%) respondents who were aware that local vets offer puppy training schools, and only 6.80% of respondents did not know about this offering. Of the 309 respondents who answered the question, 79.61% would take their new puppy to puppy school, while 20.39% would not. When asked why they would not utilise a local puppy school, responses included that it is too expensive, they are confident training their dog at home, time restraints, and ability to socialise their dogs without needing puppy school.

There were also 255 (82.52%) respondents who would consider taking their dog to obedience and training sessions or clubs, while 17.48% of respondents said they would not consider it.

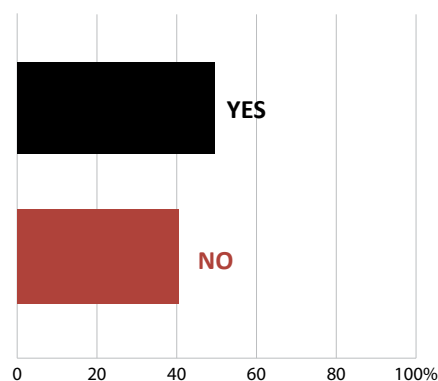
There were a number of questions in the survey that related to wandering cats and dog aggression and attacks. When asked whether they occasionally feed or look after any neighbourhood cats who come to their home, 96.94% of respondents said no, while 3.06% said yes. There were 131 (41.85%) respondents who had been personally affected by a wandering cat or witnessed a wandering cat on their property or on public land 4 or more times, while 16 (5.11%) respondents had been affected 3 times, 29 (9.27%) 2 times, 16 (5.11%) once in the last 12 months and 121 (38.66%) who had not been affected at all.

When asked whether they would support the introduction of a night-time cat curfew in Golden Plains Shire, 56.23% of the respondents said they strongly supported a cat curfew, 18.85% supported the idea and 10.22% said they were neutral. There were 29 (9.27%) respondents who strongly opposed the curfew and 17 (5.43%) who said they opposed it.

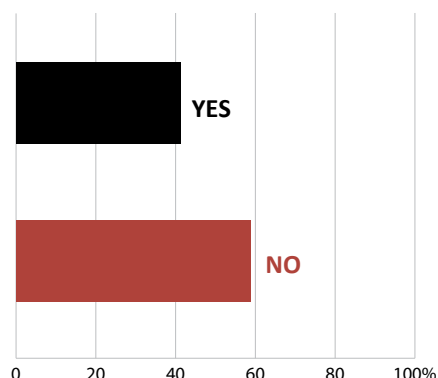
Do you know that Council offers a free ride home to registered animals when found outside your property on the first occasion?



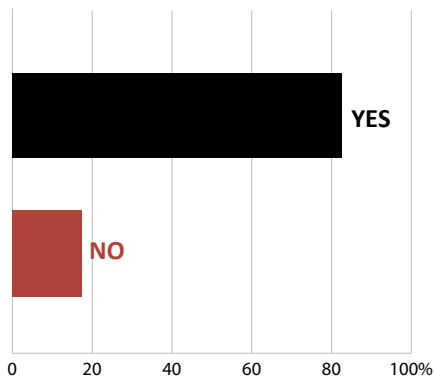
Did you know that a fine for owning an unregistered dog or cat is \$363? (The cost of the fine is set by the Victorian Government)



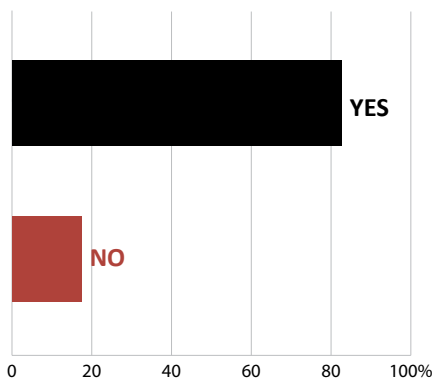
Did you know that Council offers a humane cat trap to hire for free to trap wandering cats on private land?



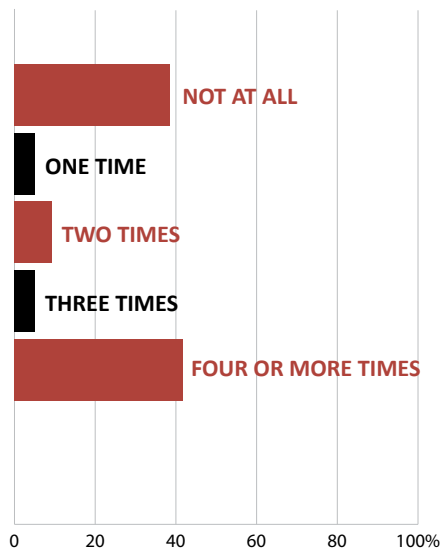
Are you aware of the impact to the livelihood of farmers from dog attacks from unrestrained dogs have on farm animals?



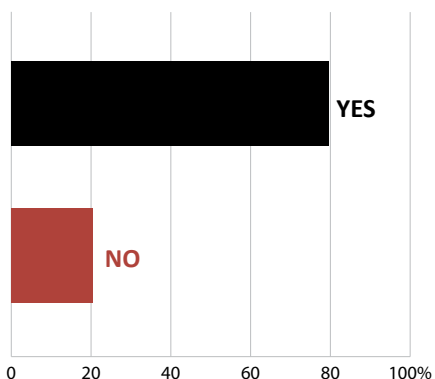
There are a lot of benefits to having an obedient dog, including the ability to recall your dog in all situations. Would you consider taking your dogs to obedience and training sessions or clubs?



