
Melton Shire Council

DRAFT DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction and Context of This Plan	page
1.1 introduction	3
1.2 Purpose of this Domestic Animal Management Plan	3
1.3 Process Applied in Developing this Plan	4
1.4 The Shire of Melton – Demographics and Profile	4
1.5 Domestic Animal Statistics and Data	5
1.6 Animal Management Staffing and Operational Structure	6
1.7 Current Programs and Services – Service Levels	6
2.0 Key Issues for Melton Shire Council	
2.1 education	7
2.2 desexing of dogs and cats	8
2.3 cat management – feral and semi owned cats	8
2.4 dog Attacks	8
2.5 confinement of cats and the prevention of dogs wandering at large	9
2.6 microchipping cats and dogs	9
2.7 community safety	10
2.8 barking dogs	10
2.9 dog training	10
2.10 registration and identification	11
2.11 animal welfare	11
2.12 promotion of “dogs off leash areas”	12
3.0 Strategic Directions for Domestic Animal Management:	
3.1 Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Process	13
3.2 AMO Training and Development	14
3.3 Encouraging Responsible Pet Ownership – Community Education	14
3.4 Identification and Registration	15
3.5 Compliance and Enforcement – Local Laws and Orders	15
3.6 Domestic Animal Businesses	16
3.7 Declared Dogs	17
3.8 Program Funding	17
3.9 Review Cycle/Date for this Plan	18
3.10 Action Plans	18
Appendices	
A: Action Plans	19-27

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT OF THIS PLAN

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Domestic (Feral and Nuisance) Animals Act 1994 (The Act) requires that each municipal council prepare an animal management plan. Melton Shire Council supports that strategic approach and has therefore developed this plan in strict accordance with the legislative guidelines. The Plan will allow the Council to undertake a consistent approach to animal management issues throughout the municipality and will raise the profile of the Local Laws unit by providing a strategic planning focus to the activities undertaken by the unit in relation to animal management.

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

In this plan, Council has sought to balance the competing needs of animal owners, the broader community and the animals that share people's lives. Council also recognises the positive health and wellbeing outcomes that arise from pet ownership. It is expected over the life of the plan there will be measurable improvements in animal welfare, responsible domestic animal ownership and compliance with relevant legislation. 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.

1.2 PURPOSE OF THIS DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

The purpose of this plan is to develop and implement a range of approaches that will:

- Improve animal management in general
- educate our community about responsible pet ownership;
- ensure that satisfactory levels of compliance with legislation and community standards are established and maintained;
- maximise the benefits to the community that may be gained by owning companion animals.
- Reduce the numbers of domestic animals being handed in/brought in to animal shelters
- Reduce the number of domestic animals facing euthanasia annually.

Through engaging with our community, Council seeks to improve the working, living and recreational environments of our municipality by providing a range of services and facilities that meet or exceed community expectations. Council's Local Laws Unit underpin its service delivery and approach to animal management issues in order:

- To create an environment where people and pets can peacefully coexist within the community;
- To proactively inform and educate the community about the needs of companion animals and promote responsible pet ownership;
- To proactively ensure that the needs of the wider community are reflected through Council's domestic animal management policies;
- to protect the community and the environment from feral and nuisance dogs and cats;
- enable a program for registration and identification of dogs and cats which recognises and promotes responsible animal ownership;
- to identify and control dangerous dogs;
- to develop a scheme for domestic animal businesses which promotes the

- maintenance of standards of those businesses; and
- matters related to the boarding of dogs and cats.

1.3 PROCESS APPLIED IN DEVELOPING THIS PLAN

This plan was developed by a working party comprising Council Officers that invited public submissions and sought comment from animal welfare groups. During its development a discussion paper was prepared and along with a questionnaire was made available for community members to comment. Feedback received was analysed and where appropriate incorporated into the plan.

The plan was developed within the context of seeking to apply best practice, whilst recognising the socio-economic environment within this municipality.

Occupational Health and Safety:

The plan is developed to ensure that Melton Shire Council will conduct its business in a manner that contributes to the health and well being of its employees, and ensure the safety of employees, contractors and the public. Council is committed to:

- providing a safe and healthy work environment to prevent injury and illness
- the identification and quick resolution of health and safety issues in the workplace
- educating staff with respect to OH & S issues and training staff in safe work practices
- providing appropriate safety equipment, clothing and protective gear to prevent accidents and injuries
- encouraging a consultative approach between all parties to improve health and safety performance.

1.4 THE SHIRE OF MELTON – DEMOGRAPHICS AND PROFILE

Melton Shire is booming and was recently recognised as Victoria's fastest growing municipality. The Shire of Melton is located within Melbourne's outer Western region, and offers an urban-rural lifestyle within 35 minutes traveling time to the CBD.

The Shire of Melton includes the town of Melton, the key townships of Diggers Rest, Oxford, Rock bank, Toolern Vale and the rapidly developing suburbs of Hillside, Burnside, Burnside Heights, Taylors Hill and Caroline Springs.

The Shire has a population of about 91,000 - projected to rise to 143,710 by the year 2017. Melton Shire is a young community with 75 percent of the Shire's population aged 45 years or under.

The Shire offers an affordable blend of urban and rural living opportunities within its 528 square kilometre boundary. There are planning provisions in place to ensure that the Shire retains this unique character as it grows to become a major regional centre within the next two decades.

Future growth

Under the Melbourne 2030 strategy, the Victorian Government approved Toolern, a new development area south of Melton Township, as one of Victoria's major new growth centres within the Urban Growth Boundary. Toolern will be an entirely new community and home to up to 100,000 people over the next 20 years.

