

Horsham Rural City Council  
Domestic Animal Management Plan  
2022-2026

If you would like to receive this publication in another format, please contact reception at the Civic Centre Municipal Office on telephone (03) 5382 9777 or email [council@hrcc.vic.gov.au](mailto:council@hrcc.vic.gov.au).

If you require an interpreter service, please contact the Translating and Interpreter Service (TIS National) on 131450 and ask them to contact Horsham Rural city Council Reception on telephone (03) 5382 9777. Our business hours are 8:30am to 5:00pm Monday to Friday.

Horsham Rural City Council recognised the five Traditional Owner groups of this land and water where we work and connect: the Wotjobaluk, Wergaia, Jupagulk, Jaadwa and Jadawadjali people and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

Horsham Rural City Council  
Civic Centre Municipal Office  
18 Roberts Avenue  
Horsham VIC, 3402

PO Box 511  
Horsham VIC, 3402

Phone: (03) 5382 9777  
Facsimile: (03) 5382 1111  
Email: [council@hrcc.vic.gov.au](mailto:council@hrcc.vic.gov.au)  
Website: [www.hrcc.vic.gov.au](http://www.hrcc.vic.gov.au)

## Mayor's message

To be completed once phase two community consultation undertaken.

Cr Robyn Gulline

Mayor

Horsham Rural City Council

## What is a Domestic Animal Management Plan?

Every Victorian local government must, under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, prepare a plan outlining how it will manage dogs and cats within its municipal boundaries. Other domestic animals are exempt from the plan.

The format and content of the Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) is set by the State Government in order to ensure consistency across the state of Victoria. As set by the state Government a DAMP must include:

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Training of authorised officers                             | Registration and identification                               |
| Programs to promote and encourage responsible pet ownership | Programs to address over-population and high euthanasia rates |
| Domestic animal nuisances                                   | Dog attacks   |
| Dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs               | Domestic animal business                                      |
| Other matters important to the community                    | Annual review and reporting of action and impact              |

The plan identifies how the council will:

- Support and facilitate the benefits that animal ownership and companionship has on the health and wellbeing of residents
- Educate residents about accepted standards of animal welfare, including the care, feeding and physical wellbeing of domestic animals
- Manage nuisance complaints about animals, which are impacting on other residents
- Ensure that the keeping of domestic animals does not compromise accepted standards of public health and safety.

## Animals covered under the Domestic Animal Management Plan?

The DAMP has been developed to cover the requirements associated with cats and dogs and as required with the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*.

## Our vision

The Horsham Rural City Council (HRCC) encourages an environment of responsible domestic animal ownership, where people and animals can coexist in harmony. Animals are part of a safe and liveable community. HRCC strives to implement effective animal management practices that balance the needs of animal owners and non-animal owners, the agricultural sector and the environment.

## Guiding principles

- HRCC has a leadership role in animal management and coordination
- Pets contribute to our quality of life
- The need of pet owners needs to be balanced with the broader needs of the community
- Responsible pet ownership is valued
- Animal management and education should be proactive
- The best outcomes are when we all work together
- The environment and local wildlife must be protected from the negative impacts of cats and dogs

## How do we currently manage animals?

As well as registration and identification of dogs and cats, our central functions are to:

- Enforcement of registration requirements
- Investigation of nuisance animal complaints
- Investigation of dog attacks and dangerous/ menacing dog complaints
- Dogs wandering at large
- Declared dog property inspections
- Cat de-sexing program
- Domestic animal business inspections
- Collection of stray and lost animals
- Pound services
- Excess animal permit renewals and inspections
- Cat trapping
- Customer service
- After hours emergency service for animals
- Promotion of responsible pet ownership

What are the roles and responsibilities of local authorities and service providers?

|                  | Local Government Authority   | Pound Service(s)   | Rehoming Services   |
|------------------|--|--|---|
| Who              | Horsham Rural City Council   | Horsham Rural City Council   | Horsham PAWs<br>Phoenix Animal Rescue Horsham<br>CatNap Kitten Rescue   |
| Responsibilities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage pet registration</li> <li>• Develop dog control orders in areas not under land management authority</li> <li>• Adopt, monitor and enforce dog control orders in all areas</li> <li>• Promote responsible pet ownership</li> <li>• Conduct animal investigations</li> <li>• Provide advice about the management of domestic animals</li> <li>• Manage contract for pound service</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• House and care for impounded animals</li> <li>• Provide veterinary care for impounded animals</li> <li>• Microchip and register animals prior to their release</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Horsham PAWS: Since forming in April 2010, Horsham PAWS has partnered with Council in establishing a successful re-housing program at the local pound. In 2011, Council entered into a formal agreement with Horsham PAWS to enable fostering of cats and dogs awaiting adoption.</li> <li>• Phoenix Animal Rescue Horsham: PARH commenced operating in October 2018 and is committed to rescuing, caring for, rehabilitating and transporting lost, abandoned and surrendered companion animals and prepare them for rehoming</li> <li>• CatNap established in March 2021 is committed to taking in cats and kittens from Horsham Rural City Council pound, as well as some direct surrenders. CatNap rehabilitates (when needed), cares for and attends to all veterinary work so that all felines are rehomed desexed, vaccinated, flea and worm treated and microchipped.</li> </ul> |

## The broader context

There is a wealth of scientific evidence to support the benefits of owning pets for physical and emotional wellbeing. A range of different studies has demonstrated evidence of a link between pet ownership and better health. Dogs encourage people to enjoy the outdoors and they have been shown to stimulate conversations between strangers. They can also improve a person's sense of security both at home and in public places.

