

# DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN 2026-29



## BACKGROUND

Under Section 68A of the Domestic Animals Act 1994, every Council must prepare a domestic animal management plan, as follows:

68A Councils to prepare domestic animal management plans

(1) Every Council must, in consultation with the Secretary (of the Department of Primary Industries), prepare at 4-year intervals a domestic animal management plan.

(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 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 or local laws dealing with the management of dogs and cats in the municipal district are desirable; and

(e) provide for the review of any other matters related to the management of dogs and cats in the 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

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## Executive Summary

The West Wimmera Shire Council Domestic Animal Management Plan has been developed in accordance with Section 68A of the Domestic Animal Management Act 1994.

Following a community consultation process, numerous suggestions that were submitted have been considered and incorporated as actions within the plan. Consideration was also given toward current day legislative requirements, best contemporary practice and technical information at the officer level when developing future actions.

In outlining the actions, four common themes have merged and as a result the plan has been categorised as follows;

1. Community Safety
2. Neighbourhood Amenity, Wellbeing and Environment Protection
3. Registration and Identification, Governance and Statutory Compliance
4. Domestic Animal Management Plan Reporting and Review

## Introduction - The Purpose of a Domestic Animal Management Plan

In developing its Domestic Animal Management Plan 2026-2029, the Council will meet its legal obligations under Section 68A of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 by identifying key issues needing to be implemented through its animal management activities that will provide beneficial social, environmental, wellbeing and economic outcomes. During the process, the council has consulted with its community and stakeholders in order to identify current and emerging issues that are relevant to achieving sound animal welfare outcomes and a high level of community satisfaction.

The importance of domestic pet ownership and its positive impact on physical and mental wellbeing is well recognised. Whilst domestic pets can certainly contribute to our quality of life, it is also recognised that Council needs to maintain a balance between the competing interests that may exist within the community in relation to domestic animal matters. Therefore, this plan outlines the best outcomes to ensure a high level of community safety and amenity and to protect environmental values. Responsible pet ownership requires taking responsibility, not only in the care of the animals owned but in considering impacts on neighbours and the

community, this benefits of this apply to both domestic animal owners and others. Essentially the plan aims to identify measures upon which to achieve responsible domestic animal ownership focussing on registration, microchipping and desexing of cats and dogs, control of dogs in public places, proper behaviour of cats and dogs within neighbourhoods and protecting the environment from any impact of dogs or cats.

In adopting this plan, Council will, over the next four years, implement strategies and actions that are responsive to emerging issues and matters of importance to its community. Additionally, such strategies will identify innovative ways for council officers to meet the various statutory obligations that council has with respect to domestic animal management.

Achieving compliance will likely require a diverse and targeted approach to issues whereby numerous measures may be applied including education and awareness campaigns, pro-active initiatives/incentives, stakeholder partnerships and robust but fair compliance strategies.

## The West Wimmera Shire Council - Demographic and People

West Wimmera Shire is located in the West of Victoria, encompassing an area of 9200 square kilometres, joining the South Australian border to the west, along the Glenelg River to the south and The Big Desert to the north, making it one of the largest area size Victorian municipalities. The municipality has a community of 4006 people centred in the townships of Edenhope, Kaniva, Apsley, Goroke and Harrow. The majority of the municipal area consists of agriculture related industries, broad acre grazing and cropping, rural farming properties and community services.

West Wimmera also boasts a large variety of natural environments including the Big Desert Wilderness Park, the Little Desert National Park and about 3000 wetlands.

### Domestic Animal Statistics and Data

Key Statistics	2021/22	2024/25
Population	4006	4006
Area (km2)	9200	9200
No of Authorised Officers	1	1
<b>Dogs</b>		
No Registered	1026	619
No Impounded	47	18
No Returned to Owner	39	10
No Rehoused	2	4
No Euthanised	8	4
No Dogs Declared Menacing	0	0
No Dogs Declared Dangerous	0	0
No of Restricted Breed Dogs	0	0
<b>Cats</b>		
No Registered	222	122
No Impounded	52	45
No Returned to Owner	2	4
No Rehoused	2	11
No Euthanised	48	29

## Current Situation

Council currently employs a fulltime Local Laws Officer, who's duties amongst other things include the responsibilities of an Animal Management Officer. Through the various versions of this plan, further development has taken place with respect to actions, projects and activities.

The tasks and activities undertaken by the Animal Management Officer are vast, diverse and at times complex, often competing with other duties. In striving to achieve maximum compliance, a range of approaches are applied to support the various program area including animal registrations, dangerous and aggressive dogs, dogs in public places, nuisance animals and general compliance.