There will be a mix of residential, employment, office and industrial areas, as well as major retail and commercial activity centres and linked transport networks. Space will also be afforded for a

range of equine industries. Sustainable urban design and infrastructure principles will be at the forefront of the process, with areas for native vegetation, open space for active and passive leisure pursuits, along with community and social infrastructure.

Location

Melton is the geographic hub of a region that extends from Geelong through to Werribee, Ballarat, Bacchus Marsh, Sunbury, Tullamarine Airport, over to the Hume Highway. Its location provides great access to Melbourne's central business district, Melbourne International Airport, the Ports of Melbourne and Geelong, in addition to national road and railway networks. The Deer Park Bypass is also set for completion in 2009 and will further enhance major roadways.

1.5 DOMESTIC ANIMAL STATISTICS AND DATA

Key Statistics based on the 2007/08 year

Estimated Dog Population:	19,558
Estimated Cat Population:	8,477

Other matters	Melton Shire	Like Councils (av.)
No. of EFT Authorised Officers (Animal Control)	5	5.4
Hours training per officer annually	36	42
No. of Registered Dogs	14550	18060
No. of Registered Cats	4386	6880
No. of Registered Declared Dogs	44	N/A
No. of Prosecutions completed annually	0	28
No. of Successful Prosecutions	N/A	28
No. of impoundments (dogs)	1,302	774
% of impounded dogs returned to owner	46	55
% of dogs rehoused	23.7	20
% of dogs euthanized	30.3	25
No. of impoundments (cats)	578	301
% of cats returned to owner	0.5	8
% of cats rehoused	2.3	12
% of cats euthanized	97.2	80
No. animal complaints per year	1,325	1333
No. animal complaints per officer	265	247

1.6 ANIMAL MANAGEMENT STAFFING AND OPERATIONAL STRUCTURE

Animal Management functions at Melton Shire are conducted by the Local Laws Unit, which has responsibility for most of Council's compliance functions. The organisational relationship is shown below.

Council
 Chief Executive Officer
 General Manager Corporate Services
 Administration Manager
 Local Laws Co-ordinator
 5 X Local Laws Officers
 1 X Community Safety Officer
 1 X Administration Officer

1.7 CURRENT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES – SERVICE LEVELS

Program/Service	Service Level
Identification and Registration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Website ▪ Press Releases ▪ Prompt reactive enforcement ▪ Mandatory registration of animals prior to release from pound
Identification and Registration- doorknock campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Annual Registration Renewal Doorknock
Domestic animal complaints (including dangerous dog complaints)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Immediate threat to health – within 1 hour ▪ All other matters – contact complainant within 24 hours and action within 2 working days
Routine street patrols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regularly undertaken however more accurate reporting systems are required
Pound Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 7 Days a week excluding public holidays
Micro-chipping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Micro Chipping held at appropriate Council events which was on three occasions in 2007
After Hours Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Respond to wandering stock, injured animals and dog attacks

Cat Cages

- Provide cat cages to residents to assist in containing cats at large on their properties

Domestic Animal Business Inspections

- Conducted annually

Dangerous, Restricted Dog inspections

- Conducted annually
- Industrial areas also patrolled regularly to identify unregistered Dangerous Dogs

Other Programs, services, strategies

- Range of educational material developed and available, including:
 - Barking Dog Booklet
 - Fact Sheets
 - Brochures
 - Website

2.0 KEY ISSUES FOR THE SHIRE OF MELTON

2.1 EDUCATION

The objectives of the responsible pet ownerships is to ensure and encourage new and prospective pet owners to:

- consider the responsibilities of pet ownership before obtaining a pet; select a breed that is appropriate to their lifestyle and home environment;
- consider obtaining a pet from Council's dog adoption programme, the Lost Dogs' Home or the RSPCA;
- identify and register their pets;
- vaccinate their pet;
- desex their pet;
- socialise their pet around other humans and animals;
- undertake appropriate obedience training;
- provide an appropriate home environment;
- confine their pet to their property; and
- exercise their dog.

Education is now integral to animal management. However to be successful, education programs need to be carefully designed and targeted. Council considers that the focus of the education program should be targeted at prospective and new pet owners.

The Department of Animal Welfare operates education programs and activities on a statewide basis however it is proposed that Council build on these programs and develop its own education programs to reflect local priorities and to include local animal businesses, veterinarians and sales outlets.

Council staff presently visit schools on a regular basis in conjunction with the Responsible Pet School Program to provide instruction in dog behaviour. Council procedures for dealing with dog attacks and menacing dog complaints have proven to be effective.

2.2 DESEXING DOGS AND CATS

All dogs and cats unless specifically exempt under the Act are not required to be desexed unless they are a restricted breed dog. The state government has introduced legislation that Councils may by Order require all dogs and cats in the municipality to be desexed other than those exempt. Numerous animal welfare organisations (11 in total) and the Humane Society for Animal Welfare have formed the Cat Crisis Coalition Group to address the problem and have written and contacted Councils and key stakeholders to support the introduction of compulsory desexing of dogs and cats. Local survey results show that the majority of the community support the compulsory desexing of dogs and cats.

The State Government in recognition of these facts has amended the Domestic (Feral and Nuisance) Animals Act 1994 Section 10A to provide for Council if it so chooses, to make a resolution that after a specified date it would not register or renew the registration of a dog or cat unless the dog or cat has been desexed or is exempted under the Act from any requirement to be desexed.

There are specific exemptions for cats and dogs used as part of a registered domestic animal breeding establishment or if the owner is a current member and the animal is registered with an Applicable Organisation ie: Victorian Canine Association, Feline Control Council (Victoria), a working dog or a particular animal on medical grounds.

