



HORSHAM
Rural City Council

DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

2026-2029



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Horsham Rural City Council acknowledges the five Traditional Owner groups of this land: the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagulk people. We recognise the important and ongoing place that all Indigenous people hold in our community.

We pay our respects to the Elders, both past and present, and commit to working together in the spirit of mutual understanding and respect for the benefit of the broader community and future generations.

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MAYOR'S MESSAGE

I'm pleased to share with you our 2026-29 Domestic Animal Management Plan, which builds upon the solid foundation of previous years supporting our community with pet ownership. Our goal is to create a safe and supportive environment where both people and pets can thrive together.

Drawing from the growing expertise in animal management across Victoria and our deep understanding of local needs, we have developed a strategic action plan to guide our efforts from 2026 to 2029. This plan aligns with the Domestic Animals Act 1994 Part 5 A 68A(1).

The Domestic Animal Management Plan serves as our framework for the next four years, focusing on promoting responsible pet ownership, safeguarding animal welfare, and highlighting the many benefits pets bring to our lives. Public education and open communication are at the heart of this plan, ensuring that the community understands their responsibilities as pet owners, and they contribute to the wellbeing of both animals and our broader community.

Council acknowledges that pet ownership provides a wide range of physical, emotional, social and practical benefits for individuals, families, and communities. There are also significant benefits of working dogs within the agricultural sector which include efficiency and productivity, cost effectiveness, livestock welfare, environmental benefits and farmer wellbeing and safety.

The key objectives of the plan include enhancing public safety, creating an environment that encourages responsible pet ownership, and minimising nuisances caused by pets, such as noise or environmental impacts. Additionally, we are committed to providing innovative and effective dog and cat management services to meet our community's needs.

This plan closely aligns with our broader strategic planning framework, ensuring that our animal management efforts contribute to our overall vision for the community.

Together, we can continue to create a safe, responsible, and pet-friendly environment for everyone.



Cr Ian Ross

Mayor

Horsham Rural City Council



Contents

OUR VISION	5
About the Plan.....	6
Legislative Obligations	6
Introduction.....	7
The Aim of the Plan	7
Benefits of pet ownership	7
Victorian Legislation	8
Victorian Guidelines & Standards.....	8
Process Applied in Developing the Domestic Animal Management Plan.....	9
Community Consultation.....	9
Demographic.....	12
Summary of Domestic Animal Statistics (2022–2025).....	13
1. Training of Authorised Officers	14
2. Programs to Promote & Encourage Responsible Pet Ownership & Compliance with Legislation.....	16
3. Programs to Address Over-Population Rates & Euthanasia Rates.....	19
4. Registration & Identification	22
5. Nuisance.....	26
6. Dog Attacks	28
7. Dangerous, Menacing & Restricted Breed Dogs.....	31
8. Domestic Animal Businesses	33
9. Other Matters	35
10. Annual Review of Plan & Annual Reporting.....	36



OUR VISION

The Horsham Rural City Council encourages an environment of responsible domestic animal ownership, where people and animals can coexist in harmony. Horsham Rural City Council strives to implement effective animal management practices that balance the needs of the community, the agriculture sector, and the environment.

The benefits of pet ownership for people's health and wellbeing are well established. Whilst Domestic Animal Management Plans are concerned primarily with the management of dogs and cats within the community, it is important to note that pet ownership has a range of positive outcomes for the ongoing physical and mental health of community members, including companionship, reducing loneliness and isolation.





About the Plan

Under Section 68A of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994 (the Act)*, every Council must prepare a Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP), as follows:

Legislative Obligations

Councils to prepare Domestic Animal Management Plans

- 1) Subject to subsection (1.a), each Council must, in consultation with the Secretary, prepare a Domestic Animal Management Plan on 4 December 2025 and at the end of each period of 4 years after that day.
 - a. A Council may apply to the Secretary for an extension of time within which to prepare a Domestic Animal Management Plan.
 - b. The Secretary may grant an extension of time under subsection (1A) if the Secretary believes that special circumstances exist that warrant the granting of an extension.
- 2) A Domestic Animal Management Plan prepared by a Council must—
 - a. set out a method for evaluating whether the animal control services provided by the Council in its municipal district are adequate to give effect to the requirements of this *Act* and the *Domestic Animal Regulations 2015* (Regulations); and
 - b. outline programs for the training of authorised officers to ensure that they can properly administer and enforce the requirements of this *Act* in the Council's municipal district; and
 - c. outline programs, services and strategies which the Council intends to pursue in its municipal district—
 - i. to promote and encourage the responsible ownership of dogs and cats; and
 - ii. to ensure that people comply with this *Act*, the regulations and any related legislation; and
 - iii. to minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals; and
 - iv. to address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats; and
 - v. to encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats; and
 - vi. to minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance; and
 - vii. to effectively identify all dangerous dogs, menacing dogs and restricted breed dogs in that district and to ensure that those dogs are kept in compliance with this *Act* and the regulations; and
 - d. provide for the review of existing orders made under this *Act* and Local Laws that relate to the Council's municipal district with a view to determining whether further orders dealing with the management of dogs and cats in the municipal district are desirable; and future considerations for the review of the updated Local Law.
 - e. provide for the review of any other matters related to the management of dogs and cats in Council's municipal district that it thinks necessary; and
 - f. provide for the periodic evaluation of any program, service, strategy, or review outlined under the plan.
- 3) Every Council must
 - a. review its domestic animal management plan annually and, if appropriate, amend the plan; and
 - b. provide the Secretary with a copy of the plan and any amendments to the plan; and
 - c. publish an evaluation of its implementation of the plan in its annual report.



Introduction

The Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) caters for the needs of companion animals, their owners and addresses the concerns of the public in an equitable and compassionate manner.

The aim of this Plan is to facilitate co-existence of pets, pet owners and the general population whilst addressing the welfare and legislative issues relating to animal management. This Plan also aims to promote responsible pet ownership and enhance the experience of animal ownership within the community.

The preparation of the Plan is in line with the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* (The Act), which requires all Victorian councils to have a four-year plan in place for the management of dogs and cats within their municipality.

It is well recognised by the community and governments alike that there is more to animal management than the collection of stray dogs and cats, and the enforcement of offences against the laws. It is not well recognised by the community the role local government plays in protecting and promoting responsible animal ownership in the community and the environment, both essential to maintaining sustainable communities and a healthy environment.

This plan is designed to improve the provision of animal management services by maintaining the traditional local government role whilst expanding upon Council's capacity to respond to new and emerging animal management issues and implement identified treatments.

The Plan integrates the developing expertise in domestic animal management within Victoria. Furthermore, the Plan incorporates Council's understanding of its own local needs to produce a program of action to be undertaken over the next four years (2026-2029). Relevant issues include those prescribed under relevant legislation and local laws as well as responsible pet ownership.

The Aim of the Plan

The principal aim of this plan is to create an environment where people and pets can peacefully and safely co-exist within the community and where pet owner's activities and those of their pets do not adversely affect the rest of the community or environment.

