

Domestic Animal Management Plan 2017-2021



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Executive Summary

Throughout the Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) review and community consultations, key findings and trends have emerged that reinforce the need to engage more with the community to grow responsible pet ownership in Golden Plains Shire.

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*
- *The visual presence of Community Protection Officers appears to have a positive impact on rates of animal registration compliance*
- *animal cruelty persists in Golden Plains Shire*
- *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 rates have declined and vary significantly in different areas*
- *domestic animal management staffing resources have remained constant over the life of the last plan*
- *dog attacks on people, pets and livestock continues to impact the community*
- *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
3. Advocating for improved resourcing

Introduction

Domestic Animal Animals Act (1994)

Under the section 68A of the *Domestic Animals Act* (1994), every Council in Victoria must prepare a domestic animal management plan every four years in consultation with the Secretary of the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR).

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

Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of the Domestic Animal Management Plan is to provide Council with a clear direction as to how it will encourage and support residents within the Golden Plains Shire Council to be responsible pet owners.

To ensure the community and individual cost of domestic animal ownership is kept to a minimum, there are two outcomes that need to be achieved:

- A community informed of the legislated responsibilities Council is required to deliver;
- Awareness of the community's role in working with Council, as responsible pet owners, to minimise costs of domestic animal management services.

The overarching objectives of this plan will be to:

1. Encourage, facilitate and increase responsible pet ownership
2. Ensure compliance with the Domestic Animals Act
3. Reduce the incidence of problems within the community related to pets being a nuisance or causing injury to people or other animals

The objectives will be achieved through this plan by:

1. providing the community with a clear understanding of Council's expectations of pet owners;
2. reinforcing the community commitment to improving standards associated with pet ownership;
3. clearly describing the community's role, and actions Council will take, to improve the level of responsible pet ownership throughout Golden Plains Shire;
4. supporting and promoting responsible pet ownership;
5. increased community engagement and positive dialogue;
6. exploring targeted initiatives to improve the value of registrations for the community;
7. fair and consistent enforcement of legislation.

Outcomes that will contribute to achieving the above objectives include:

1. increasing dog and cat registration levels;
2. increasing the skills and resources available to Council officers;
3. decreasing the incidence of dog and cat impoundments and nuisance behaviour;
4. actively managing dangerous, restricted breed and menacing dogs;
5. increased reporting of dog attacks;
6. decreasing the incidents of dog attacks;
7. decreasing euthanasia rates and impacts associated with overpopulation in cats;
8. ensuring the operation of Domestic Animal Businesses is in accordance with the applicable laws and Codes of Practice;
9. reinforce the responsibilities of domestic pet ownership in a rural landscape;
10. reinforce the benefits of the 'Free Ride Home' service for registered pets

Golden Plains Shire Overview



Golden Plains Shire is a relatively small rural municipality with a correspondingly low rate base. Like all services provided throughout the municipality, animal management services need to be strategically planned and targeted so as to address the main concerns and minimise the use of resources on matters considered of low concern or which would achieve a minor impact. This prioritisation of resources is supported by data collected through community engagement activities and research institutions.

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

With 22,145 residents¹ across some 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%.

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's, 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 Pound) are two Council's that

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

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 Pound. This arrangement contributes towards providing a convenient service to residents at each of the major cities north and south of the Shire where residents access most of their services.

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. Council is committed to providing improved value for the whole community in the delivery of its animal management services.

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.

Service Demographic Trends

Golden Plains Shire has experienced significant growth since drafting the 2012/13 Domestic Animal Management Plan.

Population has increased by 3,145 residents with many new residents being registered pet owners. Unfortunately, responsible pet ownership, as reflected in registration levels of dogs and cats, has declined throughout Golden Plains Shire during this period to below the 2012/13 levels (figure 1).

Impoundments have declined slightly for both dogs and cats but when compared to the decrease in percentage of dogs returned to owners and the significant increase, which is still very low, in the percentage of cats returned, Council, and therefore the wider community, has incurred increased impoundment costs from this negative trend.

Council's resources have not increased during this growth period, remaining constant at 2.5 Authorised Officers allocated to the 2,705km² of municipal area managed.

Attribute	2012/2013 Value	2016/17 Value
Population	19,000	22,145
Area	2705km ²	2705km ²
No. of EFT Authorised Officers (Animal Control)	2.5	2.5
Hours training per officer annually	7.6	15.2
No. of Registered Dogs	5240	5029
No. of Registered Cats	1103	1073
No. of Registered Declared Dogs	7	11
No. of impoundments (dogs)	220	190
No. of impoundments (cats)	312	258
% of dogs returned to owner	64%	38.50%
% of cats returned to owner	2%	14.10%

Figure 1: Service Demographic Trends

Township Audit Results

As part of this review Council Officers undertook an extensive property registration audit to assess full, partial (some registered and non-registered animals present) and non-complaint properties.

A statistically accurate sample was taken from townships located in the North, Central and Southern areas (figure 2) of the municipality, resulting in 1038 properties being audited in August and early September 2017 (figure 3, 4, and 5).

