

East Gippsland Shire Council

Domestic Animal Management Plan



Mayor's Message

All members of our community matter and that includes our beloved pets.

We acknowledge and recognise the positive benefits that pet ownership has for the entire community. Pets, especially dogs and cats, can reduce stress, anxiety and depression, as well as improve the owner's cardiovascular health. Pets also provide valuable companionship, especially for our older residents or those living alone.



The key is "responsible pet ownership". We must consider both animal owners and non-animal owners and their rights to use our open spaces.

The Domestic Animal Management Plan (the Plan) sets clear directions and provides guidance to ensure pets in East Gippsland are valued and treated humanely and that responsible pet ownership is supported.

The Plan provides an overview of the work that Council is currently doing in the animal management space, but more importantly, it sets some new actions that will align our work to our community's expectations.

East Gippsland's community advised us what it wants in terms of domestic animal management through our engagement with community. This feedback confirms that our community supports a cat curfew, Council's free cat cages and dogs on leash rules.

You told us there is a need for more education on responsible pet ownership, more enforcement around picking up after your pets, as well as a reasonable registration fee structure for pet owners.

The Plan has statutory requirements we must meet as well as meeting community expectations. As part of this Plan, we are dedicated to supporting and valuing pets in our community by:

- 🐾 Ensuring pet owners understand they have a responsibility to care for and protect their pets and that they do not adversely impact on other pets, people or the environment.
- 🐾 Reviewing our registration fee structure with a long term view to making it cheaper to first register puppies and kittens, prior to them being desexed.
- 🐾 Exploring a reduced initial Council registration fee paid when you adopt a desexed pet from the Council pound, operated by Animal Aid.
- 🐾 Providing information to our community to address issues that relate to our pets such as dog attack mitigation strategies, what to do about roaming cats and barking dog nuisance complaints.

We thank everyone who contributed feedback to the review of the Plan. We look forward to continuing to provide a community where responsible pet ownership is a priority, our pets are valued, and we can all use our open spaces together.



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Introduction

Council recognises the important role companion animals play in community health, wellbeing and social connection. We are committed to supporting responsible pet ownership and continually improving how we assist owners of dogs and cats.

With extensive forests, open spaces and waterways, and as a major tourist destination, East Gippsland must balance pet ownership with community expectations for a clean, safe and natural environment. Council carefully manages domestic animals to protect public safety, environmental values and amenity, while supporting the benefits pets bring to residents and visitors.



Council's animal management strategies reflect the needs of the broader community, acknowledging the interests of both pet owners and non-owners and their shared right to enjoy public spaces.

Context

The *Domestic Animals Act 1994* (the Act) requires Council to prepare a Domestic Animal Management Plan every four years. This Plan provides a strategic framework for animal management services and a method to evaluate their effectiveness and responsiveness to community needs.

Council's animal management activities are guided by the Act and supported locally by Orders of Council and provisions within Council's General Local Law. These instruments set clear expectations for responsible pet ownership, public safety and amenity. They provide the basis for education and engagement, as well as enforcement where appropriate.

Current Orders of Council (made under section 26(2) of the Act)

- 24-hour Cat Curfew — *gazetted 19 December 2002*
Requires cats to be contained to their owner's premises at all times
- Dogs on Leads in Nominated Areas — *gazetted 12 December 2019*
Requires dogs to be on-leash in specified public places unless otherwise signed

General Local Law (2017) – Part 7, Division 2: Animal Control

- Clause 88 – Keeping of Animals (allowable limits)
- Clause 89 – Permits for Keeping of Animals (over allowable limit)
- Clause 90 – Animal Excrement (requirement to remove and properly dispose of dog waste)
- Clause 91 – Animals on Beaches and Foreshore Areas

Council will review animal-related clauses of the General Local Law as part of the current review process, with any proposed changes subject to statutory consultation and decision-making requirements. Where Orders of Council or Local Law provisions are updated during the life of this Plan, Council will update associated references and guidance materials accordingly.

Council will monitor implementation of this Plan and report on progress and outcomes through its Annual Report. The Plan may be amended during its term to respond to emerging issues, legislative change or evolving community expectations.