It is recognised that effectiveness can be achieved by applying the right balance of educational and compliance enforcement activities on a case-by-case scenario.

Examples of current activities include;

- Website development and hard copy educational material
- Distributing various brochures relating to the responsible keeping of dogs and cats, including the containment to their property, working dogs and cat nuisances
- Assisting animal owners with information about proper fencing and cages to contain domestic animals
- Administering the animal registration and domestic business licensing processes
- Regular cat trapping
- Regular patrols to monitor for compliance
- Responding to requests, high risk incidents and emergency scenarios

The actions outlined in this plan seek to further consolidate existing actions that have been successful in the past and to also include new and emerging actions that have been developed as a result of community consultation, service trends and observations and amended legislation. Collectively, the plan aims to address the issues, identified as important issues during the consultation process, over the next four years.



# **Domestic Animal Management Plan – 2026-2029**

A range of issues arising from the community consultation and stakeholder engagement process, service data, emerging issues and legislative requirements have informed the development of the Domestic Animal Management Plan – 2026-2029. These issues have been categorised within four main sections and sub-categories as follows;

## **1. Community Safety**

- i. Dog Attacks
- ii. Dangerous Dogs
- iii. Overpopulation and High Euthanasia
- iv. Dogs in Public Places

## **2. Neighbourhood Amenity, Wellbeing and Environment Protection**

- i. Nuisance Dogs and Cats
- ii. Open Space Needs
- iii. Dog Litter

## **3. Registration and Identification, Governance and Statutory Compliance**

- i. Authorised Officers
- ii. Animal Registration
- iii. Animal Identification and Lost Animals
- iv. Animal Desexing
- v. Domestic Animal Businesses
- vi. Dangerous Dogs
- vii. Responsible Pet Ownership
- viii. Compliance
- ix. Animal Care in Emergencies

## **4. Domestic Animal Management Plan Reporting and Review**

- i. Annual Review

# Community Safety and Wellbeing

## *(Dog Attacks, Dangerous Dogs, Overpopulation and High Euthanasia and Dogs in Public Places)*

Aim: To ensure a high level of safety to the broader community by minimising the opportunity for incidents to occur that would have a detrimental impact and to actively promote strategies and educate the community on matters that would improve responsible pet ownership and ultimately community safety outcomes.

<b>1 – COMMUNITY SAFETY AND WELLBEING</b>	
<b>1.1 – DOG ATTACKS</b>	
<b>Objective 1. Reduce the number of dog attacks</b>	
<b>Actions</b>	<b>When</b>
Conduct targeted patrols at random times in the vicinity of frequent complaint locations	Ongoing
Promote responsible dog ownership practices that may prevent incidents through all communication medium	Ongoing
Encourage the reporting of dog rushes as 'near misses' to prevent potential attacks	Ongoing
Educate the community about how to prevent dogs from escaping from private properties	Periodic and Ongoing
Develop a user-friendly online reporting process for dog attacks and dog rushes on Council website	Ongoing
<b>Objective 2. Decrease attacks on livestock</b>	
Distribute 'Responsible Ownership of a Working Dog' booklet to relevant properties	Annually
Encourage the reporting of dogs at large and dog attacks on stock in rural areas	Ongoing
Advise the farming community of Section 30 of the Domestic Animals Act relating to their right to destroy any dog or cat found near their livestock	Annually
<b>Objective 3. Improve communication and liaison with Police for reports of dog attacks</b>	
Continue Local Laws/Police Liaison for reports of serious dog attacks including awareness of Crimes Act 1958 offences relating to restricted breed and declared dogs.	Ongoing
<b>1.2 – DANGEROUS and MENACING DOGS</b>	
<b>Objective 1. Identification of Restricted Breeds, menacing and dangerous dogs</b>	
To identify and enforce the Acts provisions in respect of restricted breed dogs	Ongoing
Identification of dogs that meet criteria for declaration as either a dangerous or menacing dog	Ongoing
Process the dangerous dog declaration process following serious dog attacks	Ongoing



Conduct random inspections of declared dogs to ensure compliance with the Act and Regulations	Ongoing
Ensure all declared dogs are recorded on the VDDR	Annually
<b>1.3 OVERPOPULATION AND HIGH EUTHANASIA</b>	
<b>Objective 1: Reduction of stray/feral animals in residential areas</b>	
Promoting the availability of cat traps	Ongoing
Promote the benefits of desexing and the detrimental environmental/animal welfare impacts of not desexing animals, via media, social media, website etc	Annually
Undertake fencing assessments of properties from where dogs have escaped and implement compliance actions	Ongoing
<b>Objective 2: Collate data to research and determine any over population</b>	
Review impoundment records to monitor for repeat offenders, multiple animals, non- registration	Ongoing
Audit Council's registration database for numbers of animals owned by one entity	Ongoing
<b>Objective 3: Rehoming program</b>	
Maintain relationships and agreements with foster carers to increase rehoming outcomes	Ongoing

## Neighbourhood Amenity, Wellbeing and Environment Protection

### *(Nuisance Dogs and Cats, Open Space Needs, Dog Litter)*

Aim: To ensure that domestic animal owners exercise responsible pet ownership practices in order to prevent any disturbance, intrusion, annoyance or impact to other's enjoyment of their own property and/or their use of a public space and to protect flora and fauna from any detrimental impact that may be caused by domestic animals.