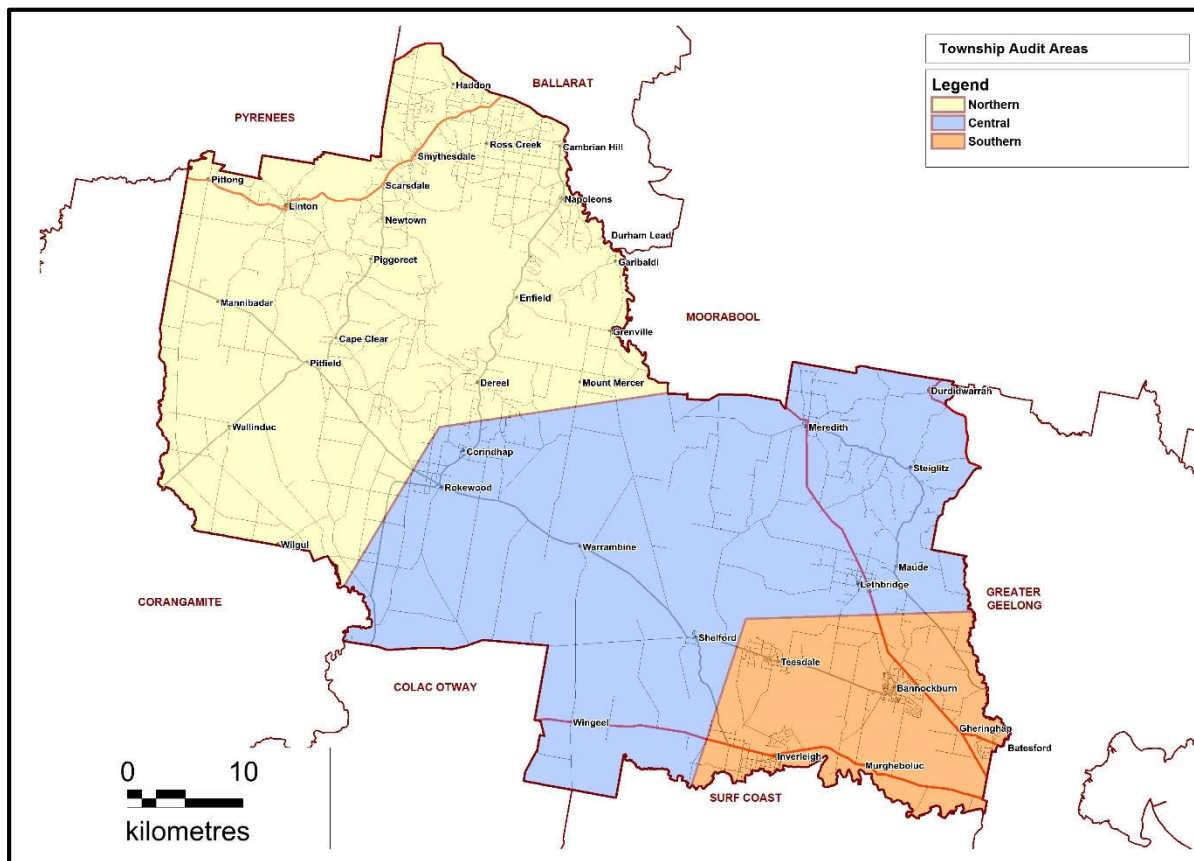


Figure 2: Township Audit Areas - Northern, Central, and Southern

Additional Council Officers were organised to support this audit to ensure an accurate sample could be assessed in the allocated time.

Golden Plains Shire's overall results were 60.76% of properties audited had full registrations, 6.68% for partial registrations, and 32.58% for non-compliant properties.

Whilst the Northern and Southern Township Area averages achieved a similar result, of note is the difference in the Central Township Areas, which were considerably lower in full registrations, and significantly higher for non-compliance (figure 4).

These results indicate that there are different dynamics influencing registrations levels across Council which will need to be considered when developing engagement strategies and resource allocation.

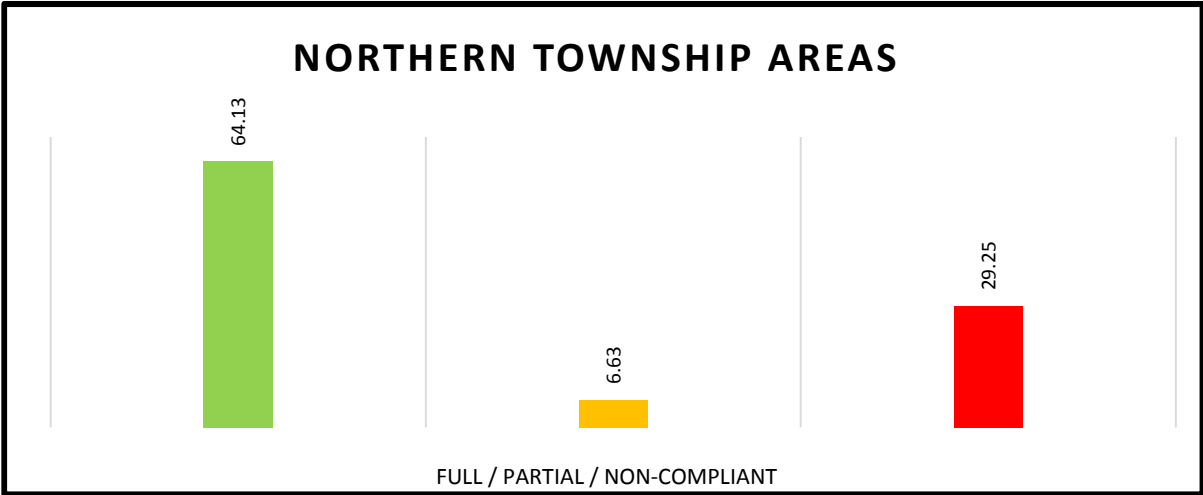


Figure 3: Northern Township Area Audit Registration Percentages

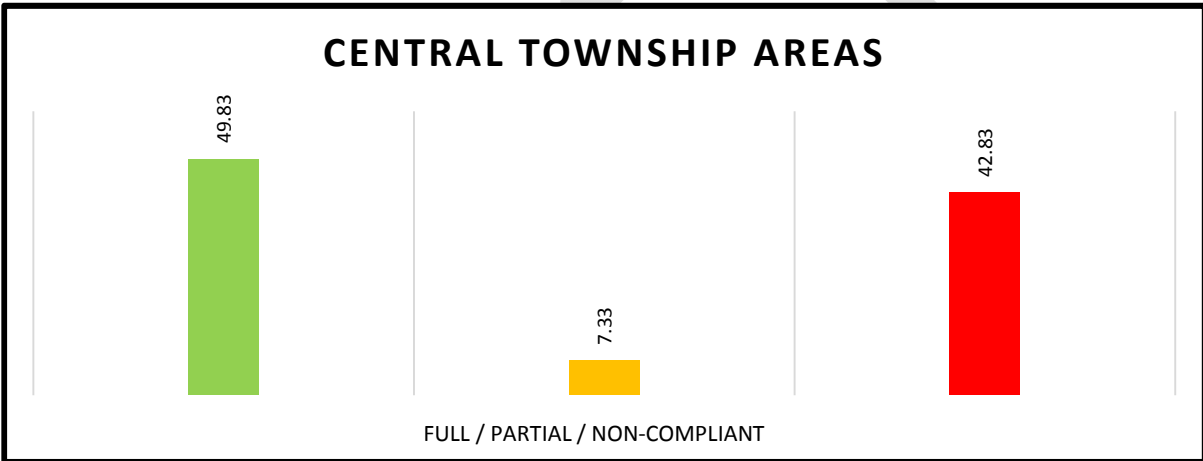


Figure 4: Central Township Area Audit Registration Percentages

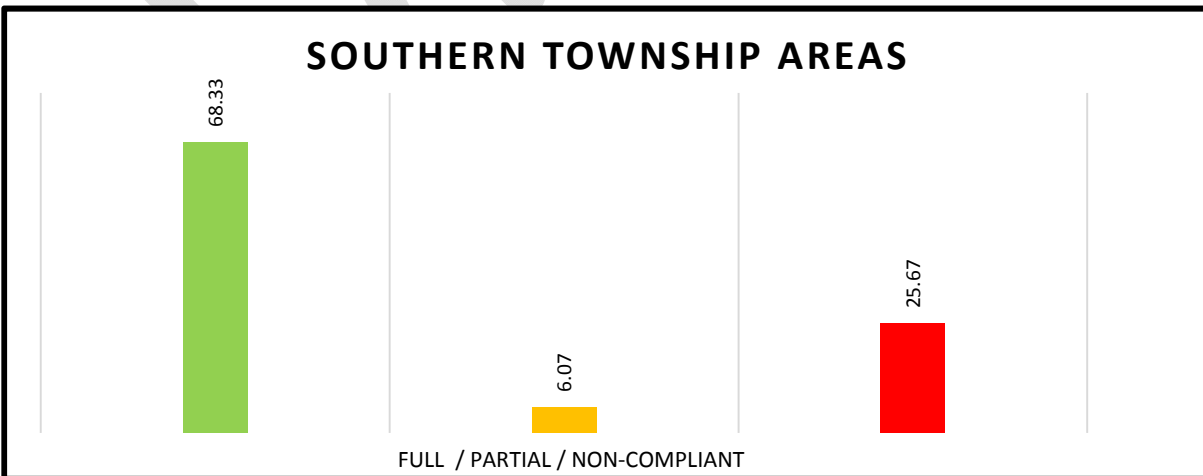


Figure 5: Southern Township Area Audit Registration Percentages

Community Engagement Survey Results

An online community survey was conducted in September 2017 to seek input from registered pet owners on how Council could improve its domestic animal management services and improve registration levels. 1450 surveys were circulated, resulting in 281 responses, a statistically high response rate with 38.7% completing the survey.