2.3 CAT MANAGEMENT – FERAL AND SEMI OWNED CATS

Cats that are wandering at large annoy neighbours and may be harmed by cars and other cats. If they are not desexed, cats can also contribute to the population of stray and feral cats. Cat owners need to be encouraged to be responsible pet owners rather than semi owners who feed their cats but take no further responsibility for the cat. This practice escalates overpopulation of cats and cats becoming feral. A strong education focus of the DAMP will be to encourage people to desex, identify and confine their cats. The education program will provide a foundation for the possible future introduction of cat controls. The Department of Animal Welfare will introduce education programs and activities on a state wide basis to deal with feral and semi owned cats during the next twelve months. It is Council's intention to build on these programs and develop local education programs and target local situations.

2.4 DOG ATTACKS

This is a critical Animal Management role. It is generally thought that dog attacks occur predominantly in and around the family home. All dog owners should be encouraged to confine their dogs to their property unless they are under effective control and to take their dog to a recognised obedience training school.

This introduces basic training which helps the owner to understand his or her responsibilities and importantly helps with socialisation of the dog and minimizes aggressive tendencies. Residents should be reminded that every dog has the capacity to bite. Children should be supervised around dogs at all times. Dog owners should be made aware of the potential implications for their dog if it bites.

All school children in the municipality can receive instruction in how to behave around dogs through the Bureau of Animal Welfare Responsible Pet Schools program or the schools contacting Council. This is particularly important for children who don't have any experience with dogs.

2.5 CONFINEMENT OF CATS AND THE PREVENTION OF DOGS WANDERING AT LARGE

Dogs that wander at large contribute to a significant proportion of dog management problems and essentially the majority of dog attacks are the result of inadequate confinement. Council has procedures for dealing with complaints about dogs wandering at large. Dog owners are encouraged to maintain fencing. Design guidelines for pet-friendly housing and fencing are available and promoted by Council to promote confinement. Cats that wander are a potential nuisance to others and potentially contribute to the pool of unwanted litters. Council has established procedures for dealing with complaints about cats. The existing cat trap procedures are based on current best practice principals. However, it is proposed to review these procedures to improve the turn around time for cages and make more effective use of the cat traps.

Cat Confinement

The Domestic Animals Act makes provision for councils to issue orders confining cats to their owners' properties at all times. The provision is flexible enough to also allow confinement to be time limited eg 'cats must be confined to their owner's property between the hours of sunset and sunrise each day.'

Since the provision became available, a number of councils have implemented such orders. So far as is known, there has not been any formal research undertaken to determine the impact of these orders. Anecdotal advice from councils contacted indicates that there has been some improvement in owner responsibility, in the small number of cases where unconfined cats have been able to be matched with owners. This advice also indicates however that most councils believe these orders are very difficult to enforce. This is because it's very difficult to capture wandering cats, particularly since most reported wandering occurs at night.

Given the lack of evidence to indicate that cat confinement leads to improved outcomes and the practical difficulties associated with its enforcement, it is not proposed to further consider this matter, at this time.

2.6 MICROCHIPPING CATS AND DOGS

Council has the ability by resolution to introduce an Order requiring all dogs and cats in the municipality to be retrospectively microchipped other than those registered after the 1 May 2007 who must be microchipped prior to registration.

The State Government has amended the Domestic (Feral and Nuisance) Animals Act 1994 Section 10D to provide for Council if it so chooses, to exempt a class of dog or cat from any requirement to be implanted with a prescribed permanent identification device (microchip) for the purposes of the renewal of registration unless the dog or cat was exempted under the Act from any requirement to be implanted with a microchip.

All dogs and cats unless specifically exempt must be microchipped. Local survey results show that the majority of the community support the compulsory retrospective microchipping of all dogs and cats. Legislation requires all new dogs and cats being registered for the first time to be microchipped.

2.7 COMMUNITY SAFETY

There needs to be a balance between the rights of animal owners and the rights and safety of others. Many incidents of attacking, rushing, barking and menacing are not reported. Some adults and children are afraid of dogs; others are not sure if a dog is friendly or not, while others wish to be free of interference from other people's dogs. Community safety is a paramount consideration in the operation of this plan.

Community Education

In the community forums, the issue of education was raised on a number of occasions. Community members suggested that education needs to happen at a range of levels, including at schools, face-to-face and via other mediums such as mailouts, newspaper articles etc.

Council's current range of animal management services does not provide any specific benefits for elderly or disabled members of our community. Matters that Council should consider include:

- establishment of some dog off-leash areas in parks, that better cater for people with disabilities;
- establishing a volunteer service to assist elderly/disabled people with the care of their animals eg exercise, visits to the vet etc.;
- establishing a Pets as Therapy program – pets are taken to elderly citizens centres, aged care homes etc, to interact with people who can no longer care for animals full-time.

All of these suggestions are considered as worthwhile. Some of them are already available in other locations. It is proposed that an action item for this plan will be to further research these concepts with a view to implementing them, wherever practicable.

2.8 BARKING DOGS

Barking dog complaints have increased in recent years with the rising incidence of pets being left alone during the day, increases in housing density and declining levels of tolerance generally. Excessive barking is caused by but not limited to:

- Separation anxiety
- Boredom
- External stimuli (e.g. passers by, other dogs barking, cats)
- Territorialism (visitors to the property)
- Communication

Often the owner is not at home to hear or stop excessive barking. Council has procedures for dealing with barking dog complaints including a checklist and flow chart of procedures to follow and forms officers use to complete the investigations. It is considered that the procedures are effective in dealing with this issue. New procedures and equipment will be investigated and introduced when available.