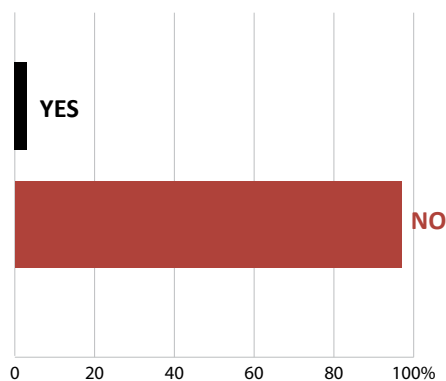
In the last 12 months, have you been personally affected by a wandering cat or witnessed a wandering cat (that was not your own) on your property or on public land?



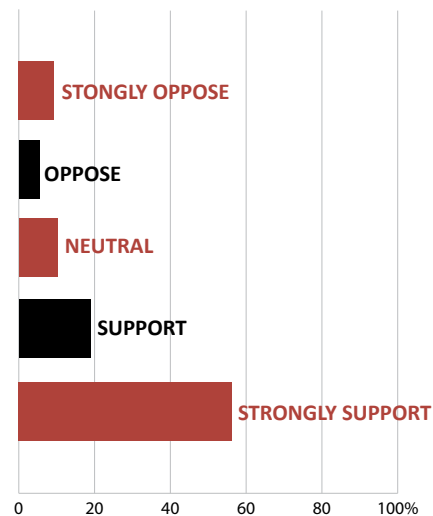
Did you know that local vets offer puppy training school?



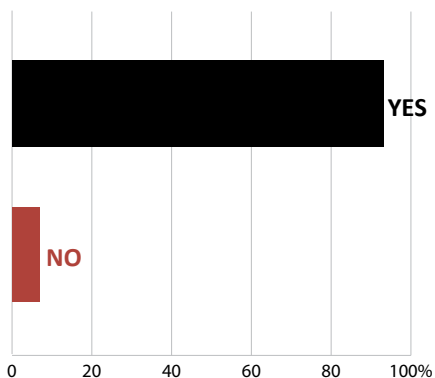
Do you occasionally feed (or look after) any other neighbourhood cats who come to your house?



Some councils have introduced orders which require cats to be confined to owner's property, to protect wildlife and reduce nuisance. Would you support the introduction of a night-time cat curfew in Golden Plains Shire?



Would you take your new puppy to puppy school?



1. INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

When asked if they had been personally affected, and/or witnessed dog aggression or a dog attack in the last 12 months, 69.45% of respondents said they had not been affected at all, while 12.54% responded 1 time, 6.43% 2 times, 3.54% 3 times and 8.04% had been affected more than 4 times.

There were also 51 (16.40%) respondents who said they had witnessed or been a party to a dog attack involving livestock, while 260 (83.06%) said they had not.

There were 27 (8.86%) respondents who were not aware that an animal can be put down and the owner could be fined or face the Magistrates Court if your dog is involved in an attack, while 284 (91.32%) respondents were aware.

The survey included questions about dog walking in Golden Plains Shire, and compliance with dog on-lead areas. When asked how well they think the community follow dog on-lead areas, 63.48% of the 307 participants who responded to the question said not well or not well at all, while 26.71% said well or very well and 36.81% said compliance was okay.

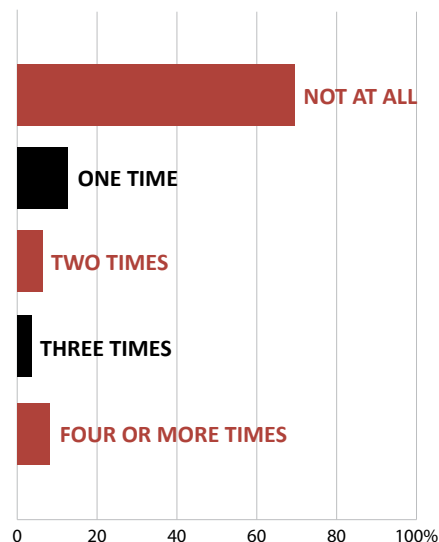
There were 208 (67.75%) respondents who said they always follow dog on-lead orders when walking their dog, while 39 (12.70%) said they follow the orders most of the time and 4 (1.30%) said they sometimes follow the orders. Of the 307 respondents who answered the question, 2 (0.65%) said they rarely comply with dog on-lead orders and 3 (0.98%) said they never comply.

When asked if they have any concerns about dog walking in Golden Plains Shire, respondents were able to choose multiple options. Of the 307 respondents to the questions, 58.96% said dog poo not being picked up was a concern, 46.25% said dogs being walked off lead or not under control of the owner, 32.25% said safety and the potential of dog aggression or attack was a concern and 16.61% said the impact of dog on native wildlife. There were 25.08% who were not concerned about dog walking and 11.73% who selected other.

