Procedure 4.04.5 Companion Animal Management Plan

Directorate
Community, Environment & Planning

Responsible Officer
Manager | Certification & Compliance

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Introduction

This plan has been developed to work towards the long term aspirations of the community as identified in the Community Strategic Plan – Bega Valley 2030.

The plan documents Council’s responsibility under the Companion Animals Act 1998 and Regulations.

The plan recognises the importance of dogs and cats in the social fabric of our communities.

The overall aim of the plan is to provide a structure within which residents and visitors to the Bega Valley can enjoy the benefits of companion animals, whilst protecting against problems caused by aggressive, nuisance or uncontrolled animals. This structure is built within the framework provided by the Companion Animals Act and Regulations.

Context

Bega Valley Shire is a large coastal shire of 6,080 square kilometres. It has a population of approximately 33,000 people and manages 1,850 hectares of public land. There are 270 parks, open spaces and reserves within the Shire. As at 1 January 2014 there were 12,265 dogs and 2,114 cats identified in the Bega Valley Shire. Of these 8,915 dogs and 1,211 cats were lifetime registered.

This plan is developed under the terms of Council’s Companion Animal Management Policy 3.06. It is intended that the plan is read in conjunction with the following documents.

- Bega Valley Shire Council documents:
  - Companion Animal Re-homing procedure
  - Companion Animal Feral and Infant Animal Management procedure
  - Companion Animal Facility Cleaning procedure
  - Companion Animal Regulation – Personal Information procedure
  - Companion Animal Guide Book– (including) dog control areas.

- Division of Local Government Guideline on the Exercise of Functions under the Companion Animals Act – October 2012. This Guideline provides information about the use of the NSW Companion Animals Register and the exercise of enforcement functions under the Act and Regulation.

Council shall ensure that all staff accessing the Register or dealing with companion animal issues are familiar with these Guidelines and use them in conjunction with the above Policies and procedures.
Terms used for the purpose of this document

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Act</td>
<td>Companion Animals Act 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulations</td>
<td>Companion Animal Regulations 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal</td>
<td>a dog or a cat (Companion Animal)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Companion Animal</td>
<td>a dog or a cat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identified</td>
<td>Animal with a microchip implanted and the owner details recorded on the New South Wales Companion Animal Register.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Registered</td>
<td>Animal with a microchip implanted and the owner details recorded on the New South Wales Companion Animal Register and a lifetime registration fee has been paid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dangerous dog</td>
<td>A dog which has been declared dangerous by the Court or by Council under the terms of the Act.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Menacing dog</td>
<td>A dog which has been declared menacing by the Court or by Council under the terms of the Act.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restricted dog</td>
<td>A dog which has been declared restricted by Council or is restricted by virtue of it being a restricted breed under the Act.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seized</td>
<td>When an animal is lawfully captured by a Council Ranger or member of the public.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Surrendered</td>
<td>An animal handed in to Council Rangers by the owner when the owner wishes to relinquish ownership to Council.</td>
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The Act and Regulation provide the legislative framework for enforcement and for the responsibilities of Council, owners and others in charge of companion animals. Council has a general duty to promote awareness of the requirements of the Act with respect ownership of companion animals. Council shall also take steps to ensure that it is notified or otherwise made aware of the existence of all Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted dogs, including dogs that might be considered to be the subject of a declaration, that are ordinarily kept within the Shire.

The "Pound"

Council operates a Companion Animal Facility (Pound) at Wallagoot to receive and care for cats and dogs.

New South Wales Companion Animal Register

Council manages the New South Wales Companion Animal Register in respect to dogs and cats, including dangerous, menacing, restricted, nuisance and missing animals in the Bega Valley Shire.

Enforcement

Council employs Rangers whose duties include the investigation of offences, seizure and release of dogs and cats, and the patrol of public areas to encourage compliance with the Act and Regulations.

Education

Council has published a Companion Animals Guide book which is available free of charge at Council Offices and Veterinary Clinics, Pet Shops and Tourist Information locations or by post on request. Councils’ web page also has a copy of the Companion Animals Guide book.

Policies

Council has adopted a number of procedures to fulfil Council’s community and legislative obligations.

This Management Plan addresses the following key areas to ensure that Council’s companion management activities and responsibilities are proactively conducted and resourced. This Management Plan will also be used to inform future Operational Plan activities.

