



Domestic Animal Management Plan 2017-2021

Foreword

Under Section 68A of the Domestic Animals Act, every Council must prepare a domestic animal management plan, as follows:

68A Councils to prepare domestic animal management plans

- (1) Every Council must, in consultation with the Secretary (Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources), prepare at 4 year intervals a domestic animal management plan.
- (2) A domestic animal management plan prepared by a Council must—
 - (a) set out a method for evaluating whether the animal control services provided by the Council in its municipal district are adequate to give effect to the requirements of this Act and the regulations; and
 - (b) outline programs for the training of authorised officers to ensure that they can properly administer and enforce the requirements of this Act in the Council's municipal district; and
 - (c) outline programs, services and strategies which the Council intends to pursue in its municipal district—
 - (i) to promote and encourage the responsible ownership of dogs and cats; and
 - (ii) to ensure that people comply with this Act, the regulations and any related legislation; and
 - (iii) to minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals; and
 - (iv) to address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats; and
 - (v) to encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats; and
 - (vi) to minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance; and
 - (vii) to effectively identify all dangerous dogs, menacing dogs and restricted breed dogs in that district and to ensure that those dogs are kept in compliance with this Act and the regulations; and

- (d) provide for the review of existing orders made under this Act and local laws that relate to the Council's municipal district with a view to determining whether further orders or local laws dealing with the management of dogs and cats in the municipal district are desirable; and
 - (e) provide for the review of any other matters related to the management of dogs and cats in the Council's municipal district that it thinks necessary; and
 - (f) provide for the periodic evaluation of any program, service, strategy or review outlined under the plan.
- (3) Every Council must—
- (a) review its domestic animal management plan annually and, if appropriate, amend the plan; and
 - (b) provide the Secretary with a copy of the plan and any amendments to the plan; and
 - (c) publish an evaluation of its implementation of the plan in its annual report.

Table of Contents

Foreword	2
1. Introduction	5
2. Training of Authorised Officers	8
3. Registration and Identification	13
4. Nuisance	17
5. Dog Attacks	21
6. Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs.....	24
7. Overpopulation and High Euthanasia	27
8. Domestic Animal Businesses	30
9. Other Matters	34
Dogs Off Leash Areas.....	34
Animals in Emergencies	36
10. Annual Review of Plan and Annual Reporting.....	38

1. Introduction

The City Of Whittlesea supports the strategic approach set out in the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* (the Act), which requires that each municipal council prepare an animal management plan. Council has therefore developed this plan in accordance with the legislative guidelines.

In this plan, Council has sought to balance the competing needs of pet owners, the animals that share their lives, and the broader community. Council also recognises the positive health and wellbeing outcomes that arise from pet ownership. The programs and activities set out in the plan have therefore been developed with the aim to encourage more people to enjoy the pleasure derived from animal companionship, within a framework of responsible ownership.

Context

The City of Whittlesea has an estimated resident population of 211,629 (November 2017) and covers an area of approximately 489sq/km. The City is one of Melbourne's major growth areas with the future population growth expected to exceed 295,000 by 2031.

In the 2015/16 financial year, the City of Whittlesea was the:

- Sixth largest growing Local Government Area in raw number of new residents;
- Seventh fastest growing Local Government Area in Australia; and
- Third largest growing Local Government Area in Victoria behind Wyndham and Casey.

Note: “Largest growth” refers to the change in number of residents between June 2015 and June 2016. “Fastest growth” refers to the change in number of residents as a proportion of the population at June 2016.

Residents of the City come from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds, with the largest changes in birthplace countries were born in India (+3,509 persons), China (+1,154 persons), United Kingdom (+699 persons) and Sri Lanka (+ 685 persons) making the City of Whittlesea one of the most culturally diverse localities in Victoria.

The City of Whittlesea features both urban and considerable rural areas. The bulk of the population is in the urban areas in the south. Substantial industrial and commercial areas are also located in the south. The rural areas of the City are characterised by farming and grazing, but also include forest areas and sites of significant conservation value.

As at April 2017, there were 16,479 dogs and 4,978 cats registered within the municipality. The City of Whittlesea also has 11 registered Domestic Animal Businesses, comprising five pet shops, three animal training establishments, one boarding establishment, one animal shelter and one pet daycare facility.

In September 2017, Council undertook a community survey to hear the community's views about domestic animals. This feedback has helped to inform Council's focus over the next four years.

Statement of Purpose

The Animal Management Unit provides a broad range of services to ensure Council meets its legislative responsibilities regarding the management of domestic animals within the municipality. The unit is also responsible for ensuring the needs of the wider community are reflected through Council's domestic animal management policies, procedures and practices.

Council's domestic animal services include:

- Providing advice to the community on domestic animal matters and promoting responsible pet ownership;
- Investigation of nuisance animal complaints and dog attacks;
- Attending to customer complaints;
- Management of Council's domestic animal collection and pound services contracts;
- Maintaining a domestic animal register and undertaking registration checks;
- Impounding wandering, unwanted or un-owned dogs and cats;
- Administration and control of dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs;
- Providing an after-hours emergency service;
- Registration and inspection of domestic animal businesses; and
- Administration and inspection of excess animal permits.

In late 2017, the City of Whittlesea, in partnership with our neighbouring councils the City of Darebin and Moreland City Council, will open a new pound and adoption centre, the Epping Animal Welfare Facility, with pound services provided through a contract arrangement with RSPCA Victoria.

Council recognises companion animals are an integral part of many people's lives. Therefore, we actively seek new and innovative ways to support owners and to encourage and promote the health and social benefits of responsible pet ownership.