- Encourage statutory compliance and promote responsible pet ownership through education and enforcement.
- Support and facilitate the benefits of animal ownership and companionship.
- Increase public safety and general amenity by reducing nuisances caused by dogs and cats.
- Increase public safety by ensuring compliance by owners of declared dangerous, menacing, and restricted breed dogs.
- Provide for the welfare of cats and dogs.
- Reduce the number of unwanted animals bred and euthanised; and
- Ensure that Council fulfils its legislative responsibility.

Benefits of pet ownership

Pet ownership delivers wide-ranging benefits to individuals and communities, including:

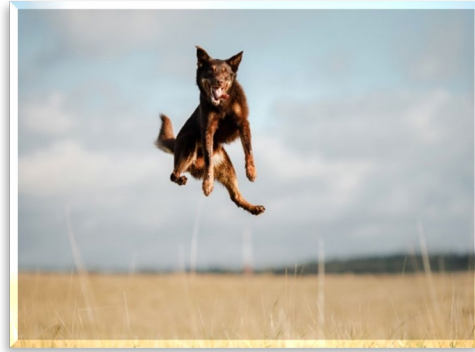
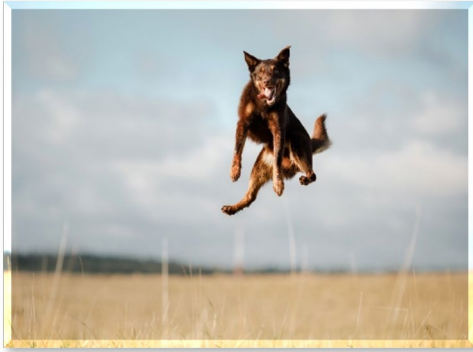
- **Health & Wellbeing:** Encourages physical activity, lowers stress and blood pressure, and supports mental health—especially for people living alone or with disability.
- **Social Connection:** Promotes social interaction, teaches empathy and responsibility in children, and supports therapy in aged care and disability settings.
- **Safety & Security:** Dogs can deter intruders and alert owners to potential hazards, enhancing home safety.



Working breed dogs in the agricultural sector

Working dogs are essential to rural operations, offering:

- **Productivity Gains:** Improve livestock handling efficiency and reduce labour needs.
- **Cost & Environmental Benefits:** Lower operational costs and reduce reliance on vehicles, preserving land.
- **Animal Welfare & Farmer Safety:** Minimise livestock stress and support safer solo farming practices.



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
- Domestic Animals Amendment (Reuniting Pets and other Matters) Act 2022
- Domestic Animals Regulations 2015
- Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986
- Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulations 2019

Victorian Guidelines & Standards

- Code of Practice for the Management of Dogs and Cats in Shelters and Pounds (Revision 1)
- Code reporting - Mandatory reporting of animal fate data
- Code of Practice for the Operation of Boarding Establishments
- Code of Practice for the Operation of Breeding and Rearing Businesses (2014)
- Code of Practice for the Operation of Dog Training Establishments
- Code of Practice for the Operation of Pet Shops
- Code of Practice for the Keeping of Racing Greyhounds

Other Council Plans

- This plan is consistent with the Horsham Rural City Council Plan 2025-29
www.hrcc.vic.gov.au/files/assets/public/v/1/document-resources/hrcc-council-plan-2025-29.pdf
- This plan is linked with the Horsham 2041 Community Vision
www.hrcc.vic.gov.au/files/assets/public/document-resources/our-council/community-information/hrcc-community-vision.pdf
- This plan is linked to the Municipal Emergency Management Plan
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



Process Applied in Developing the Domestic Animal Management Plan

Horsham Rural City Council's Domestic Animal Management Plan was developed through extensive community and stakeholder engagement to ensure that it identified and addressed specific animal management issues across the municipality.

In addition to engagement with community members and stakeholders, the DAMP has been developed following review and best practice frameworks.

Community Consultation

A detailed community engagement program was delivered to encourage the community of Horsham Rural City Council to have their say on domestic animal management issues. The engagement gathered feedback from a wide cross-section of the diverse areas across Horsham. Approximately 139 people provided feedback. The consultation methods included:

Stage one of the community consultation was conducted from 19 May 2025 to 16 June 2025.

- Intercept surveys conducted at – Weir Park, Langlands Park, Lions Park and Central Dog Park.
- Online surveys with promotion through Council's website and social media campaigns.
- Consultation / engagement at key community locations.
- Council sought input from special interest groups along with key stakeholders to help inform actions and priorities to be included in the draft plan.

DAMP Community Engagement Summary – Key Insights (2025)

Demographics & Reach

- Total Responses: 139 (143 excluding 4 test results).
- Primary Postcodes: 3400 (Horsham) dominated with 110 responses.
- Highest response rate age groups indicate strong feedback from working age adult pet owners.

(Age 26 -35) 21%

(Age 36 – 45) 20.3%

(Age 46 – 55) 22.4%

Pet Ownership Trends

- Dogs: 82% of respondents own at least one dog.
- Cats: 42% own at least one cat.
- Pet-Free Homes: 10 reported.

Pet Acquisition Sources (138 responses)

- Breeders (41%) and adoptions (17%) most common.
- Found/dumped animals (5%) remain an issue.

Registration & Microchipping

- Registered with HRCC: 85%
- Desexing & Microchipping Status (135 responses)
- Dogs: 92% are desexed and/or microchipped.
- Cats: 68% are desexed and microchipped.



Barriers to Registration

- Cost is the most cited deterrent—13% say it's too expensive.
- Confusion with microchipping remains (1.5%).

Ideas to Improve Registration Rates (116 responses)

- Reduce costs or offer lifetime registration.
- Better education and awareness (especially social media).
- Partner with vets for on-the-spot registration.
- Financial incentives (e.g. pet food vouchers, welcome packs).
- Transparency about what fees support.
- Consider registration amnesties, microchip and registration days or reimbursements when pets die or are desexed post-registration.
- Concerns over ranger trust and pet recovery efforts.

Dog Parks Use & Feedback

- Awareness: 57.7% aware and use dog parks at least sometimes.
- Non-users: 42% do not use them.

Common Suggestions (81 responses)

- More shade, seating, and dog play equipment.
- Better fencing (especially for small dogs).
- Improve water access and cleanliness.
- Separate areas for small and large dogs.
- More patrols, bins, and dog etiquette education.
- Desire for additional parks, particularly in Natimuk.

Cat Management (59 responses)

- Curfew Awareness: 77% aware of the sunset-to-sunrise rule.
- Indoor-only cats: 42.4%
- Indoor/outdoor: 55.9%
- Outdoor only: 1.7%

Suggestions for Improved Cat Management (82 responses)

- 24-hour curfew.
- Free/cheaper desexing programs, especially for low-income earners.
- Increase visibility and presence of rangers.
- Stricter laws, penalties, and incentive-based education.
- Support for building cat runs and subsidising rescue efforts.
- Concerns about feral cat populations and wildlife impact.

