



Companion Animal Management Plan

CONTENTS

1. Purpose	3
2. Scope.....	3
3. General Principles.....	3
4. Promoting Responsible Pet Ownership	4
5. Companion Animal Management:.....	4
5.1 Registration and Identification.....	4
5.2 Animal Welfare	5
5.3 Impounding Animals:	5
5.4 Nuisance Animals and Barking Dogs:.....	6
5.5 Dangerous Dogs and Restricted Breeds:	7
5.6 Dog Off Leash Area	8
5.7 Cat Management	8
5.8. Community Education and Enforcement	9
5.9. Community Consultation.....	9
5.10 Review.....	9
6. Key issues areas.....	10
6.1 Identification and Registration	10
6.2 Animal Welfare	11
6.3 Public Safety	12
6.4 Nuisance Animals and Barking Dogs	13
6.5 Impounding Animals	14
6.6 Dog Off Leash Facility	15

1. Purpose

- To recognise that companion animals form part of the Wentworth Shire community, contributing to quality of life.
- To ensure that the needs of all community members, including companion animals owners and their pets are met fairly and equitably.
- To strive for a high level of responsible pet ownership throughout the community via consultation and integrated management.

2. Scope

Wentworth Shire Council's Companion Animals Management Plan aims to achieve high levels of responsible pet ownership through consultation with the community.

This plan has been produced to manage key issues surrounding companion animals and to provide guidance for the attainment of identified goals.

The introduction of the Companion Animals legislation and changing community expectations has meant that new approaches by local authorities are now required.

Wentworth Shire Council recognises the importance of such a plan as the key strategy in the effective management of companion animals in the community.

3. General Principles

The aim of implementing a Companion Animal Management Plan is to provide guidance to Council in relation to fulfilling its statutory responsibilities under the Companion Animals Act 1998 (the Act). This is achieved by setting clear objectives and priorities and a program of implementation.

Part 1 of the Plan provides the strategic framework for key areas. It examines the relevant issues and responsibilities in relation to the management of companion animals.

Part 2 states the action plans to achieve the identified objectives and goals as outlined in the strategic framework. Part 2 also sets forth the related performance indicators.

The key areas of the Plan are:

- Identification and Registration.
- Animal Welfare.
- Public safety.
- Nuisance Animals and Excessive Barking.
- Impounding Animals.
- Dog off Leash Facility.

The aims are:

- A high level of responsible pet ownership.
- To ensure that the needs of all community members, including companion animals owners and their pets are met fairly and equitably.

- To increase the number of animals microchipped and registered - thereby reducing the number of impounded animals.
- To shift the focus away from enforcement based animal control to one of education and community responsibility.
- To reduce the negative impacts from companion animals on the community and the environment.
- To ensure that resources for the control, management and care of companion animals are maintained.
- To ensure that procedures utilised for the enforcement of the Act are based on community education and are fair and equitable.

4. Promoting Responsible Pet Ownership

Owning a pet comes with responsibility to both the pet and the community. Council aims to encourage pet owners to be responsible for their pet's actions through a two pronged approach of education and enforcement.

Being a responsible pet owner involves:

- Ensuring the pet is properly identified and registered.
- The provision of health and welfare needs for the pet.
- Ensuring the minimisation of nuisance behaviour and negative impacts on the community and the environment.
- Preventing pets from entering prohibited areas.
- Ensuring that dogs are under effective leash control whilst in public.

5. Companion Animal Management:

5.1 Registration and Identification

Objectives

- To encourage the permanent microchip identification of companion animals.
- To facilitate the prompt return of lost or stray companion animals to their owners.
- To provide an efficient service for customers updating or registering details on the NSW Companion Animal Register.

Background

Anecdotal evidence suggests that there are a large number of companion animals that are not microchipped or lifetime registered within the Wentworth Shire Community.

The management of companion animals is highly dependent on the animals being properly identified. Identification also leads to the ability to return the animals and for the owners to be accountable under the Act.

Actions

Council will encourage pet owners to:

- Microchip their animals before 12 weeks of age, have their pets collared and tagged.
- Register their pets by 6 months of age, pursuant to the Act.
- Notify Council of any changes relating to identification information.
- Notify Council if the pet is missing or dies.

Strategies to increase the number of microchipped and registered pets will include:

- Community education promoting the benefits of the 2 step identification process.
- Encouraging pet owners to notify Council of changes of contact details.
- Implement “door knock” registration checks with adequate local media coverage.

5.2 Animal Welfare

Objectives:

To encourage companion animal owners to provide appropriate mental and physical challenges for their pets to improve animal welfare and reduce adverse impact on the general community.

Background:

Many pet problems arise due to the pet’s frustration or boredom causing barking, chasing and jumping. The provision of cognitive, dietary, physical, sensory and social stimuli may improve physiological well being and alleviate such problems.

Animal welfare is defined as providing appropriate nutrition, shelter, exercise and interaction to enhance the physical and mental wellbeing of the animal.

Council aims to work with local veterinary clinics and companion animal stakeholders to ensure animal welfare issues in the community are addressed.