Plan Development

This Plan has been developed to respond to the needs of East Gippsland's diverse communities and the practical challenges associated with managing dogs and cats across the municipality. Council sought to ensure the Plan is informed by evidence, local experience and an understanding of community expectations.



In identifying key issues and priorities, Council considered a range of information sources. This included best-practice guidance from relevant state agencies, a review of the previous Plan and available performance data, analysis of service requests and compliance trends, and feedback from community members and other stakeholders.

Input from the community was gathered through Council's **Your Say** online engagement platform, supported by face-to-face engagement at the **Bairnsdale Field Days**. This approach enabled Council to hear from a broad cross-section of the community, including pet owners and non-pet owners, and to capture perspectives from both urban and rural areas.

The insights gathered through this process have directly informed the priorities and actions outlined in this Plan. A summary of the key themes raised by the community is provided below.

Summary of Community Feedback

The feedback received through the consultation process highlighted a range of views, experiences and priorities relating to the management of dogs and cats across East Gippsland. While perspectives varied, several consistent themes emerged that reflect community expectations around amenity, safety, animal welfare and responsible pet ownership.

The following summary outlines the key themes raised by the community and provides insight into the issues most important to residents. These themes have helped inform the focus areas and actions included in this Plan.

Here's what we heard:

- 🐾 Strong community support for the **cat curfew** as a way to better manage roaming cats and protect amenity and wildlife.
- 🐾 Interest in **expanded access to cat trapping programs**, particularly to assist with the management of nuisance and unowned cats.
- 🐾 Broad support for **dogs being on-leash in public spaces**, reflecting expectations around safety and shared use of public areas.
- 🐾 Ongoing concerns about **dog waste**, including calls for improved disposal options such as dog waste bag dispensers.
- 🐾 **Nuisance barking** identified as an issue affecting neighbourhood amenity.
- 🐾 Clear calls for **stronger enforcement of existing animal management requirements**, particularly relating to dogs off-leash, wandering dogs, roaming cats and dog waste.
- 🐾 A consistent emphasis on the importance of **responsible pet ownership**, alongside requests for increased **education and awareness** to support positive behaviours and long-term compliance.



Our Region

East Gippsland's size, landscape diversity and dispersed settlement pattern create a distinctive context for the management of dogs and cats. With almost 80 per cent of the municipality comprising Crown land, and many townships situated within or alongside bushland, coastal and rural environments, there is a strong interface between domestic pets, wildlife and agricultural land uses. This places particular importance on responsible pet ownership and effective containment to protect community safety and our natural environment.



Dog and cat management issues vary across the municipality. In higher-density townships, common concerns include roaming animals, nuisance behaviours and impacts on neighbourhood amenity. In rural and semi-rural areas, free-roaming dogs and cats can present risks to livestock, wildlife and neighbouring properties. Council's place-based approach supports education and compliance activities that are responsive to local conditions and community expectations.

East Gippsland's strong tourism economy and seasonal population increases also influence dog and cat management. Visitors travelling with pets and short-term accommodation can increase service demand and the need for clear education around local requirements, leash controls and pet-friendly areas. Ongoing population growth driven by lifestyle migration has further contributed to increased dog and cat ownership, particularly among residents transitioning from urban environments who may require additional support to understand responsible pet ownership in rural settings.

These regional characteristics shape Council's approach to dog and cat management, requiring flexible, education-focused and place-responsive strategies that balance community wellbeing, animal welfare and the protection of East Gippsland's natural environment.

Our Animals

Dogs and cats are a significant part of life in East Gippsland, with more than 7,500 registered dogs and over 2,100 registered cats living across the municipality. These figures reflect a high level of companion animal ownership, particularly in a region characterised by dispersed townships, rural living and lifestyle migration.

Each year, Council responds to a wide range of dog and cat related matters, including wandering animals, impoundments and re-homing. In 2024/25, 234 dogs and 143 cats were impounded, with many successfully returned to their owners or re-homed through partner organisations. These outcomes highlight the importance of pet identification and registration in enabling timely reunification and positive welfare outcomes.