Top Animal-Related Issues Identified (128 responses)

- Dog faeces not picked up (95).
- Dogs wandering at large (72).
- Cats roaming outside curfew (70).
- Wandering cats on private property (62).
- Barking dogs (58).



Ideas to Improve Animal Management Services (85 responses)

Education & Communication

- Community talks, school visits, ranger Q&As.
- More info on social media about pound operations and outcomes.

Infrastructure & Resources

- Increased dog park maintenance.
- Dog poo bag dispensers and more bins.
- Lighting in dog parks and safe fencing.

Ranger Services

- Better after-hours response.
- Patrolling problem areas (e.g. river paths, Baillie Street).

Enforcement

- On-the-spot fines, better tracking of unregistered pets.
- Tougher responses to aggressive animals and backyard breeding.

Opportunities Moving Forward

Education & Transparency	Clear messaging on the <i>why</i> behind registration and ranger roles
Incentive Programs	Discounts, free registration days, or pet packs
Partnerships	With vets and rescues to streamline microchipping, desexing, and registration
Targeted Enforcement	Patrol problem zones and improve after-hours accessibility
Pet Infrastructure	Improve parks, increase bins, build more fenced areas
Feral Animal Control	Tackle stray cat populations with funding, visibility, and humane practices

Stage two of the community engagement regarding the Draft DAMP was conducted from 23 September 2025 to 23 October 2025.

- Online feedback was sought with promotion through Council's website and social media campaigns:
 - Public Notices - Feedback and pop-up sessions were advertised on September 24, October 1, October 15 and October 22, 2025.
 - eNews on September 25, October 3, October 10, October 17.
 - Facebook posts on September 24, October 1, October 10, October 16, October 22 - combined post reach: 2,764
 - Have your say Draft DAMP Council website page - 346 total visits, 160 people downloaded the draft DAMP, 26 people viewed the existing DAMP. 280 aware and 153 informed.
 - 3 formal submissions were received by Council
- Consultation / engagement/ feedback was sought at Horsham Plaza on Saturday 6 October 2025, Sunday 7 October 2025, Saturday 18 October 2025 and Sunday 19 October 2025 between 10am and 4pm each session. Approximately 40 residents attended the engagement over the 4 days.
- Council sought input from special interest groups along with key stakeholders to help inform actions and priorities to be included in the plan.

These themes help shape the plan's objectives and activities in the relevant area of focus, with some themes crossing over into more than one focus area. No changes were needed to be made to the Draft Domestic Animal Management Plan post engagement.



Demographic

Horsham Rural City Council is a vibrant, diverse community situated approximately 300 kilometres north-west of Melbourne and North of the Grampians National Park, in the heart of the Wimmera region of Victoria. The municipality has a population of 20,315 and covers an area of 4,267 square kilometres, with approximately three quarters of residents living within the urban area of Horsham.

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

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

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

(Animal Registration Year Data - 10 April - 9 April)	2022	2023	2024	2025
Domestic Animal Population (Registered Pets)	5518	5902	5835	5653
# of registered dogs	3766	4082	4094	3948
# of registered cats	1752	1820	1741	1705
# of unpaid animal registrations	128	227	288	150
# of Domestic Animal Businesses	3	3	4	4
Animal Requests Received				
Dog attack	39	44	39	36
Barking dog	102	114	97	93
Dog - lost and found	383	337	241	359
Dog - general	343	443	227	155
Cat - request for cat cage	96	66	129	147
Cat - general	147	190	97	67
Cat - lost and found	164	144	103	203
# of Dogs impounded	306	326	289	245
# of dogs surrendered to Council	51	53	65	42
# of dogs released to owner	243	261	206	168
# of dogs rehoused	42	46	48	56
# of dogs euthanised	21	18	34	19
# of dogs DOA	0	1	1	2
# of impounded cats	253	242	153	211
# of cats surrendered to Council	56	70	30	41
# of cats rehoused	112	85	56	85
# of cats released to owner	43	41	41	52
# of cats euthanised incl. feral	98	113	54	70
# of cats DOA	0	3	2	4



Summary of Domestic Animal Statistics (2022–2025)

Registration and Population

- The estimated domestic animal population remained relatively stable, ranging from 5,518 to 5,902.
- Registered dogs decreased slightly from a peak of 4,094 in 2024 to 3,948 in 2025.
- Registered cats also declined from 1,820 in 2023 to 1,705 in 2025.
- Unpaid registrations peaked at 288 in 2024 but reduced to 150 in 2025, reflecting improved compliance.
- The number of registered Domestic Animal Businesses increased from 3 in 2022 to 4 in 2024 and 2025.

Animal Management Requests

- Dog-related complaints (e.g. barking, general, and lost and found) declined overall, though lost and found cases rose again in 2025.
- Cat-related requests fluctuated, with a significant increase in lost and found reports and cage hire requests in 2025, indicating a rise in roaming or stray cats.

Impoundments and Outcomes

- Dog impoundments and surrenders declined steadily, while rehousing numbers improved.
- Return-to-owner rates for dogs dropped from 261 in 2023 to 165 in 2025.
- Cat impoundments fell in 2024 but increased again in 2025. Rehousing and return-to-owner outcomes improved.
- Euthanasia of cats, including feral and deceased-on-arrival, declined from 113 in 2023 to 69 in 2025.

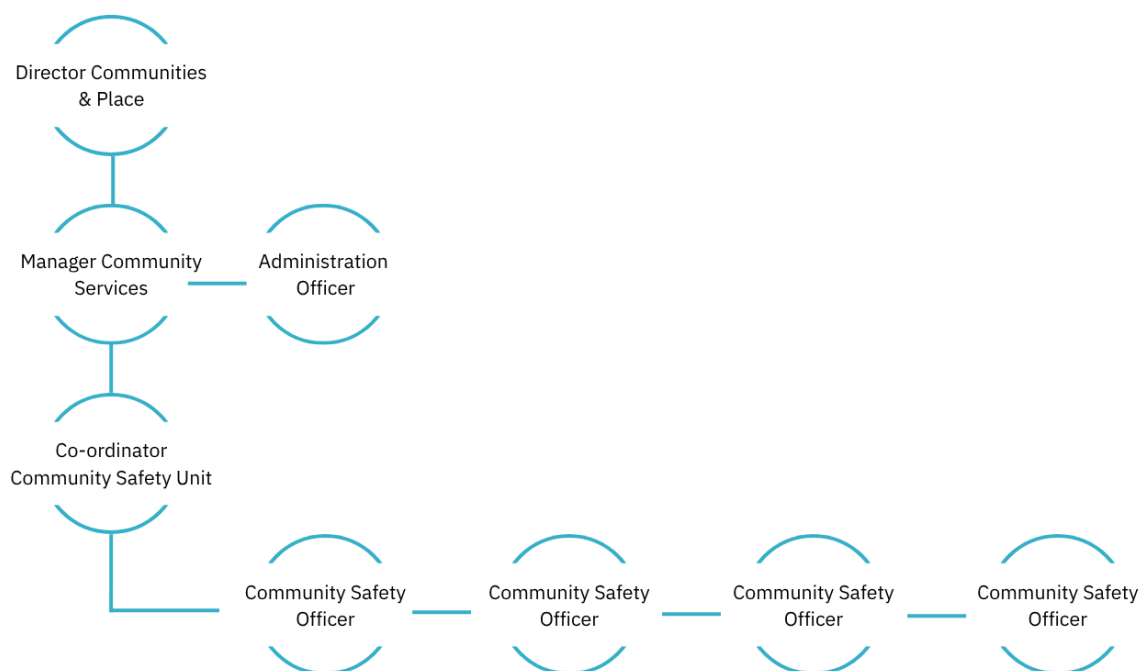
This data highlights the importance of continued focus on:

- Increasing animal registration and microchipping (particularly for cats).
- Promoting responsible pet ownership.
- Supporting desexing and containment initiatives to reduce impoundments and euthanasia.