Domestic Animal Statistics and Data

The following table provides a summary of key data relating to domestic animal management for 2016-2017.

Key Statistics	City of Whittlesea
Population (Estimated November 2017)	211,629
Area (sq/kms)	489
No. of Animal Management Officers	6
Hours training per Officer annually	24
No. of Registered Dogs*	16,479
No. of Registered Cats*	4,978
No. of Registered Dangerous Dogs	6
No. of Registered Dangerous Dogs (Guard)	9
No. of Registered Restricted Breed Dogs	9
No. of Registered Menacing Dogs	4
No. of dog attack prosecutions 16/17	1
No. of successful prosecutions 16/17	1
No. of Dogs Impounded**	874
No. returned to owner	707
No. re-housed	204
No. euthanised	64
No. of Cats Impounded**	1,278
No. returned to owner	92
No. re-housed	987
No. euthanised	619

**Figures as at April 2017.*

***Figures do not include animals that were surrendered to Council or its service provider.*

2. Training of Authorised Officers

Current Situation

Council has five full-time animal management staff, supported by a Team Leader and Administration team. Council's Animal Management team deals with a broad range of issues associated with the management of domestic animals in our community. These include:

- Providing advice to the community in relation to animal matters;
- Responding to customer complaints;
- Educating residents and promoting responsible animal ownership;
- Maintaining a register of dogs and cats;
- Providing a collection service for lost, stray and/or unwanted dogs and cats;
- Responding to animal welfare issues;
- Conducting investigations into barking dog complaints;
- Conducting investigations into nuisance cat complaints;
- Conducting investigations into allegations of dog attack;
- Conducting inspection of domestic animal businesses, dangerous and restricted breed dog premises for compliance with legislation; and
- Ensuring Council applies state legislation and Council municipal laws and policies to the management of domestic animals, businesses and activities.

Council is committed to ensuring that staff are equipped to respond to the demands of their roles and will provide staff with access to relevant training and education. Council is committed to best practice and innovation in terms of animal management practices. We support industry and community based initiatives that respond to the goals in the Domestic Animal Management Plan.

To ensure that all animal management staff have the knowledge and skills necessary to carry out their duties, standard training qualifications have been established and are set out in officer position descriptions.

Each officer has an individual annual performance plan, which includes a section related to training and development. Plans are reviewed bi-annually, with training requirements and suggestions being updated at those times. Responsibility for ensuring that nominated training is completed then becomes a shared responsibility for the individual officer and their supervisor.

Objective:

To ensure that all staff involved in animal management obtain and maintain the knowledge and skills necessary to carry out their work efficiently and effectively.

Goals:

- All Animal Management Officers are required to obtain a Certificate IV in Government Statutory Compliance and Animal Control and Regulation.
- Staff are encouraged to attend in-service days/workshops provided by relevant industry bodies and are supported to participate in relevant Associations and Special Interest Groups.

All staff in this team currently hold the minimum qualification or its equivalent. Any new staff appointed are required to have the minimum qualification or to commit to attaining it within two years of commencing employment with Council. Council will fund and facilitate attainment of the minimum qualification.

Current Status:

Officers are also encouraged and supported to undertake other training that may assist them in providing improved services to the community and increase officer safety, situational awareness and conflict resolution.

The table below summarises officer's current qualifications and identifies further training and/or professional development planned over the next four years.

Authorised Officer Training	Current 2017	Planned 2017-2021
Certificate IV in Government Statutory Compliance & Animal Control and Regulation		
Officer 1	Completed	
Officer 2	Completed	
Officer 3	Completed	
Officer 4	Completed	
Officer 5	Commenced	2017

Internal industry training – animal handling, animal assessment, statement taking, brief preparation, computer skills Officer 1 Officer 2 Officer 3 Officer 4 Officer 5	Ongoing	Regular training sessions throughout the year
In-house training – management skills Officer 1 Officer 2 Officer 3 Officer 4	Ongoing	Update annually
Customer service training – conflict resolution, telephone communication Officer 1 Officer 2 Officer 3 Officer 4 Officer 5	Ongoing	Update annually or as required
OH&S training – workplace safety Officer 1 Officer 2 Officer 3 Officer 4 Officer 5	Ongoing	Update annually or as required
OH&S training – Dog Bite Prevention Training Available to all to all Local Laws Officers who handle animals	Ongoing	Bi-annually
Authorised Officer Training - Additional	Current 2017	Planned 2017-21
Firearms training - Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (POCTA) All Authorised Officers under POCTA	Ongoing	Regular training sessions throughout the year

Bureau of Animal Welfare – training and information days	Officer 1 Officer 2 Officer 3 Officer 4 Officer 5	All Officers to attend as appropriate	Regular sessions throughout the year
Municipal Association of Victoria – training and information days	Officer 1 Officer 2 Officer 3 Officer 4 Officer 5	All Officers to attend as appropriate	Regular sessions throughout the year

Our Plans

Objective 1: Develop a training policy that clearly identifies minimum training requirements and any additional training needs that should be undertaken by Authorised Officers by June 2018.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Identify minimum training requirements by consultation with management and staff.	By June 2018	Documentation to be finalised and incorporated into an approved training policy.
Identify additional training opportunities by consultation with management and staff.	By June 2018	Documentation to be finalised and incorporated into an approved training policy.

Objective 2: Develop and maintain a training register for individual officers detailing completed and proposed training.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Compile a register listing each officer's name, and their completed training, along with proposed training.	By June 2018	Bi-annual and annual review of register to ensure its accuracy and to determine whether proposed training goals have been met for each officer during that period.