The number of excess animal permits and impoundments also reflects the diverse living arrangements across the region, from urban townships to rural properties, and the need for tailored education and support around responsible pet ownership. While registration data provides a useful snapshot of dogs and cats in East Gippsland, industry research indicates that the actual animal numbers are much higher, reinforcing the ongoing need for community education, engagement and accessible animal management services.

2024/25 Statistical Snapshot

Registered dogs	7,553
Registered cats	2,177
Registered declared dogs	1
Impoundments (dogs)	234
Dogs returned to owners	102
Dogs re-housed	70
Impounded dogs euthanised	43
Impoundments (cats)	143
Cats returned to owners	20
Cats re-housed	150
Impounded cats euthanised	75
Excess animal permits	142



Animal Management Services and Programs

Council's animal management services support safe, healthy and respectful communities where people and pets can coexist. Services are delivered with a strong focus on education, early intervention and responsible pet ownership, while maintaining appropriate compliance and response functions to protect community safety, animal welfare and environmental values.

Through its animal management role, Council works to balance the needs of pet owners, non-pet owners, the farming sector and the natural environment. Services are designed to minimise the impacts of dogs and cats on amenity, ensure humane care for impounded animals, and support positive outcomes through reunification, re-housing and community education. Council also provides specialist advice and regulatory oversight to support best practice animal management across the municipality.

East Gippsland Shire Council currently provides the following animal management services and programs to the community:

- 🐾 Maintenance and administration of a comprehensive dog and cat registration database
- 🐾 Proactive follow-up of registration renewals and targeted new registration campaigns
- 🐾 Response to service requests and complaints relating to dog and cat management, including barking dogs, dogs at large, dog attacks and nuisance cats
- 🐾 Collection of stray, wandering or surrendered dogs and cats
- 🐾 Oversight of the operation of Council's pound and animal shelter through a contracted service provider, ensuring impounded animals are cared for humanely in a safe, secure and hygienic environment
- 🐾 Provision of an after-hours emergency animal management service
- 🐾 Efforts to reunite impounded animals with their owners wherever possible
- 🐾 Support for the re-housing of suitable animals through our partnership with Animal Aid
- 🐾 Provision of advice and information to residents on animal management matters and responsible pet ownership
- 🐾 Distribution of education material to new pet owners at the time of registration
- 🐾 Placement and maintenance of dog litter bag dispensers in public locations across the municipality
- 🐾 Cat trapping program, including the provision of traps for the management of nuisance and unowned cats
- 🐾 Regulation, inspection and support of Domestic Animal Businesses to ensure appropriate standards of operation
- 🐾 Inspection and monitoring of restricted breed, dangerous and menacing dog premises
- 🐾 Investigation and enforcement where education and engagement have not achieved compliance
- 🐾 Preparation of briefs and prosecution of offences where required
- 🐾 Provision of animal management training and ongoing professional development for Community Laws Officers
- 🐾 Timely response to serious matters, including dog attack incidents



Priority 1: Authorised Officer Training

Council's animal management services are delivered through the Community Laws team, which plays a central role in protecting public safety, animal welfare and community amenity.

In delivering these services, Council places a strong emphasis on education, engagement and early intervention, recognising that informed and responsible pet ownership leads to better long-term outcomes. To support this approach, Community Laws Officers must be appropriately trained, confident and well supported to apply both education-focused and enforcement responses when required.



Community Laws Officers undertake regular training and professional development to ensure services are delivered safely, consistently and professionally. Training includes animal handling and restraint, animal welfare, restricted breed identification, first aid, and effective communication and conflict management. These skills support Officers to manage routine interactions as well as high-risk or challenging situations.

All new Officers complete a comprehensive induction program covering Council policies, procedures and operational practices. Ongoing capability is supported through refresher training, on-the-job coaching and individual Personal Development Plans, ensuring training remains targeted, relevant and aligned with service delivery needs.

Training and Capability Development Initiatives

Objective: To ensure Authorised Officers are skilled, confident and well-supported through regular training, induction and professional development enabling safe, consistent, education-focused animal management and appropriate enforcement across East Gippsland.