2.9 DOG TRAINING

As part of being a responsible pet owner puppy socialisation and dog obedience training should be encouraged and promoted through local obedience training schools.

2.10 REGISTRATION AND IDENTIFICATION

Low registration rates

The rate of registration in Melton Shire is much lower than for like Councils across the State. In the case of dogs, Melton's rate is approximately 31% lower than the average, whilst for cats it's approximately 46% lower.

Experience throughout Victoria has shown that higher levels of registration generally lead to higher levels of overall compliance with animal management requirements. For example, as shown in the benchmarking statistics on page 4, councils with higher registration rates generally experience lower levels of complaint about animals.

Generally, registered animals are returned to their owners quicker and therefore the process becomes more cost effective. This is because officers can instantly identify the animal from its tag/microchip and then contact the owner to arrange immediate return. Being able to return animals in this way saves costs for both the council and the owner. Council is constantly seeking ways to increase the ratio of dogs and cats that are registered to the number that are not registered and comply with State Government legislation. To increase registrations and identification of animals Council proposes to:

- promote the benefits of animal registration;
- establish procedures for domestic animal businesses to notify Council of any animals sold or given away as required by Section 13 of the Domestic (Feral and Nuisance) Animals Act 1994;
- continue the annual animal audit by door knocking all premises in the municipality;
- examine the introduction of an annual Pet Expo in the municipality; and
- review the current animal registration fees to encourage registrations

When state government created the Domestic Animals Act, they recognised that the cost to councils of providing animal management services would significantly increase. They therefore created registration fees as a means of ensuring that the costs could be recovered from the principal users of these services – pet owners. Allowing the current low rates of registration to continue therefore deprives the community of the funds reasonably required to provide the level of animal management services expected.

Responses received from Councils feedback strongly advocated that more should be done to ensure animals are registered, so that the cost of providing additional services can be offset.

2.11 ANIMAL WELFARE

The number of animals impounded every year remains high. Many are returned or re-homed but many also need to be put down. The number of animals impounded is a function of:

- unwanted litters;
- lost animals (unidentified and/or unregistered animals that cannot be returned to their owners);
- relinquished and/or unclaimed animals; and
- the ability to confine pets to their property.

The number of animals put down each year is extremely high as a result of a very low reclaimed or rehoused rate for cats in particular. The reasons for this are:

- pets being unable to be returned to their owners;

- pets being unable to be re-homed with new owners (this in turn is a function of the number of people willing to adopt an animal from a shelter and the temperament and ability of the animal to be re-homed);
- Overpopulation.

Council believes responsible pet ownership is fundamental to animal welfare as a dog or cat is a pet for life.

Low rates of re-housing of unclaimed animals

46% of dogs impounded by Melton are returned to their owners. Of the remaining 54%, 23.7% are re-housed and the balance are euthanized. Across the State, the average number of animals returned to owners is 55%, with 20% being re-housed and 25% being euthanized. In analysing these figures, it can be seen that Melton is performing quite well in terms of re-uniting owners with their dogs, however slightly below the average in terms of re-housing abandoned dogs. It is therefore seen as necessary that Council further research the reasons for this, with a view to increasing re-homing rates if possible.

With cats, the situation is far more dire. Only 0.5% of cats impounded in Melton are returned to owners, compared to the average of 8%. Only 2.3% are re-housed, compared to the average of 12%. 97.2% of impounded cats are euthanized, compared to 80% across other like councils. This is clearly an unacceptable outcome, which this plan will seek to redress.

High rates of cat impoundment/high rates of cat euthanasia

The number of cats impounded per year in Melton Shire is approximately 60% higher than the average. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this could be linked to the lower than average rates of registration. Information provided by Council's Local Laws Officers indicates that approximately 80% of cats impounded are feral and therefore have never been owned. Feral cats are also generally unsuitable for re-housing and must therefore be euthanized, so this is seen as a contributing factor to the higher than average rates of euthanasia.

Approximately 20% (116) of the cats impounded are kittens, which are generally collected in groups of 2-8 (litters). Anecdotal evidence from Local Laws Officers indicates that most of these litters come from owned/semi owned parents.

Information received from the three major animal welfare agencies in Victoria also indicates that across the State, more cats are being produced annually, than could reasonably be expected to be housed. This analysis and advice therefore suggests that a major problem in Melton Shire is with owned or semi owned animals producing unwanted litters. These unwanted litters, coupled with low registration rates, are seen as the major contributor to cat over-population in the municipality. This appears to be consistent with the experience being reported by most other urban municipal councils across Australia.

Improving registration rates and increasing desexing rates are seen as key issues in decreasing the number of cats being produced, only to face near certain euthanasia. Community feedback, supported by local vets, also indicates that more work needs to be done in educating the people about responsible cat ownership.

2.12 PROMOTION OF "DOGS OFF LEASH" AREAS

It is proposed as an outcome of developing the plan for Council to adopt a requirement for all dogs to be on a leash at all times in public places. It will be difficult for some residents to easily accept this proposal but this only highlights the need to continually promote and advertise designated off leash areas and encourage responsible pet ownership in any off leash areas that will be developed concurrently with this proposed new Local Law.

Management of dog off-leash areas eg patrol frequency, signage, facilities etc

Community feed back was very strong in requesting more and clearer signage in parks, to develop clear on/off leash areas. This matter has also been raised by councillors on several occasions, based on feedback they've received directly from the community.

There was also clear feedback that residents would like to see Local Laws Officers more often in the parks and off-leash areas. The feedback also indicated that residents would like to see equipment in parks that dispense bags/devices for picking up dog droppings.