Objective 3: Ensure all Authorised Officers have completed their minimum training requirements within two years of appointment.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Identify minimum training requirements for officers (e.g. OH&S, animal handling), and create documents to record when officers have completed each course.	By June 2018	Bi-annual and annual review spread sheet and ensure each officer has completed their minimum training requirements within 2 years of appointment.

Objective 4: Investigate other available training courses and offer at least one Officer the opportunities for additional training each year.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Identify additional training opportunities e.g. animal welfare, prosecutions training, conflict management, communication / microchip implant technique.	Ongoing	Annually – review how many officers undertook training that was in addition to their minimum requirements. Provide additional training opportunities annually.

3.Registration and Identification

Current Situation

Current Data

Since 2012/13, the number of dogs and cats registered in the City of Whittlesea has fluctuated but remained relatively consistent.

Year	Registered Cats	Registered Dogs
2012/13	4,537	16,377
2013/14	4,556	16,454
2014/15	6,551	21,571
2015/16	5,302	17,409
2016/17	4,978	16,479

It is estimated that there are a number of unregistered dogs and cats living in the City of Whittlesea. This prediction has been based on the population growth of 47,081 people since 2011, and a report¹ published by Animal Medicines Australia (AMA) in 2016 which indicates that national dog and cat ownership has increased by 3 per cent and 6 per cent respectively.

Our Orders, Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures

Council currently has the following Orders in place:

- Prohibiting exercising of dogs off-leash other than in designated places;
- Designating six off-leash dog parks.

Council currently has the following General Municipal Laws in place:

- Regulating the number of dogs and cats allowed to be kept on a property.

Council currently has the following Policies and Procedures in place:

- Under section 12 of the Domestic Animals Act, appointment of organisations to act as an agent for the Council in the registration of cats and dogs.

Our Current Education/ Promotion Activities

Council employs a range of activities aimed at promoting and encouraging the registration of dogs and cats.

¹ Animal Medicines Australia, Pet Ownership in Australia 2016

These include:

- Information being made available on the Council's website, social media and through traditional media outlets;
- Prompt proactive and reactive enforcement activities;
- Providing information through various Council and industry publications;
- Compliance with mandatory registration and microchipping of animals prior to release from the pound;
- Registration and/or microchipping arrangements in partnership with the RSPCA;
- Annual registration renewal follow-up; and
- Proactive patrols of parks and public open spaces.

Our Current Compliance Activities

These include:

- Annual registration renewal follow up and audit;
- Doorknocking programs throughout the municipality;
- Proactive patrols of parks and public open spaces;
- Inspections of excess animal permits;
- Property inspections following information received from the public;
- Investigating all nuisance animal complaints including detecting unidentified animals; and
- Enforcement of legislation.

Summary

In 2016/17, accurate registration information enabled Council to reunite 707 dogs with their owners. This represents a return rate of 80% of the total number of dogs impounded. Equipping officers with mobile devices has enabled officers to access Council's registration database in-field to facilitate the quick return of wandering dogs.

The majority of dogs that are impounded escape from their properties due to inadequate containment fencing within both urban and rural properties. A lack of adequate fencing can result in lost dogs, particularly during periods of thunder, severe storms or when there are events involving fireworks.

Of the 1,278 cats impounded in 2016/17, only 92 were returned to their owners (7%), with a further 987 rehomed. This indicates that most impounded cats are not identifiable and therefore are not returned to their owners.

The community survey asked respondents a series of questions about registration and microchipping.

Of the survey respondents, 34 nominated that they owned a dog. Of these, 100% of owners reported that their dogs were microchipped and 94% indicated that their dogs were registered.

The majority of cat owners (91%) also indicated that their cats were microchipped, however when compared to dogs, registration rates were significantly lower at 50%.

Of those whose pets were microchipped, 88% indicated that the details on the microchip were accurate and up-to-date.

Reasons provided for not registering pets included:

- Cats being elderly or being indoors only;
- Not having sufficient time to register their pet;
- Not seeing the value in pet registrations; and
- Pets being registered in other municipalities.

Respondents indicated that they would be encouraged to register their pets if there was:

- An easier registration process;
- Ability to register their pet via different methods such as online);
- More incentives to register pets;
- Access to clear information about pet registration; and
- A cost reduction to register pets, especially older pets.

It is important to have accurate registration numbers so Council can adequately plan for the service needs of the community. It also enables other operators working in animal welfare to target their programs and services to meet community expectations.

To increase the number of registered pets within the City of Whittlesea, Council intends to continue following up any unpaid renewals and conduct targeted door knocks throughout the municipality annually over the next four years.

Our Plans

Objective 1: Improve the accuracy of Council’s registration database by cross-referencing with the microchip registry data by 2017-2021.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Periodic cross referencing of microchip registries to obtain current details of dogs and cats within the municipality that are micro-chipped.	June 2021	Demonstrate Council’s pet registration database can be accurately cross-referenced with microchip registries.

Objective 2: Follow-up unpaid dog and cat registration renewals by May-June each year.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Ensure all active registration renewals are paid through follow up contact and property inspections.	By June each year	Maintain registration numbers. Review percentage of non-renewal of dogs and cats registrations from year to year.