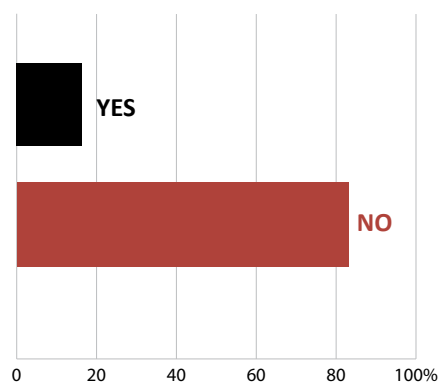
Responses provided in comment under the 'other' selection included concerns about dogs out of control or not secure in the front yard of other properties, a lack of safe roads to walk on, allergies to dog hair, community members who may be afraid of dogs, the risk of dogs being injured if they get off lead and a lack of off-lead areas for dogs.

Respondents were asked a number of questions about things they had noticed about dogs while they have been out and about in their local area in the last 12 months. The questions included: Have you noticed dog poo left on the ground? Dogs off-lead where they shouldn't be? Or dogs with owners far away or appear to be absent? The questions and responses are shown in the table on the next page.

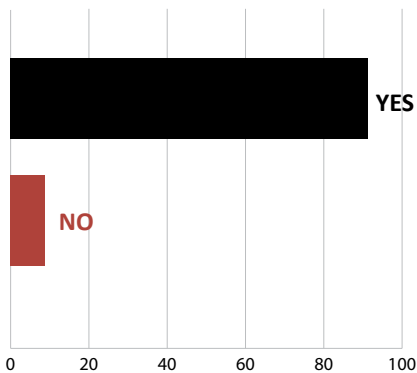
In the last 12 months, have you been personally affected, and/or witnessed dog aggression/attacks?



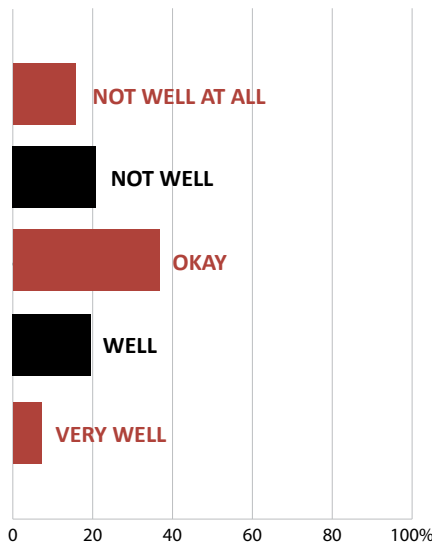
Have you witnessed or been a party to a dog attack involving livestock?



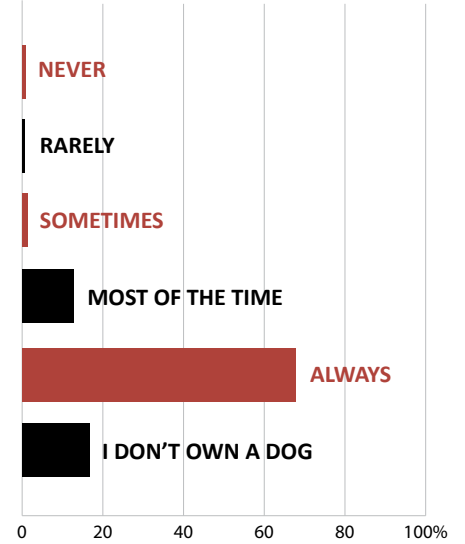
Are you aware that if your dog is involved in an attack, the animal can be put down, you could be fined or have to face the Magistrates Court?



How well do you think the community follow dog on-lead areas?



When you walk your dog (if relevant), how often do you follow dog on-lead orders?



In the last year, have you noticed any of the following things about dogs when out and about in your local area?

	ALWAYS	VERY OFTEN	SOMETIMES	RARELY	NEVER	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Dog poo left on the ground	21.50% 66	24.43% 75	34.85% 107	14.33% 44	4.89% 15	307	2.57
Dogs off-leash when they shouldn't be	10.10% 31	17.26% 53	40.39% 124	25.73% 79	6.51% 20	307	3.01
Dogs with owners far away/owners seem to be absent	6.51% 20	12.05% 37	33.55% 103	31.27% 96	16.61% 51	307	3.39
Dogs annoying or intimidating other people	2.28% 7	8.47% 26	19.87% 61	37.13% 114	32.25% 99	307	3.89
Dogs annoying or intimidating other dogs	2.93% 9	10.10% 31	30.29% 93	33.22% 102	23.46% 72	307	3.64
Dogs chasing/attacking wildlife	1.05% 3	2.28% 7	7.17% 22	31.60% 97	57.00% 175	307	4.39
Dogs not returning to their owners when called	5.21% 16	13.68% 42	23.09% 71	20.07% 62	22.15% 68	307	3.50
Dogs in playgrounds	3.91% 12	8.79% 27	23.78% 73	28.66% 88	34.85% 107	307	3.82
Dogs sitting next to their owners at outdoor cafes	6.51% 20	25.73% 79	40.07% 123	14.33% 44	13.36% 41	307	3.02
Dogs not responding to owners commands	3.91% 12	11.73% 36	34.20% 105	34.85% 107	15.31% 47	307	3.46

1. INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

There were multiple questions centred on the dog parks, that asked respondents about whether they would use a dog park and how far they would travel to use a dog park.

Of the 309 respondents who answered the question, 60.91% said they would use an off-lead, fenced dog park if there was one located in Golden Plains Shire, while 39.09% said they would not. When asked how far they would be willing to travel to use a dog park, 46.21% of respondents said 5km, 40.53% said 10km, while 10.61% said 25km and 2.65% said they would be willing to travel 50km to use a dog park.