- Companion Animal Facility
- Identification and Registration & the NSW Register
- Community Education
- Enforcement
- Capital works

## Companion Animal facility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Priorities</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maximise the number of animals returned to owners and rehomed and minimise the duration of stay at the facility.</td>
<td>Liaise with animal welfare organisations to:</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitate the rehoming of suitable animals under the terms of Councils rehoming procedure 3.06.1c, and</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Care for infant animals under Section 64 of the Act where Council is unable to provide suitable care.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Release seized animals to owners prior to being taken to the pound where possible. (Handling fee charged on account).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Recover fees incurred by animal owners by debt recovery process where animals are not claimed and an owner can be identified</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reduce the occurrence of unclaimed animals at the facility.</td>
<td>Release seized animals to owners and recovering pound fees by issuing an account to:</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Facilitate the release without being delayed by financial considerations,</td>
<td>Fortnightly</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Encourage owners to claim animals by removing the need to have cash at the time of release.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Publish photographs of unclaimed dogs and cats kept at the pound by appropriate media (such as Council's website, Facebook).</td>
<td>Quarterly</td>
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<td>Promote the wearing of name tags by dogs.</td>
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<td>Review the accounting processes with respect companion animal management to ensure that:</td>
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<td>Acceptable levels of payment of fees is received, and</td>
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<td>Particular classes of animals received are not over represented in the debt recovery processes.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Maximise the health and welfare outcomes for animals held at the facility</td>
<td>Employ suitably qualified animal carers to care for animals and maintain the facility</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Operate a Companion Animal facility (Pound) to receive and care for cats and dogs using “best practice”.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Independently review (via RSPCA or similar) operations at the Pound.</td>
<td>Annually</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategies</td>
<td>Actions</td>
<td>Priorities</td>
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<td>Prepare and maintain an Emergency Management Plan for the Companion Management facility.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Immediate &amp; ongoing</td>
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| Increase the number and percentage of companion animals registered (compared with identified only animals) in the Bega Valley Shire. | Issue reminder letters to owners of animals identified but not registered.  
Follow up on reminder letters with enforcement where appropriate to ensure compliance.  
Facilitate ease of payment with the introduction of payment of lifetime registration by EFTPOS and Credit Card.  
Mail out to persons who have submitted multiple identification forms, change of owner forms and a reminder notice to ensure the new owner details are forwarded to Council when the pups or kittens are sold or given away.  
Expand the Credit Card payment option to include telephone payment for persons without easy access to Council’s office at Bega | Ongoing |
| Increase the accuracy of the NSW Companion Animal Register.               | Include with Council’s rates letters, notices reminding animal owners to notify Council if animals die, change hands or any contact or address details change.  
Attend and scan for microchip details, deceased animals in public places.  
Ensure all requests for amendments to ownership data held on the Companion Animals Register are completed within seven (7) days. | Immediate      |
| Manage dog attacks, Dangerous Dogs, Menacing Dogs and Restricted breeds.  | Ensure all dog attack reports are entered on the NSW Companion Animal Register within 72 hours of notification of the event.  
Declarations of Dangerous or Menacing Dogs are made in instances where it is established that an unprovoked dog attack or unreasonable aggression has occurred. Compliance inspections are conducted within 48 hours of declarations being made.  
Premises where declared dangerous or menacing dogs are kept are inspected at least bi-annually and that premises where restricted breeds are ordinarily kept are inspected at least bi-annually. | Immediate and ongoing |
## Community Education