Action	Timeframe	Evaluation Method
Maintain minimum qualifications for Community Laws Officers through enrolment in Certificate IV programs	Ongoing	Training records maintained; qualification completion rates monitored
Provide ongoing professional development opportunities through Animal Welfare Victoria and Department of Agriculture training programs, where available	Ongoing	Attendance records; officer feedback; relevance of training to operational needs
Implement individual training and development plans to address specialist capability requirements	Ongoing	Review of Personal Development Plans; performance review outcomes
Support officer wellbeing and the safe management of challenging and high-risk situations	Ongoing	Incident reporting trends; wellbeing check-ins; HSW records and debrief outcomes
Strengthen investigation, evidence gathering and prosecution skills	Short to medium term	Successful completion of targeted training; quality of briefs and prosecution outcomes
Include a standing agenda item at Community Laws team meetings to improve legislative awareness and knowledge sharing	Ongoing	Meeting minutes; officer feedback on legislative confidence and awareness
Explore the value and benefit of specialist training in canine anatomy, breed identification and behaviour assessment	Medium term	Training needs analysis; cost-benefit assessment; implementation decision documented



Priority 2: Responsible Pet Ownership

Responsible pet ownership underpins all aspects of effective dog and cat management. When pets are appropriately cared for, contained, identified and supervised, the benefits extend beyond individual owners to the wider community through improved safety, amenity and animal welfare outcomes.



During the 2024/25 financial year, Council received a high volume of enquiries and complaints relating to dogs and cats, including barking dogs, dog attacks, wandering animals, stray cats and general animal management issues. These matters highlight the ongoing need for clear information, practical support and behaviour-change initiatives to help owners understand and meet their responsibilities.

Council promotes responsible pet ownership through a combination of education, accessible services and targeted compliance. This includes providing information on containment, leash requirements, registration, desexing, nuisance management, lost pets and our cat trapping program, as well as working directly with residents to resolve issues early and avoid escalation. Council also recognises the importance of delivering education that is inclusive, locally relevant and culturally appropriate.

By prioritising education and engagement, and supporting this with appropriate enforcement where required, Council aims to build long-term compliance and positive relationships between pet owners, non-pet owners and the broader community.

Responsible Pet Ownership Initiatives

Objective: To promote and encourage responsible dog and cat ownership through education, engagement and behaviour-change initiatives, supported by appropriate compliance, to improve community safety, amenity and animal welfare.

Action	Timeframe	Evaluation Method
Provide education on responsible pet ownership through Council's website, media, advertising and community events	Ongoing	At least 10 items annually
Delivery of behaviour-change initiatives that support and encourage responsible pet ownership	Ongoing	Usage monitoring; community feedback
Promote and enforce dog on-leash requirements, cat curfews and registration obligations	Ongoing	Compliance trends; patrol outcomes
Follow up unexpired registrations using education-first approaches	Ongoing	Registration renewal rates
Promote responsible cat ownership, including containment education and the free cat trapping program	Ongoing	Program uptake; roaming cat complaints
Attend community events such as the Orbost Show and Gippsland Field Days to engage directly with residents	Ongoing	Event participation; feedback
Work with Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust staff to deliver culturally appropriate education and support	Ongoing	Stakeholder feedback; engagement outcomes
Review nuisance animal response protocols to support consistent, long-term compliance outcomes	Medium term	Protocol review completed; improved resolution rates



Priority 3: Over-Population and Euthanasia Rates

Reducing the number of unwanted dogs and cats, and minimising euthanasia requires a coordinated approach across registration and identification, desexing, responsible pet ownership, and effective re-homing pathways. East Gippsland partners with the Victorian Animal Aid Trust (Animal Aid) to operate the Pound and Animal Shelter under. Animal Aid provides high standards of animal care, strong reunification and re-housing pathways, and supports Council's education-focused approach.

In recent years, East Gippsland has seen more surrenders and abandonments, often linked to behavioural challenges and economic pressures. Re-homing older animals can be more difficult due to their health needs and ongoing care costs. During 2024/25, a higher proportion of animals failed behaviour assessments, and in line with legislative requirements, these animals cannot be adopted. These factors, combined with increased intake, place pressure on re-housing capacity and euthanasia rates.