Community feedback includes the desire to increase notifications of renewal dates (figure 6) and discount de-sexing and microchipping for new registrations (figure 7 and 8). Of note, 77.8% of respondents recorded that their registered pet has been de-sexed (figure 9).

Of concern, 36.9% of respondents recording involvement in a dog attack (figure 10), with 77.7% reflecting that Council had not been involved in the incident (figure 10). Comments provided to this question, reflected that many where not aware that Council would respond or believed that a response would not result in a satisfactory outcome.

Cat owners also expressed a reluctance to register their cats due to perceived low value and high cost registration.

Influencing cat registration was also the belief that a registration check would be unlikely.

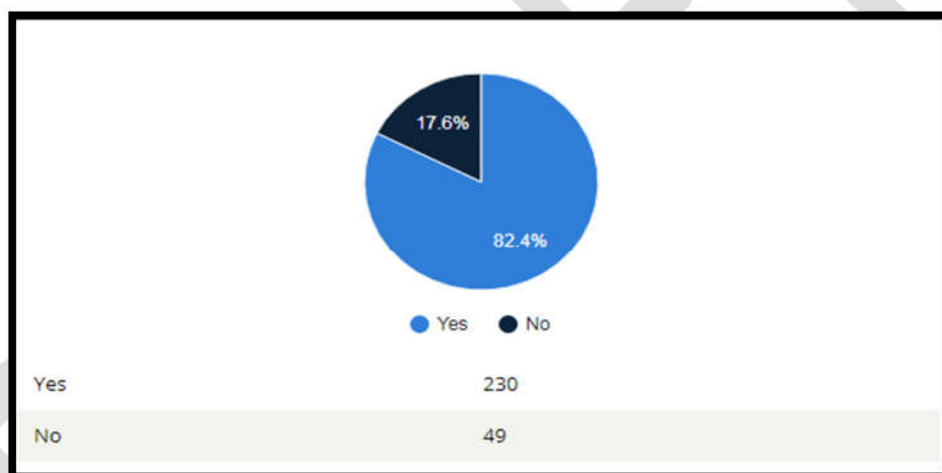


Figure 6: Online Survey - SMS service

“If Council invested in an SMS service to issues registration reminders, would you be willing to support Council by providing a mobile number and updating your details as required?”

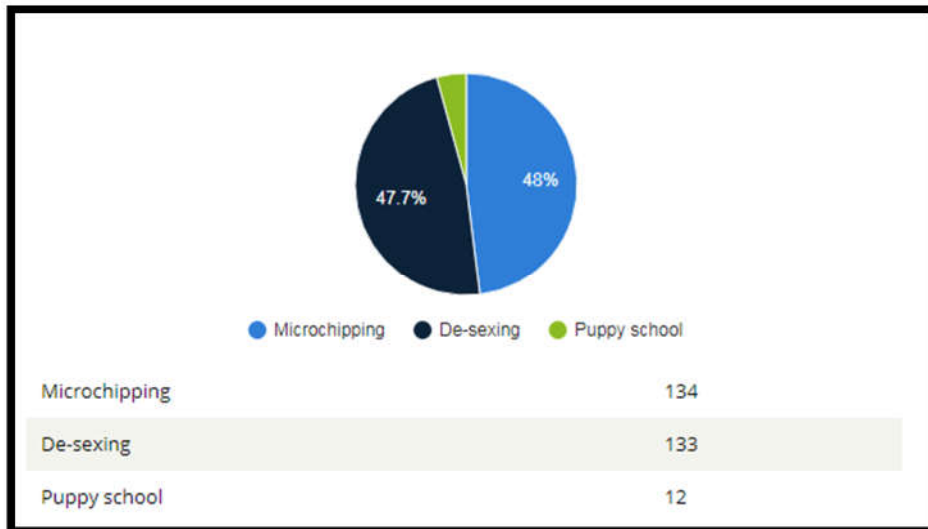


Figure 7: Online Survey - Registration Discounts

“When considering registration, which of the following, if discounted or rebated, would most motivated you to complete a registration (choose one)?”

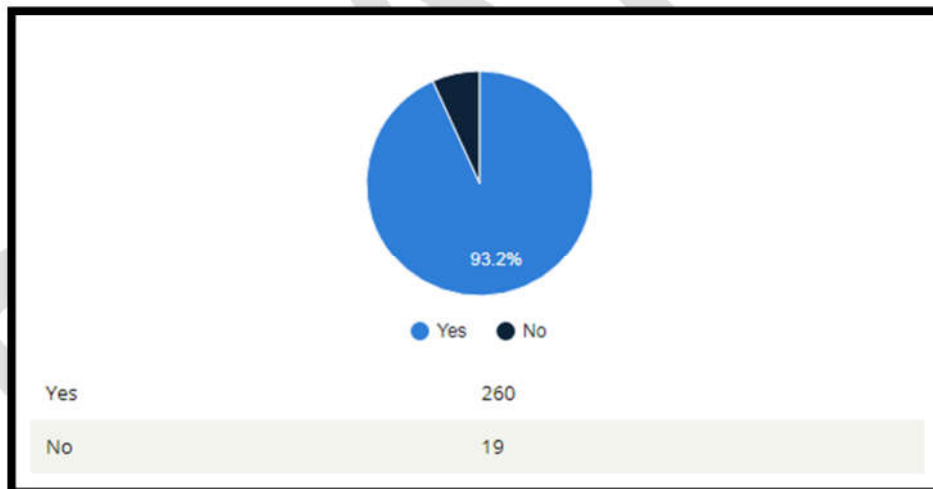


Figure 8: Online Survey - Discount De-sexing

“In your opinion would a discounted de-sexing program encourage more people to de-sex their pets?”

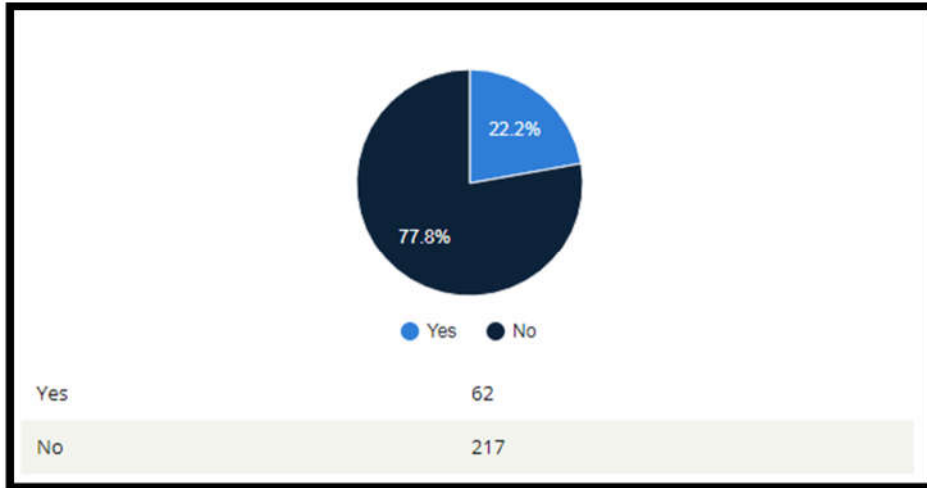


Figure 9: Online Survey - Pets De-sexed
 “Do you have a pet that has not been de-sexed?”