Pets make a wonderful companion and can help combat loneliness and social isolation. Pet ownership teaches children responsibility, whilst helping them to develop their social and nurturing skills.

While the Council has the responsibility of administering the relevant legislation, it recognises the need to promote responsible pet ownership, provide supportive programs and meet the community expectations. This plan is the base for Council to provide high quality animal services and programs now and into the future.

As already stated animal management is guided by a combination of legislation, local orders, policies and local laws.

### **Victorian legislation**

- Domestic Animals Act 1994 and associated codes of practice
- Domestic Animals Amendment (Restricted Breeds) Act 2017
- Domestic Animals Amendment (Puppy Farms and Pet Shops) Act 2017
- Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986

### **Victorian guidelines and standards**

- Code of practice for the Management of Animals in Shelters and Pounds
- Code of Practice for the Operation of Pet Shops
- Code of Practice for the Operation of Breeding and Rearing Establishments
- Code of Practice for the Operation of Boarding Establishments
- Code of Practice for the Operation of Dog Training Establishments; and
- Code of Practice for the Operation of Greyhound Establishments

### **Horsham Rural City Council Policies and Local Laws**

- Community Local Law 2021 <https://www.hrcc.vic.gov.au/Our-Council/Local-Laws>
- Orders of Council
  - An order of Council was passed at a Council Meeting on 12 December 1995, and revisited on 16 May 2006, restricting cats to the owner's premises between sunset and sunrise <https://www.hrcc.vic.gov.au/Residents/Pets-and-animals/Pet-ownership#section-3>
  - On a 4 April 2016 Council meeting a resolution was passed "That Council retain the no dog status of the Botanic Gardens noting that guide dogs and assistance dogs are an exception to this, and are allowed in the Botanic Gardens".

### Link to other Council plans

- This plan is consistent with the Horsham Rural City Council Strategic Plan 2021-2025 <https://www.hrcc.vic.gov.au/Our-Council/About-Us/Council-Plan>
- This plan is linked to the Municipal Emergency Management Plan [https://www.hrcc.vic.gov.au/files/assets/public/document-resources/emergency-management/documents/hrcc\\_memp\\_version\\_1.1\\_december\\_2015\\_1.pdf](https://www.hrcc.vic.gov.au/files/assets/public/document-resources/emergency-management/documents/hrcc_memp_version_1.1_december_2015_1.pdf)
- This plan is linked to the Animal Emergency Management Sub-Plan [Recfind: 17/02178,](#)



Wimmera EAWS  
Sub-plan Signed Co



## Overview

Animals are identified in the following three ways, they are registered with Council, they are wearing a Council issued tag and they are microchipped. Failing to do any of these three things attracts a fine.

Pet registration is a legal requirement under the Act. Every dog and cat three months of age and over must be registered with Council. Existing registrations must be renewed by 10 April each year.

A proportion of the registration fee goes to Animal Welfare Victoria, Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR). The registration fee gives more than just a lost and found service for pets. It is also funds:

- Facilities such as dog parks, dog poo bins and pounds / shelters
- Animal management to attend to nuisance complaints, investigate dog attacks, patrol parks/beaches/streets, and collect and return stray animals to owners
- Events such as pet expos and discount microchipping days
- Information such as responsible pet ownership publications, websites, and online courses
- Domestic animal business audits (e.g. to check animal welfare standards in pet shops, breeding facilities, boarding kennels etc.)
- Management of dangerous and restricted breed dogs
- Dog bite prevention education programs for kindergarten and primary school children
- Emergency animal welfare preparedness
- Research into a range of dog and cat welfare issues.

## Key facts

Horsham Rural City Council is a vibrant, diverse community situated approximately 300 kilometres northwest of Melbourne and north of the Grampians National Park, in the heart of the Wimmera region of Victoria. Horsham is approximately 3.5 hours by car west of Melbourne and 4.5 hours east of Adelaide.

Horsham Rural City Council has a total population of 19,931 and covers an area of 4,267 km<sup>2</sup>. Over three quarters of residents live in the urban area of Horsham.