Animal Management Staffing and Operational Structure



1. Training of Authorised Officers

Domestic Animals Act 1994 – Section 68A(2)(b)

This section outlines Council's programs for the training of authorised officers to ensure they are equipped to administer and enforce the requirements of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 within the Horsham Rural City Council municipal district.

Context and Current Practice

The **Community Safety Unit** comprises four Community Safety Officers, one Community Safety Coordinator, and one part-time Administration Officer. Officers are multi-skilled and perform duties across a range of disciplines including local laws, parking enforcement, and animal management. Each officer is appointed as an Authorised Officer under the relevant Acts and is empowered to enforce the following legislation:

- Local Government Act 1989 (s224(1)) and Local Government Act 2020
- Horsham Rural City Council Community Local Law 2021
- Road Safety (Traffic Management) Regulations 2019
- Road Safety (General) Regulations 2019
- Emergency Management Act 2013
- Impounding of Livestock Act 1994
- Environment Protection Act 2017
- Country Fire Authority Act 1958
- Summary Offences Act 1966
- Domestic Animals Act 1994
- Graffiti Prevention Act 2007
- Road Management Act 2004
- Road Safety Act 1986
- Land Act 1958

All officers have access to Council's operational procedures via the document management system, which provides guidance and compliance expectations in line with legislative and organisational requirements.

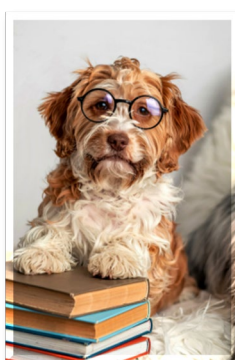


Staff Development Commitment

Horsham Rural City Council is committed to maintaining a highly skilled and knowledgeable workforce. All employees are provided with regular opportunities for training and professional development, tailored to both individual needs and organisational objectives. Training needs are identified through annual performance appraisals and supported by internal and external development opportunities.

Authorised Officer Training Matrix

Training / Qualification	Who Completed	Notes
Certificate IV in Animal Control and Regulation	Community Safety Coordinator	Formal qualification
Certificate IV in Government (Statutory Compliance)	Community Safety Coordinator	Formal qualification
Online Induction Compliance Training (OH&S, Privacy, Fraud, Child Safety)	All Officers	Completed during induction
Council Policies, Manual Handling, Bullying & Harassment	All Officers	Induction + regular updates
Microchip Implantation Training	Community Safety Coordinator	Specialist training - explore options for other officers to complete training.
Aggressive Dog Handling Training	All Officers	Refresher as required
Occupational Violence & De-escalation Training	All Officers	Refresher as required
CAIT – Canine Anatomy Identification Training	All Officers	Restricted breed identification (Ag Vic approved)
Statement Taking and Brief Preparation	All Officers	Refresher training as needed
Computer Skills – Altitude, Microsoft Office	All Officers	Internal training or on-the-job support
DEDJTR / Agriculture Victoria Seminars	All Officers (rotating attendance)	State training and updates
Mandatory / Role-Specific / Individual Training	All Officers	Identified annually via performance reviews
Joint Training with Neighbouring Councils	All Officers	As available – strengthens regional collaboration





2. Programs to Promote & Encourage Responsible Pet Ownership & Compliance with Legislation

This section outlines the programs, services, and strategies Horsham Rural City Council will pursue to promote and encourage the responsible ownership of dogs and cats, in accordance with Section 68A(2)(c)(i) of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*.

Council recognises that education, promotion, and enforcement activities are essential to improving responsible pet ownership and community compliance with domestic animal legislation. The following initiatives and current activities reflect community feedback and Council's commitment to continuous improvement in this space.

Current Programs and Activities

Community Safety Officers educate and engage with the public during proactive patrols and interactions in the community.

Distribution of Animal Welfare Victoria educational materials promoting responsible pet ownership and compliance with legislation.

Targeted patrols in areas identified as hotspots for off-leash dog activity.

Provision of free cat traps and facilitated collection of trapped nuisance cats during business hours.

Thorough investigation of all complaints received, with enforcement of relevant legislation as required.

Collaboration with the RSPCA to investigate reports of animal cruelty.

Multiple methods used to encourage registration compliance including registration renewals via mail, text messages, final reminders, and follow-up phone calls.

Enforcement using Notices to Comply, infringement notices, Animal Management Agreements, and court prosecution when necessary.

Annual social media awareness campaign and vehicle magnets promoting registration renewal deadlines.

Implementation of a targeted cat desexing program, funded through a grant from the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA), aimed at reducing semi-owned cat populations.

Impoundment of stray or wandering animals.



Future Strategic Actions

Initiative / Program	Purpose / Description	Lead Stakeholder	Timeframe
Targeted Social Media Campaigns	Promote key messages on desexing, leash laws, registration, microchipping, and curfews to improve compliance and community awareness.	Council	Year 1–3
Distribution of Educational Materials	Include pet ownership information with infringement notices, ranger engagements, and community mailouts.	Council	Year 1–3
Review and Upgrade Off-Leash Area Signage	Ensure leash/off-leash signage is clear, accurate, and visible to reduce non-compliance in designated areas.	Council	Year 1
‘On Leash’ Ground Stencils	Improve compliance in high-traffic areas by painting visual leash law reminders along walking paths.	Council	Year 1-3
Increased Ranger Patrols in Priority Areas	Promote visible enforcement and engage directly with the community in areas with high rates of dog-related complaints.	Council	Year 1–3
Bike Patrols in River Precinct	Address off-leash dog concerns and increase compliance with leash laws in river and shared-use areas.	Council	Year 1–3
Pop-Up Educational Stations at Events	Provide on-the-spot information and support at local festivals, markets, and Council events.	Council	Year 1–3
Promotion of Cat Curfew & Trapping Services	Educate the public on curfew rules and the availability of Council’s free trap hire service for managing roaming/nuisance cats.	Council	Year 1–3
Collection of Resident Statements for Enforcement	Support compliance action in cases of ongoing curfew breaches and nuisance cat complaints.	Council	Year 1–3
Pursue Government Funding for Cat Desexing Expansion	Secure additional resources to extend existing subsidised desexing programs in response to community demand.	Council + State Govt	Year 1–3



Success Indicators



Reduction in reported dog attacks



Fewer animal-related complaints received



Increase in annual dog and cat registration rates



Decrease in overdue or unpaid registration renewals



Reduction in off-leash dog incidents



Fewer reports of roaming cats



Increased uptake of desexing programs

These combined efforts reflect Horsham Rural City Council's commitment to promoting safe, responsible, and informed pet ownership practices across the municipality.