Establishing off-leash areas, with a particular emphasis on parks that can be easily accessed by older residents or those with disabilities, was also strongly supported.

Experience all across Victoria has shown that off-leash areas are generally well supported by residents and that they do not lead to increases in the incidence of attack/rush or animal escape.

3.0 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT

This section sets out Council's strategic response to each of the matters detailed in the Act as mandatory elements.

New programs and initiatives set out in this section will be funded from increased registration revenue. That revenue will be raised in the first instance by a doorknock program to be conducted covering predominantly the residential areas of the municipality. On the basis of success achieved by this Council previously, it is estimated that in the first year, this exercise will generate additional income in the order of \$80,000.

3.1 PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND EVALUATION PROCESS

The annual targets for this plan will be set out in the business unit plan for Local Laws Unit and other relevant Council departments. They will be reported against at fixed intervals, as set out in each Key Performance Indicator (KPI) shown below. Targets and KPIs will also be reflected in the individual performance plans of relevant staff.

3.1.1 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs)

The following key performance indicators have been developed based on research undertaken at the local, state and national levels. Although some targets may seem low they will, if achieved, meet industry best practice standards by the third year of the plan. It is not seen as practical to set targets higher than current best practice, given the socio-economic circumstances existing in Melton Shire.

KPIs: (indicative)	Target	Current
1. Dog Registration rate: (% Dogs registered/estimated dog population*)	+30%	14,550
2. Cat Registration rate: (% cats registered/estimated cat population**)	+30%	4,386
3. Enforcement Success Rate: (% successful prosecutions/total prosecutions)	100%	100%
4. Dog Complaints: (Number of dog complaints per 1,000 population)	7.48	11.22
5. Cat Complaints: (Number of cat complaints per 1,000 population)	2.33	3.50

6. Dog Attacks: (Number of dog attacks causing injury per 1,000 population)	0.41	0.62
7. Dog Rehousing Rate: (% total dogs rehoused/total dogs impounded)	40%	23.7%
8. Cat Rehousing Rate: (% total cats rehoused/total cats impounded)	10%	2.3%
9. Cat Reclaim Rate: (% total cats reclaimed/total cats impounded)	10%	0.5%
10. Cat Euthanasia Rate: (% total cats euthanased / total cats impounded)	80%	97%
11. Declared dog Compliance Rates:		
(Number declared/number complaint/number of audits)	100%	100%
12. Domestic Animal Business Compliance Rates:	100%	100%
(Number registered/Number compliant/Number of audits)		

3.2 AMO TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Objective:

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

Current/Ongoing Activities:

- All staff required to hold minimum Certificate IV in Municipal Enforcement
- Staff encouraged and supported to attain higher level qualifications eg Diploma in Animal Management
- Staff encouraged and facilitated to attend all in-service days provided by relevant industry bodies
- Staff representative on all relevant industry committees

Additional Planned Initiatives:

- 3.2.1 All staff qualified to minimum Certificate IV in Animal Management.
- 3.2.2 All staff required to be qualified to insert Microchips.

3.3 ENCOURAGING RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERSHIP –

Objective:

To encourage people to manage pets in a way that protects the health and welfare of the animal, maximises the companion benefits of their pet and minimises potential for nuisance or harm to others.

Current/Ongoing Activities:

The current education activities and programs Melton Shire Council offers, aimed at promoting responsible pet ownership include:

- Animal adoption program;
- Barking Dog Booklet;
- Activities at local festivals, events;
- Micro-chipping Day; and

- Website.

Planned Programs and Initiatives:

- 3.3.1 Review and upgrade Council website, to provide more interactive educational experiences for site visitors
- 3.3.2 Include a full range of printed educational materials in customer service centre displays
- 3.3.3 Provide regular audio visual messages for customers via various mediums including display monitors in Customer Service Centres and 'Caller On Hold' messages.
- 3.3.4 Conduct regular displays in public areas eg shopping centres/strips, community festivals.
- 3.3.5 Expand activities at Micro-chipping days, to provide more responsible ownership education.
- 3.3.6 Investigate and where practicable, implement programs that assist elderly/disabled residents to maintain pet ownership, or access to 'Pets as Therapy'.

3.4 IDENTIFICATION AND REGISTRATION

Objective:

To maximise the number of registered and identifiable domestic animals.

Current/Ongoing Activities:

- Website;
- Press Releases;
- Prompt reactive enforcement;
- Mandatory registration of animals prior to release from pound;
- Annual Registration Renewal Doorknock;
- Free registration offered to animals less than 3 mths of age (1st year only); and
- Participate in the State Government's Pet Registration Incentive Scheme.

Planned Programs and Initiatives:

- 3.4.1 Introduce mandatory micro-chipping of all registered animals, via a subsidised scheme, over a two year period commencing 1 July 2010.
- 3.4.2 Continue the annual doorknock of municipality but to all households, to identify all unregistered animals, commencing in 2010.
- 3.4.3 Seek agreements with local vets, pet stores and animal shelters for such facilities to act as Council registration agents.

3.5 COMPLIANCE WITH LEGISLATION AND ORDERS

Objective:

To maximise compliance with domestic animal laws, orders and regulations (State and Local).