Council's focus is to prevent animals entering the system where possible (through containment, registration, identification and desexing), reunite lost pets quickly, and maximise re-homing outcomes for suitable animals. Where euthanasia is required, for welfare or safety reasons, decisions are made carefully, consistent with legislative obligations and animal welfare standards.

Recent Pound/Shelter Outcomes (All Animals)

Year	Impounded	Reclaimed	Adopted	Euthanised	Transferred
2024–25	652	131	341	153	21
2023–24	474	134	219	67	8
2022–23	572	132	145	97	4
2021–22	423	115	155	56	8
2020–21	525	122	203	92	0

Notes: Year-on-year variation reflects intake volume, suitability for re-homing, behaviour outcomes, and external factors (e.g., post-COVID pet ownership changes).

Over-Population and Euthanasia Reduction Initiatives

Objective: To reduce the number of unwanted dogs and cats entering the pound system and minimise euthanasia through desexing, identification, reunification, re-homing partnerships and community education.

Action	Timeframe	Evaluation Method
Promote Animal Aid adoption programs and highlight the benefits of adopting desexed, registered and microchipped pets	Ongoing	Adoption numbers; campaign reach
Promote responsible pet ownership with a focus on desexing, containment and identification	Ongoing	Community engagement metrics; intake trends
Require all animals to be registered and microchipped prior to release from the Pound	Ongoing	Pound release records; reunification rates
Review Council's free cat trapping program to ensure it meets community and Council needs and supports humane outcomes	Short term	Program review completed; usage and outcome data
Explore external funding and partnerships to support discounted desexing	Medium term	Grants identified or applied for; number of procedures supported
Explore the benefits and practicalities of introducing a mandatory cat desexing order	Medium term	Policy analysis; decision and implementation pathway



Priority 4: Registration and Identification

Registration and identification of dogs and cats is a fundamental component of effective animal management. It supports responsible pet ownership, enables the rapid return of lost animals to their owners, and assists Council to plan and deliver animal management services across East Gippsland.



In the **2024/25 registration period, Council recorded 7,553 registered dogs and 2,177 registered cats.** Registration and permanent identification play a critical role in achieving positive outcomes for these animals, with registered and identifiable pets far more likely to be returned home quickly, often without the need for impoundment.

Council's objective is to maximise the number of registered and identifiable dogs and cats within the municipality. This is achieved through a combination of accessible registration services, fee incentives, education and targeted compliance activities. Council recognises that not all unregistered animals are the result of deliberate non-compliance, and places a strong emphasis on education and support before enforcement.

Council offers a range of registration categories and fee structures to encourage compliance, including reduced fees for desexed animals, pensioner concessions, working dogs and animals adopted through recognised re-homing organisations. Registration fees are reviewed annually as part of Council's Fees and Charges process and are published on Council's website.

Registration and Identification Initiatives

Objective: To maximise the number of registered and identifiable dogs and cats in East Gippsland, supporting responsible ownership, rapid reunification of lost pets and effective planning of animal management services.

Action	Timeframe	Evaluation Method
Deliver annual dog and cat registration renewal program	Ongoing	Renewal rates; year-on-year registration trends
Follow up unrenewed registrations using education-first and appropriate compliance methods	Ongoing	Number of renewals following follow-up
Promote the benefits of microchipping and registration through targeted communication and media campaigns	Ongoing	Campaign reach; community feedback
Require all dogs and cats to be microchipped and registered prior to release from the Pound	Ongoing	Pound release records
Explore best-practice initiatives with key stakeholders to improve registration compliance	Medium term	Stakeholder engagement outcomes
Investigate introducing a reduced initial registration fee for animals adopted from the Pound	Medium term	Policy decision; adoption and registration rates
Explore partnerships and funding opportunities to support discounted or low-cost microchipping	Medium term	Partnership agreements; participation rates



Priority 5: Nuisance Animals

Managing nuisance behaviours associated with dogs and cats is a significant component of Council's animal management services. Nuisance issues most commonly relate to barking dogs, wandering animals, roaming cats and impacts on neighbourhood amenity. These issues can affect quality of life, create neighbour disputes and place additional demand on Council resources.