Horsham is the major provider of retail, community and government services in the Wimmera, with dryland and broad acre agriculture being the major industry. The Grains Innovation Park, a nationally acclaimed agricultural research centre, is based in Horsham. There are a range of quality educational and health care facilities including secondary colleges, a University and an agricultural college.

The municipality are of Horsham has a diverse array of natural assets including recreational lakes, wetlands, the Wimmera River, Mount Arapiles, the Wartook Valley and the nearby Grampians National Park.

Horsham Rural City Council includes the major centres of Horsham and Natimuk, and the following localities: Arapiles, Blackheath, Brimpaen, Bungalally, Clear Lake, Dadswells Bridge, Dooen, Douglas, Drung, Duchembegarra, Grass Flat, Green Lake, Greenland Dam, Haven, Jilpanger, Jung, Kalkee, Kangulk, Kewell, Laharum, Longerenong, Lower Norton, McKenzie Creek, Mitre, Mockinya, Mount Talbot, Murra Warra, Noradjuha, Nurrabel, Pimpinio, Quantong, Riversdale, St Helens Plains, Telangatuk East, Tooan, Toolondo, Vectis, Wail, Wartook and Wonwondah.

## Our domestic animals

Domestic animal population – 5,670

No. of registered dogs 1 July 2018 and 30 June 2021 – 11,432

No. of registered cats 1 July 2018 and 30 June 2021 – 5,345

No. of unpaid animal registrations from 1 July 2018 and 30 June 2021 – 336

No. of domestic animal registered business in the area – 4

| No. of domestic animal related complaints received 1 July 2018 and 30 June 2021 |       |
|---|-------|
| Request type  | Total |
| Dog attack/dangerous  | 112   |
| Barking dog   | 240   |
| Dog - Lost and found  | 1277  |
| Dog - General   | 663   |
| Cat - request for cat cage  | 288   |
| Cat - General   | 739   |
| Cat - Lost and found  | 729   |

No. of dog attacks lodged between 1 July 2018 and 30 June 2021 – 112

No. of impounded dogs 1 July 2018 and 30 June 2021 – 1,146

No. of dogs released to owner 1 July 2018 and 30 June 2021 – 845  
No. of dogs rehoused 1 July 2018 and 30 June 2021 – 193  
No. of dogs euthanised 1 July 2018 and 30 June 2021 – 108  
No. of impounded cats 1 July 2018 and 30 June 2021 – 833  
No. of cats rehoused 1 July 2018 and 30 June 2021 – 247  
No. of cats released to owner 1 July 2018 and 30 June 2021 – 131  
No. of cats euthanised 1 July 2018 and 30 June 2021 – 455 (20% feral)

## About this plan

We have developed a new four-year Domestic Animal Management Plan 2022-2026, which sets rules for managing dogs and cats, and help the community play their part as responsible pet owners. The plan will also direct how Council will invest its time and resources, and how we will support the management of domestic animals and the safety and wellbeing of the wider community. We will seek to address the following issues over the next four years of our plan:

Issue 1: Responsible pet ownership

Issue 2: Animal identification and lost animals

Issue 3: Over population and euthanasia rates for cats and dogs

Issue 4: Nuisance cats and dogs

Issue 5: Dogs in public places

Issue 6: Open space needs and dog parks

Issue 7: Dog attacks

Issue 8: Dog poo

Issue 9: Cat de-sexing

Issue 10: Backyard breeding

For each issue, we have provided a summary of:

- **What we currently do to address the issue.**

These actions will be ongoing throughout 2022-2026 periods.

- **A summary of community views about the issue.**

We believe it is important to reflect the views of those who took the time to contribute to our consultation.

We are limited by legislation and resources, so we cannot address every issue raised but have chosen to focus on the issues of greatest relevance and importance to our community.

- **New actions planned for 2022-2026.**

These new actions will be carried out in addition to those we are currently undertaking.

## Consultation

The draft DAMP 2022-2026 has been developed in consultation with the community and key partners. Phase one of the consultation process has seen:

|                                 |                                   |   |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| <b>301</b><br>Surveys completed | <b>46</b><br>Interviews completed | <b>1</b><br>DAMP reference<br>group completed |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|

## Our Plan 2022-2026

### Issue 1: Responsible pet ownership

Owning a pet can be extremely rewarding. They bring unconditional love, companionship and help to reduce stress or anxiety. However, owning a pet also comes with responsibilities.

Our role as a local government is to help people understand what responsible pet ownership means to minimise potential harm to the animal, people, property, other animals and the environment. Helping pet owners choose the right pet for their lifestyle and home is an important first step.

While dogs are great for getting the whole family out to exercise, this also makes them quite high maintenance. Depending on the breed and age of the dog, they may also need a significant amount of training and grooming.

Cats are more independent and content indoors, which makes them a great choice for busy people and families. They are also generally quiet, have long life spans and need minimal house training. However, they must be managed properly or they may cause problems to other cats and native wildlife.