Current/Ongoing Activities:

The following local laws are also in place:

- Keep/allow to be kept more than two dogs/cats without permit
- Keep/allow to be kept on land of area less than 0.4 hectare without permit an animal that is not a dog/cat,

- Keep/allow to be kept on land less than 0.4 hectare without a permit more than 5 domestic birds
- Keep/allow to be kept on land less than 0.4 hectare without a permit more than 12 Poultry hens
- Keep/allow to be kept on land less than 0.4 hectare without a permit any poultry rooster
- Keep/allow to be kept on land without a permit more than 20 birds
- Keep/allow to be kept on land without a permit more than 20 budgerigars, canaries, finches
- Keep/allow to be kept on land racing pigeons
- Keep/allow to be kept on land less than 2 hectares without a permit keeping any bees
- Keep/allow to be kept on land without a permit 2 rodents and/or 3 reptiles
- Keep/allow to be kept on land less than 0.4 hectare without a permit more than 5 domestic birds
- Conditions around the keeping of any animals on any land
- Fail to keep animal/bird in confined area and maintained in clean/sanitary condition
- Power around the impounding of animals
- Fail to carry means of collection and disposal of animal's excrement
- Fail to immediately collect and dispose of animal excrement
- Fail to produce to Authorised Officer any means of collection and disposal

Planned Programs and Initiatives:

3.5.1 Review Local laws to ensure plan objectives are met.

3.5.2 Review Local Laws and Orders, with a view to

- implementing dogs being on a leash at all times;
- providing for designated off-leash areas; and,
- improving access for elderly/disabled residents.

3.6 DOMESTIC ANIMAL BUSINESSES

Melton Shire currently has 6 registered Domestic Animal Businesses(DABs).

Objective:

To work in partnership with domestic animal businesses, to achieve Council's domestic animal management goals.

Current/Ongoing Activities:

- Annual Inspection program.

Planned Programs and Initiatives:

3.6.1 Seek agreements with DABs to act as Council registration agents.

3.6.2 Establish 'information kiosks' in relevant DABs, to provide information on responsible pet ownership either provided by Council or other means.

3.6.3 Conduct annual Council/DAB Workshop in relation to responsible pet ownership and compliance with relevant Codes of Practice.

3.6.4 Lobby state government for the introduction of a legislative requirement that all animals sold by DABs must be desexed prior to sale, unless exempted by S.10A or 10B of The Act.

3.7 DECLARED DOGS

Objective:

To minimise the risks of dog attack to the community from menacing, dangerous or restricted breed dogs.

Current/Ongoing Activities:

Melton Shire currently has 44 declared dangerous dogs and no menacing dogs.

None of the declared dangerous dogs are kept on industrial/premises as guard dogs. Such animals automatically qualify for dangerous declaration, even though they may never have attacked or injured another animal or a person but that is not a factor in this instance.

Programs/activities aimed at minimising the risk to the broader community from declared dangerous, restricted breed and menacing dogs include:

- Established policy and guidelines for staff to follow;
- Ensure all dogs declared by Council are recorded on the Victorian Declared Dog Registry
- Annual inspections of all premises housing declared dogs; and
- Regular pro-active patrols of industrial areas, to identify new sites housing dangerous (guard) dogs.

The level of compliance with declared dog legislation within Melton Shire is seen as very high. On that basis, it not seen as necessary at this time to introduce any new activities in relation to them. Declared dog requirements will however continue to be featured in educational material developed or circulated by Council.

3.8 PROGRAM FUNDING

As indicated earlier, registration rates in Melton Shire are lower when compared to like municipalities. Raising registration rates is therefore a key focus for this plan, with a target being to increase these rates to at least industry averages, over the plan's three year cycle.

Additional doorknocking of the whole municipality throughout the year, coupled with increased community education and the annual doorknocking to check registration renewal is expected to result in significant increases in the number of registered animals. It follows that there will also be a significant increase in revenue from registration fees.

The chart below shows budgeted income and expenditure for 2008/2009 without the plan being in place, as well as estimations for the following three years, when the plan will be in the implementation phase. The estimated increases are based on current registration fees and population estimates, coupled with the increased numbers of registrations arising out of the annual doorknocking and education/awareness campaigns. Across the life of the plan it is estimated that a nett revenue surplus of approximately \$124,750 could be achieved.

Year	Total Registrations	Total income	Ave cost of animal registration	\$ improvement over previous year
2008-2009	18950	473,750	\$25.00	N/A
2009-2010	19000	570,000	\$30.00	96,250
2010-2011	19950	598,500	\$30.00	28,500

It is proposed to review and increase fees to reflect the fees charged in neighbouring and comparable Councils. It is proposed that the fee increase will be 20%.

On the basis of these estimates, it is not seen as necessary at this time, to consider any other avenues for funding of the new initiatives. This approach is also seen as the most equitable for our community because the additional revenue will come from existing pet owners who are simply failing to comply with legislation, without placing any further burden on those registered owners who are currently 'doing the right thing'. The registration fees have not increased in the last three years and while neighbouring and comparable Council's have increased fees to reflect the costs borne in operating such a service, Council has chosen to provide some relief to animal owners by not increasing fees but it has come at the cost of the service not being self-funding.

3.9 REVIEW CYCLE/DATE FOR THIS PLAN

Any new initiatives or ongoing programs identified in this plan will be recorded and reported against in accordance with the KPIs shown in Section 3.1. Outcomes will be fed into Council's annual report, as required by Section 68A (3) (c) of the Act.

At the end of each business planning cycle (currently financial year) the Administration Manager will also provide a summary report to Council as part of the Council Plan reporting process outlining progress in achievement of the plan's targets and objectives. A full review of the plan will be conducted every three years.

3.10 ACTION PLANS

The activities and initiatives set out above will be delivered through action plans implemented each year, as set out in **Appendix A**. In some cases, activities and initiatives will become ongoing across the life of the plan whilst in others, they will have finite lives, aimed at achieving specific objectives.