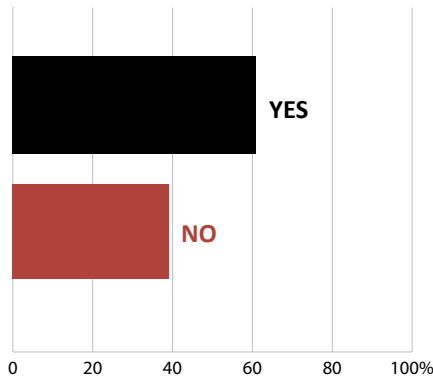
There were 144 (47.06%) respondents who said they had used a dog park before, while 162 (52.94%) said they had not.

Respondents were asked about the topics that need more promotion in the general community, and were able to select one or more options. The responses are included in the table on the next page.

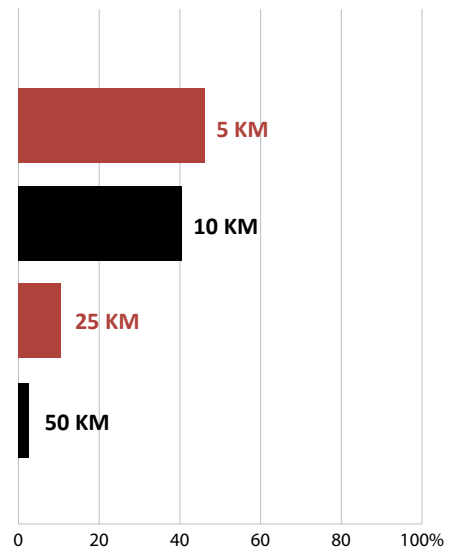
‘Other’ responses included ranger contact details, enforcement of leash rules, barking dogs, companion animal information, responsibility of property owners to ensure animal are secure, picking up dog waste, registration age, the importance of dog walking, the impact cats can have on native wildlife and responsible pet ownership.

Respondents were also asked about the importance of Council services in relation to animal management. The services and responses are in the table on the next page.

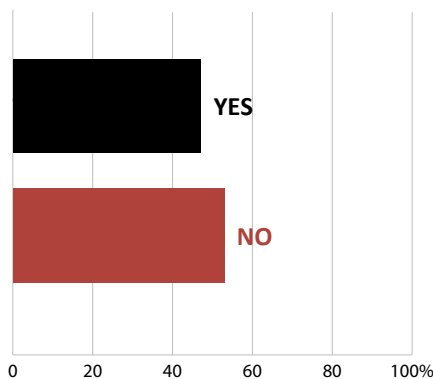
Would you use an off-lead, fenced dog park if there was one available in Golden Plains Shire?



How far would you be willing to travel to use a park?



Have you used a dog park before?



What topics need more promotion in the general community?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Why microchipping is important	32.79%	100
Why you need to register your pet	37.70%	115
Responsibilities of dog owners when walking/exercising their dog	61.64%	188
What 'effective control' of a dog means	49.51%	151
Why de-sexing is important	42.96%	131
How to renew or add a pet registration online	37.38%	114
Dog on-leash areas and the rules	48.52%	146
Dog off-leash areas and the rules	46.23%	141
Who can look after your pet if you have to suddenly leave home	26.89%	82
What to do if you can no longer care for your pet	27.21%	83
What to do if you find a lost pet	44.59%	136
What to do if you lose your pet	33.77%	103
Barking dogs in your neighbourhood	44.92%	137
Making a complaint about another pet or owner	29.84%	91
Other (please specify)	Responses 9.18%	26
Total Respondents: 305		

How important (or otherwise) do you think it is for Council to provide the following services for the community?

	VERY IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	FAIRLY IMPORTANT	SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT	NOT IMPORTANT	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Dog-free nature reserves/environmentally sensitive areas	32.08% 54	22.53% 66	19.80% 58	12.97% 38	12.63% 37	293	2.52
Fenced park/s for dog play (tunnels, ramps, water play)	35.84% 105	18.77% 55	16.38% 48	16.72% 49	12.29% 35	293	2.51
Subsidised cat de-sexing program	49.15% 144	21.16% 62	15.36% 45	5.46% 15	8.87% 26	293	2.04
Door-knocking every house to check if pets are correctly registered	10.58% 31	11.60% 34	13.99% 41	26.96% 79	36.86% 108	293	3.68
Cat traps for residents' use	19.11% 56	22.18% 65	23.89% 70	20.48% 60	14.33% 42	293	2.89

2. COUNCIL'S ANIMAL MANAGEMENT TEAM

This section of the plan addresses the requirement of Section 68A (2) (b) of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*. It deals with Council's human resourcing for animal management tasks, the current skills of the team and planned training.



2.1 WHO WE ARE

Golden Plains Shire Council is a large peri-urban council, covering 2705km² and its animal management program is managed by the Community Safety Team, which is part of the Development and Regulatory Services Unit.