Objective 3: Maintain and increase dog and cat registration numbers each year.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Conduct non-renewal follow up inspections within the municipality every year to check for unregistered and un-identified dogs and cats.	Intermittent property inspections throughout the year.	Records the number of unregistered animals identified during door knocks.
Continue to ensure that all animals released from the pound are microchipped and registered prior to release.	Prior to every animal release.	Annually review registration numbers. Review number of dogs and cats being seized and impounded that are not registered.
Promote responsible pet ownership and advertise the benefits of pet registration through Council’s communications channels.	Annually	Number of new registrations. Animal registration renewal rates.

4. Nuisance

Current Situation

Current Data

The Animal Management Unit responded to approximately 2,946 animal related requests and enquiries in 2016/17. The primary nuisance complaint types received in the City of Whittlesea are:

- Dogs found at large/wandering;
- Barking dogs;
- Nuisance cats; and
- Dog bites/attacks.

Our Orders, Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures

Council currently has the following Orders in place:

- Prohibiting exercising of dogs off-leash, other than in designated places;
- Designating six off-leash dog parks.

Council currently has the following General Municipal Laws in place:

- Regulating the number of dogs and cats allowed to be kept on a property;
- Requirement of a dog owners to remove and dispose of faeces deposited by their dogs in public places or private property without the consent of the property owner or occupier; and
- Requirement for pet owners to prevent any objectionable noise from any animal on those premises if the noise adversely affects the comfort of any other person.

Council currently has the following policies and procedures in place:

- Procedure regarding noise nuisance complaints for dogs and/or cats; and
- Procedure regarding trapping programs associated with nuisance complaints for cats.

Our Current Education/Promotion Activities

Council employs a range of activities aimed at promoting and encouraging responsible pet ownership. These include:

- Information being made available on the Council's website, social media and through traditional media outlets;
- Prompt proactive and reactive enforcement activities;
- Providing information through various Council and industry publications; and
- Proactive patrols of parks and public open spaces.

Our Current Compliance Activities

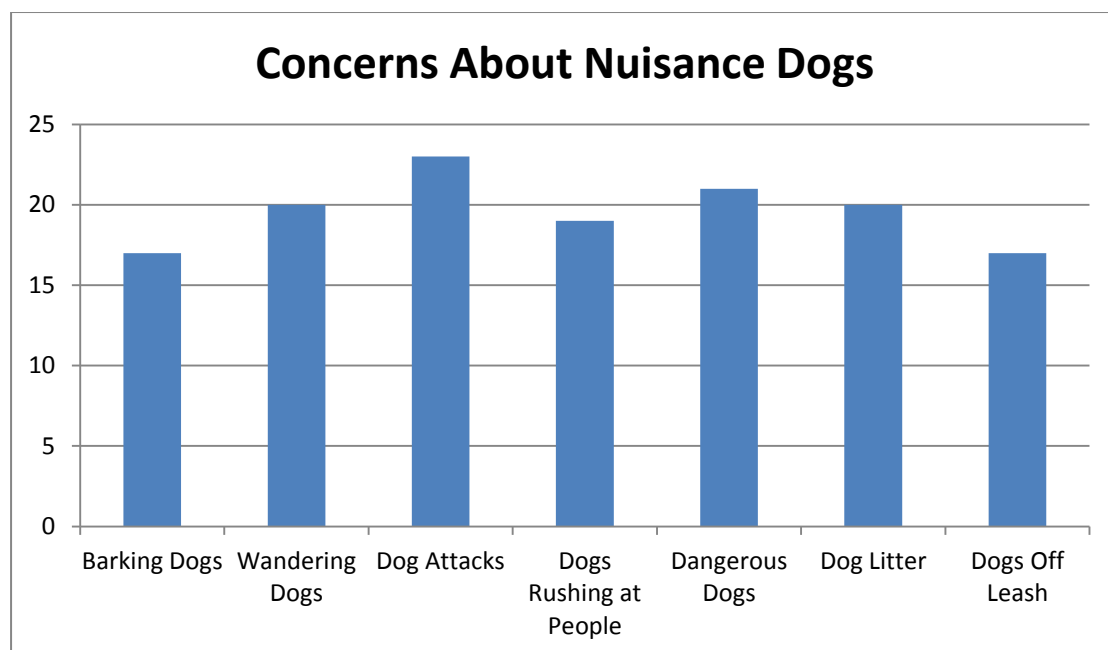
These include:

- A barking dog policy and procedure;
- A nuisance cat trapping policy and procedure for both residential and business premises; and
- An excess animal permit system to manage the number of animals per property.

Note: The issue of nuisance wandering dogs will be addressed in Section 5: Dog Attacks

Summary

The community survey indicated that the following issues were either of concern or great concern to respondents in relation to nuisance dogs. The graph below demonstrates survey responses in relation to nuisance dog complaints.