Action plans will be reviewed each year, as part of Council's business planning activity. As indicated previously, they will also be incorporated into the business plans of the relevant council departments, to ensure that they are acted upon and reported against as required.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: ACTION PLANS

OBJECTIVE 3.2 AMO TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Objective:

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

PROGRAM/ SERVICE OBJECTIVE:	ACTIONS	BY WHOM	BY WHEN	RESOURCES REQUIRED
Staff encouraged and supported to attain higher level qualifications eg Diploma in Animal Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify appropriate courses/programs ▪ Discuss options with team members ▪ Provide support through Council Study Assistance Program 	Local Laws Co-ordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ June each year ▪ During performance review, June each year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nil ▪ Funding via Study Assistance program
Staff encouraged and facilitated to attend all in-service days provided by relevant industry bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Attend Bureau of Animal Welfare Regional Training Seminar ▪ Identify potential training providers for manual handling of animals ▪ All Local Laws Officers to attend manual handling of animals training 	Local Laws team Local Laws Co-ordinator Local Laws Co-ordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As available May 09 June 09 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nil ▪ Course to be sourced via Org Dev staff ▪ External provider,
Staff representative on all relevant industry committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Seek to have greater involvement on Domestic Animal Management Committee (DAMIC) 	Local Laws Co-ordinator	ongoing	Nil
All staff required to hold minimum Certificate IV in Animal Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conduct skills audit of existing staff ▪ Seek provider to deliver 'top-up' training for staff ▪ Modify existing role statement to reflect requirement ▪ Seek scholarship/s to cover cost of training ▪ Schedule training 	Local Laws Co-ordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> March 09 June 09 March 09 June 09 September 09 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ External provider, training budget, scholarship funding
All staff required to be qualified to insert Microchips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Seek provider to deliver training for staff ▪ Modify existing role statement to reflect requirement ▪ Schedule training 	Local Laws Co-ordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May 09 June 09 October 09 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ External provider, training budget ▪ Nil ▪ External provider, training budget,

3.3 ENCOURAGING RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERSHIP --

Objective:

To encourage people to manage pets in a way that protects the health and welfare of the animal and minimises potential for nuisance or harm to others.

New Programs and Initiatives:

PROGRAM/ SERVICE OBJECTIVE:	ACTIONS	BY WHOM	BY WHEN	RESOURCES REQUIRED
3.3.1 Review and upgrade Council website, to provide more interactive educational experiences for site visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify key messages ▪ Develop content brief ▪ Engage designer ▪ Develop new pages ▪ Test content format with a focus group ▪ Review/modify if required ▪ Launch new format and content 	Local Laws Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ September 09 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Nil at present
3.3.2 Include a full range of printed educational materials in customer service centre displays	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Source range of brochures from existing suppliers eg Bureau of Animal Welfare, Council materials ▪ Negotiate size and location of displays with Customer Services Co-ordinator ▪ Monitor displays to ensure adequate stock and relevance of material, re-stock/replace as required. 	Local Laws Team	June 09	Existing materials to be sourced (at no cost) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Display unit if required (estimated at \$1,000) ▪ Recurrent costs for stock estimated at \$2,000 PA.
3.3.3 Provide regular audio visual messages for customers via various mediums including display monitors in Customer Service Centres and 'Caller On Hold' messages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify key messages ▪ Develop content brief ▪ Source existing materials from relevant bodies eg Bureau of Animal Welfare, other welfare agencies etc. ▪ Develop Melton Shire specific messages as required ▪ Establish annual program, targeting key times of year eg registration renewal, cat breeding season etc ▪ Implement program 	Local Laws Team In conjunction with Communications team	November 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Nil

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PROGRAM/ SERVICE OBJECTIVE:	ACTIONS	BY WHOM	BY WHEN	RESOURCES REQUIRED
<p>3.3.4 Conduct regular displays in public areas eg shopping centres/strips, community festivals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify key messages ▪ Source materials from relevant bodies eg Bureau of Animal Welfare, other welfare agencies etc. ▪ Develop Melton Shire specific messages as required ▪ Establish annual program, targeting key locations and times of year eg registration renewal, cat breeding season etc ▪ Implement program ▪ Review key messages and resources 	<p>Local Laws team</p>	<p>March 2009 and review Quarterly</p>	<p>Nil</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Estimated cost of purchasing/developing resources and display equipment \$2,000 ▪ Increase in overtime budget estimated at \$2,000 per annum.
<p>3.3.5 Expand activities at Micro-chipping days, to provide more responsible ownership education.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Seek provider to deliver training for staff ▪ Implement expanded micro-chipping program of activities ▪ Schedule training 	<p>Local Laws Co-ordinator</p>	<p>February 08</p>	<p>Nil</p>

3.4 IDENTIFICATION AND REGISTRATION

Objective:

To maximise the number of registered and identifiable domestic animals.

Planned Programs and Initiatives:

PROGRAM/ SERVICE OBJECTIVE:	ACTIONS	BY WHOM	BY WHEN	RESOURCES REQUIRED
3.4.1 develop relevant and appropriate animal publication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify key messages ▪ Develop content brief ▪ Send to designer ▪ Review and approve design ▪ Send to printers ▪ Distribute with registration renewal notices. ▪ Add copies to displays in customer service centres and place on website 	Local laws team	March/April 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Nil at present but depending on outcomes there may be a financial impact
3.4.2 Annual Registration Renewal Doorknock	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify registrations not renewed by 24 April each year ▪ Send renewal reminder to owners ▪ Update unpaid list ▪ Schedule doorknock, allocate staff ▪ Conduct doorknock ▪ Submit report on doorknock outcomes. 	Local Laws Co-ordinator	June/July annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Included in current budget annually, no additional costs identified.
3.4.4 Introduce mandatory micro-chipping of all registered animals, via a subsidised scheme, over a two year period commencing 1 July 2009.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify number of registered animals in Melton not currently microchipped ▪ Establish a subsidy program, based on numbers and costs. ▪ Contact owners of registered animals and advise of requirement to Microchip and date required. ▪ Plan, organise and deliver Microchipping days at least quarterly, commencing July 2009. ▪ Commence follow up program with owners. 	Local Laws Co-ordinator	February 09 April 09 July 09 Ongoing from July 2009 July 10	Nil Nil <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of mail out and community education estimated at \$5,000 • Officer overtime costs approx. \$1600 per annum Nil