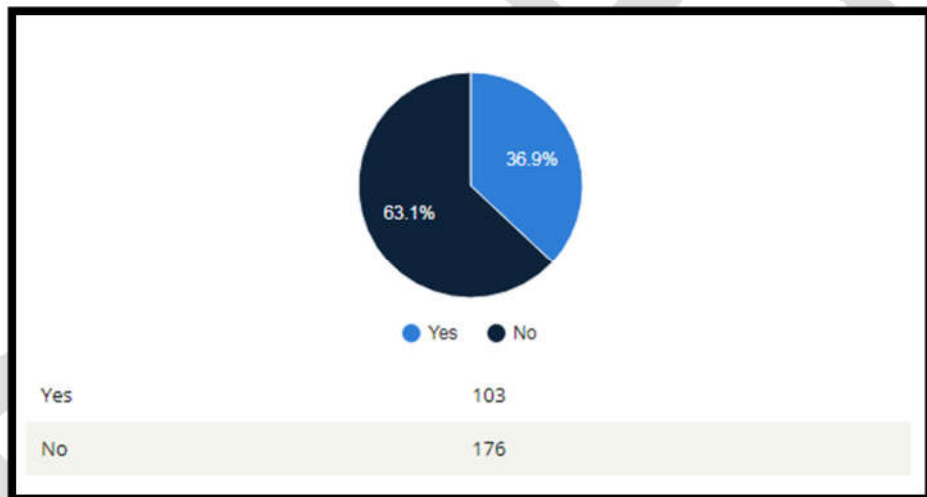


Figure 10: Online Survey - Dog Attack
 “Have you been personally involved, either directly or indirectly as a witness, in a dog attack or a dog rushing aggressively?”

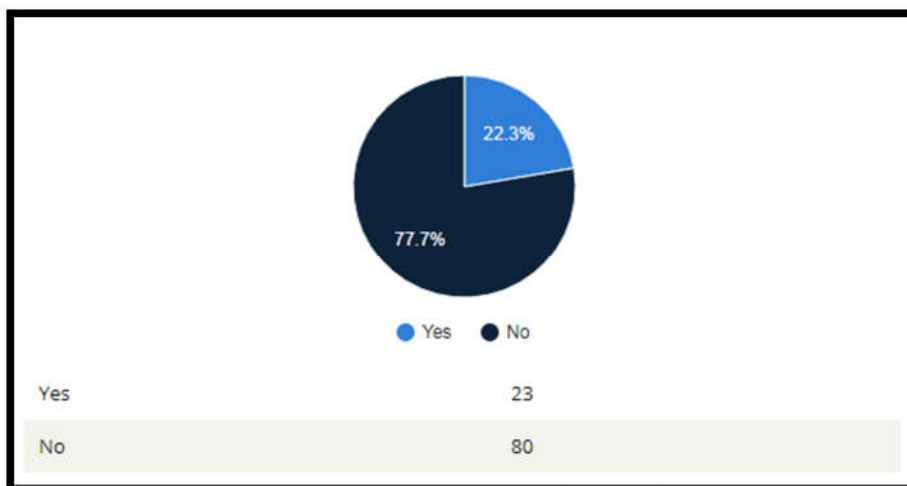


Figure 11: Dog Attack - Reporting
 “Was Council involved in the incident?”

Dog Attacks Statistics

Reported dog attack incidents continue to remain a significant issue for Golden Plains Shire with 19 reported for 2016/17 compared to 20 in 2015/16.

As figure 11 highlights, approximately 2 out of every 3 attacks is on livestock, with multiple stock either killed or severely maimed during each attack, causing trauma to those involved and impacting farm incomes.

Council’s Community Protection Officers document and investigate all reported dog attacks, with a view to have offending dogs surrendered. Owners that refuse to surrender dogs found to be involved in attacks will be served notice and summoned to the Magistrates Court.

In 2016/17 Council achieved a 100% success rate for prosecutions in the Magistrates Court.

2015/16 Victims	Numbers	2016/17 Victims	Numbers
People	5	People	4
Pets (dogs/cats)	3	Pets (dogs/cats)	4
Livestock	12	Livestock	11

Figure 12: Dog Attack - Victims

Vet Consultations

As part of the community engagement focus of this review, Council engaged with the local veterinary clinics service providers.

The opportunity to inform Council’s plan by professionals in animal welfare is greatly appreciated and is aligned to Council’s commitment to improving community engagement at every opportunity. As respected members of the community, vets are in a unique position to

provide an informed opinion of community needs, both of pet owners and pets in their own right.

These meetings provided valuable recommendations for the development of the new plan, including the investigating of financial incentives for registrations; promotions of 'puppy school's'; and microchipping days.

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Registration and Identification

Current Situation

The township audit in the north, central and southern areas of the Shire during August and September 2017 provided an insight into the varying registration levels throughout the municipality (figure 3, 4, 5). The focus of this audit was to achieve a statistically accurate representation of properties that had either Full Registration (all dogs and or cats registered); Partial Registration (registered and unregistered dogs and or cats present); and Non-Compliant (all dogs and or cats present unregistered).

The differences between the defined areas where data was collected suggests different community perspectives on domestic animal registration exist within the Shire and that a variety of actions need to be employed to support, facilitate and encourage domestic animal registrations.

Current/Ongoing Activities

Golden Plains Shire's current identification and registration activities include;

1. publishing regular articles in Council's community newsletter promoting the need for residents to register their pet and keep it contained to their property;
2. application of Penalty Infringement Notices to owners of unregistered dogs and cats;
3. issuing of Registration Renewal Reminder Notices;
4. application of Failure to Renew Registration Infringement Notices;
5. providing a 'Free Ride Home' for registered dogs found wandering and not causing a nuisance provided it is not a repeat offence or ongoing concern;
6. displaying 'register your pets now' signs throughout the municipality;
7. conducting inspection audits to identify where unregistered pets are located;
8. issuing 'Pet Registration Warning Notices' to residents identified as owning unregistered pets as a result of routine inspections;
9. identifying decals and promotional messages on vehicles.

Summary

To support residents with their registration renewals, Council provides renewal notices, before the April 10th state wide due date, and reminder notices, during Council's amnesty period, which runs to the 30th June.

In the delivery and reporting on its responsibilities under the Domestic Animals Act (1994), Council pursues infringements and undertakes animal registration audits throughout the municipality.

Registration, identification, and microchipping of pets and the collection and maintenance of accurate contact details are fundamental elements of responsible pet ownership and central to Council services. The ability to accurately identify a pet contributes to the prompt return of

lost and wandering pets and ensures owners are held accountable for damage or offences involving their pets.