<b>2 - NEIGHBOURHOOD AMENITY, WELLBEING AND ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION</b>	
<b>2.1 NUISANCE DOGS AND CATS</b>	
<b>Objective 1: Review of off leash areas</b>	
<b>Actions</b>	<b>When</b>
Consider implementing dog control orders to provide for specific on and off leash areas in key locations	2027-28
Evaluate the need to establish dog park open space facilities within the municipality	ongoing
<b>Objective 2: Implement cat management measures to mitigate nuisance</b>	
Educate the community about the environmental impacts of roaming cats	ongoing
Consider adopting cat containment and/or confinement orders	2026-27
Promote containment to cat owners	2027-28
Create and Promote cat desexing program 'information packs'	2026 and ongoing
Provide cat enclosure and cat proof fencing booklets to repeat offenders	Ongoing
In conjunction with local veterinarians, investigate any sponsorship opportunities to conduct a subsidised cat desexing program	2026 and ongoing
<b>Objective 3: Implement measures to mitigate barking dog nuisances</b>	
Educate community about health impacts of barking dog nuisances	2026-27 and ongoing
Provide information to affected persons to assist resolution, including barking dog collars	2026 and ongoing
Advise affected persons of the legal process required to satisfy a common law nuisance and make such information readily available	2026
Access Neighbourhood mediation services to assist with dispute resolution	As required
<b>2.2 OPEN SPACE NEEDS</b>	
<b>Objective 1: Identify opportunities to maximise public space enjoyment by all users</b>	
Investigate opportunities to establish open range off leash spaces to assist with dog socialisation	2026-27
Continue to reinforce and monitor for compliance with dogs being under effective control and/or any other dog control orders	Ongoing
Establish a brand to promote 'safe and shared spaces' for all of community	2026

Ensure that adequate dog controls signage is installed and maintained at key locations; maintain a register of such	2026-27
<b>2.3 DOG LITTER</b>	
<b>Objective 1: To prevent offensive and unsanitary conditions and the loss of enjoyment by public space users</b>	
Provide dog poo bag dispensers in high use parks and at public toilets	Ongoing
Provide biodegradable litter disposal bags suitable for use in any bin	Ongoing

## Registration and Identification, Governance and Statutory Compliance

***(Authorised Officers, Animal Registration, Animal Identification and Lost Animals, Animal Desexing, Domestic Animal Businesses, Dangerous Dogs, Responsible Pet Ownership and Animal Care in Emergencies)***

Aim: To ensure that domestic animal owners exercise responsible pet ownership practices in order to prevent any disturbance, intrusion, annoyance or impact to other's enjoyment of their own property and/or their use of a public space and to protect flora and fauna from any detrimental impact that may be caused by domestic animals.

<b>3 - REGISTRATION AND IDENTIFICATION, GOVERNANCE AND STATUTORY COMPLIANCE</b>	
<b>3.1 AUTHORISED OFFICERS</b>	
<b>Objective 1: To ensure adequate skill, competency and capacity levels for Authorised Officers</b>	
<b>Actions</b>	<b>When</b>
Update the Animal Management Officer Position Description to include the minimum qualifications for the role; Certificate 1V Government (Statutory Compliance) and Certificate 1V Animal Control and Regulation	2027
Investigate opportunities for ongoing professional development and formal training for Animal Management Officer	Ongoing
Investigate establishing a reciprocal 'resource sharing' arrangement with neighbouring shires in order to deal with peak service demands, emergencies, absenteeism, assist with training/induction etc	2027-28
Incorporate training documentation into operational and officer induction manuals	2026- 27
Conduct regular reviews of key procedures relating to dog attacks/rushes, dogs at large, barking dogs, unregistered dogs and nuisance cats	annual
Undertake a regular analysis of resource capacity to undertake the full breadth of AMO duties	2026 and annual
<b>3.2 ANIMAL REGISTRATIONS</b>	
<b>Objective 1: To maximise the number of dog and cat registrations</b>	
Update website to provide online registration links to all correspondence, educational and promotional material that is easily accessed by residents	2026
Record reuniting data lodged with council by vets or foster carers and implement registration procedures	Ongoing
Notify pet owners of registration requirements by various means, i.e. letter drop, social media, /door knocks signage, A-Frames	Ongoing
Identify any unpaid registrations and implement compliance action	Ongoing
Periodic audit of properties without an animal registration to detect unregistered animals	Ongoing/Annual