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PROGRAM/ SERVICE OBJECTIVE:	ACTIONS	BY WHOM	BY WHEN	RESOURCES REQUIRED
3.4.6 Seek agreements with local vets, pet stores and animal shelters for such facilities to act as Council registration agents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish a standard agreement format ▪ Contact relevant businesses and agencies to initiate agreements ▪ Implement agreements ▪ Monitor and review ▪ Report outcomes 	Local Laws Co-ordinator	<p>March 09 June 09</p> <p>June-December 09 Ongoing Ongoing</p>	Legal advice on form of agreements estimated at \$2,000.
3.4.7 Include regular registration reminders into appropriate Council publications.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Add as regular item to plan 	Local Laws Co-ordinator	January 09 and ongoing	Nil

3.5 COMPLIANCE WITH LEGISLATION AND ORDERS

Objective:

To maximise compliance with domestic animal laws, orders and regulations (State and Local).

Planned Programs and Initiatives:

PROGRAM/ SERVICE OBJECTIVE:	ACTIONS	BY WHOM	BY WHEN	RESOURCES REQUIRED
3.5.1 Review Local laws and current orders, to ensure plan objectives are met.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft resolution for Council to implement compulsory micro-chipping in accordance with legislation, effective 1 July 2009. • Draft resolution for Council to implement compulsory de-sexing, in accordance with legislation, commencing 1 July 2010. • Conduct community consultation on resolutions • Seek legal opinion on proposed resolutions • Submit proposals to Council for adoption • Advertise resolutions in Govt Gazette • Implement resolutions in accordance with plan • Conduct review of local laws against plan activities, report outcomes • If required, draft local law amendments • Conduct community consultation on proposed changes • Seek legal opinion on proposed changes • Submit proposal to Council for adoption • Advertise amendments in Govt Gazette • Introduce amendments. 	Administration Manager	<p>October 08</p> <p>October 08</p> <p>November 08</p> <p>November 08</p> <p>February 09 March 09 July 09 – ongoing</p> <p>May 08</p> <p>October 08 November 08</p> <p>October 08 November 08 November 08 January 09</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget for legal advice, advertising and implementation estimated at \$6,000.
3.5.2 Review Dog on Leash areas and Orders, with a view to increasing the number of off-leash areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review open space within Melton Shire, to identify additional; sites suitable for dog off-leash areas, with a focus in sites that will be suitable for disabled users • Provide a report for Council on suitable sites and establishment costs • Seek community feedback on proposed sites • Introduce new sites through community awareness campaign. 	Local Laws Coordinator and Leisure Services Team	<p>Jan-June 09</p> <p>July 09</p> <p>August 09</p> <p>Sept-Nov 09</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget for community consultation, infrastructure in new areas and community education campaign, estimated at \$20,000.

3.6 DOMESTIC ANIMAL BUSINESSES

CGD currently has 6 registered Domestic Animal Businesses(DABs).

Objective:

To work in partnership with domestic animal businesses, to achieve Council's domestic animal management goals.

Planned Programs and Initiatives:

PROGRAM/ SERVICE OBJECTIVE:	ACTIONS	BY WHOM	BY WHEN	RESOURCES REQUIRED
3.6.1 Annual Inspection program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule program in annual business plans 	Local Laws Officer for pound services	February annually	Nil
3.6.2 Establish 'information kiosks' in relevant DABs, to provide information on responsible pet ownership.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Source range of brochures from existing suppliers eg Bureau of Animal Welfare, Council materials ▪ Negotiate size and location of displays with DAB proprietors ▪ Source appropriate display units ▪ Install displays ▪ Monitor displays to ensure adequate stock and relevance of material, re-stock/replace as required. 	Local Laws Team	December 2009	Existing materials to be sourced (at no cost) Display unit costs and Re-stocking will be assessed on a case by case basis
3.6.3 Investigate the need to conduct annual Council/DAB Workshop in relation to responsible pet ownership and compliance with relevant Codes of Practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Include into annual business plan. 	Local Laws Co-ordinator	August 2009	Nil

PROGRAM/ SERVICE OBJECTIVE:	ACTIONS	BY WHOM	BY WHEN	RESOURCES REQUIRED
3.6.4 Lobby state government for the introduction of a legislative requirement that all animals sold by DABs must be desexed prior to sale, unless exempted by S.10A or 10B of The Act.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lobby through existing agencies eg MAV, LGPRO ▪ Support other LGs and agencies in lobbying 	Local Laws Co-ordinator	Ongoing	Nil

3.7 DECLARED DOGS

Objective:

To minimise the risks of dog attack to the community from menacing, dangerous or restricted breed dogs.

Current/Ongoing Activities:

PROGRAM/ SERVICE OBJECTIVE:	ACTIONS	BY WHOM	BY WHEN	RESOURCES REQUIRED
3.7.1 Annual inspections of all premises housing declared dogs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Include into annual business plan. ▪ Report outcomes 	Local Laws Co-ordinator	June/July annually	Annual follow up program costs \$55,000