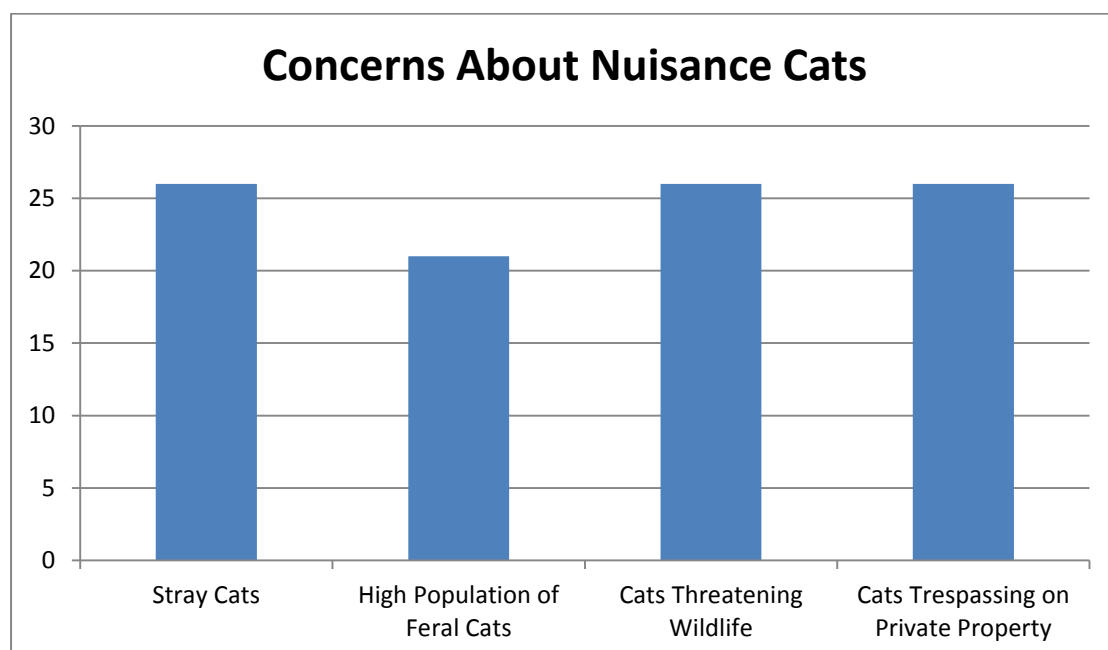


Whilst dog attacks were of the highest concern to the community, each of the above categories of nuisance dog complaints was generally consistent in its level of community concern.

The most common nuisance complaint received by Council about dogs is excessive barking. As barking is a natural behaviour for dogs it will never be possible to totally eliminate barking complaints. Most barking dog complaints however, can be resolved by gathering data showing the frequency of barking that may or may not

impact on neighbours. The reporting of a barking dog in many incidences also alerts officers to unknown dogs within the area resulting in animal registration non-compliance action.

The community survey indicated that the following issues were either of concern or great concern to respondents in relation to nuisance cats. The graph below demonstrates survey responses in relation to nuisance cat complaints.



Similarly to the nuisance dog issues, each of the above categories of nuisance cat complaints was generally consistent in its level of community concern.

In regards to nuisance cats, Council provides a free cat trapping service to residents and commercial businesses wanting to remove a stray cat from their property.

This service assists in addressing each of the above issues, and education remains an important element in reducing the impact of stray and un-owned cats.

Verbatim comments provided by survey respondents also indicated support for introducing laws to ensure cats are contained to their owners' property.

Our Plans

Objective 1: Reduce cat nuisance complaints.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Provide education material about nuisance cat issues to cat owners in registration information packs each year.	Ongoing	Number of booklets distributed and when.
Assist residents and businesses to deal with cat nuisance problems by maintaining and providing cat trapping programs.	Ongoing	Number of trapping programs conducted (residential/businesses). Number of cats/kittens impounded.

Objective 2: Reduce dog nuisance complaints.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Assist in reviewing and increasing the number of designated off-leash park areas to encourage dog owners to exercise their dogs off leash at designated locations.	Annually	New areas commissioned in accordance with Council policy.
Review barking dog complaints, investigation policy/procedure.	Annually	Monitor number of barking complaints received and actioned. Number of barking dog complaints resolved.
Include information regarding confinement, barking, dogs at large etc. in registration information each year.	Annually	Up-to-date information included.

5. Dog Attacks

Current Situation

Council responded and investigated 92 reported dog attacks (includes all alleged attacks/rushes) during 2016/17 financial year.

Council has been able to settle the majority of dog attacks by the issuance of infringements with only one attack proceeding to the Magistrates Court.

Our Orders, Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures

Council currently has the following Orders in place:

- Prohibiting exercising of dogs off-leash, other than in designated places;
- Designating six off-leash dog parks.

Council currently has the following General Municipal Laws in place:

- Regulating the number of dogs and cats allowed to be kept on a property.

Council currently has the following policies and procedures in place:

- Council has comprehensive procedures to be followed when investigating dog attacks and rushes. These procedures are constantly reviewed and updated in response to legislative changes and experience gained before the courts/tribunals.
- Procedures are followed in dealing with dogs that have been proven to rush or attack, in relation to Council's legislated powers under the Domestic Animals Act.

Our Current Education/Promotion Activities

These include:

- Fact sheets;
- Brochures such as dangerous/restricted breed dogs and containment of dogs;
- Activities at local events;
- Information being made available on Council's website, social media and through traditional media outlets; and
- Personal contact with dog owners.

Our Current Compliance Activities

These include:

- Annual registration renewal follow ups;
- Proactive park and street patrols;
- Inspections of properties where dangerous and restricted breed dogs reside;
- Prompt response to complaints (within one hour);
- Door-knocking to identify unregistered animals;
- Firm enforcement in relation wandering dogs, attacks and rushes; and
- Consistent use of declaration/destruction powers.

Summary

Council's current statistics show the number of dog attacks occurring in the municipality has been maintained at a static level.

Council will continue to apply its current practices, with a strong focus on education, containment and registration to minimise the risk of dog attacks on people and animals.