3. Programs to Address Over-Population Rates & Euthanasia Rates

The overpopulation of dogs and cats within the Horsham Rural City Council municipality presents a range of complex and persistent challenges. These include negative impacts on native wildlife, public health concerns, and significant animal welfare issues. A particular concern is the growing population of unowned or semi-owned cats, many of which are feral, malnourished, or diseased. These animals contribute to the spread of illness, the growth of unsocialised litters, and environmental degradation.

This situation places additional pressure on Council's pound facility, increasing intake numbers and, in some cases, requiring euthanasia of animals unsuitable for rehoming due to behavioural or health concerns. Horsham Rural City Council is committed to minimising these outcomes and prioritising the welfare of lost, stray, and surrendered animals by promoting responsible pet ownership and improving reunification and rehoming rates.

Between 2022 and 2025 statistics show:

- Dog impoundments and surrenders declined steadily, while rehousing numbers improved.
- Return-to-owner rates for dogs dropped from 261 in 2023 to 165 in 2025.
- Cat impoundments fell in 2024 but increased again in 2025. Rehousing and return-to-owner outcomes improved.
- Euthanasia of cats, including feral and deceased-on-arrival, declined from 113 in 2023 to 69 in 2025.

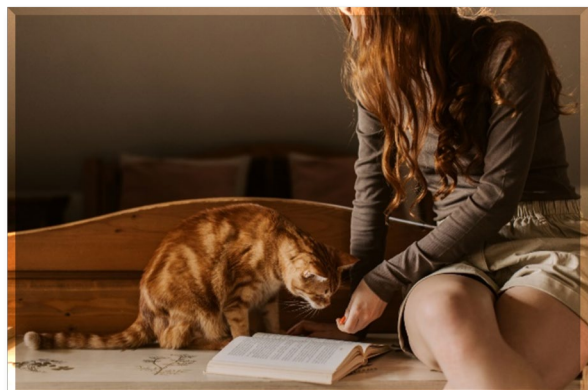
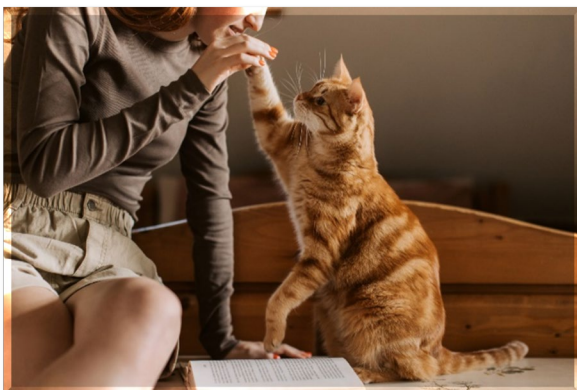
The Importance of Responsible Pet Ownership

Responsible pet ownership underpins all aspects of effective domestic animal management. Council continues to promote the following core responsibilities:

- **Desexing** to prevent unwanted litters and reduce the overall animal population.
- **Microchipping** to support identification and prompt reunification with owners.
- **Registration with Council** to ensure traceability, compliance, and community safety.

Failing to desex or contain pets, particularly cats, leads to uncontrolled breeding, disease transmission, and threats to biodiversity. Similarly, untrained and uncontained dogs may exhibit nuisance or aggressive behaviours, posing risks to public safety and animal welfare. In extreme cases, such animals may be subject to seizure and euthanasia.

Council's approach balances education, enforcement, and support services to encourage responsible behaviours among pet owners.





Current Programs and Activities

Regular campaigns are delivered to raise awareness about responsible pet ownership, the importance of registration, and compliance with microchipping requirements.

Images and information about found animals are published via Council's social media platforms and community newsletters to assist in reuniting pets with their owners.

Council maintains s84Y agreements with local rescue organisations, including Phoenix Animal Rescue and Horsham PAWS, to support rehoming and reduce euthanasia rates.

Council enforces registration requirements for breeders with three or more fertile females, supporting ethical breeding practices and consumer protection.

Supported by government grant funding, this program aims to reduce unwanted litters and relieve pressure on Council's pound and local rescue groups.

A free, humane cat trap hire service is available to residents to assist in managing stray, feral, or nuisance cats.

Officers investigate reports of animal cruelty, hoarding, and illegal breeding to ensure compliance with animal welfare legislation and standards.

Requests for excess animal permits are assessed and monitored to ensure responsible pet ownership and adherence to local regulations.

Online and printed media are monitored to detect unregistered or illegal breeders, improving enforcement and compliance.

Unidentified animals impounded by Council are microchipped on-site, once owners are identified to facilitate faster reunification with their owners.

Infringement notices are issued to owners of roaming cats and dogs to reinforce containment responsibilities and reduce nuisance-related incidents.





Future Strategic Actions & Initiatives

Year 1-3 Council Goals

Microchipping & Registration Drive. Improve awareness and compliance through community events and vet partnerships.

Targeted Cat Desexing (Government-Funded). Specific government-supported desexing initiative to reduce unwanted litters and pound pressure.

Education Campaigns. Raise awareness on registration, benefits of desexing, microchipping, ranger roles, and curfews. Delivered via social media, schools, and public Q&As.

Partnerships with Rescue Groups (Phoenix, PAWS). Formal s84Y agreements to support rescue rehoming and reduce euthanasia.

Enforcement of DAB Registration. Ensure breeding operations with 3+ fertile females register as Domestic Animal Businesses.

Breeder Regulation. Develop and enforce licensing for breeders, focusing on backyard breeding reduction.



Ongoing Council Goals

Publication of Found Animal Images. Promote return-to-owner through social media and newsletters, improving visibility and transparency.

Free Cat Trap Hire Service. Assist residents in humanely managing nuisance or stray cats, particularly in curfew or complaint zones.

Monitoring of Online/Print Advertising. Track and investigate illegal or unregistered breeders advertising animals for sale.

Cruelty, Hoarding & Breeder Investigations. Respond to community complaints and enforce animal welfare regulations.



4. Registration & Identification

Legislative Requirements

Under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, all dogs and cats over the age of three (3) months must be:

- **Implanted with a microchip**, and
- **Registered** with the municipal council in which they reside.

Animal registrations must be renewed **annually by 10 April**. The Act also requires that councils outline, within their Domestic Animal Management Plan, the programs, services, and strategies they will implement to:

- Promote and encourage responsible pet ownership, and
- Increase the registration and identification of dogs and cats within their municipality.

Purpose and Importance of Registration

Animal registration plays a critical role in promoting responsible pet ownership and enabling effective animal management services. Most importantly, registration and microchipping ensure that lost pets can be quickly reunited with their owners—reducing stress, minimising safety risks, and decreasing the burden on Council resources.