During the **2024/25 financial year, Council received over 1,200 domestic animal-related complaints and enquiries**, with barking dogs, wandering dogs and stray cats representing the most common concerns. Many matters required multiple contacts with both complainants and animal owners, reflecting the time-intensive nature of nuisance investigations and the importance of education and early intervention.

Council recognises that some animal behaviours, such as barking, are natural. However, responsible pet ownership requires animals to be managed in a way that minimises unreasonable impacts on others. Council's approach to nuisance animal management prioritises education, owner engagement and practical solutions, supported by compliance action where necessary to achieve lasting outcomes.

Local Orders of Council, Local Laws and internal procedures provide the framework for managing nuisance behaviours, including requirements for animal containment, leash controls, cat curfews and waste disposal. These tools are applied proportionately and consistently, with enforcement used where education has not achieved compliance or where impacts on amenity persist.

Nuisance Animal Management Initiatives

Objective: To minimise the impact of nuisance behaviours associated with dogs and cats by prioritising education, early intervention and owner engagement, supported by targeted compliance activities to protect neighbourhood amenity.

Action	Timeframe	Evaluation Method
Work with owners of nuisance and barking dogs to identify causes and achieve lasting behaviour and containment solutions	Ongoing	Reduction in repeat complaints
Maintain and enforce the 24-hour cat curfew Order of Council	Ongoing	Compliance trends; service request data
Maintain and enforce existing dog on-leash Orders of Council	Ongoing	Patrol outcomes; compliance levels
Provide education and guidance to animal owners on managing barking, roaming and nuisance behaviours	Ongoing	Owner engagement records; feedback
Maintain availability of dog waste bag dispensers in high-use public areas	Ongoing	Stock monitoring; community feedback
Conduct targeted patrols in high-complaint and high-use areas	Ongoing	Patrol records; complaint trends
Review and evaluate Council's approach to managing barking dog complaints, informed by best-practice models	Medium term	Resolution timeframes; user feedback
Develop education campaigns focused on preventing and managing nuisance animal behaviours	Medium term	Campaign delivery; community awareness



Priority 6: Dog Attacks

Dog attacks and rushing incidents can be highly distressing and have serious consequences for people, animals and the broader community. Council treats all reports of dog attacks and rushes as a priority and responds promptly to minimise risk and prevent further incidents.

During the **2024/25 financial year, Council received 141 dog attack and rush-related reports**. Population growth, new residential developments and increased pet ownership, particularly from people relocating from metropolitan areas, have contributed to increased service demand in this area. This demand is further influenced by East Gippsland's high visitor numbers and seasonal population increases, with visitors travelling with dogs and greater use of public spaces during peak tourism periods increasing the potential for dog-related incidents.

Council encourages all dog attacks and rushing incidents, regardless of severity, to be reported. Reporting enables Council to assess risk, identify patterns, and take appropriate action ranging from education and early intervention through to enforcement, declarations or prosecution in serious cases. Council provides a 24-hour emergency response for dog attack incidents, ensuring timely and consistent management.

Reducing dog attacks requires a balanced approach that combines education, responsible pet ownership, clear expectations in public spaces, and appropriate enforcement.

Dog Attack Prevention and Response Initiatives

Objective: To reduce the incidence and severity of dog attacks and rushing incidents through prevention-focused education, effective incident response, and appropriate enforcement to protect community safety.

Action	Timeframe	Evaluation Method
Investigate all reported dog attack and rushing incidents, apply appropriate mitigation strategies, and prosecute offences where required	Ongoing	Investigation records; enforcement and prosecution outcomes
Enforce the existing dog on-leash Order of Council	Ongoing	Patrol results; compliance trends
Deliver education campaigns focused on preventing dog attacks in homes and public spaces	Ongoing	Campaign delivery; community feedback
Monitor the Victorian Declared Dog Registry to identify dangerous and menacing dogs relocating into the Shire	Ongoing	Registry checks; updated Council records
Develop a revised standard operating procedure (SOP), including an investigation plan template for dog attack reports	Medium term	SOP completion; staff adoption and consistency
Provide clear and consistent information to dog owners, victims and affected parties through standardised information letters	Medium term	Stakeholder feedback; reduction in follow-up enquiries



Priority 7: Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Dogs

Council has an important role in managing dogs that pose an increased risk to community safety, including declared dangerous dogs, menacing dogs and restricted-breed dogs. The Act provides councils with the authority to make declarations following dog attacks, rushing incidents or where a dog meets the prescribed restricted-breed standard.