A responsible pet owner is someone who:

- Considers the need of all users of public space
- Prevents their animal/s from causing harm or intimidation to others
- Sees to the welfare and social needs of their animal, including vaccination
- Abides by the dog control orders in public places
- Minimises nuisance to others and the environment
- Has an animal that is desexed, microchipped and registered.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Strategic Aim:</b><br/>To promote and encourage responsible pet ownership.</p> | <p><b>What success looks like:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reduction in dog attacks</li><li>• More dogs registered</li><li>• More cats registered</li><li>• Less unpaid animal registrations</li><li>• Less complaints</li></ul> |
|--|--|

| What we currently do   | Community views   | New action for 2022-26   |
|--|---|--|
| <p>Investigate and enforce legislation</p> <p>Investigate animal cruelty and work with RSPCA</p> <p>Secure funding for programs encouraging registration and identification</p> <p>Provide information to the community on responsible pet ownership, including the need to register and identify domestic cats and dogs</p> <p>Review and benchmark Council’s fees and charges against other Councils and make recommendations for changes if deemed appropriate</p> <p>Mail renewal notices to all previously registered animals with payment by BPay an option</p> <p>Follow up all non-renewals with reminder notices, emails, phone calls &amp; door knocks</p> <p>A responsible pet ownership pamphlet is sent out with annual registration renewals</p> | <p>The rules need to be enforced and applied consistently</p> <p>Some people are concerned about the impact cats have on local birdlife and native animals</p> <p>Community wants more frequent patrols to improve owner compliance with dog orders</p> <p>Some community members believe that where an owner is found to be non-compliant on greater than three occasions owners should have to participate in a mandatory training/ education program</p> <p>Some community members believe animal owners must hold a licence to demonstrate they understand what it means to be a responsible animal owner</p> <p>Many community members believe that if individuals were responsible animal owners that there would be no need for the DAMP</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explore the possibility of increasing resources to better meet community patrolling and enforcement expectations</li> <li>2. Work collaboratively with community to respond to complaints received</li> <li>3. Initiate a registration, micro chipping and de-sexing blitz across the municipality for community members who may not be aware of their obligations</li> <li>4. Where appropriate Council to provide grant writing support for organisations looking to support micro chipping, de-sexing and responsible pet ownership activities</li> <li>5. Council to establish relationships with peak bodies and external stakeholders who can support Councils efforts in domestic animal management</li> <li>6. Council to explore options to establish a key contact officer for all domestic animal management enquiries from the public</li> </ol> |

## Issue 2: Animal identification and lost animals

Dogs and cats are legally required to be registered annually. They also must be microchipped and wear a registration tag when they're not at home. Up-to-date registration and microchipping help us identify pets and return them to their owners as soon as possible.

The cost of registration is set by the Victorian Government, increasing annually in line with inflation. The money is used to help fund responsible pet ownership initiatives.

We're anecdotally aware that pet ownership has increased across our municipality as people spend more time at home, but this increase is not reflected in animal registration data. The number of unpaid registrations has increased. This suggests there are more domestic animals living in the Horsham area that are not currently registered.

When it comes to caring for and returning lost animals, we work with several important stakeholders to do this work. In particular, PARH, CatNap and Horsham PAWS.

We also work to help the community prepare for, and manage, situations that might lead to them losing their pet. As well as providing advice to prepare owners for emergencies, we also support local agencies to help pet owners who find themselves in crisis situations.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Strategic Aim:</b><br/>To maximise domestic dog and cat registration and identification in the municipality.</p> | <p><b>What success looks like:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• More dogs registered</li><li>• More cats registered</li><li>• Less dogs impounded</li><li>• Less cats impounded</li><li>• Increase in animal microchipping</li><li>• Increase in animals released back to owner</li><li>• Decrease in animals euthanised</li></ul> |
|--|---|



| What we currently do  | Community views  | New action for 2022-26  |
|---|--|---|
| <p>Provide information to the community on responsible pet ownership, including the need to register and microchip domestic cats and dogs</p> <p>Issue a lifetime tag for all dogs and cats</p> <p>Secure funding for programs encouraging registration and identification</p> <p>Microchip and register impounded animals prior to releasing to the owner</p> <p>Microchip, desex and register impounded animals prior to releasing for adoption</p> | <p>There are many different views of how lost animals should be managed and who's responsibility it is to detain the lost animal</p> <p>Many community members believe all cats should be de-sexed prior to release back to the owner or prior to re-homing</p> <p>Many community members believe that owner should not incur a fine for the first time their animal is lost</p> <p>Some community members believe that there are high numbers of animals not registered with Council especially during the pandemic</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Council to collaborate with providers of micro chipping services to run special micro chipping days, including discounts and/or incentives</li> <li>2. Council to collaborate with providers of de-sexing services to run special de-sexing days, including discounts and/or incentives</li> <li>3. Provide education to the community on how to safely approach and contain a lost animal</li> <li>4. Explore the possibility of increasing resources to better meet community patrolling and enforcement expectations</li> <li>5. Continue to microchip, register and where appropriate de-sex impounded animals prior to releasing to owner and/or prior to releasing for adoption</li> <li>6. Support use of the communities lost and found page on Facebook</li> </ol> |

### Issue 3: Euthanasia rates for cats and dogs

Horsham Rural City Council reunite registered cats and dogs with their owners where ever possible which has contributed to a steady reduction of dog and cat impounds over the past 4 years which has in turn helped achieve a lower euthanasia rate.

