



**COOTAMUNDRA-  
GUNDAGAI** REGIONAL  
COUNCIL

# COMPANION ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN



COOTAMUNDRA-GUNDAGAI REGIONAL COUNCIL  
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## Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	2
1 - STATEMENT AND OBJECTIVES .....	3
1.1 STATEMENT.....	3
1.2 OBJECTIVES .....	3
2 - ANIMAL MATTERS.....	4
2.1 MICROCHIPPING AND REGISTRATION .....	4
2.2 IMPOUNDING.....	5
2.3 ANIMAL WELFARE AND RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERSHIP .....	5
3 - COMMUNITY MATTERS .....	6
3.1 PUBLIC SAFETY .....	6
3.2 ENFORCEMENT AND EDUCATION.....	9
4 – ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS .....	10
4.1 NOISE POLLUTION.....	10
4.2 WATER AND FAECES POLLUTION.....	11
4.3 IMPACTS ON BIODIVERSITY.....	11
5 – MONITORING AND REVIEW .....	12
ANNEXURE – 1 - OFF LEASH AREAS.....	12

## INTRODUCTION

The Companion Animal Management Plan provides the framework for the provision of an effective animal management service and procedural Functions under the Companion Animals Act 1998(the Act).

The Act and the Companion Animals Regulation is the legislation that gives effect to the way local authorities manage dogs and cats. The principle object of the Act is to provide for the effective and responsible care and management of companion animals.

The term Companion Animal refers to all dogs and cats and any other animal that is prescribed by the regulations as a companion animal.

The main items relevant to the Companion Animal Management Plan are to:

1. acknowledge general duties and responsibilities for the management of domestic dogs and cat animal issues in the CGRC area
2. ensure that Council meets its responsibilities under the Companion Animals Act 1998 and Companion Animal Regulation 2008
3. achieve a balance between the needs of pet owners and non-pet owners
4. provide pet owners with support, education, regulation and facilities to accommodate their pets within the broader community and environment

# 1 - STATEMENT AND OBJECTIVES

## 1.1 STATEMENT

To balance community amenity, animal welfare and environmental preservation while promoting the benefits of responsible pet ownership alongside effective companion animal management.

## 1.2 OBJECTIVES

Our main objectives include:

1. Encouraging residents and visitors to properly care for all dogs and cats
2. Encouraging dog and cat animal owners to provide appropriate physical and mental challenges for their animals, to improve animal welfare without affecting the comfort of others
3. Encouraging the permanent microchip identification and lifetime registration of all dogs and cats
4. Identify and prioritise dog and cat management issues particularly in managing dangerous dogs, restricted breeds and nuisance dog and cat behaviour
5. Educating the community about the rights and responsibilities of dog and cat ownership
6. Maintaining best practice animal care and facilities and minimise the number of unwanted animals that are euthanased
7. Providing adequate off leash areas for dog exercise throughout the CGRC region that are as safe as possible for dogs and humans (refer to Annexure 1 'Off Leash Areas')

The statement and objectives of the Plan are detailed under four key performance areas:

1. Animal matters
2. Community matters
3. Environmental matters
4. Monitoring and review

## 2 - ANIMAL MATTERS

### 2.1 MICROCHIPPING AND REGISTRATION

Microchipping and registration is required by law and enables the return of stray animals to their owner.

The NSW Companion Animals Act 1998 (Sections 8-9) require owners to:

- Have their cats and dogs microchipped from 12 weeks of age or at the time in which they are sold or given away prior to 12 weeks of age:
- Register their cats and dogs on the NSW Companion Animals Register by 6 months of age, or upon sale of the cat or dog (if sold prior to 12 weeks of age); and
- Advise the Council or the Pet Registry when there is a change in either the registration or identification information for the animal, if the animal has been missing for more than 72 hours and also if found after the missing notification or the animal has died.

The NSW Pet Registry is an online database of microchipped and registered cats and dogs in NSW. All existing cats and dogs that have previously been contained within the Companion Animals Register are available via the Pet Registry.

The Pet Registry enables owners to:

- Update their contact details such as a change of address
- Transfer ownership
- Report pets as missing or deceased; and
- Pay most lifetime registration fees online

#### Benefits

- Lost pets can be identified and reunited with their owner reducing stress on lost pets.
- Faster reunion with pet owners and reduces the likelihood of extended confinement in the pound facility and associated costs of collection, kennelling, impounding and possible destruction of pets
- Ownership of pets can be legally established in the event where liability has been incurred as a result of animal behaviour
- Allows an opportunity for Council to educate and/or take enforcement action where necessary.

#### Goals

- Encourage microchipping and lifetime registration of dogs and cats in the CGRC area
- To improve rehoming rates for lost and stray dogs and cats.

## 2.2 IMPOUNDING

The CGRC Animal Care Facility is managed by Council and is located on the corner of Turners Lane and Muttama Road, Cootamundra and an Animal Holding Facility is located at Council's Works Depot in Short Street, Gundagai.