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<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Priorities</th>
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| Actively promote the benefits of pet ownership including companion animals.| Make available the Companion Animals Guide book which is available free of charge at Council Offices and Veterinary Clinics, Pet Shops and Tourist Information locations or by post on request.  
Enclose a copy of the Companion Animals Guide with all certificates of identification and registration mailed out to companion animal owners.  
Review the Companion Animal Guide in 2014 2015 including a comprehensive community and agency consultation. | Immediate & Ongoing                      |
| Actively communicate to residents and visitors of the Shire the obligations of companion animal ownership. | Make available the Companion Animals Guide book which is available free of charge at Council Offices and Veterinary Clinics, Pet Shops and Tourist Information locations or by post on request.  
Update Council’s web based information regarding companion animal management and ownership on a bi-annual basis.  
Proactively involve staff in Community Animal Activity Events and take up relevant opportunities to promote responsible companion animal ownership.  
Proactively develop companion animal media packages, including regular Media Releases and social media publications including:  
- The benefits of owning a cat or dog,  
- the potential impact companion animals have on our environment,  
- the introduction of EFTPOS and Credit Card payments for lifetime registration,  
- the benefits of notifying Council of address and contact number changes,  
- the need to notify Council of a change of owner, encouraging the reporting of “free to good home” advertisements,  
- promoting the micro-chipping of all companion animals, and  
- encouraging the de-sexing of animals at an early age.  
Develop and issue a how to “Barking Dog” and / or “Nuisance / straying Cat” community information package for issue to all customers with nuisance companion animal / barking dog concerns. | Immediate & ongoing  
Ongoing  
Ongoing  
Ongoing  
Immediate & ongoing |
| Promote the responsible management of companion animals so that there is no adverse effect on native wildlife and biodiversity. | In partnership with NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), erect and maintain comprehensive interpretative signs at identified locations where endangered species of birds are threatened by animal activity.  
Provide a visible presence at shorebird breeding sites to support NPWS and the Shorebird Recovery Team volunteers.  
Continue the “Where is your cat now?” promotion to encourage cat owners to enclose their cats at all times.  
In the review of animal control areas in 2014/2015, promote the expansion of “Wildlife Protection Zones” to protect ecological | Seasonal & ongoing  
Seasonal  
Ongoing  
4th quarter 2014/15 |
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<td>communities in close proximity to urban areas. Maximise the protection of our estuaries and sensitive ecological communities by maintaining dog tidy bag dispensers at suitable locations to encourage the removal of animal faeces from public land.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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</table>
## Enforcement

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| Ensure that residents and visitors are not made unsafe or insecure in any public area due to the presence of a companion animal. | Conduct high visibility patrols of public areas to encourage compliance with the Act and Regulations - including prohibited areas, wildlife protection areas and leash free areas. Maintain a visible presence at shorebird breeding sites to support National Parks NSW and the Shorebird Recovery Team volunteers. Where information indicates irresponsible animal ownership is adversely affecting others or the environment:  
  - Conduct targeted high visibility and/or covert patrols during business hours,  
  - Conduct targeted patrols outside of business hours including weekends,  
  - Conduct additional weekend / public holiday patrols during holiday seasons. Investigate and fully document reports of offences being committed against the Act or the Regulations. Issue caution notices, penalty notices, court attendance notices where offences have been committed as appropriate to the circumstances. | Ongoing             |
| Ensure that residents and visitors are confident about their own security when dangerous, menacing or restricted dogs are being kept nearby. | Conduct a quarterly search of the Companion Animal Register for any dangerous, menacing or restricted dogs which have relocated to the Bega Valley. Initiate “restricted dog” proceedings under the Act where the presence of a dog of a breed listed in the Act as restricted is discovered. Initiate “dangerous dog” or “menacing dog” proceedings under the Act where circumstances justify such an action. | Quarterly, Ongoing  |
| Ensure that residents and visitors have equity of access to all public areas irrespective of companion animal ownership. | Monitor use of leash free areas to ensure safe and equitable access to all. Ensure signage at prohibited, wildlife protection and leash free areas is clear and maintained. Seize dogs found at large in public places. Collect or receive stray companion animals lawfully seized by members of the public. | Ongoing             |
| Ensure that the presence of companion animals does not degrade the environment and that any companion animal activities are environmentally sustainable. | Regularly patrol public places in regard the removal of dog faeces and prosecute offenders where appropriate. | Ongoing             |
Capital Works

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<tr>
<td>Ensure that the companion animal built assets, equipment and property are correctly maintained and upgraded or replaced in a timely manner to ensure maximum efficiency within budgetary restraints.</td>
<td>Complete a detailed asset management plan to determine maintenance, upgrade and replacement options for the buildings. Build the Companion Animal Facility Reserve fund to ensure that adequate funding for capital works is available. Investigate the feasibility of sustainability actions such as energy use reduction, solar hot water and the harvesting storm water at the Companion Animal facility for use in irrigation of lawn and landscaped areas. Review use of storage garage at Cattery Building. Maintain companion animal control area signage and dog tidy bag dispensers in good order and audit all signage and dispensers during the 2014 2015 review of Council’s Companion Animals Guide.</td>
<td>2nd quarter 2014/15 Ongoing Immediate &amp; ongoing Immediate Ongoing</td>
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Review and Evaluation

This Companion Animal Management Plan will be initially reviewed in conjunction with the Companion Animals Guide and the control areas review and then each five years thereafter.

Contact details

For further details about this plan or Council’s activities in relation to Companion Animal Management please contact:

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