Unfortunately, many impounded animals each year are found without current registration. In particular, **cat registration remains significantly lower than dog registration**, which contributes to lower reclaim rates for cats. While many impounded cats are sociable and friendly, they are often not reclaimed by their owners and must be transferred to rescue organisations. Increasing the registration and identification of cats remains a key focus for Council.

Current Registration Data (2025)

Animals Registered 2025- 2026



3,948



1,705

- The estimated domestic animal population remained relatively stable, ranging from 5,518 to 5,902.
- Registered **dogs** decreased slightly from a peak of 4,094 in 2024 to 3,948 in 2025.
- Registered **cats** also declined from 1,820 in 2023 to 1,705 in 2025.
- **Unpaid registrations** peaked at 288 in 2024 but reduced to 150 in 2025, reflecting improved compliance.
- The number of registered **Domestic Animal Businesses** increased from 3 in 2022 to 4 in 2024 and 2025.

It is acknowledged that actual pet ownership numbers are likely to be higher, as not all pets are registered.



Council Pound Facility

Horsham Rural City Council operates a dedicated pound facility for dogs and cats that are found wandering at large or are surrendered. Complies with the Code of Practice for the Management of Dogs and Cats in Shelters and Pounds (Revision 1). The facility can accommodate:

- **10 dogs**, and
- **20 cats**.

The facility provides:

- Indoor enclosures for dogs overnight and outdoor enclosures during the day.
- Raised bedding and enrichment items.
- Air conditioning to ensure animal comfort during warmer months.

Maintaining Accurate Records

To support efficient management and communication, it is essential that pet owners notify Council of any changes, such as:

- Change of address or contact details.
- Transfer of pet ownership.
- Deceased animals.

This ensures that renewal notices are issued correctly and helps prevent unnecessary infringements for non-renewal.





Current Programs and Activities

Horsham Rural City Council undertakes a range of proactive and reactive measures to promote animal registration and compliance, including:

Community Safety Officers play an active role in addressing non-compliance and engaging with the community.	Education-first enforcement approach, with officers providing verbal advice and referring residents to official Department of Agriculture literature.
Microchip scanning and mobile checks carried out by authorised officers during patrols.	Free registration transfers for pets moving from another Victorian municipality.
Mandatory microchipping and registration of all impounded animals before release.	Excess animal permits are monitored and recorded in Council's Greenlight system and Altitude CRM.
Follow-up on registration compliance for animals purchased through Domestic Animal Businesses.	Animal registration magnets are displayed on Community Safety Officer vehicles from February to May.
Enforcement actions such as notices to comply, infringement notices, and prosecution when required.	Timely database updates when notified of address changes or deceased animals.
Pro rata refunds for desexed animals when desexed before October following full registration	Routine registration checks when investigating other animal-related complaints.
Use of Council social media and newsletters to help reunite unregistered pets with owners.	Application of the State Government levy on all animal registrations as required.
Multi-channel education and promotion, including Council's website, social media, and printed materials.	Half-price registration for new applicants between 10th October and 1st March.



Future Strategic Directions

To enhance pet identification and registration across the municipality, Council will implement the following strategic actions:

Strategic Action	Responsible Team	Timeline
Host informal community engagement events (e.g. 'Tea with an Officer') to promote responsible pet ownership which includes registration and microchipping and hear feedback from the community.	Community Safety	Ongoing from 2025
Conduct annual door knock and communications campaign to identify unregistered animals.	Community Safety	Pilot in 2026, review annually
Undertake targeted patrols in public areas to address non-compliance.	Community Safety	Quarterly from 2025
Continue multi-step renewal communications process (mail, SMS, phone calls).	Local Laws Admin	Annually
Continue and promote 'First Ride Home Free' program- Continue the program allowing the first impound release at no charge for animals who were registered at the time of the offence and no previous history of wandering.	Pound Operations	Ongoing
Investigate low-cost registration/microchipping days.	Community Safety	Develop proposal by mid-2026
Attend community events to provide education on pet ownership and registration.	Community Safety	Ongoing
Launch welcome pack for newly registered animals.	Local Laws & Communications	Q1 2026





5. Nuisance

The Domestic Animals Act 1994 requires that the Domestic Animal Management Plan outlines programs services and strategies to minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance.

According to the Domestic Animals Act 1994 a dog or cat is regarded as a nuisance: if it injures or endangers the health of any person; or if it creates a noise e.g. barking which persistently occurs or continues to such a degree or extent that it unreasonably interferes with the peace, comfort or convenience for any person in any other premises.

Community feedback demonstrated several key nuisance themes particularly relating to cat impacts on wildlife and roaming, owners not complying with cat curfew order, owners not picking up dog excrement and owners not having their dog on leash where required. Council has a role in protecting the community from unnecessary nuisance from dogs and cats through their services and community education.

Council off-leash dog parks

Pursuant to Section 26 of the Domestic Animals Act 1994, Council designated the following reserves or parks thereof, as off leash reserves.

Langlands Park – Houston Street

Jenkinson Reserve Baillie Street (Unfenced / beside a school - does not meet the requirements of an effective dog park - Council to investigate deregistering)

Central Park – Natimuk Road

Weir Park – Barnes Boulevard

Lion Park – Plant Avenue

Owners' obligations utilising off-leash dog parks

- a. A dog may be exercised off a chain, cord, or leash in a designated off-leash area provided the owner:
- b. Carries a chain, cord, or leash, sufficient to bring the dog under effective control if the dog behaves in a manner which threatens any person or animal.
- c. Remains in effective voice or hand control of the dog and within constant sight of the dog to be able to promptly place the dog on a chain, cord or leash if that becomes necessary; and
- d. Do not allow the dog to worry, cause a nuisance or threaten any person or animal.

Strategic importance of dog parks in the Horsham Rural City Council urban area

Dog parks are essential community infrastructure that support animal welfare, public safety, and social cohesion. Council's Recreation and Open Space Planning team is responsible for the strategic planning of dog parks. Effective planning seeks to identify the balance between amenity, safety, open space, and community wellbeing outcomes.

Dog parks serve multiple roles: they provide dedicated off-leash areas that promote physical and mental wellbeing for dogs, offer social opportunities for pet owners, and reduce conflict in shared spaces by providing appropriate and approved options for off-leash activity. By directing off-leash activity to designated areas, councils can better manage risk, promote compliance, and support the needs of both pet owners and non-pet-owning community members.