In East Gippsland, the number of declared dangerous, menacing and restricted-breed dogs remains low. This allows Council to take a proactive and preventative approach, with routine inspections, targeted education and close monitoring to ensure ongoing compliance. Declarations are not undertaken lightly and are applied only where necessary to protect people, animals and the broader community.

Council manages declared dogs through clear policies, procedures and enforcement protocols, supported by regular auditing, use of the Victorian Declared Dog Registry, and collaboration across municipalities. Education plays a key role in ensuring owners understand and meet their obligations, while compliance action is taken where risks cannot be adequately managed through education alone.

Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Dogs Initiatives

Objective: To effectively manage declared dangerous, menacing and restricted-breed dogs through monitoring, education and compliance activities that reduce risk and ensure ongoing community safety.

Action	Timeframe	Evaluation Method
Conduct random property inspections for declared dangerous, menacing and restricted-breed dogs	Ongoing	Inspection records; compliance outcomes
Assess all reported dog attack and rushing incidents to determine whether a declaration is required	As required	Incident assessments; declaration decisions
Monitor the Victorian Declared Dog Registry to identify declared dogs relocating into the Shire	Ongoing	Registry checks; updated local records
Investigate reports of suspected restricted-breed dogs	As required	Investigation outcomes; breed assessment records
Provide clear information and targeted education to owners of declared dogs about their obligations	Ongoing	Owner engagement records; reduction in repeat non-compliance
Promote community awareness of reporting pathways for dog rushes and minor incidents, including the dangerous dog hotline	Ongoing	Service request trends; community feedback
Explore the value and benefit of specialist training in canine anatomy, breed identification and behaviour assessment	Medium term	Training needs analysis; implementation decision



Priority 8: Pound Services

Council's pound and animal shelter services play a critical role in supporting animal welfare, community safety and responsible pet ownership across East Gippsland. The East Gippsland Shire Pound and Animal Shelter is located in Giles Street, Bairnsdale and is operated by the Victorian Animal Aid Trust under contract to Council.



The Pound provides short-term accommodation and care for impounded dogs and cats, including stray, wandering, surrendered and seized animals. Services are delivered in a manner that prioritises animal welfare, supports reunification with owners wherever possible, and promotes positive outcomes through re-housing when reunification is not achievable.

The Pound is open to the public Monday to Friday from 11.00am to 3.00pm, and weekends and public holidays from 10.30am to 12.30pm, ensuring reasonable community access while maintaining safe and effective operations.

Through its contracted arrangement, Victorian Animal Aid Trust delivers a range of services on Council's behalf, including the care and housing of animals, owner contact and lost pet promotion, and support for enforcement and animal welfare actions. Council works closely with the contractor to ensure services align with community expectations, animal welfare standards and Council's education-focused approach to animal management.

Pound Services Initiatives

Objective: To ensure impounded dogs and cats are cared for humanely and safely, with a focus on reunification and re-homing outcomes, supported by effective contractor oversight and continuous service improvement.

Action	Timeframe	Evaluation Method
Maintain a contracted pound and animal shelter service with Victorian Animal Aid Trust	Ongoing	Contract performance reviews; compliance with service specifications
Ensure a high standard of care, housing and welfare for all impounded dogs and cats	Ongoing	Welfare audits; incident and complaint monitoring
Support timely owner contact and reunification of impounded animals	Ongoing	Percentage of animals returned to owner; identification and registration data
Promote lost and found animals through online platforms, media and photographs	Ongoing	Website and social media activity; reunification outcomes
Support the re-housing of suitable dogs and cats through partnerships with re-homing organisations	Ongoing	Number of animals successfully re-housed
Provide secure accommodation for seized animals pending enforcement or court outcomes	As required	Compliance with legal requirements; secure holding records
Monitor pound operating hours and public accessibility to meet community needs	Medium term	Service demand analysis; community feedback
Work collaboratively with the contractor to identify opportunities for service improvement	Ongoing	Contract meetings; documented improvement actions
Work in partnership with Animal Aid to identify and support funding opportunities, including in-kind support and financial contributions, to improve pound facilities.	Ongoing	Funding opportunities explored; improvements made through grant funding



Priority 9: Domestic Animal Businesses

Domestic Animal Businesses play an important role in the care, breeding, training and boarding of dogs and cats within East Gippsland. Under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, certain animal-related businesses are required to be registered with Council and operate in accordance with prescribed Codes of Practice to ensure appropriate standards of animal welfare, health and safety.