As new registration numbers increase, officers are able to reunite more animals which results in less animals being taken to the pound. The euthanasia rate for cats has remained high over the past four years, and is still much higher in comparison to dogs.

This statistic is due to a large number of cats in the community not being microchipped or registered with Council. If a cat has no microchip, it limits the ability to trace its owner and can lead to euthanasia.

Educating the community on the benefits of microchipping as well as process changes in the use of cat traps can aid in the reduction in euthanasia rates in cats.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>Strategic Aim:</b><br/>To reduce domestic dog and cat euthanasia rates.</p> | <p><b>What success looks like:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in animals released back to owner</li> <li>• Increase in animal microchipping</li> <li>• More dogs registered</li> <li>• More cats registered</li> <li>• Decrease in animals euthanised</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

| What we currently do  | Community views  | New action for 2022-26   |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Provide information to the community on responsible pet ownership, including the need to register and microchip domestic cats and dogs</p> <p>Work with existing and emerging re-homing organisations to reduce euthanasia of animals suitable for re-homing</p> | <p>Some community members were concerned about the high euthanasia rates for cats</p> <p>The importance of micro chipping cats was identified as a priority as cats wearing collars for identification purposes could cause the cat harm</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Council to collaborate with providers of micro chipping services to run special micro chipping days, including discounts and/or incentives</li> <li>2. Council to collaborate with providers of de-sexing services to run special de-sexing days, including discounts and/or incentives</li> </ol> |

Secure funding for best practice programs to reduce euthanasia, particularly in relation to cats

Some community members felt high euthanasia rates in cats was due to poor de-sexing practices

Lack of animal registration across the municipality was seen as a significant contributor towards higher euthanasia rates

- 3. Continue to microchip, register and where appropriate de-sex impounded animals prior to releasing to owner and/or prior to releasing for adoption
- 4. Initiate a registration, micro chipping and de-sexing blitz across the municipality for community members who may not be aware of their obligations
- 5. Where appropriate Council to provide grant writing support for organisations looking to support micro chipping, de-sexing and responsible pet ownership activities

## Issue 4: Nuisance cats and dogs

Council experiences a number of cat and dog nuisance complaints per year. Unless a range of measures are adopted and put into place, nuisance complaints will increase affecting the well-being of the community.

We are required to investigate all complaints regarding trespassing cats and barking dogs. We also deal with a lot of issues related to dogs in public places – for example, escaping dogs and dogs that are not under effective control, or not leashed in on-leash areas.

Our goal in every situation is to work with everyone involved and reach a positive outcome. However, these situations are often very complicated and resolving them can be very difficult.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Strategic Aim:</b><br/>To minimise nuisance created by domestic dogs and cats.</p> | <p><b>What success looks like:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less complaints</li> <li>• Reduction in dog attacks</li> <li>• Less dogs impounded</li> <li>• Less cats impounded</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

| What we currently do   | Community views  | New action for 2022-26   |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Enforce and monitor compliance with the legislation and local law relating to nuisance</p> <p>Loan ‘bark control houses’ and provide advice on reducing nuisance barking</p> <p>Keep the HRCC website up to date with responsible pet ownership information</p> <p>Provide off-leash dog parks to allow dogs to socialised and exercise off-leash</p> | <p>Trespassing cats and barking dogs are the most frequent cause of nuisance</p> <p>Many people believe that the cat curfew should be policed</p> <p>The process of investigating nuisance animals needs to be consistent and improved</p> <p>The community are concerned about the impact that cats are having on birdlife and native animals</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Council to promote the role of the rangers in the community</li> <li>2. Explore the possibility of increasing resources to better meet community patrolling and enforcement expectations</li> <li>3. Council to explore options to establish a key contact officer for all domestic animal management enquiries from the public</li> <li>4. Participate in industry based discussions regarding nuisance cats</li> </ol> |

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Undertake random patrols and enforce on-leash laws and communicate with the owner about responsible pet ownership</p> <p>Work with State Government regarding feral cat management and education opportunities in the HRCC area</p> |  | <p>5. Develop and implement alternative dispute resolution methods for nuisance animals</p> |
|--|--|---|

## Issue 5: Dogs in public places

Dogs must be kept on-leash in all public areas, unless signs indicate otherwise. This is to reduce conflict between dogs and the general community. However, the size of our municipality makes it difficult to enforce.