Policies / Procedures

Council has standard operating procedures for investigating nuisance complaints. Current compliance activities include:

- Investigating nuisance complaints and issuing notice to comply or infringement notices and when required filing charges for prosecution regarding management of dogs and cats.
- Officers actively work with other agencies including Agriculture Victoria, Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) and Victoria Police on broader nuisance issues.
- Providing signage relating to dog control placed in dog parks.
- Providing information and advice on methods for resolving nuisances in the community.
- Encouraging complainants to speak to the owner of the animal causing the nuisance directly.
- Conducting Park patrols and educating the community on Local Laws.
- Providing dog waste bags and bins at known walking tracks and parks to encourage dog owners to comply with requirements to pick up and safely dispose of dog excrement in public places.
- Reasons why dogs bark and make available barking dog diaries for residents to download, receive by email or post and complete for a minimum 7 days.
- Provide free cat traps to residents for the trapping of cats causing a nuisance and trespassing on their property.
- Record all nuisance complaints on Council's customer complaint management (CRM) system to track resolutions, repeat offenders and ensure officers follow set tasks and procedures.
- Investigate all reported alleged nuisance complaints within specified timeframes.
- Ensure nuisance investigation timeframes are as short as possible to reduce complainants' frustration.
- Provide educational resources, e.g. Agriculture Victoria literature to residents when requested and when investigating complaints.

Strategic Action

Trial bike park patrols which allow officers to access areas frequented by dogs being walked off leash.	Promote community training on responsible pet ownership and developing necessary resources.
Look into what training needs to be provided to officers to engage in bike patrols.	
Increase number of patrols in dog off-leash areas, educate and where repeated behaviors occur issue infringement notices.	Provide community education on how to report animal related nuisance complaints and build awareness of Council's investigation process.
Issue infringements for roaming dogs and cats to reinforce containment responsibilities.	Audit signage and the availability of dog waste bins in public places to encourage cleaning up after dogs and to ensure effective control.
	Pet confinement advocacy, promote containment of pets to private property to reduce and protect wildlife.



Educational Actions Required

Provide information on Council's website, social media outlets and newsletters on:

- The requirements of dogs being confined to their owner's property.
- The requirement of all dogs to be on leash throughout the municipality unless in an area designated and signed as off-leash.
- How to prevent and avoid dog attacks.

Promote various resources available to ensure the correct choice of pet, such as the 'Choosing a Pet' program, to assist prospective dog owners to select an appropriate dog or cat to meet their lifestyle and circumstances:

<https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/livestock-and-animals/animal-welfare-victoria/choosing-a-pet>





6. Dog Attacks

The prevention of dog attacks on people and animals is a critical component of Council's commitment to public safety and responsible pet ownership. Council's authorised officers are empowered under relevant legislation to investigate all reported incidents of dog attacks or aggressive behaviour occurring within the municipality.

Minimising the risk of dog attacks remains a key strategic priority, as the safety and wellbeing of all community members—both human and animal—is of paramount importance. Council is dedicated to improving community safety outcomes through a combination of education, enforcement, and strategic intervention.

Dog Attack Statistics Summary

Over the past four reporting periods, the number of reported dog attacks has remained relatively consistent, indicating an ongoing concern that requires sustained attention and intervention. The recorded incidents were as follows:

- Year 1: 39 reports
- Year 2: 44 reports
- Year 3: 39 reports
- Year 4: 36 reports

While there has been a **slight decrease** in the most recent reporting period (from 44 to 36), the overall figures reflect a **persistent trend of approximately 40 incidents annually**. This consistency suggests that while educational and enforcement efforts may be having some effect, further targeted actions are required to significantly reduce the frequency of dog attacks.

Key contributing factors commonly associated with dog attacks include:

- Dogs wandering at large or not adequately confined to properties.
- Lack of responsible pet ownership, including failure to socialise or train animals.
- Repeat incidents involving known aggressive animals.

The data reinforces the importance of continued investment in:

- **Public education campaigns** on responsible dog ownership.
- **Proactive ranger patrols** and after-hours responses.
- **Stronger enforcement** around dog containment and declared dangerous dogs.
- **Supportive programs** that encourage training and behavioural interventions for at-risk animals.

Future strategies should also focus on **improving community reporting mechanisms**, increasing the visibility of enforcement actions, and evaluating the effectiveness of current interventions.

Operational Response and Investigation Protocols

Council officers respond to reports of dog attacks, rush incidents, and aggressive or wandering dogs 24 hours a day, seven days a week. All reported attacks are investigated thoroughly, with officers trained to collect and compile evidence necessary to support enforcement and legal proceedings. This includes:

- Obtaining formal statements from witnesses and victims.
- Capturing photographic and video evidence.
- Requesting veterinary and/or medical reports.
- Preparing comprehensive investigation briefs in accordance with legal requirements.



Initial contact is made on the same day a report is received to triage the situation, assess immediate risks, and determine the appropriate operational response.

Contributing Factors and Risk Analysis

Data and officer experience indicate a strong correlation between inadequate containment of dogs and the likelihood of attacks. The majority of reported dog attacks occur when a dog is not securely confined to its property. In many instances, owners advise that their dog had not previously exhibited aggressive behaviour, highlighting the importance of proactive containment measures.

Education and Community Engagement

Council recognises that education is a vital component of reducing the incidence of dog attacks. Current initiatives include:

- Community education campaigns on dog confinement and control, delivered through social media, Council's website, and printed materials.
- Promotion of responsible pet ownership practices, including the importance of secure fencing and appropriate supervision of dogs in public spaces.

Compliance and Enforcement Activities

Council undertakes the following compliance activities to mitigate risk and respond to incidents:

- Timely response to all reports of stray, wandering, or unsecured dogs.
- After-hours response capability for incidents involving aggression or attacks.
- Thorough investigation of all reported dog attacks and rush incidents.
- Immediate seizure or secure confinement of suspected attacking dogs during investigation and/or prosecution.
- Issuance of infringement notices for non-compliance, particularly in cases involving unsecured or wandering dogs.
- Prosecution of dog owners in serious cases, and application for formal declarations of dogs as menacing or dangerous where appropriate.

Future Strategic Directions

Council will continue to strengthen its approach to dog attack prevention through the following strategic actions:

- Promotion of prosecution outcomes and declared dog notices to act as a general deterrent.
- Ongoing pursuit of court action and formal declarations for serious or repeat incidents of aggression, rushing, or attack.
- Review and enhancement of educational materials and communication strategies to improve community awareness and compliance.



7. Dangerous, Menacing & Restricted Breed Dogs

As of the current reporting period, Council has one declared dangerous dog registered within the municipality. There are no declared menacing dogs or restricted breed dogs registered at this time.

Definitions and Legal Framework

Under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, dogs may be declared as menacing, dangerous, or identified as a restricted breed based on specific criteria and behaviours.

Menacing Dogs

A dog may be declared menacing by Council if it:

- Causes a non-serious bite injury to a person or animal, or
- Rushes at or chases a person in a menacing or aggressive manner.

Owner obligations for menacing dogs include:

- Ensuring the dog is muzzled and securely leashed whenever it is outside the owner's property.

Dangerous Dogs

A dog may be declared dangerous by Council if it:

- Bites or attacks a person or animal, causing serious injury.
- Was previously declared menacing and the owner has failed to comply with the associated conditions on two or more occasions.
- Is kept for the purpose of guarding non-residential premises.