This team, made up of a Coordinator, an Administration Officer, an Investigations Officer, two Community Safety Officers, a relief Community Safety Officer and seven School Crossing Supervisors who undertake roles the following areas:

- Domestic Animal Management (including Domestic Animal Businesses)
- Livestock issues
- Linton Livestock Pound
- Fire Prevention
- Emergency Management
- Local Laws and Permits
- School Crossings
- Investigations and Compliance
- Standpipes

Golden Plains Shire Council currently has two full-time Community Safety Officers who are responsible for a range of tasks including livestock issues, local laws, parking, relief school crossing supervision, fire prevention and animal management duties. On two weekends a month and on periods of leave, a relief Community Safety Officer is rostered on duty. These officers share on-call duties and an officer is available every day and night of the year for emergency animal management issues.

Enforcement activities often place Council officers in difficult and confronting situations so ensuring the safety of staff is a top priority of Council.

Council maintains a training register which details all the qualifications of its officers.

The Community Safety Officers have undertaken animal handling and prosecution courses. Council promotes further training during the annual performance review cycle.



2.2 OUR CORE TRAINING

Core training opportunities currently include:

1. Certificate 4 Animal Management (or equivalent experience)
2. Animal Behaviour Workshops
3. Level 2- First Aid
4. Conflict Resolution
5. Dealing with aggressive customers
6. Canine Identification Training
7. Prosecution/Evidence Gathering Courses

2.3 WHAT WE CURRENTLY DO

1. Two Community Safety Officers undertake animal management as part of their duties throughout the Shire.
2. Council responds to more than 1,200 calls per year for assistance for animal management issues.
3. Council attends and investigates all reported animal management matters.
4. Council liaises with local veterinary practices on a regular basis.
5. Council staff attend training or courses when available.
6. Council informs victims and offenders of the result of investigations.
7. Council annually inspects Domestic Animal Businesses, Restricted Breed Dogs, and Dangerous and Menacing Dogs.

2. COUNCIL'S ANIMAL MANAGEMENT TEAM

2.4 WHAT THE COMMUNITY HAS SAID

1. They would like to see an increase the number of Community Safety Officers within the community.
2. Community Safety Officers should be more visible and undertake proactive patrols.
3. The community want more engagement, information and education from Golden Plains Shire Council staff.
4. The community would like to know more about the role of Community Safety Officers.
5. Some community members were unaware that Council staff can respond to emergencies after hours.
6. Some responses to the survey stated that Council staff in Animal Management do a great job whilst some reported that officers needed to improve.



2.5 NEW ACTIONS FOR THE DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022-2025

NEW ACTIONS	WHEN	EVALUATION
Complete a business case for an additional staff member to undertake the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit Domestic Animal Businesses. • Annually inspect properties containing Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs. • Undertake education regarding Responsible Pet Ownership through schools and in the community. 	2021-22 FY	2022 Review of DAMP
Review Council's Internal Policies and Procedures to ensure they are current and meet best-practice standards.	Ongoing	End of DAMP period.
Investigate a third-party phone answering service to ensure officers on call are responding to emergency events.	2021-22 FY	2022 Review of DAMP

3. CATS

There are 1,336 cats registered in Golden Plains Shire Council. Council officers investigate all reports of roaming animals and provide cat traps for residents to humanely trap cats.



3. CATS

3.1 WHAT WE CURRENTLY DO

1. Council loans cat traps to residents dealing with nuisance cats.
2. Council staff collect trapped cats and check for a microchip and registration.
3. Council officers return trapped registered cats home.
4. Council impounds cats that are not registered at either GAWS or City of Ballarat pound.
5. Cats deemed feral by an authorised officer and a vet are humanely destroyed.
6. Council offers subsidised cat desexing at the vets located in the shire.
7. Council offers discounted registration on desexed cats.



3.2 WHAT THE COMMUNITY HAS SAID

1. Most of the community members who responded to the survey were not aware that Council has a cat trap loan program.
2. More than 40% of respondents have had a cat wander on their property more than 4 times in the last year.
3. 56% of respondents surveyed would like a cat curfew introduced to stop cats wandering.
4. Cat enclosures should be encouraged as it stops cats leaving their owner's property.

3.3 NEW ACTIONS FOR THE DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022-2025

NEW ACTIONS	WHEN	EVALUATION
Investigate the benefits of introducing of a cat curfew between dusk and dawn.	2022-23 FY	End of DAMP period
Participate in any animal-based discussions with relevant authorities regarding nuisance cats.	Ongoing	End of DAMP period
Increase advertising that cat traps are available for hire.	Ongoing	2022 Review of DAMP
Circulate safe Cat, Safe Wildlife education material throughout the municipality (Find out more: www.safecat.org.au)	Ongoing	End of DAMP period

4. DOGS

There are 5,917 dogs registered in Golden Plains Shire. The current issues relating to dogs are:

1. Barking dogs
2. Dog attacks on livestock
3. Dogs at large (outside of their property and not under effective control)
4. Dogs rushing at passers-by
5. Failing to register dogs



4. DOGS

4.1 WHAT WE DO

1. Council investigates barking dog complaints and implement appropriate action.
2. Council educates dog owners about strategies they can use to ensure their dog does not create a nuisance.
3. Council attends to reports of dogs found at large any time or day of the year and attempt to take registered dogs home or unregistered dogs to the pound.
4. Council investigates rushing dogs, where a dog rushes at a person or animal in a menacing way however does not bite, and educate of prosecute the dog owner.
5. Council investigates dog attacks on humans, other domestic animals and livestock, and prosecute, if necessary.
6. Council declares dogs menacing, dangerous or put the owner on an undertaking if their dog attacks a person or animal.
7. Council issues warnings, infringements or prosecute in the Magistrates Court for offences against the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*.
8. Council audits and checks Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed dogs.
9. Council advocates for neighbours to seek out dispute resolution through the Department of Justice and Community Safety when Council is unable to obtain a successful resolution.