Golden Plains Shire has a 'Free Ride Home' service for registered pets that have not been involved in any incidents. Council is committed to returning registered pets to owners in the shortest amount of time, with the minimal amount of stress for all involved.

Objectives

1. Achieve a 70% full registration level for the north, central and southern township areas
2. Reduce the number of properties with partial registration to 2% for all township areas
3. Reduced impoundments rates and associated costs

Actions

EDUCATION AND PROMOTION ACTIVITIES	WHEN	EVALUATION
Use local newspapers, community newsletters and the Golden Plains Gazette to promote and advertise registration requirements prior to the 10 th April renewal date.	March / April each year	1 Article submitted prior to renewal date.
Investigate the application of an SMS service to notify registration renewal dates are due.	February 2018	Investigate funding requirement and Council policy. Secure budget to support SMS notification service
Investigate, secure funding/budget for packaged discounted/rebated microchipping for new dog registrations.	November 2017	Investigate funding/budgeting opportunities.
Investigate, secure funding/budget for packaged discounted/rebated de-sexing for new cat registration.	November 2017	Investigate funding/budgeting opportunities.
Continue to publish regular articles in the Golden Plains Gazette 'promoting the need for residents to register their pet/s and ensure animals were identification tags.	6 months	2 Articles (minimum)
Report on impoundment costs.	6 months	Report on impoundment costs on Council Website
Include registration, identification and renewal information on Council's 'on-hold' messages.	Ongoing	Review Annually

Councils website to provide information to residents on where and how to register their pet, registration requirements, renewal dates, registration fees, microchipping, de-sexing certificates, notifying Council of changes to ownership or reporting the passing of a pet.	June 2018	Review Annually
Include pet registration forms, and registration fact sheets in 'new residents' kits.	June 2018	Review Annually
Enable owners to transfer existing registrations from other municipalities to Golden Plains Shire without charge.	Ongoing	Promote in community publications annually
Provide registration forms and pet ownership fact sheets on Council's website.	Ongoing	Review Annually
Provide 'Free Ride Home' for pets found wondering and not causing a nuisance.	Ongoing	Implemented in day to day works programs
Promote benefits of registration including 'Free Ride Home' service and reduced costs from impoundments.	Ongoing	Promote in community publications annually
Displaying 'register your pets now' signs throughout the municipality.	Ongoing	17 Townships / 40 weeks
Promote awareness of the difference between microchipping and registration in the community.	Ongoing	Promote in community publications annually
Promote community engagement with reporting cat nuisance properties and backyard breeders.	Ongoing	Promote in community publications annually
Create puppy and cat packs for new pet owners to promote responsible pet ownership and registration.	June 2018	Review Annually
Provide for a range of payment methods, including online and in person, by money order, credit card, or Bpay.	June 2018	Review Annually
Attempt to identify dead or injured animals by means of registration tag or microchip in order to inform owners.	Ongoing	Promote in community publications annually
Investigate Mid-Year registration payment option for half priced registrations (1 st October) for new registrations.	June 2018	Investigate payment option and if successful promote in community publications
Improved awareness of 'Community Protection Officers' role in the community.	Annually	Develop positive engagement programs i.e. 'Meet the your local CPO'

Investigate support from local veterinary clinics to facilitate pet registrations, microchipping and de-sexing services.	Annually	Meet with local Vet Clinics annually
Engage and partner with local Vets to promote responsible pet ownership.	Ongoing	Meet with local Vet Clinics annually
Create 'Responsible Pet Packs' for distribution.	December 2018	Supply to Local Vets as required to distribute during Puppy Schools. Supply with new registrations

COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES	WHEN	EVALUATION
Issue registration renewal notices annually.	March each year	Implemented
Follow up non-renewals with a reminder notice and SMS message in the 'grace' period.	May / June each year	Implemented
Issue Failure to Renew Registration notice.	July each year	Implemented
Issue Penalty Infringement notices to owners of dogs and cats found to be committing offences.	Ongoing	Implemented
Conduct annual routine inspections of township areas to identify properties with unregistered dogs and cats and issue 'register your pet' notices as required.	Annually	Two township locations to be randomly inspected throughout the year
Ensure registration is checked as part of any pet related complaint or compliance process.	Ongoing	Implemented
Ensure all authorised officers have a microchip scanner. Investigate the purchase of a long arm scanner for checking caged cats.	Ongoing	2 scanners available. Investigate and secure budget for long handled scanner/s
Ensure all authorised officers have optimum connectivity in mobile devices to accessing update to animal management data.	June 2018	Vehicles to have external mobile aerials and phone cradles installed. iPad cradles installed as standard vehicle set up.
Follow up registration of animals adopted or sold from shelters.	Ongoing	Implemented
Ensure all impounded animals are registered prior to release.	Ongoing	Implemented

Report data on the outcomes of prosecutions as well as updates on infringements in local media and in the Golden Plains Gazette.	Quarterly as appropriate	Quarterly as appropriate
Pursue unpaid infringements through the Magistrates Court.	Ongoing	Implemented
Develop format / procedure for lodging infringements through the Infringements Court.	Ongoing	Develop format with Council's IT Department
Advocate for increased resources to improve compliance and innovation to meet growth pressures.	Annually	Submission for increased budget allocation and grant opportunities

Nuisance

Current Situation

Nuisance complaints received by Council are generally related to barking, dogs at large, dog attacks and feral cats.

Council's response to barking complaints is to encourage the complainant to discuss the problem with their neighbour. If this course of actions fails, Council will inform the dog owner of the problem and provide them the opportunity to rectify it.

Current / Ongoing Activities

Council employs investigation, negotiation, communication and education strategies to resolve most nuisance issues. If legal action is identified as being required, it is necessary for the complainant to become involved and provide much of the evidence.

Council provides a dog seizure and impoundment service to help prevent dogs found at large from being harmed or becoming a nuisance. Registered dogs found at large are returned to their owners and informed of their obligation to keep their dog contained. Unregistered dogs at large are delivered to the pound and penalties applied.

Council has for many years made up to 10 cat traps available for hire by residents to assist with the capture of nuisance feral cats and offers a service of removal of cats once the offending animal has been captured.

Summary

Council currently responds to all nuisance complaints, intercepting and either delivering registered pets back to residents, or detaining and impounding, if required, and subsequent issuing of fines.

The need to expand the cat trap program, management of undesirable litters and illegal breeding businesses, has been identified by Council.

The number of traps available for the cat program is planned to increase and the hire of traps is free once a fully refundable deposit has been paid. Education and information programs are being expanded to support residents to become more responsible pet owners.

Penalty infringement notices will continue to be utilised where appropriate to discourage irresponsible pet ownership and illegal breeding activities.