Owner obligations for dangerous dogs include:

- Housing the dog in a secure, compliant enclosure.
- Displaying prescribed warning signage on the premises.
- Ensuring the dog wears the prescribed dangerous dog collar at all times.
- Ensuring the dog is muzzled and leashed when in public.



Council undertakes a rigorous risk assessment process before declaring any dog menacing or dangerous, taking into account the nature of the incident(s), the severity of the harm caused, and the risk the dog may pose to the community.

Registration fees for declared menacing and dangerous dogs are significantly higher than standard dog registration fees, in recognition of the increased risks and regulatory oversight required.

Current Compliance Activities

Council's Community Safety Officers undertake a comprehensive suite of compliance actions to manage risks associated with a declared dog including:

All authorised officers are currently enrolled in the Minister's approved Canine Anatomy and Identification Training (CAIT), required for the identification and investigation of suspected restricted breed dogs.

Issuance of declarations for dogs where appropriate, to ensure ongoing community safety.

Annual inspections of properties housing declared dogs to ensure full compliance with containment and control requirements.

Enforcement action, including infringement notices and prosecution, for breaches of declaration conditions.

Investigation of complaints involving menacing, dangerous, or suspected restricted breed dogs.

Registration of all declared dogs on the Victorian Declared Dog Registry.

Prompt investigation and response to all reported dog attacks.

Future Strategic Directions

To enhance Council's proactive management of high-risk dogs, the following strategic actions are planned:

Proactive engagement with owners of declared dangerous dogs to support compliance with legal obligations and improve education around containment and control.

Annual auditing of the Victorian Declared Dog Registry to ensure records are accurate, current, and reflective of any changes in dog status or ownership.



8. Domestic Animal Businesses

Horsham Rural City Council is committed to ensuring that all Domestic Animal Businesses (DABs) operating within the municipality are compliant with the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* and relevant Mandatory Codes of Practice. Council recognises that appropriate regulation and support of these businesses are essential to promoting animal welfare and responsible pet ownership in the community.

Current Profile of Registered Domestic Animal Businesses

As of 2025, there are five registered Domestic Animal Businesses operating within the Horsham municipality:

- Two (2) Pet Shops
- Two (2) Boarding Establishments
- One (1) Pound

All Domestic Animal Businesses are required to register with Council. Upon application, businesses are subject to an inspection and audit to assess compliance with the applicable Mandatory Code of Practice. Where compliance is demonstrated, a Certificate of Registration is issued.

Compliance and Enforcement Activities

Council undertakes a range of activities to ensure the ongoing compliance of registered Domestic Animal Businesses. These include:

Annual Audits - All registered DABs are subject to annual audits. Findings are recorded in a dedicated compliance register to support transparency and accountability.

Provision of Codes of Practice - Council supplies all proprietors and staff of existing and proposed DABs with the relevant Mandatory Code of Practice applicable to their business type.

Stakeholder Engagement - Council ensures proprietors are informed of and involved in any reviews or updates to the applicable Codes of Practice.

Comprehensive Registration Oversight - Council actively monitors and registers all eligible Domestic Animal Businesses within the municipality, including:

- Breeding and Rearing Establishments
- Pet Shops
- Animal Shelters and Pounds
- Boarding Establishments
- Dog Training Establishments

Response to Non-Compliance - In instances of non-compliance, proprietors are issued with written directions outlining required actions and specified timeframes. Follow-up inspections are conducted to confirm resolution, and where necessary, matters may be escalated to prosecution.

Complaint Investigation - All complaints relating to the operation of Domestic Animal Businesses are investigated promptly and appropriate enforcement action is taken where required.

Unscheduled Inspections - Council may undertake unannounced inspections in response to complaints or concerns about compliance with legislative obligations or registration conditions.



Future Strategic Directions

To strengthen its oversight and support of Domestic Animal Businesses, Council will pursue the following strategic initiatives:

Identification of Unregistered Businesses - Council will proactively monitor online platforms, social media, and local advertising channels to identify businesses that may be operating without the required registration and take appropriate enforcement action.

Community Education on the Pet Exchange Register - Council will raise community awareness of the *Pet Exchange Register* and reinforce the requirement for a valid source number when advertising, selling, or giving away cats and dogs.





9. Other Matters

Municipal Orders:



Cat Curfew. Adopted 12 December 1995 and reaffirmed 16 May 2006, the curfew requires cats to be confined to their owner's property between sunset and sunrise (s25(2)).

www.hrcc.vic.gov.au/Residents/Pets-and-animals/Pet-ownership/Section-3



Botanical Gardens Dog Ban. Introduced 4 April 2016 under s26(2)(a), the ban prohibits dogs in the gardens, with exceptions for guide and assistance dogs. An order of Council was passed on 4 April 2016 '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'.

Horsham Rural City Council Policies & Local Laws

Community Local Law 2021 www.hrcc.vic.gov.au/Our-Council/Local-Laws

- **Section 62**
Requires pet owners to remove and lawfully dispose of excrement, and keep dogs under effective control unless in a designated off-leash area.
- **Section 63**
Requires dogs to be muzzled when near or within the livestock exchange.
- **Section 66**
Regulates the number and types of animals permitted based on property zoning and land use classification.
- **Section 72**
Requires secure fencing to confine animals to their property.





10. Annual Review of Plan & Annual Reporting

In accordance with Section 68A(3) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994, Council is required to:

- a) Review the Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) annually and amend the plan as necessary to reflect changes in policy, operations, or community needs.
- b) Provide a copy of the plan to the Secretary of Agriculture Victoria by December 2025, including any amendments made during the life of the plan.
- c) Publish an evaluation of the implementation of the plan in Council's Annual Report, ensuring transparency and accountability.

Plan Review Cycle and Community Engagement

Council will undertake a comprehensive review of the DAMP every three years, with interim annual reviews to monitor progress and assess whether any amendments are required.

Prior to formal adoption, community consultation will be undertaken to ensure that the plan aligns with the expectations and values of the local community. This may include surveys, stakeholder workshops, online engagement, and targeted outreach to key community groups and industry stakeholders.

Continuous Improvement and Service Alignment

As part of the review process, Council will evaluate the effectiveness of current strategies and determine whether specific activities should be continued, modified, or discontinued. This approach ensures that Council's animal management services remain responsive to community needs, evidence-based, and aligned with best practice standards.

Expected Outcomes of Successful Implementation

Successful implementation of the Domestic Animal Management Plan should result in the following outcomes:

- Improved community safety through effective management of dangerous, menacing, and stray animals.
- Increased rates of pet registration and microchipping, supporting responsible pet ownership and reuniting lost pets.
- Enhanced animal welfare through education, enforcement, and access to appropriate services.
- Reduction in nuisance complaints relating to barking, roaming, and dog attacks.
- Stronger community engagement and awareness around responsible pet ownership.
- Greater compliance with local laws and state legislation related to domestic animals.
- Efficient and consistent enforcement and compliance activities supported by trained, accredited staff.
- Strengthened partnerships with veterinary clinics, rescue groups, and other stakeholders.
- Regular evaluation and continuous improvement of services and strategies aligned with community expectations.