4.2 WHAT OUR COMMUNITY HAS SAID

1. 93% of respondents observed dogs off-lead when they should not have been.
2. 57% of respondents have not seen a dog chase wildlife.
3. 70% of respondents stated they were not affected or personally witnessed a dog attack over the last year, whilst 16.4% had been involved or witnessed an attack.
4. More than 90% of respondents were aware that dog owners can be charged and summonsed to appear before the courts if their dog is involved in an attack.
5. Some respondents to the survey wanted to ban off-lead dogs all together.
6. Dog barking diaries are difficult to fill out.
7. A lot of respondents want a more visible Council presence to deter people having their dog off-lead or failing to pick up after their dog.

4.3 NEW ACTIONS FOR THE DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022-2025

NEW ACTIONS	WHEN	EVALUATION
Review Councils procedures relating to dog barking and investigate any best practices like-size councils.	2022-23 FY	End of DAMP period.
Undertake more town/street audits and communications to ensure more dogs are registered.	Ongoing	End of DAMP period.
Update Council's website as to the consequences of dogs being off-lead.	Ongoing	2022 Review of DAMP.
If resources permit, liaise with local schools and kindergartens for Golden Plains Shire Council staff to undertake responsible pet ownership education.	2022-23 FY (If new resources are recruited)	End of DAMP period.

5. DOGS AND THEIR OWNERS IN PUBLIC PLACES

Golden Plains Shire has scheduled dog on-lead areas in nine (9) townships. Historically, properties in Golden Plains Shire were larger properties which allow dogs to have more space. Due to the changes in the types of properties in the Shire, there are more smaller allotments which require owners to take their dogs out for exercise.

Where dogs meet other dogs or owners in public areas, there can be confrontations that result in serious injuries to dogs and humans.



5. DOGS AND THEIR OWNERS IN PUBLIC PLACES

5.1 WHAT WE DO

Due to resources, Golden Plains Shire Council is reactive in this area and does not undertake proactive patrols.

1. Council publishes maps in Council's Local Law relating to dog on-lead areas.
2. Council installs and maintains signage around dog on-lead areas.

5.2 WHAT THE COMMUNITY HAS SAID

1. The community have concerns over the amount of dog poo left in public places. 21.5% of respondents to the survey always observe dog poo left on the ground, while 24% observed it very often and 35% observed dog poo sometimes.
2. 93% of respondents observed dogs off-lead when they should not have been.
3. There are no dedicated dog poo bins or dog litter bag dispensers within the Shire and the community would like to see them on walking trails.
4. 61% of respondents stated they would use an off-lead, fenced dog park if there was one available in the shire. 46.2% of respondents stated they were happy travel 5kms to a fenced dog park while 40.5% would be happy to travel 10kms.



5.3 NEW ACTIONS FOR THE DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022-2025

NEW ACTIONS	WHEN	EVALUATION
Investigate the cost and location of potential public bins and dog litter bags in multiple areas within the municipality.	2022-23 FY	End of DAMP period.
Investigate the cost and location of a fenced dog park in the municipality.	2022-23 FY	End of DAMP period.
Identify the locations within the community where they feel that dogs are off-lead and dog poo is left and, if resources permit, undertake targeted patrols, targeted education and potential enforcement.	Ongoing	End of DAMP period.
If resources permit, liaise with local schools and kindergartens for Golden Plains Shire Council staff to undertake responsible pet ownership education.	Ongoing	End of DAMP period.
Increase community understanding of effective control and responsible pet ownership through the Golden Plains Times, the Gazette, Council's website and social media, and community markets.	Ongoing	End of DAMP period.

6. DOG ATTACKS

Dog attacks have a massive impact on our community, wildlife and livestock in the Shire. Dog attacks occur regularly in Golden Plains Shire and there are medical costs, legal costs and personal trauma for all involved.

To the year ending June 2021, Council had 11 dog attacks reported, however Council are aware that a vast majority of attacks go unreported. Council prosecuted two dog owners in the Magistrates Court and issued a number of infringement notices for attacks deemed 'minor' as per the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*.

The key to preventing dog attacks is ensuring dogs remain securely confined to their premises. Forty-two infringements were issued in the year ending June 2021 for dogs found at large.

After an attack has occurred, Council has the option of declaring the dog Menacing (in minor attacks) or Dangerous (in serious attacks).



6. DOG ATTACKS

6.1 WHAT WE DO

1. Council officers ensure owners of Menacing, Dangerous and Restricted Breed Dogs are aware of their legal obligations and the dogs are recorded on the Victoria Declared Dog Registry.
2. Council investigates all reported dog attacks.
3. Council may declare dogs Menacing or Dangerous after an attack.
4. Council may prosecute serious dog attacks in the Magistrates Court.
5. Council’s website includes detailed fact sheets on dog attacks.
6. Council staff report on outcomes of prosecutions quarterly.
7. Council officers encourage the reporting of dog attacks.