Objectives

1. Increase community awareness of the impacts of nuisance pets and responsible pet ownership
2. Increase cat registration by 5% each year

Actions

EDUCATION AND PROMOTION ACTIVITIES	WHEN	EVALUATION
Develop Council branded responsible cat ownership promotional material for Council webpage.	June 2018	Develop and promote responsible cat ownership webpage
Advocate for funding a discount / rebate scheme for de-sexing of new cat registration.	Ongoing	Annual review of opportunities and application submissions
Investigate grant opportunities to support a discount / rebate scheme for de-sexing of new cat registration.	Ongoing	Annual review of opportunities and application submissions
Investigate collaboration opportunities with local vets.	Annually	Meet annually – discuss community trends, needs and opportunities
Promotion of the benefits, both behaviourally and financially, of de-sexed pets.	Annually	Promote in community publications annually and on Council website
Promote use of cat trap service and provide information on humane use and cat welfare.	Annually	Promote in community publications annually and on Council website
Provide a factsheet to assist owners to respond to excessive barking by their dog.	Annually	Promote in community publications annually and on Council website
Provide a factsheet to support residents experiencing a nuisance that explains the process for responding to barking noise, at large and trespassing related complaints.	Annually	Promote in community publications annually and on Council website
Create 'Responsible Pet Packs' for distribution.	December 2018	Supply to Local Vets as required to distribute during Puppy Schools. Supply with new registrations

COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES	WHEN	EVALUATION
Maintain the register of all nuisance complaints.	Ongoing	Annual review
Review Council policies and procedures relating to nuisance complaints.	June 2018	Update Council webpage – December 2018
Report the outcomes of prosecutions and infringements relating to dog and cat nuisance issues.	February and August each year	Twice each year
Provide cat cages to residents free of charge subject to a fully refundable security bond.	Ongoing	Implemented
Provide a free trapped cat collection service.	Ongoing	Implemented
Audit cat trap program and purchase additional cat traps as required to increase Council's capacity to meet demand for traps.	Ongoing	Implemented
Implement Council's Local Laws requirement for owners of more than two dogs or cats to obtain a permit (unless exempt).	Ongoing	Implemented
Impound all unregistered dogs and cats seized while at large.	Ongoing	Implemented
Advocate for increased resources to improve compliance and efficiency to meet growth pressures.	Annually	Submission for increased budget allocation and grant opportunities

Dog Attacks, Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs

Current Situation

Dog attacks have a massive impact on our community and occur regularly in the Golden Plains Shire. There are medical costs, legal costs and personal trauma impacts for everyone involved.

The majority of dog attacks involve livestock, with 80% of all reported attacks resulting in the death of an animal. The high incidence of fatal dog attacks on livestock may, in part, be attributed to the proximity of the 52 discreet communities interspersed among farming properties. This inherently exposes livestock to attack if dog owners do not take action to ensure their dogs cannot escape.

Attacks on people and other dogs account for approximately 37% of known incidents. However, as the recent community survey highlights, of this 37% up to 77.8% of attacks were not reported to Council, indicating a potential higher occurrence of attacks on people and pets than has previously been recognised.

While less severe, when a dog rushes aggressively at people and other animals it causes great concern for many in the community, older people and families with small children are particularly at risk of impact.

Golden Plains Shire currently has four dangerous dogs and seven menacing dogs on the register.

Current / Ongoing Activities

Council currently investigates reported dog attacks with the intention of having the offending dog impounded until the matter can be resolved. If the owner refuses to surrender a dog, Council will investigate the incident with the intention to prosecute. If a case of where a serious attack has been substantiated, Council endeavours to have the dog(s) responsible destroyed.

It should be noted that in 2016/17 Council achieved a 100% prosecution rate in the Magistrates Court.

Council audits all declared dog premises biennially to ensure they are adhering to legislated keeping requirements.

Summary

Dog attacks on livestock and pets occur frequently in Golden Plains Shire. Attacks on animals dominate Council dog attack statistics and consequently. Preventing attacks on livestock and pets is the primary focus of Council's Domestic Animal Management Plan.

Core to preventing dog attacks in Golden Plains Shire is the necessity for residents to keep their dogs securely confined to their premises. Subsequently, Council's actions to prevent dog attacks involve education about the need to confine dogs, issuing infringements for 'dogs at large', and minor attacks, prosecution of dogs found to have committed a serious attack and publicising the frequency of attacks, and number of successful prosecutions.

Objectives

1. Increase community reporting of dog attacks to Council's Community Protection Officers to reflect number of incidents.
2. Increase community's commitment to responsible pet ownership and the containment of pets.
3. Identify and register all declared dogs in the municipality.
4. Inspect and audit all declared dog premises biennially to ensure they are adhering to legislated keeping requirements.

Actions

EDUCATION AND PROMOTION ACTIVITIES	WHEN	EVALUATION
Ensure the owners of Dangerous Dogs are aware of their legal obligations.	Annually	Annual review of legislation and Councils factsheet and webpage.

		Annual reminder sent to owners of declared dogs of legislated requirements
Promote awareness of the risk of dog attacks on pets, livestock and people.	Dec / Annually	Promote in community publications annually and on Council webpage
Distribute factsheets on dog attack prevention in 'New Resident Kit' and via Council website.	Annually	Implemented
Promote confinement of dogs to their property through media, factsheets and on Council's website.	Ongoing	Implemented
Provide residents with information on implications for their dog and themselves if their dog attacks a person or animal.	Ongoing	Implemented
Promote de-sexing of dogs to reduce aggressive tendencies and wandering at large in local media and on the Council website.	Ongoing	Implemented
Create 'Responsible Pet Packs' for distribution.	Dec 2018	Supply to Local Vets as required to distribute during Puppy Schools. Supply with new registrations

COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES	WHEN	EVALUATION
Develop dog Attack investigation and enforcement policies.	Ongoing	Review annually
Respond to dog attack reports in line with existing 'out of hours' response policy.	Ongoing	Implemented
Maintain a register of dog attacks including breed of dog, details of victim, nature of injuries, date, and outcome of Council action.	Ongoing	Implemented
Seize dogs that have seriously attacked a person and prosecute owners where is adequate evidence to support a case.	Ongoing	Implemented
Promote Councils 'Dogs on Lead' areas.	Annually	Promote in community publications annually and on Council webpage
Report outcomes of prosecutions and provide updates on infringements issued (dog attacks, Menacing, Dangerous and Restricted Breed Dogs) in local media.	Feb and Aug each year	Twice each year

Continue to declare dogs as Restricted Breed, Dangerous or Menacing in accordance with legislation.	Ongoing	100% identified dogs
Ensure all declared Dangerous Dogs are accurately registered on the Victorian Dangerous Dogs Registry.	As required	100% registered
Biennially audit premises where Dangerous Dogs are kept to ensure compliance with requirements for keeping Dangerous Dogs.	Aug - every 2 nd year	Implemented
Respond to complaints about Menacing, Dangerous or Restricted Breed Dogs.	Within 2 working days	Implemented
Review and maintain Council's policy for responding to Restricted Breed Dogs.	June 2018	Implemented
Ensure all Dangerous Dogs are implanted with a microchip.	Ongoing	100%
Advocate for increased resources to improve compliance and efficiency to meet growth pressures.	Annually	Submission for increased budget allocation and grant opportunities

Overpopulation and High Euthanasia

Current Situation

The 2016/17 data collected by Council indicates that there are issues related to cat overpopulation in Golden Plains Shire with a significant percentage of unclaimed cats being euthanized.

Many of these cats have been declared feral and deemed unsuitable for rehoming. However, an acceptable percentage of unclaimed cats are abandoned from domestic homes.