Periodic audit and visit to properties that have advertised dog/cat sales (not a Domestic Animal Business) to collect registration data	Ongoing
Issue Notice to Comply in respect of unregistered animals requiring application or registration	Ongoing
Consider a periodic registration amnesty, whereby fines are waived if owners of unregistered animals register their animal	Prior to Annual Registration Period - Ongoing
<b>3.3 ANIMAL IDENTIFICATION AND LOST ANIMALS</b>	
<b>Objective 1: To maximise the identify and reunite lost animals</b>	
Investigate officers acquiring microchip implanter qualifications to capture microchipping opportunities in the field	2026
<b>3.4 ANIMAL DESEXING</b>	
<b>Objective 1: Identify opportunities to increase the number of desexed animals</b>	
In conjunction with local veterinarians, investigate any sponsorship opportunities to conduct a subsidised dog and cat desexing program	2026-27
<b>3.5 DOMESTIC ANIMAL BUSINESSES</b>	
<b>Objective 1: Ensure compliance of regulated entities such as Domestic Animal Businesses with regards to identification, appropriate notification and registration requirements of dogs and cats</b>	
Identify unregistered dog and cat breeding establishments by monitoring various communication and media platforms	Ongoing
Ensure Domestic Animal Business compliance and registration in accordance with the relevant Code of Practice relating to business type	Ongoing
Regularly audit and data cleanse registration database to detect sources of multiple registrations	Annual
Visit/contact sellers of animals to ensure compliance of providing microchipping requirements with each sale	Ongoing
Follow up notifications from Domestic Animal Businesses for animals sold to residents of Council	Ongoing
Follow up notifications from Veterinarians or shelters involved in the reuniting of any animal	Ongoing
<b>3.6 DANGEROUS DOGS</b>	
<b>Objective 1: Ensure compliance of the Dangerous Dogs provisions of the Domestic Animal Act 1994 and relevant regulations and Codes of Practice</b>	
Regularly audit the compliance of declared Dangerous Dogs	Ongoing
<b>3.7 RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERSHIP</b>	
<b>Objective 1: Promote and implement Responsible Pet Ownership Initiatives</b>	
Publish and promote to the community key messages derived from service trends, common officer observations, regular sources of complaint	Ongoing

Conduct regular reviews of Council's website to ensure relevant and contemporary information is listed that can assist and/or educate the community	Ongoing
Promote key responsible pet ownership messages to primary school children through educational packages	Annual
Provide educational packages highlighting the detrimental social, safety, wellbeing and environmental impact of irresponsible dog and/or cat ownership	2027-28
Provide a specific educational package relating to dog and cat confinement along with useful self-help resources	2026
<b>3.8 COMPLIANCE</b>	
<b>Objective 1: Compliance Framework – to ensure compliance outcomes through implementing fair and reasonable compliance actions</b>	
Develop a Compliance Strategy to inform compliance actions for corresponding events/incidents	2026
Maintain a compliance database to record and monitor informal and Official Warnings, Notices to Comply, Infringements and Prosecutions	Ongoing
Investigate safety options to ensure lone worker safety for Animal Management Officer	2026
<b>3.9 ANIMAL CARE IN EMERGENCIES</b>	
<b>Objective 1: Develop and Maintain an Animal Emergency Management Plan, policies and procedures for domestic animals in emergencies</b>	
Regularly review the Animal Emergency Management Plan and associated procedures, practice notes etc; ensure this plan is updated and integrated into council Emergency Management Plan	Annual
Refresher/debrief and induction training to be conducted with officers.	Annual
<b>4 - DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN REPORTING AND REVIEW</b>	
<b>4.1 ANNUAL REVIEW</b>	
<b>Objective 1: Measure the effectiveness of activities undertaken and any opportunities for change/improvements</b>	
<b>Actions</b>	<b>When</b>
Conduct annual review of current Domestic Animal Management Plan and make minor amendments	Annual
Publish an evaluation of the implementation of the plan in its annual report	Annual
Maintain an inventory of emerging issues for consideration and adoption into any revised/new plan	Ongoing
Prepare submissions and reports to council for any periodic amendment to the plan and lodge same with the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions	As required
Develop new Domestic Animal Management Plan 2029-2033	2028-29