In **2024/25**, there were **14 registered Domestic Animal Businesses operating within East Gippsland**. These businesses include dog and cat breeding establishments, boarding facilities, training organisations, shelters and other premises involved in the commercial care or management of animals.

Council's role is to regulate and support Domestic Animal Businesses through registration, inspection and education, with a focus on maintaining high animal welfare standards and supporting businesses to understand and meet their obligations. This approach balances regulatory oversight with guidance and engagement, recognising the contribution these businesses make to the community while ensuring risks to animal welfare, public safety and amenity are appropriately managed.

Domestic Animal Business Initiatives

Objective: To regulate and support Domestic Animal Businesses to operate responsibly and in accordance with required standards, promoting animal welfare, public safety and continuous improvement.

Action	Timeframe	Evaluation Method
Investigate reports of unregistered or previously unknown Domestic Animal Businesses	Ongoing	Investigation records; registration outcomes
Maintain a program of scheduled and unscheduled inspections and audits	Ongoing	Inspection reports; audit completion rates
Respond to complaints and investigate non-compliance with relevant Codes of Practice	As required	Complaint resolution timeframes; compliance outcomes
Issue Notices to Comply and follow up outstanding compliance matters	As required	Compliance follow-up records; repeat non-compliance rates
Provide guidance and specialist advice to assist businesses to meet regulatory and welfare requirements	Ongoing	Operator feedback; reduction in compliance issues
Work collaboratively with Domestic Animal Businesses to support continuous improvement and positive animal welfare outcomes	Ongoing	Inspection outcomes; documented improvement actions
Update Council's website information and referral resources, including links to Animal Welfare Victoria	Short term	Website review; stakeholder feedback



Priority 10: Animals and Emergencies

East Gippsland's size, geography and natural environment mean the region is particularly prone to major emergency events, including bushfires, floods and severe weather. Council has a critical role in supporting community safety during emergencies, including the coordination, provision and operation of emergency relief centres when required.



Council recognises that animals, particularly companion animals, are an important consideration for residents during emergencies. Pets can strongly influence decisions about evacuation, sheltering and personal safety. While animal owners have primary responsibility for planning and providing for their pets during emergencies, Council works alongside a range of agencies and organisations to support coordinated animal welfare outcomes during emergency events.

Council maintains an Emergency Animal Welfare Management Plan as part of its broader emergency management framework. This plan supports a coordinated response to the management and welfare of animals during emergencies and recovery. Council's emergency management arrangements are regularly reviewed to ensure preparedness, clarity of roles and effective coordination, and this Domestic Animal Management Plan includes a commitment to ongoing review and improvement of emergency animal management arrangements.

Animals and Emergencies Initiatives

Objective: To support animal welfare and community safety during emergency events through preparedness, coordination and alignment with Council's emergency management arrangements.

Action	Timeframe	Evaluation Method
Ensure animal management staff and resources are available to support emergency response activities	Ongoing	Emergency response debriefs; resource availability reviews
Maintain alignment between animal management operations and Council's Emergency Management arrangements	Ongoing	Plan alignment checks; internal reviews
Support a coordinated animal welfare response during emergency events in collaboration with relevant agencies	As required	After-action reviews; stakeholder feedback
Work with Council's Emergency Management Team to review and update the Emergency Animal Welfare Management Plan	Medium term	Plan review completed; endorsement and implementation monitored



Review and Revision History

Version Number	Date Approved	Approved By	Review Summary
1	17/03/26	Council	New Plan

Administrative Updates

Minor amendments to this document may be required from time to time. Where amendments do not materially alter the intent of a document, they will be made administratively and approved by the Document Owner.

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