2016/17 data indicates there are problems related to overpopulation of cats in Golden Plains Shire with a very high proportion of cats delivered to the pound being destroyed. By contrast, euthanasia of dogs delivered to the pound is much lower, averaging 10%. While there is room for improvement in dog euthanasia rates, the most significant issue remains unacceptably high rates for cat.

Current / Ongoing Activities

Council continues to make cat traps available to the community in an effort to alleviate problems associated with stray and feral cats.

As part of this service, Council's Community Protection Officers will collect cats that have been caught in traps for delivery to the contracted animal management shelters.

Summary

There is no data to indicate cats that are owned and registered with Council are causing nuisance problems, nor are they contributing significantly to the cat overpopulation problem as nearly all registered cats are de-sexed. The data also indicates there is no discernible dog overpopulation problem in Golden Plains Shire.

Overpopulation problems lie squarely with an abundance of stray/ semi owned and feral cats. Data is also deficient of the status of owned unregistered cats; therefore, Council extrapolates that these pets are contributing to overpopulation issues with stray and feral cats in the community.

Objectives

1. Increase de-sexed cat registrations by 5% each year
2. Increase reclaim rates for cats by 10% per year
3. Increase reclaim for dogs by 5% per year

Actions

EDUCATION AND PROMOTION ACTIVITIES	WHEN	EVALUATION
Advocate for funding a discount / rebate scheme for de-sexing of new cat registration.	Ongoing	Annual review of opportunities and application submissions
Investigate grant opportunities to support a discount / rebate scheme for de-sexing of new cat registration.	Ongoing	Annual review of opportunities and application submissions
Investigate collaboration opportunities with local vets.	Annually	Meet annually – discuss community trends, needs and opportunities
Promotion of the benefits, both behaviourally and financially, of de-sexed pets.	Annually	Promote in community publications annually and on Council website
Promote use of cat trap service and provide information on humane use and cat welfare.	Annually	Promote in community publications annually and on Council website
Create a link from Council's website to the Ballarat Pound and Geelong Animal Welfare Society websites to advertise animals available for adoption.	December 2018	Implemented
Investigate 84Y agreements rehoming opportunities with 'Animal Shelters' and local veterinary clinics.	December 2018	Investigated with agreements outlined
Attempt to identify all dogs and cats found deceased to inform owners.	As required	Implemented

COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES	WHEN	EVALUATION
Investigate reports of unauthorised 'backyard' breeders to ascertain whether they should be registered as a Domestic Animal Business.	Annually	Implemented
Continue to issue Penalty Infringement notices to owners of dogs and cats found to be committing offences.	Ongoing	Implemented
Conduct annual routine inspections of township areas to identify properties with unregistered dogs and cats and issue 'register your pet' notices as required.	Annually	Two township locations to be randomly inspected throughout the year
Ensure registration is checked as part of any pet related complaint or compliance process.	Ongoing	Implemented
Ensure all authorised officers have a microchip scanner. Investigate the purchase of a long arm scanner for checking caged cats.	Ongoing	2 scanners available. Investigate and secure budget for long handled scanner/s
Work with both of Council's animal shelter service providers to generate more accurate impound data.	Ongoing	Required data provided
Generate more accurate data detailing the reason(s) for euthanasia of impounded animals.	Ongoing	To be undertaken
Clearly identify owned, unowned and feral cats that are seized and impounded.	As required	Implemented
Provide cat cages to residents free of charge subject to a fully refundable security bond.	Ongoing	Implemented
Provide a free trapped cat collection service.	Ongoing	Implemented
Purchase additional cat traps to double Council's capacity to meet demand for traps.	Ongoing	Implemented
Implement Council's Local Laws requirement for owners of more than two dogs or cats to obtain a permit (unless exempt).	Ongoing	Implemented
Advocate for increased resources to improve compliance and efficiency to meet growth pressures.	Annually	Submission for increased budget allocation and grant opportunities

Domestic Animal Businesses

Current Situation

Golden Plains Shire currently has five Domestic Animal Businesses registered with Council, three of which are involved in boarding and two breeding. There are several small-scale breeding establishments where the proprietor is a member of an applicable organisation. These premises are administered under the Golden Plains Shire General Public Amenity and Local Law No. 2 (2017).

Current / Ongoing Activities

Council currently maintains a register of Domestic Animal Businesses operating within the shire and investigates properties where significant numbers of dogs are kept to determine if the Domestic Animal Business provisions of the *Domestic Animals Act* (1994) apply.

Council has a local law in place requiring residents to obtain a permit to keep more than 2 dogs or cats unless the dogs are working dogs (as defined in the local law) and kept in a rural area. There are currently 198 valid permits for keeping more than 2 dogs or cats in the Golden Plains Shire and Council is actively seeking to increase the level of compliance.

Summary

Golden Plains Shire is susceptible to being utilised by unscrupulous dog and cat breeders as it contains many isolated properties with close proximity to markets in Melbourne, Geelong and Ballarat.

If residents intend to breed the subject pets, Council expects relevant permits and current registrations to be in place; property to be kept in a condition, and to a standard, that promotes the health and well-being of the animals present.

Council seldom receives information on illicit cat breeders, but will continue to reactively respond to information on cat breeding operations and proactively endeavour to address illicit dog breeders.

Council is increasing its inspections of properties to identify unauthorised breeding businesses, with a focus on enforcing the community standards as defined in legislation through compliance and prosecution.

Objectives

1. Identify and register all known Domestic Animal Businesses in the municipality.
2. Ensure 100% compliance with registration and mandatory codes of practice for all domestic animal businesses.
3. Identify potentially illegal 'puppy farms' and ensure compliance with applicable legislation and codes of practice, and all animal welfare needs are being maintained.
4. Reduce incidence of domestic animal cruelty throughout the Golden Plains Shire

Actions

EDUCATION AND PROMOTION ACTIVITIES	WHEN	EVALUATION
Provide a copy of the relevant Code of Practice to each registered Domestic Animal Business in Golden Plains Shire.	Every 2 nd Year with Audit	100%
Promote awareness of unauthorised breeders and Domestic Animal Business requirements.	Annually	Promote in community publications annually and on Council webpage
Promote awareness of Council's actions to unauthorised breeders and Domestic Animal Business.	Annually	Promote in community publications annually and on Council webpage
Support registration of domestic animal businesses that achieve best practice under the code and compliance requirements.	Annually	Promote in community publications annually and on Council webpage

COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES	WHEN	EVALUATION
Register all Domestic Animal Businesses in the municipality.	April each year	100%
Conduct biennial 'unscheduled' inspections / audits of each Domestic Animal Business with Golden Plains Shire to determine compliance.	Biennially	100%
Issue Penalty Infringement notices to owners of dogs and cats found to be committing offences.	Ongoing	Implemented
Document and report animal cruelty to the RSPCA.	As required	Implemented
Pursue prosecutions of perpetrators assessed as committing offences under the Prevention Of Cruelty To Animals Act (1986).	As required	Implemented
Audit all registered properties with more than 9 dogs registered to the property to ensure compliance with applicable legislation and codes.	Annually	Implemented
Audit properties with more than 2 fertile females of the same breed where there is no evidence of the owner being a member of an applicable organisation.	Annually	Implemented
Advocate for increased resources to improve compliance and efficiency to meet growth pressures.	Annually	Submission for increased budget allocation and grant opportunities