To give dog owners space to exercise and socialise their animals, there are designated off-leash areas. However, the general community also uses these spaces. Dog owners must follow certain rules – such as having their animal under effective control – if they want to have their dog off leash.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Strategic Aim</b><br/>To provide access to public and open spaces for dogs and their owners, whilst also providing dog free areas for non-animal owners.</p> | <p><b>What success looks like:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction in dog attacks</li> <li>• Less complaints</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

| What we currently do  | Community views   | New action for 2022-26   |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Provide five off-leash dog parks in Horsham to allow dogs opportunities to socialise and exercise off-leash</p> <p>An off-leash parks pamphlet developed for out of towners</p> <p>Provide clear signage and easy reference towards all designated off-leash areas</p> <p>Encourage desexing of dogs to reduce aggressive tendencies and wandering at large</p> <p>Undertake random patrols and enforce on-leash laws and communicate with the owner about responsible pet ownership</p> | <p>Only some dog owners obey the signs about when dogs can be off-leash</p> <p>Some people would like more dog free areas</p> <p>People reported dog signage is well positioned and a sufficient amount of signage</p> <p>Some people would like more dog parks throughout the municipality</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase proactive patrols across a variety of trails, walking tracks and parks in our municipality</li> <li>2. Organise community education and information regarding on and off-leash sites across the municipality</li> <li>3. Advocate for open spaces suitable for dog exercising</li> <li>4. Build better relationships with animal-related businesses and community groups including the dog obedience club</li> <li>5. Develop and promote education programs about the importance of puppy schools and obedience clubs</li> </ol> |

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| Promote the effective confinement and control of dogs via the media |  | 6. Develop and implement school education programs about safely managing domestic animals |
|---|--|---|

## Issue 6: Open space needs and dog parks

Lack of open space to exercise dogs can present a challenge for residents living in higher density areas. This can result in problem behaviors in dogs: frequent escaping, digging, chewing and incessant barking.

In response to the communities request for more off leash spaces, we will produce a Dogs in Public Places Policy, in which grassed, public sporting reserves may be used for off-leash dog recreation when no organised sport (including club training) is taking place.

Dog parks are designed to give dogs a space to exercise and socialise under the close supervision of their owners.

Dog parks are a great asset for everyone within our community. As well as providing fully fenced spaces for dogs to explore and play, they separate off-leash animals from those in the community who may feel less comfortable around dogs.

Dog parks are a very popular concept that is well-supported by dog owners. However, not all dogs are able to use them. Section 27 of the Victorian Domestic Animals Act 1994 requires owners to keep their greyhounds on-leash in all public areas, including dog parks.

We remain committed to identifying new areas that would be suitable for such facilities.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Strategic Aim:</b><br/>To provide access to public and open spaces for dogs and their owners.</p> | <p><b>What success looks like:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction in dog attacks</li> <li>• Less complaints</li> </ul> |
|---|--|

| What we currently do  | Community views   | New action for 2022-26   |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Provide five off-leash dog parks in Horsham to allow dogs opportunities to socialise and exercise off-leash</p> <p>Provide clear signage and easy reference towards all designated off-leash areas</p> | <p>Many people are happy with the existing dog parks available across the municipality</p> <p>Some people would like existing open spaces within the municipality used for multipurpose</p> <p>When choosing a pet people should consider the animals needs and how they are going to be accommodated</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Capture and respond to community requests and feedback about open space usage</li> <li>2. Continue to educate the community regarding expectations of dogs in open spaces</li> </ol> |



|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
|  |  | 3. Create a promotional campaign to encourage dog owners to make the most out of the existing dog parks available across the municipality |
|--|--|---|

## Issue 7: Dog attacks

The public health and well-being implications of dog attack are significant and their needs to be increased awareness of the risks, particularly in relation to young children. Potential interventions to reduce the incidence of dog attacks vary from strict controls on high-risk breeds to mandatory local laws to keep your dog on-leash in public.

Responding to dog attacks remains a top priority for our animal management officers. Attacks can involve people, dogs, cats, wildlife and livestock.

There are medical costs, legal costs and personal trauma for everyone involved when a dog attack occurs. It is also an issue of significant community concern. With proper management and education, attacks are preventable.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>Strategic Aim:</b><br/>To ensure dangerous, menacing dogs and restricted breed dogs are identified and kept in compliance with the Act and Regulations.</p> | <p><b>What success looks like:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction in dog attacks</li> <li>• Less complaints</li> <li>• Decrease in animals euthanised</li> <li>• Less dogs impounded</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

| What we currently do   | Community views  | New action for 2022-26  |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Undertake investigations and prosecute dog attack offences that occur in the community</p> <p>Undertake random patrols and enforce on-leash laws and communicate with the owner about responsible pet ownership</p> <p>Ensure all dogs entering the rehoming program are temperament tested</p> <p>Ensure all dogs entering the rehoming program are temperament tested</p> | <p>Some community members were user of what to do or who to contact in relation to a dog attack</p> <p>It was felt that Council could improve instigation and communication regarding dog attacks</p> <p>Some community members felt that it was not their responsibility to contain a dog for the ranger especially if the dog had been involved in an attack</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explore the possibility of increasing resources to better meet community patrolling and enforcement expectations</li> <li>2. Review our processes for reporting, investigating and managing dog attacks</li> <li>3. Council to explore options to establish a key contact officer for all domestic animal management enquiries from the public</li> <li>4. Continue to educate the community regarding expectations of dogs in open spaces</li> </ol> |