6.2 WHAT THE COMMUNITY HAS SAID

1. 30% of respondents have been involved in an incident of dog aggression, being either an owner, victim or witness in the past 12 months.
2. 16.4% have observed a dog attacking livestock.
3. 91% of people surveyed stated they were aware that if their dog was involved in an attack, the dog can be put down, they could be fined or have to go to the Magistrates Court.
4. We should make it easier for a dog attack to be reported.



6.3 NEW ACTIONS FOR THE DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022-2025

NEW ACTIONS	WHEN	EVALUATION
Investigate an online reporting system for dog attacks, which includes the ability to attach photographs.	2022-23 FY	End of DAMP period.
Ensure factsheets and documentation is up-to-date and is handed to victims and dog owners in the event of an attack.	Ongoing	End of DAMP period.
If resources allow, undertake education in schools relating to dog safety programs.	Ongoing	End of DAMP period.
Reinforce that dogs must be confined to their premises with further media stories about the costs associated with dogs found at large.	Ongoing	End of DAMP period.

7. LOST ANIMALS AND REGISTRATION

Golden Plains Shire Council officers attend to dogs or cats found outside their property on a daily basis, sometimes the animals cannot be found, sometimes they are taken home but other times they are required to be taken to the pound.

Officers will take all dogs and cats who are not registered or microchipped to GAWS or the Ballarat Animal Shelter where they must be registered before being released to the owners. In the financial year ending June 2021, officers took 39 dogs and 70 cats to the pound. With each animal costing approximately \$250 to impound, this practise is expensive for Council and its ratepayers. This is why registration of domestic animals is so important.

All cats and dogs over 3 months of age must registered and microchipped.

There are 5,917 dogs and 1,336 registered within the Shire, a sharp reduction from the previous two years as there has been minimal infringement notices or physical registration checks due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Council officers, through previous audits understand that there are a lot more animals out there that are not registered, especially cats. Officers understand that residents do not feel the need to register cats that do not leave the house or an enclosure however the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* requires registration.



7. LOST ANIMALS AND REGISTRATION

7.1 WHAT WE DO

1. Council manages dog and cat registrations and renewals.
2. Council supplies a tag with every new registration or a new one if the tag is lost.
3. Council undertakes town and/or street audits to identify unregistered animals.
4. Council places signs strategically around the Shire promoting animal registration.
5. Council returns dogs and cats found outside their premises if they are registered. If the animal out is an ongoing issue, the animal will be taken directly to the pound.
6. Council offers free scanning of animals for residents who cannot locate their animals chip number.
7. Council offers discounted registration to working dogs when the owners income is derived from primary production and the dog is used as part of the business.

7.2 WHAT THE COMMUNITY HAS SAID

1. 94.3% of respondents know that cats and dogs over 3 months must be registered with Council.
2. 24.13% of respondents know of someone who has an unregistered dog or cat.
3. 84.6% of respondents were not aware it costs Council and its ratepayers \$250 per animal to put in to the pound (not including the cost to the owner to collect the animal).

4. There needs to be an increase in the number of Community Safety Officers in the Shire.
5. Some community members do not know how to contact officers when they have lost or found an animal, or when they are available to attend jobs (they are available 24/7 365 days a year for emergency situations).

7.3 NEW ACTIONS FOR THE DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022-2025

NEW ACTIONS	WHEN	EVALUATION
Explore the feasibility to reduce cat registrations where cats are desexed and the owner has a properly constructed cat enclosure on the property.	2022-23 FY	End of DAMP period.
Remind the community to ensure their microchip and registration details are up-to-date by social media and printed media campaigns.	Ongoing	End of DAMP period.
Reinforce that dogs must be confined to their premises with further media stories about the costs associated with dogs found at large.	Ongoing	End of DAMP period.



8. DOMESTIC ANIMAL BUSINESSES

There are currently 12 Domestic Animal Businesses within Golden Plains Shire.

A Domestic Animal Business means:

- An animal shelter, Council pound or pet shop; or
- An enterprise which carries out the breeding of dogs (other than GRV greyhounds) to sell, if the enterprise has 3 or more fertile female dogs and the proprietor is not a recreational breeder; or
- An enterprise which carries out the breeding of cats to sell, if the enterprise has 3 or more fertile female cats and the proprietor is not a recreational breeder; or
- An enterprise which trains or boards dogs or cats for the purpose of profit; or
- An enterprise which rears or keeps dogs (other than GRV greyhounds) or cats:
 - For the purposes or profit or sale; or
 - For a fee or for exchange or services.

Of the 12 Domestic Animal Businesses:

- 4 are boarding kennels; and
- 8 are for breeding.

Any property exceeding the permitted numbers in the zone they are located is required to apply for a Planning Permit for Domestic Animal Husbandry.



8. DOMESTIC ANIMAL BUSINESSES

8.1 WHAT WE DO

1. Council currently maintains a register of Domestic Animal Businesses in the shire.
2. Council attends and investigates properties where significant dogs and cats are kept to determine whether or not they are a Domestic Animals Business and potentially identify 'puppy farms'.
3. Council has issued more than 260 permits for people to keep more than 2 dogs or 2 cats.
4. Council audits Domestic Animal Businesses on a yearly basis.
5. Council provides details about Domestic Animal Businesses and application forms on its website.



8.2 NEW ACTIONS FOR THE DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022-2025

NEW ACTIONS	WHEN	EVALUATION
If resources permit, undertake unscheduled inspections of Domestic Animal Businesses.	Ongoing	End of DAMP period.
If resources permit, audit properties with more than two fertile females of the same breed where there is no evidence they are members of an applicable organisation.	Ongoing	End of DAMP period.

9. RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERSHIP

A responsible pet owner is someone who:

- Considers the needs to the community when their animal is in public places;
- Abides by dog on-lead requirements;
- Minimises their animal being a nuisance, such as dog barking or cats defecating in neighbouring properties;
- Has an animal desexed, microchipped and registered;
- Prevents their animal from causing harm to other people and animals;
- Attends to the needs of their animal, include vet treatment and vaccinations; and
- Secures their pet to the confines of their property.



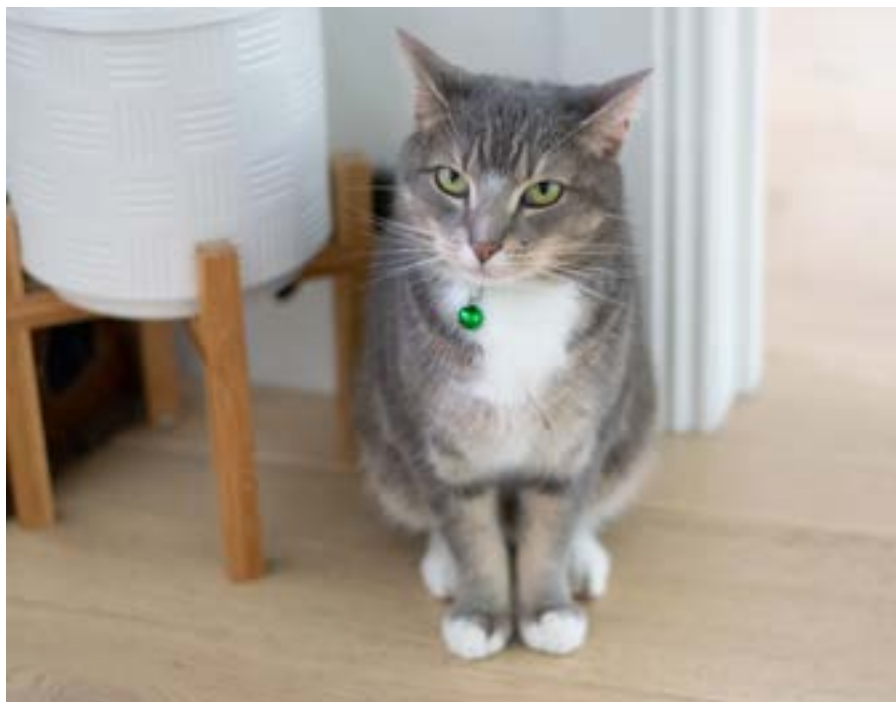
9. RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERSHIP

9.1 WHAT WE DO

1. Council regulates the number of dogs and cats by having a Local Law and a requirements for a permit for more than 2 dogs or 2 cats in residential areas.
2. Council provides advice on the phone, in person and on the website relating to responsible pet ownership.
3. Council promotes desexing of animals and apply a registration reduction for desexed animals.

9.2 WHAT THE COMMUNITY HAS SAID

1. 30% of respondents have been involved in an incident of dog aggression, being either an owner, victim or witness in the past 12 months.
2. 16.4% have observed a dog attacking livestock.
3. Dog barking is an issue.
4. Some people do not pick up after their dog.
5. Cats are out roaming off their owners properties.



9.3 NEW ACTIONS FOR THE DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022-2025

NEW ACTIONS	WHEN	EVALUATION
Include the definition of 'effective control' in Council's Local Laws.	2021-22 FY	If included in the Plan or not.
If resources permit, undertake proactive patrols or walking paths.	Ongoing	End of DAMP period.
If resources permit, undertake education of responsible pet ownership in local schools and communities.	Ongoing	End of DAMP period.

10. THE LOCAL LAW AND COUNCIL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Together with the *Domestic Animals Act 1194*, Council officers work within the Local Law and Council's policies and procedures to deliver animal management services.

These include:

- Golden Plains Planning Scheme
- Local Law No. 1 – General Public Amenity
- Animal Registration Pro-rata Policy
- Animal Registration Refund Policy
- Community Safety Officer – Emergency Call Out Procedure
- Regulating Dog and Cat Keeping in Golden Plains Shire

Council's Local Law regulates the amount and type of animals that are allowed to be housed on properties. For a copy of the Local Law, please visit goldenplains.vic.gov.au or call 5220 7111.

11. EVALUATION OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022-2025

Performance against the objectives and targets specified in the Plan will be monitored and evaluated by keeping records to measure the success of the Plan.

The outcomes of the Plan will be measured and evaluated annually in order to be reported in the Golden Plains Shire Council Annual Report to the Auditor General. The Plan itself is scheduled to be reviewed every four years in accordance with the provisions of the *Domestic Animals Act (1994)* and updated yearly.



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PO Box 111, Bannockburn, VIC 3331

 5220 7111

 enquiries@GPLAINS.VIC.GOV.AU

 GOLDENPLAINS.VIC.GOV.AU

CUSTOMER SERVICE HOURS

Bannockburn Customer Service Centre
8.30am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

The Well, Smythesdale
8.30am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

 @GPSCouncilNews

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 GoldenPlainsShire

 GoldenPlainsMayor