Administration

Objectives

1. To provide the necessary administration arrangements to implement actions identified in this plan

Actions

EDUCATION AND PROMOTION ACTIVITIES	WHEN	EVALUATION
Investigate collaboration opportunities with local vets.	Annually	Meet annually – discuss community trends, needs and opportunities
Promote information sheets for residents so they know what to do with their animals in an emergency event.	Annually	Promote in community publications annually and on Council webpage
Ensure new Council website contains RSPCA website link.	June 2018	Implemented
Ensure new Council website contains link to Bureau of Animal Welfare.	June 2018	Implemented
Develop professional LG and agency networks to share information.	Ongoing	Implemented
Maintain a dialogue with shelter service providers and relevant councils to develop initiatives to improve domestic animal management outcomes for the community.	Ongoing	Implemented
Advocate for increased resources to improve compliance and efficiency to meet growth pressures.	Annually	Submission for increased budget allocation and grant opportunities

COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES	WHEN	EVALUATION
Undertake a review of service delivery 'bottlenecks' and operational inefficiencies.	June 2018	Draft Report provided to Development Manager
Facilitate the authorisation of officers under the POCTA Act, regulations and Codes of Practice.	As required	Implemented
Seek assistance from RSPCA and other authorised officers to implement and enforce POCTA Act, regulations and Codes of Practice.	As required	As required

Advocate for increased resources to improve compliance and efficiency to meet growth pressures.	Annually	Submission for increased budget allocation and grant opportunities
Undertake online community surveys to evaluate the impact of specific actions on community perception and objectives.	Annually	Implemented

Training of Authorised Officers

Current Situation

Golden Plains Shire is currently committed to developing an optimum training schedule for new and experienced Authorised Officers.

Whilst there is a depth of experience and knowledge within our team, improved training and networking opportunities is key to delivering, and continuously improving, Council's animal management services.

Authorised Officers currently contribute to animal management forums and workshops annually and work cross tenure to improve skills and knowledge.

Current / Ongoing Activities

Core training opportunities currently includes;

1. Cert 4 Animal Management
2. Animal Behaviour Workshops
3. Level 2 - 1st Aid
4. Conflict Resolution
5. Dealing with aggressive customers

Summary

Council's Authorised Officers have decades of combined experience in resolving animal incidents and community concerns.

It is intended that the development of a training schedule, and an ongoing commitment to participation in industry forums and workshops, will support improved service and knowledge transfer within the team and across the organisation.

Objectives

1. To ensure that staff involved in animal management have the knowledge and skills necessary to safely and effectively carry out their work.

Actions

EDUCATION AND PROMOTION ACTIVITIES	WHEN	EVALUATION
Liaise with neighbouring Council's to identify opportunities to access training sessions facilitated by larger Councils.	Ongoing	Liaise with 4 Councils annually
Officers to undertake refresher training and participate in industry forums and workshops.	Annually	At Annual Review
Officers to attend regional enforcement officer peer group meetings.	Ongoing	At Annual Review
Complete training schedule that identifies minimum training requirements and training opportunities to be undertaken by Animal Management Officers.	June 2018	Training Schedule completed and maintained – reviewed annually
Ensure all Authorised Officers have completed minimal training requirements.	Within 18 months of appointment	100%
Ensure Authorised Officers with the necessary equipment to safely and effectively carry out their work.	Ongoing	Audit vehicles annually

Annual Review and Reporting

Current Situation

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

The outcomes of this plan will be measured and evaluated annually in order to be reported in the Golden Plains Shire 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).

Current / Ongoing Activities

Current data capture and reporting processes need improvement but it is intended that improved data capture at Councils Animal Shelter services providers, and an increased commitment to property auditing, will provide an opportunity to strategically direct available resources more effectively.

Both Animal Shelter service providers have now implemented the 'Sheltermate' animal shelter management system which will enable both providers to generate meaningful animal shelter management data.

Local Government reporting to the State Government includes calculating, and submitting online, Council's 'Performance Manager Indicators' quarterly. These indicators are Councils key performance indicators in domestic animal management and include;

1. Time taken to action animal management requests (represented as number of days to respond)
2. Animals reclaimed from the pound (represented as a whole number)
3. Cost of animal management service (represented as a total cost to Council per animals registered)
4. Animal management prosecutions (represented as number of cases; successfully proven; and unsuccessful)

Summary

While a significant amount of animal management related services is being delivered in Golden Plains Shire, difficulties with data capture has impacted Council's ability to engage the community effectively regarding trends and opportunities for community input in supporting responsible pet ownership.

Improved data management is an integral component of this Domestic Animal Management Plan and one measurable will be demonstrate an improvement in the amount of data collected, how it is captured and where it is reported.

Objectives

1. To capture and manage data to better support reporting of outcomes resulting from the implementation of this plan.
2. To capture data that will improve the capacity of Council to plan for domestic animal management in the future.

Evaluation Indicators

Indicators	Current	Target
Achieve a 70% full registration level for the north, central and southern township areas	60.8%	2.5% p.a.
Reduce the number of properties with partial registration to 2% for all township areas	6.7%	1.2% p.a.
Increase community awareness of the impacts of nuisance pets and responsible pet ownership	No Data	25% p.a. – establish baseline - as reflected in online survey data or registration data
Increase cat registration by 5% each year	No Data	10% p.a. - establish baseline - as reflected in online survey data or registration data
Reduced impoundments rates and associated costs	198	10% p.a.
Increase reclaim rates for cats by 10% per year	14%	10% p.a. - establish baseline - as reflected in online survey data or registration data
Increase reclaim rates for dogs by 5% per year	38.5%	5% p.a. - establish baseline - as reflected in online survey or registration data
Increase community reporting of dog attacks to Council's Community Protection Officers to reflect number of incidents.	37%	15% p.a.
Identify and register all declared dogs in the municipality.	100%	100% - Maintain
Inspect and audit all declared dog premises biennially to ensure they are adhering to legislated keeping requirements.	100%	100% - Maintain
Identify and register all known Domestic Animal Businesses in the municipality	100%	100% - Maintain
Ensure 100% compliance with registration and mandatory codes of practice for all domestic animal businesses.	100%	100% - Maintain
Identify potentially illegal 'puppy farms' and ensure compliance with applicable legislation and codes of practice, and all animal welfare needs are being maintained.	50%	100% compliance when identified during audits

Reduce incidence of domestic animal cruelty throughout the Golden Plains Shire	Reported cases 2016/17 - 3	0 - identified during audits
Provide the necessary administration arrangements to implement actions identified in this plan	Undertake DAM Plan Review	Review Operational Requirements Annually – Advocate for resources
Ensure all involved in animal management have the knowledge and skills necessary to safely and effectively carry out their work.	Training schedule outlined	Audit Training Schedule
Capture and manage data to better support reporting of outcomes resulting from the implementation of this plan.	Training schedule outlined	Training schedule endorsed and 75% completed
Capture data that will improve the capacity of Council to plan for domestic animal management in the future.	Undertake Community Engagement	Annual Online Survey, Annual Vet Consultations, and Animal Shelter Service Providers