Our Plans

Objective 1: Minimise the number of confirmed dog attacks in the community by one per cent each year.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Improve public awareness of what constitutes a dog attack and how to report attacks using media articles, website updates, direct mail, etc.	Ongoing	<p>Evaluate this activity (and overall objective) by comparing the number of dog attacks reported to Council before and after the campaign.</p> <p>Consider completing a community survey to measure awareness of dog attacks and how to report them, before and after the campaign.</p> <p>Compare the number of reported dog attack incidents before and after the campaign.</p> <p>Measure objective of decreasing</p>

		reported incidents by one per cent per annum.
Review dog attack enforcement and investigation policy and procedures.	December 2017	Policy remains up-to-date with legislation.

Objective 2: Decrease dog attacks on livestock by one per cent each year.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Run an education campaign directed at farmers and hobby farmers regarding responsibilities of owning dogs.	Ongoing	Number of direct Compliance Notices issued.
Enforcement policy regarding the destruction of dogs and cats found at large where livestock are kept.	Ongoing	Brochure, notice mail-outs issued to rural areas.

6. Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs

Current Situation

Current Data

At July 2017, the following numbers of dogs with restrictions were housed within the City of Whittlesea.

Category Type	Number
Menacing	4
Dangerous Dogs (Guard Dogs)	9
Dangerous Dogs (Declared)	6
Restricted Breed Dogs	9
Total	28

Our Orders, Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures

Council does not currently have any Orders in place in relation to dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs.

Council does not currently have any General Municipal Laws in place in relation to dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs.

Council's policies and procedures for dealing with dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs are conducted in compliance with the provisions of Council's legislative powers under the Domestic Animals Act and Regulations.

Our Current Education/Promotion Activities

These include:

- Fact sheets;
- Bureau of Animal Welfare brochures on dangerous/restricted breed dogs;
- Activities at local events; and
- Provision of information via the Council website, social media and traditional media.

Our Current Compliance Activities

These include:

- Annual registration renewal inspections of premises housing dangerous and restricted breed dogs;
- All new application for registration of American Staffordshire Terriers are flagged for visual inspection;
- Prompt response to complaints of suspected dangerous or restricted breed dogs (within one hour);
- Door-knocking to identify unregistered animals;
- Firm enforcement in restricted breed dog inspections; and
- Maintaining and providing details of dangerous dogs, restricted breed dogs and menacing dogs on the Victorian Declared Dog Registry (VDDR).

Summary

Council discourages residents and businesses from keeping dogs that are or have been classified as ‘dangerous’ (whether guard or declared) or of a ‘restricted’ breed.

The nine restricted breed dogs within the municipality were all declared by the owner to be of such a breed. The City of Whittlesea has not yet used its power under the Domestic Animals Act to declare a dog as a restricted breed dog.

The monitoring of all declared dogs will continue with ad-hoc and formal inspections, ensuring compliance and overall public safety.

Council is committed to ensuring owners of these types of dogs are fully aware of their responsibilities and any breaches are dealt with through enforcement, either by the issuance of Infringement Notices or Summons to be heard before a Magistrate.

Our Plans

Objective 1: Identify and register all Declared Dogs in the municipality.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Review current policies on when to declare a dog dangerous, menacing or as a restricted breed.	Ongoing	Policy remains current with legislation.
Flag all new ‘Amstaffs’ at registration for assessment under the approved standard.	Ongoing	All registered ‘Amstaffs’ checked as potential restricted breed declaration.
Be proactive in declaring dogs dangerous, menacing and restricted.	Ongoing	Dogs declared according to breed-specific legislation and their actions.

Cross-reference microchip database information with current Council registration database for potential restricted breed dogs.	April 2018	
Proactive patrols of industrial properties within the municipality for dogs housed or kept for guarding purposes.	Annually	Numbers of guard dogs registered within the municipality.

Objective 2: Effectively inspect and audit all declared dog premises annually to ensure they are compliant with legislation.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Conduct property inspections for all premises housing a declared dangerous or guard dog.	Annually	Increase compliance review dog identifications' against Council and Victorian Declared Dog Registry (VDDR).
Monitor training activities within parks and open spaces ensuring that dogs are not being trained to attack etc.	Ongoing	Increase compliance and prosecutions when required.

7. Overpopulation and High Euthanasia

Current Situation

Current Data

Dogs	2016/17	Cats	2016/17
Dogs impounded*	874	Cats impounded*	1,278
Dogs reclaimed	707	Cats reclaimed	92
Dogs re-housed	204	Cats re-housed	987
Dogs euthanised	65	Cats euthanised	619

**Figures as at April 2017. Figures do not include animals that were surrendered to Council or its service provider.*

Our Orders, Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures

Council does not currently have any Orders in place in relation to overpopulation or euthanasia rates.

Council currently has the following General Municipal Laws in place:

- Regulating the number of dogs and cats allowed to be kept on a property.

Council currently has the following policies and procedures in place:

- Procedure regarding trapping programs associated with nuisance complaints for cats.

Our Current Education/Promotion Activities

Council employs a range of activities aimed at promoting and encouraging responsible pet ownership.

These include:

- Information being made available on the Council's website, social media and through traditional media outlets;
- Prompt proactive and reactive enforcement activities; and
- Providing information through various Council and industry publications.

Our Current Compliance Activities

These include:

- Free use of cat traps for residents and businesses;
- Cat trapping programs in public areas;

- Personalised cat trapping programs for residents who are unable to do it themselves i.e. elderly/disabled;
- Attendance and assistance with situations of animal hoarders; and
- Excess animal permit system to manage the number of animals per property.

Summary

Based on recent data, there does not seem to be a significant problem with overpopulation and high euthanasia rates of dogs within the City of Whittlesea. This is due to the majority of impounded dogs either being reclaimed by their owner or adopted to a new home.