Where an animal has identification such as microchipped and registered, every effort is made to return the animal to the owner. This requires that the place of residence is current and has suitable containment for the animal.

In circumstances where the owner of an animal cannot be located or is unknown the dog or cat will be transported to the Animal Care Facility for collection by the owner within the prescribed time limits.

The Act provides that identified animals can be held for a minimum of 14 days and unidentified animals for 7 days.

CGRC Fees and Charges may apply for accommodation, sustenance, registration, microchipping and veterinary costs if required, upon collection of the animal. At the expiration of the prescribed periods the unclaimed animal may be rehomed.

### Goals

- Facilitate the prompt return of seized animals to their owners and reduce the number of animals that need to be impounded
- Maintain and broaden links with professional bodies, animal welfare agencies, approved 16D organisations, AWL/RSPCA/Police/Vets, to promptly manage incidents, health issues and increase rehoming opportunities
- Minimise the number of animal's euthanased

## 2.3 ANIMAL WELFARE AND RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERSHIP

The health and social benefits of owning pets are well understood. With pet ownership comes a responsibility to manage the welfare of animals. Every owner has an obligation to take reasonable care of their animals and to prevent any adverse impacts on the community from improper or negligent control.

Problems can be addressed by:

- Attending to pet health and welfare including exercise, training and socialising as appropriate to the breed of animal
- Confining dogs within the perimeter of the home to prevent straying
- Minimising any adverse effects toward neighbours, such as excessive barking
- Complying with relevant legislation (leash laws, removal of faeces from public places, maintaining dogs under effective control).

## 3 - COMMUNITY MATTERS

Conflict between people and dogs and cats does occur, particularly when there is close proximity to neighbouring dwellings. Issues include barking dogs, roaming cats/dogs, cat/dog faeces exposure, number of animals per household and serious issues such as dog attacks.

### 3.1 PUBLIC SAFETY

People should be able to move freely throughout the public areas without loss of amenity due to dogs and cats not being under effective control and furthermore that dog owners have access to safe off leash and on leash exercise areas for their pets. Cats and dogs are important companions to their owners and the rights of owners to enter public places with their pets needs to be protected. It is equally important that general rights to enjoy community and open spaces, free of dog and cat nuisances, are enforced.

It is essential that owners keep their pets under effective control when they exercise their rights to enter the public domain and immediately pick up and appropriately dispose of faeces.

#### Dog attacks

Offences relating to dog attacks are broadly defined under the Act. An offence occurs if a dog rushes at, bites, harasses or chases any person or animal (other than vermin), whether or not any injury is caused.

It is not an offence if the dog is provoked by teasing, is being mistreated or attacked, or as a result of the person or animal trespassing on the property on which the dog was being kept, or as a result of the dog acting in reasonable defence of a person or property.

Victim and witness statements received by Council on alleged dog attacks will be assessed on their individual merits to determine the nature of any enforcement action.

All confirmed dog attacks will be reported to the Office of Local Government. Significant penalties apply to the owners of a dog that is involved in serious attacks.

#### Dangerous and menacing dogs

The Act (Part 5) includes provisions that impose stringent controls on dogs that pose a threat to the safety of humans and other animals through attacks or menacing behaviours. Restricted dog breeds are defined in the Act and are required to comply with special conditions.

Education programs can also assist such as:

- Appropriate pet selection. Problems can be avoided by selecting the type of animal, breed and sex to suit the owner's lifestyle and circumstances
- Basic health and welfare principles. Regular exercise, proper nutrition, water and shelter are crucial to the maintenance of animal health. Health care practices, such as worming and vet check-ups, must be maintained
- Permanent identification (microchipping) and registration
- Desexing, which has the capacity to reduce several unwanted animal behaviours, such as: unwanted litters; roaming by male animals; territorial aggression and noise complaints.
- Obedience training, which can allow for better control over your animal, a better understanding of your pet, develop a stronger bond, provide a rewarding and challenging environment.

#### Secure confinement and environmental enrichment

Confining an animal reduces its risk of serious harm or death by misadventure. In addition, while this practice must be followed, there is the consideration of combating the boredom and frustrations that animals may feel while their owner is absent.

Environmental enrichment is the inclusion of cognitive, dietary, physical, sensory and social stimuli to relieve boredom and frustration. If an animal is kept busy, it is less frustrated, less reactive and less of a potential nuisance (barking and roaming).

#### Socialisation and training

Early socialisation of animals is important to allow exposure to different stimuli in the local environment (children/elderly people, other animals, noises, and movement). Dog training is encouraged to ensure that owners have control of their pet in public and private places.

#### Goals

- To improve community awareness of the importance of safety around animals
- To encourage further education regarding responsible pet ownership.
- Improve community awareness of the value of microchipping and registration
- To promote the desexing of animals
- To encourage animal owners to provide mental and physical challenges for their animals improving the welfare of their animals and reducing negative impacts on the community.