Actions:

Strategies for promoting animal welfare include:

- Encouraging pet owners to provide adequate health and welfare needs for their pet.
- Promote desexing of all “non-breeding” pets to reduce unwanted pets and their euthanasia.

5.3 Impounding Animals:

Objectives:

- To reduce the number of animals impounded and increase the return to owner rate.
- To facilitate the prompt return to owners of seized animals.
- To provide appropriate pound facilities and services for the surrender of animals.

Background:

A number of companion animals are impounded each year. Council aims to reduce the number of animals impounded, and increase the number of pets returned to their owners.

All animals collected or impounded by Council's Local Laws Officer that are microchipped and registered shall be returned to their owners.

Animals collected or impounded that are not properly microchipped or registered shall be taken to Council's pound. All injured animals shall receive veterinary care.

Council provides a surrender service for animals. Council aims to encourage the surrender of animals for reasons such as aggression, but does not encourage the surrender of animals where simple behaviour modification is sufficient.

Animals not collected or adopted are held for statutory periods. At the conclusion of these periods animals are humanely euthanised.

Actions:

Strategies to address issues concerning impounding animals include:

- Ensuring the return of identified animals as quickly as possible to their owners.
- Encouraging owners to identify and microchip their pets to assist and expedite their return should they be impounded.
- Encourage staff and authorised identifiers to record as much owner contact information as possible to facilitate their prompt return.
- Ensure animals are well cared for in Council's pound.
- Ensure that euthanasia is conducted in an ethical and humane manner.

5.4 Nuisance Animals and Barking Dogs:

Objectives:

- Reduce the number of complaints received due to barking dogs and take the necessary steps to reduce noise pollution.
- Develop strategies that reduce the incidence of nuisance animals and barking dogs.

Background:

Council recognises that noise created by animals can cause aggravation, discomfort and ultimately conflict.

Barking dog complaints account for a large proportion of noise complaints received by Council.

Council aims to resolve animal noise complaints efficiently and effectively and also aims to reach an amicable outcome for all parties involved.

Under section 21 of the Companion Animals Act 1998 a dog is a nuisance if it:

- Is habitually at large.
- Makes noise by barking or otherwise, that persistently occurs to such a degree that it unreasonably interferes with the peace, comfort or convenience of any person in any premises.
- Repeatedly defecates on any person's property.
- Repeatedly chases any other person, animal or vehicle.
- Endangers any person or animal.
- Repeatedly causes substantial damage to anything outside the property on which it is ordinarily kept.

Actions:

Strategies for addressing animal noise problems within the community include:

- Gaining a better understanding of animal noise problems.
- Provide advice and also work with animal owners to reduce animal noise.
- Review the current animal complaints procedure.
- Aim to reach an amicable outcome for all parties.
- Develop education packages in relation to nuisance animals.

5.5 Dangerous Dogs and Restricted Breeds:

Objectives:

- Minimise the threat to public safety from dangerous dogs and restricted breeds.
- Reduce dog attack numbers.
- Monitor, manage and control the keeping of restricted breeds.

Background:

Council recognises its obligation under the Act to investigate reports of aggression in dogs and use preventative powers contained in the Act to control and manage animal aggression.

Under the provisions of the Act Council will:

- Declare a dog dangerous if it attacks **without** provocation or trespass, a person.
- Conduct annual inspections of the premises where the restricted breeds are kept to ensure compliance with the legislation.
- Where appropriate and suitable, initiate legal action to ensure the safe keeping of restricted breed dogs to ensure public safety.

Action:

In order to reduce the number of animal attacks and minimise threat to public safety, Council will:

- Promptly respond to reports of animal attack.
- Declare dogs dangerous pursuant to the provisions of the Act.
- Ensure compliance with the Act in regard to the conditions for the keeping of restricted dogs.
- Investigate the implementation of a school education program for children covering behaviour around animals, to reduce attacks.

5.6 Dog Off Leash Area

Objective:

- Investigate a suitable dog off leash area.
- Patrol and enforce prohibition of dogs in public places.

Background:

Council recognises the benefit of an off leash area for dogs. Dogs need to be socialised with other dogs and humans. Exercise can play a part in alleviating unwanted behaviour traits.

A designated off leash area would encourage pet owners to use this specific area and not public parks and recreation areas for such activities.

Actions:

Council will:

- Investigate suitable locations for a designated off leash area.
- Encourage pet owners to utilise the facility rather than parks and recreation areas.
- Educate the community accordingly.

5.7 Cat Management

Objectives:

- To increase the number of identified, registered and desexed cats.
- To minimise the impact of cats on wildlife and public amenity.

Background:

Cats can be a nuisance to surrounding neighbours and can be a threat to native wildlife. Pursuant to section 31 of the Act, a cat is defined as a nuisance if:

- It makes persistent noise.
- Repeatedly damages anything outside the property on which it is ordinarily kept.

New cats are now required to be identified and registered under the Act.

Actions:

Council aims to improve the management of cats by:

- Promoting desexing.
- Educate owners of benefits of confining cats at night to protect wildlife and the cat.
- Increase public awareness of the need to identify and register cats and responsible cat ownership.