Collaborate with Horsham Dog Obedience Club to promote obedience training of dogs

Provide information to the community on responsible pet ownership, including prevention of dog attacks

- 5. Develop and promote education programs about the importance of puppy schools and obedience clubs
- 6. Develop and implement school education programs about safely managing domestic animals

## Issue 8: Dog poo

It is the responsibility of any dog owner or supervisor to carry poo bags or some other receptacle with them to pick up poo, and then dispose of it responsibly. Our animal management officers have the power to fine anyone who does not do this.

Dog poo is not just unsightly. It is also toxic for the environment and can lead to the growth of blue-green algae in our waterways. Despite this, getting everyone in the community to pick up after their dog is an ongoing challenge.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Strategic Aim:</b><br/>To ensure all dog owners collect and dispose of their dogs' poo in all public spaces.</p> | <p><b>What success looks like:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less complaints</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

| What we currently do  | Community views   | New actions for 2022-26   |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Provide doggie bags at key locations throughout the municipality</p> <p>Provide information to the community on responsible pet ownership, including picking up and correctly disposing of dog poo</p> | <p>Responsible pet ownership needs to be encouraged outside of dog parks</p> <p>Most people believe that dog poo is an issue</p> <p>Some dog owners appear to have a lack of respect for other users of public open spaces when they don't pick up their dog poo</p> <p>There are insufficient bins along walking tracks and in some public spaces for dog owners to dispose of collected dog poo</p> <p>Shred spaces are felt to have the worst dog poo issues</p> <p>Some dog owners are frustrated at having to pick up another dogs poo to reduce the reputational risk for dogs as a group</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Carry out a mapping process and review the availability of dog bins along walking trails and at other highly utilised public spaces</li> <li>2. Consider on-site options for educating the community about responsible pet ownership through interactive QR codes and content</li> <li>3. Enforce fines for individuals not having a receptacle when taking their dog into public spaces</li> </ol> |

## Issue 9: Cat de-sexing

The unwanted and uncontrolled breeding of cats leads to high numbers of stray and feral cats in our municipality. These cats often overwhelm animal welfare shelters, and put a significant strain on resources.

Stray cats are also a threat to other animals, killing native fauna – birds, marsupials and amphibians – and spreading diseases to domesticated cats through fighting.

Our goal is to encourage more residents to have their cats de-sexed and reduce the burden of stray cats on the community.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Strategic Aim:</b><br/>To reduce cat overpopulation.</p> | <p><b>What success looks like:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less complaints</li> <li>• Less cats impounded</li> <li>• Decrease in cats euthanised</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

| What we currently do   | Community views  | New action for 2022-26  |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Provide information to the community on responsible pet ownership, including the desexing of domestic cats</p> <p>Keep the HRCC website up to date with information regarding desexing domestic animals</p> <p>Work with State Government regarding feral cat management and education opportunities in the HRCC area</p> <p>Secure funding for best practice programs to reduce overpopulation, particularly in relation to cats</p> | <p>Cost was identified as a concern for owners when considering to de-sex their cat</p> <p>Many community members felt that there were too many cats in the municipality that were not registered and therefore not de-sexed</p> <p>Some community members felt that there was insufficient responsible pet ownership when it came to cats and de-sexing</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Council to collaborate with providers of de-sexing services to run special de-sexing days, including discounts and/or incentives</li> <li>2. Initiate a registration, micro chipping and de-sexing blitz across the municipality for community members who may not be aware of their obligations</li> <li>3. Where appropriate Council to provide grant writing support for organisations looking to support microchipping, de-sexing and responsible pet ownership activities</li> <li>4. Develop a specific education campaign regarding the benefits of cat de-sexing</li> </ol> |

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Desex all impounded animals prior to being released for adoption</p> <p>Offer cat cages to local residents to trap cats trespassing on their property, and at large, after sunset and before sunrise</p> <p>Enforcement of cat curfew between sunset and sunrise</p> <p>Offer a cheaper registration fee for desexed dogs and cats</p> |  |  |
|---|--|--|

## Issue 10: Backyard breeding

We will continue to utilise all available legislation to control and manage domestic animal businesses, and eliminate ‘backyard breeders’ wherever possible.