Of the 34 community survey respondents who identified as dog owners, all but two indicated that their dog was desexed. In the two instances where dogs were not desexed, the dog belonged to a breeder.

Whilst 100% of cat owners who responded to the community survey indicated that their cat was desexed, the fact that 619 cats were euthanised in 2016/17 demonstrates that there is a continued issue with feral cats.

Of the survey respondents, nearly 82% supported mandatory desexing of cats and dogs.

Based on this data, our objectives below aim to increase the instances of desexing with a specific focus on addressing the overpopulation of cats.

This includes examining ways to reduce the un-owned cat population by educating owners to take responsibility for their care or by trapping and removing those cats from the municipality so that they cannot breed and continue to contribute to a high cat population.

Our Plans

Objective 1: Reduce the percentage of registered dogs and cats that are currently not part of a Domestic Animal Breeding Business each year.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Evaluate the feasibility for the introduction of a Council subsidised desexing program for pets.	2017-18	Cost to run scheme Number of animals de-sexed as part of the scheme.

Objective 2: Raise awareness about semi-owned cat population

Activity	When	Evaluation
Implement "Who's for cats?" education campaign in the local area. Utilise the following resources (available from Bureau of Animal Welfare): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Are you feeding a bigger problem?" (Who's for Cats? campaign fact sheet) - distribution throughout the municipality, placement on website. 	Annually	Measure number and type of education materials distributed. Record number of queries received by Council. Record number of semi-owned cats handed into the local pound / shelter.

Objective 3: Identify and close down all illegally operating Domestic Animal Breeding establishments in the municipality.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Investigate advertisements of pets for sale in local papers, noticeboards or the internet to determine if they are a Domestic Animal Business registered with Council.	Ongoing	Investigate and ensure compliance. Number of unregistered Domestic Animal Businesses attended.
Audit every Domestic Animal Business for compliance. Enforce compliance with minimum requirements.	Annually (May – June)	Number of audits conducted, and summary of outcomes (including any Domestic Animal Businesses closed due to non-compliance)

8. Domestic Animal Businesses

Current Situation

Current Data

There are 11 registered Domestic Animal Businesses within the City of Whittlesea, comprised of:

- Five pet shops;
- Three dog training establishments;
- One boarding establishment;
- One animal shelter; and
- One pet daycare facility.

Our Orders, Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures

Council currently has no Orders in place in relation to Domestic Animal Businesses.

Council currently has the following General Municipal Laws (No 1 of 2014) in place:

- Regulating the number of dogs and cats allowed to be kept on a property; and
- Requirement for pet owners to prevent any objectionable noise from any animal on those premises if the noise adversely affects the comfort of any other person.

Council currently has the following policies and procedures in place:

- Domestic Animal Businesses must be registered annually with Council;
- All Domestic Animal Businesses to be audited annually;
- Forms for registration and information on Council website and at Council offices;
- Procedure regarding noise nuisance complaints from Domestic Animal Businesses;
- Any new businesses must be inspected before registration; and
- Forms required of Domestic Animal Businesses for notification to the Council when any animal sold or given away should be registered.

Our Current Education/Promotion Activities

These include:

- Providing all Domestic Animal Businesses with the relevant Code of Practice;
- Bureau of Animal Welfare fact sheets on Domestic Animal Businesses available in Council offices, on the Council website and sent to registered businesses.

Our Current Compliance Activities

These include:

- Registering all Domestic Animal Businesses;
- Conducting annual audits of each Domestic Animal Business within the City of Whittlesea;
- Follow up any non-compliance as required;
- Regular patrols for new/non-registered Domestic Animal Businesses; and
- Occasional unannounced inspections.

Summary

Currently, the City of Whittlesea has 11 registered Domestic Animal Businesses. There does not seem to be a compliance issue with existing businesses within the municipality. Council will continue to ensure that all new and existing Domestic Animal Businesses are registered and that Council works closely with the proprietors to ensure compliance with the Act and Code of Practice.

The City of Whittlesea provides an animal pound, which is registered as a Domestic Animal Business. The provision of pound services is conducted by the RSPCA under Section 84Y of the Domestic Animals Act. The RSPCA also operates a registered animal shelter with Council from this facility. This shelter provides significant benefits in relation to animal welfare, convenience to the community and education in relation to animal ownership.

Our Plans

Objective 1: Identify and register all Domestic Animal Businesses (DAB) in the municipality.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Identify all businesses that should be registered as a Domestic Animal Business in the municipality, and follow up to determine whether they are and should be registered with Council.	Ongoing	Compare number of registered Domestic Animal Businesses before and after activity.
Investigate any report of unregistered Domestic Animal Business within 48 hours.	Ongoing	Number of reports.

Objective 2: Annually inspect and audit all registered Domestic Animal Businesses. Ensure 100 per cent compliance with registration and mandatory codes of practice for all domestic annual businesses each year.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Conduct annual audits of all Domestic Animal Businesses within the City of Whittlesea.	April-May each year.	Audit reports for each DAB.
Where required, act promptly to address matters of non-compliance.	Action initiated within five working days of audit completion.	Levels of compliance recorded. Enforcement activity reports e.g. infringements issued, court prosecutions, revocation or refusals of registration.
Investigate and act upon public complaints about Domestic Animal Businesses.	Action within 5 working days of notification.	Number of reports. Number of new DABs identified. Number of prosecutions.

Objective 3: Promote the new legislative requirements for Breeding Domestic Animal Businesses to the community, using information brochures provided by the Department of Primary Industries (DPI).