5.8. Community Education and Enforcement

Council recognises the benefits of an education program supported by an appropriate level of law enforcement.

Voluntary compliance is achievable through education and awareness programs.

A combination of education and law enforcement will be applied to achieve responsible companion animal management.

5.9. Community Consultation

Prior to adopting this plan, Council will seek input from veterinary personnel within the local area, animal welfare stakeholders and the community at large. The plan is to be placed on public display and submissions sought from all interested parties.

5.10 Review

Council will review this Plan every four years and as required to encompass legislative amendments.

The four yearly review processes will include consultation with the wider Wentworth Shire Community, veterinary personnel and animal welfare stakeholders.

The amended plan shall be placed on public display for submissions.

ACTION PLANS AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**6. Key issues areas****6.1 Identification and Registration**

Aim	Priority	Action	Performance Indicator
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of companion animals microchipped and lifetime registered • Increased community awareness of the benefits of microchipping and registering their animals 	HIGH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement education programs to advise residents of the process (and benefit) of Microchipping and lifetime registering their animal. • Ensure all information concerning identification and registration of animals is efficiently flowing to and from Wentworth shire Council • All fees obtained through the companion animal's registration system shall be solely dedicated to the control and management of companion animals • Education programs to remind companion animal owners to notify of changes of ownership, address or other details • Liaise with and assist local veterinary clinics in raising community awareness about identification and registration • Implement "door knock" community registration checks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in number of microchipped and lifetime registered animals in the community • Decrease in the number of animals impounded • Prompt return of identified animals to their owners

6.2 Animal Welfare

Aim	Priority	Action	Performance Indicator
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of desexed companion animals • Encourage owners to be actively responsible for their animals' welfare • Reduced numbers of companion animals euthanised or going to Council's pound 	HIGH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement education programs that promote the benefits of desexing companion animals • Investigate and liaise with local veterinary clinics about holding desexing days. • Encourage and educate companion animal owners to appropriately house and care for their animals. • Encourage companion animal owners to provide appropriate mental and physical challenges for their animal to improve animal welfare and reduce adverse impact on the general community. • Ensure Council staff regard animal welfare a high priority in all dealings with the community and their companion animals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of desexed companion animals in the community • Increased community awareness about the benefits of desexing their animals • Decrease the number of companion animals euthanised or taken to Council's pound.

6.3 Public Safety

Aim	Priority	Action	Performance Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the potential threat to public safety by management of aggressive animals • Reduce incidence of dog attacks 	HIGH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure an efficient and effective response to reported dog attacks. • Investigate reports of animal aggression. • Implement a school education campaign to teach children how to behave around animals. • Effectively monitor, manage and control the keeping of identified restricted breeds of dogs. • Declare dogs as dangerous where necessary under the provisions of the Companion Animals Act. • Conduct annual inspections of the premises where restricted breeds of dogs are kept to ensure compliance with the legislation. • Gain a better understanding of the status of dog aggression and causes for attacks in the Wentworth community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced incidence of dog attacks. • Increase community compliance with dangerous dog control requirements. • Efficient response to reported dog attack.

6.4 Nuisance Animals and Barking Dogs

Aim	Priority	Action	Performance Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To minimise the adverse affects of animal noise on the community. • Gain a better understanding of animal noise problems. 	MEDIUM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review procedures for dealing with animal noise and nuisance complaints. • Respond to animal complaints efficiently. • Provide advice to owners about ways they can try and stop dogs from barking. • Continue to provide Citronella anti-barking collars available for hire from Council. • Encourage companion animal owners to provide appropriate mental and physical challenges for their animal to improve animal welfare and reduce adverse impact on the general community. • Intermittently vary Local Laws Officers working hours in an attempt to deal more effectively with after hours noise from barking dogs. • Remind owners that it is their responsibility to adequately confine their animal to their property. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced number of complaints received due to barking dogs and nuisance animals.

6.5 Impounding Animals

Aim	Priority	Action	Performance Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the number of animals impounded. • Ensure the prompt return of identified animals to their owners. 	HIGH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage the community to lifetime register and microchip their animals. • Encourage companion animal owners to notify of changes of address and details that help facilitate the prompt return of animals. • Maintain appropriate facilities for the surrender of animals. • Maintain a patrol and collection service for stray animals. • To deal with the euthanasia of animals in a sensitive and ethical manner. • Attempt to ensure the safe and responsible adoption of animals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of animals returned to their owners. • Reduce the current euthanasia rate from 81% to 60%. • Increase the number of microchipped and registered animals.

6.6 Dog Off Leash Facility

Aim	Priority	Action	Performance Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of a new leash free facility. • Once implemented, ensure dog owners use the off leash facility appropriately. 	MEDIUM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate alternative sites for a new leash free facility. • Educate the community about the benefits of using leash free areas. • Educate the community about the correct use and their responsibilities whilst using the leash free facility. • Patrol of leash free area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in the number of dog owners using public parks and recreation areas as off leash areas. • Dog owners using the new facility in a responsible manner.