The implementation of the Domestic Animals Amendment (Puppy Farms and Pet Shops) Act 2017 will regulate against illegal breeding of puppies and kittens. This will be vital to the management of this issue over the next four years.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Strategic Aim:</b><br>To eradicate unauthorised breeding establishments. | <b>What success looks like:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in the registration of domestic animal businesses</li> </ul> |
|---|--|

| What we currently do   | Community views   | New action for 2022-26  |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Conduct searches for unregistered Domestic Animal Businesses via internet, social media, word of mouth, and observations during patrol</p> <p>Provide information to the community about the Domestic Animal Businesses and how to identify illegal Domestic Animal Businesses</p> <p>Keep the HRCC website up to date with information regarding Domestic Animal Businesses</p> <p>Educate the community about the Pet Exchange Register and the requirement to provide a source number when selling or giving away domestic animals</p> | <p>Some community members are concerned about the prevalence of backyard breeding across the municipality</p> <p>Some people are unaware that the actions they are taking in relation to backyard breeding are illegal</p> <p>Some people are concerned about the impact and welfare of the animals being used to breed</p> <p>Some people are concerned that the peak bodies are not doing enough to stamp out backyard breeding</p> <p>Social media is often the platform used for the sale of animals from backyard breeders</p> <p>Individuals getting animals from backyard breeders are often not aware of responsibilities</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake a blitz on backyard breeding practices across the municipality</li> <li>Council to explore options to establish a key contact officer for all domestic animal management enquiries from the public</li> <li>Council to establish relationships with peak bodies and external stakeholders who can support Councils efforts in reducing backyard breeding</li> <li>Explore the possibility of increasing resources to better meet community patrolling and enforcement expectations</li> <li>Work collaboratively with community to identify backyard breeders</li> </ol> |

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  | regarding registration, micro chipping and de-sexing |  |
|--|--|--|



## Our animal management team

Horsham Rural City Council currently employs five-full-time equivalent Community Safety Officer (CSO) positions. CSOs are responsible not only for animal management and control in the City, but traffic management functions, school crossing administration, emergency assistance, special event support, fire prevention and local laws. While the CSOs have responsibility for specific areas within the unit, all CSOs complete all duties of the unit that ensures there is coverage for leave. The CSOs provide an after-hours service to the community, and are supported by a call centre.

Council is required to provide training to ensure Council’s CSOs are able to properly administer the legislative framework in which they operate. Appropriate training gives CSOs confidence and support they require to discharge their responsibilities.

The key areas of competency that our CSO’s are trained in include, but are not limited to:

- Understanding legislation and powers, the role of an authorised officer and statutory compliance
- Animal handling – both domestic animals and livestock
- Animal behavioural assessment
- Managing conflict and aggression through communication.
- First Aid, CPR, incident management, occupational health and safety
- Prosecution processes including investigations
- Report and Letter writing
- Maintenance of in-house record keeping databases

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Strategic Aim:</b> to have a high skilled, competent and valued workforce delivering high quality animal services</p> | <p><b>What success looks like:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CSOs are able to execute on their roles and responsibilities in compliance with the Act, related State legislation and regulations, and local laws</li> <li>• CSOs report feeling supported and valued in the workplace</li> <li>• Community value and trust the knowledge and expertise of the CSOs</li> <li>• The CSOs are actively sought by community for their advice on responsible pet ownership</li> </ul> |
|---|--|

| What we currently do  | New action for 2022-26   |
|---|--|
| <p>Review register of each officer’s completed training, along with proposed additional training as aligned with the above required competencies</p> <p>Secure funding for extraordinary training</p> <p>Officer attendance at relevant industry seminars, training and briefings</p> <p>Allocate a variety of tasks for the CSO to complete during the development period</p> <p>Establish and maintain an afterhours services to triage animal management matters, thereby reducing CSO fatigue</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop a business case that supports additional resourcing for animal management services</li> <li>2. Review our internal processes to ensure it meets best practice and the upcoming legislative changes</li> <li>3. Explore the possibility of increasing resources to better meet community patrolling and enforcement expectations</li> <li>4. Council to explore options to establish a key contact officer for all domestic animal management enquiries from the public</li> <li>5. Increase health and well-being support for animal management staff</li> </ol> |

## Progress and reporting

We review our plan annually in partnership with the Domestic Animal Management Community Advisory Committee, presenting it to Council and including a summary in our annual report.

Successful implementation of the plan should result in the following outcomes:

- The community regards us as responsive, trusted, knowledgeable resource for pet owners, providing relevant advice to residents
- Responsible pet owners can own a pet without undue restrictions
- Horsham is regarded as a safe and harmonious place to live where quality of life is not negatively impacted by irresponsible pet owners
- There is simple and clear processes to register your pet through multiple channels
- Residents select the most suitable pet and breed for their circumstances
- The negative impacts on environment and wildlife by domestic animals are minimised
- There is fair and equitable access to public open spaces for all.