Activity	When	Evaluation
Distribute information to all excess animal permit holders.	Annually	Number of excess animal permits. Number of new Domestic Animal Businesses.
Provide all new excess animal permit applicants fact sheets regarding recent changes to the definition of domestic animal businesses – i.e. 3 or more fertile female cats, or 3 or more fertile female dogs	As required	Number of excess animal permits. Number of new Domestic Animal Businesses. Information distributed as and where required.
Ensure up to date information is	Ongoing	Number of enquiries & new

distributed via the Council's website and other communications channels.		Domestic Animal Businesses.
Conduct a full cross-reference to the microchip databases to identify anyone micro-chipping large numbers of animals who may be a possible breeder.	2017-18	Number of new Domestic Animal Businesses or prosecutions.

9. Other Matters

Current Situation

Dogs Off Leash Areas

Council adopted the *Dog Off-Leash Areas Policy and Management Plan 2016 to 2026*, on 30 August 2016. This plan provides direction for the establishment and operation of Off-Leash Areas within the municipality.

Council has established six Off-Leash Areas within the City of Whittlesea:

- 30W Fitzwilliam Drive, Doreen;
- Lyndarum Wetland, 27W Manor House Drive, Epping;
- Delacombe Park, 5W Delacombe Drive, Mill Park;
- Whittlesea Public Gardens, 158 Barry Road, Thomastown;
- Creek Park, 2W Perry Street, Mernda; and
- Whittlesea Park, 35 Beech Street, Whittlesea.

Our Orders, Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures

Council currently has the following Orders in place:

- Prohibiting exercising of dogs off-leash, other than in designated places; and
- Designating six off-leash dog parks.

Summary

With 16,479 dogs registered within the municipality, Off-Leash Areas have become a recognised amenity catering for the health and wellbeing of both dogs and their owners.

When properly established and managed, Off-Leash Areas represent a valuable asset providing physical and mental health to the community derived from physical exercise, social interaction and pet kinship.

The City of Whittlesea recognises the importance of amenities such as these and aims to establish more against a consistent set of principles and manage them in a safe and environmentally sustainable manner.

In response to the community's requests for more off-leash parks, Council will continue to investigate other suitable sites within the municipality for this activity. The *'Dog Off-Leash Areas Policy and Management Plan 2016 to 2026'* considers the following three types of Off-Leash Area:

- Open Unstructured;

- Confined Unstructured; and
- Confined Structured.

The community survey indicated general support for off-leash areas, however less than half of survey respondents reported using these areas.

41% of respondents wanted to see the introduction of more off leash areas, with the majority of these preferring fully fenced parks.

Other suggestions about off leash areas included:

- Installing drinking stations for dogs and humans;
- Providing bags and bins to dispose of faeces;
- Ensuring that off leash areas are of an adequate size for dogs to run in; and
- Educating dog owners that they are responsible for their dogs' behaviour whilst using off leash areas.

Our Plans

Objective 1: Identify and establish future locations for off-leash parks

Activity	When	Evaluation
Council to continue to implement its 10-year <i>Dog Off-Leash Areas Policy and Management Plan 2016 to 2026</i> .	Ongoing	Suitable locations identified for the establishment of off-leash parks within the municipality.

Objective 2: Encourage developers to consider to provide off-leash parks within new residential developments.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Engage developers to incorporate off-leash parks within urban designs.	Ongoing	The inclusion of off-leash parks within new residential area plans.

Animals in Emergencies

Animal welfare in emergency situations is also addressed in this section. Council's Municipal Emergency Management Plan (MEMP) considers the impact and what is required in dealing with domestic pets and livestock during and after an emergency.

The management of animals during and after emergencies has proven to be a significant issue. People leaving high threat areas during an emergency may need advice or support regarding their pets or livestock. People displaced by emergencies and sheltering at emergency relief centres will almost certainly bring their pets.

Further information about animals in emergencies and the Victorian Emergency Animal Welfare Plan, can be obtained via Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR).

Council currently has no orders, local laws or policies and procedures regarding animals in emergency situations.

Our Plans

Objective 1: To maintain plans/contingencies in place in the event of an emergency and provide information about pet care in these situations.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Update lists regarding animal emergency management planning – Council contacts, shelters, animal welfare organisations.	Ongoing	MEMP lists updated as required.
Participate in a relevant Emergency Management exercise in order to test the plan.	Annually	Plans tested successfully.
In association with RSPCA (Pound Service Provider) review evacuation plan for the pound if threatened with an emergency.	Annually	Evacuation plan tested successfully.
Investigate developing an MOU with other pound/shelters/kennels and catteries during an emergency	June 2018	Investigation completed and MOU developed.

event.		
Provide and distribute brochures for what to do in an emergency.	Annually	Have available and distribute brochures to residents in known risk areas.

10. Annual Review of Plan and Annual Reporting

Future Plans

Objective 1: Comply with Section 68A(3) of the Act

Activity	When	Evaluation
Provide the Secretary with a copy of the plan and any amendments to the plan.	November 2018 then annually	Copy of plan supplied and then amendments supplied annually.
Review the Domestic Animal Management Plan annually and, if appropriate, amend the plan.	Annually	Amend plan where required.
Publish an evaluation of its implementation of the plan in Council's Annual Report.	Annually	Evaluation published in Council's Annual Report.
Council will undertake a major review of the plan after four years.	2020-2021	Review in preparation for 2022-2026 Domestic Animal Management Plan.

ⁱⁱ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2017), *Regional Population Growth, Australia, 2015-16 (cat. no. 3218.0)*. Available: <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3218.0?OpenDocument> [Accessed April 2017].