## Dog Exercise Areas

There are a number of locations where the Act (sections 14, 30) prohibits cats and dogs including:

- In or within 10 metres of a children's play areas
- Food preparation or consumption areas (unless it is in a public thoroughfare such as a road, footpath or pathway)
- Recreation and public bathing areas where dogs are declared to be prohibited
- School grounds and child care centres (unless with the permission of the person controlling the school/centre)
- Shopping areas (unless secured in a vehicle, with the permission of the person controlling the place or going to or from a vet or pet shop)
- Wildlife protection areas

Dogs and cats are prohibited in all National Parks, and from some recreational areas such as sporting fields or other public places.

Council is required to provide at least one leash free area, however, people using these facilities must have control of their animals. Currently there is a range of off leash dog areas within the CGRC Local Government Area. (see Annexure 1)

## Goals

- To promote and provide opportunities for dogs to socialise with other dogs and humans
- Increase exercise opportunities for the benefit and health of dogs and dog owners.
- Increase the awareness of dog training and keeping dogs under effective control
- To monitor dangerous dogs and restricted dogs throughout the CGRC area.

## 3.2 ENFORCEMENT AND EDUCATION

Council has an active role to ensure animal owners comply with the Act. Resources are prioritised by severity, especially in cases of public safety e.g. aggressive dog behaviour and dog attacks.

Council relies heavily on voluntary compliance and responsible animal ownership. In addition, community education is also important and covers aspects such as:

- Public safety, dog attacks, dangerous dogs and restricted breeds
- Barking dogs
- Choosing a pet
- Responsible pet ownership
- Desexing your pet
- Microchipping and registration
- Early socialisation and regular obedience training
- Environmental enrichment and protection.

### Goals

- To promote the responsibilities of being a dog or cat owner
- To promote and enforce appropriate usage of dog off leash areas and responsible pet ownership
- To maintain links with professional animal industries and to organise activities
- To simplify and improve signage

## 4 – ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

Animals can create adverse impacts on the environment in a number of ways such as noise, pollution, water and faecal pollution and impacts on native fauna.

Education of dog and cat owners to understand the potential negative impacts of their animals will help the owner manage their animal's activities to minimise their impact on the surrounding environment.

### 4.1 NOISE POLLUTION

The predominant form of noise pollution is from barking dogs. While all dogs bark, it is those that bark excessively that require management. Barking dogs account for a large percentage of complaints received by the Council.

Barking dogs are a significant community problem and as a dog owner you are responsible to ensure your dog does not create a nuisance by barking. However, an animal barking may be due to: territorial behaviour, boredom, separation anxiety, illness, visual stimuli or teasing.

The noise of cats fighting during the night is reported less frequently but it is still a cause of noise pollution. Confining cats inside their residence at night to prevent cat fights, noise, roaming and hunting is recommended.

#### Goals

- To educate the community in an endeavour to reduce incidents of nuisance barking
- To raise awareness of the strategies to reduce dog and cat noise pollution
- To address community dog and cat noise complaints

## 4.2 WATER AND FAECES POLLUTION

Companion animal faeces are a significant environmental and public health issue. The pollution of backyards, footpaths, parks, reserves and beaches by animal faeces and the resulting pollution of waterways are of concern.

The failure of animal owners to properly dispose of their animal faeces is an offence and on the spot fines may be issued.

### Goals

- Educating and enforce pet owners to clean up after their pets and to dispose of the waste appropriately
- Raise animal owners' awareness of the health and amenity issues of uncollected animal faeces
- Encourage the use of dog poo bags and use of bag dispensers and waste bins

## 4.3 IMPACTS ON BIODIVERSITY

CGRC is renowned for its natural environment and an array of wildlife. Various species of threatened and endangered flora and fauna have been identified. It is vital that animal management strategies be implemented to assist with protection of endangered species.

Cats in particular are very efficient hunters. The impacts of dogs and cats on our natural areas also go beyond direct predation on native animals.

### Goals

- Encourage cat confinement
- Educate owners about the advantage of their animals wearing collars with bells

## 5 – MONITORING AND REVIEW

Ongoing monitoring and review of animal management is required. This will ensure strategies and focus will remain relevant, sustainable and in-line with statutory obligations and community expectations.

### Goals

- To analyse statistics to indicate performance and consider alternative or future strategies
- To seek feedback, via customer service surveys, from customers and animal owners
- To network with other local government areas and animal welfare organisations.

## ANNEXURE – 1 - OFF LEASH AREAS

### General arrangements

- In the absence of any regulatory advisory sign to the contrary, animals must be under effective control in all designated exercise areas.
- Animals must be under effective control and leashed while in a public place



# Cootamundra Off Leash Areas and Waste Stations

