



Domestic Animal Management Plan 2025-29

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About Us – Colac Otway Shire

The Colac Otway Shire is a richly diverse area located less than two hours west of Melbourne, linked by rail and a dual highway.

Colac Otway is one of the most picturesque municipalities in Victoria, from its volcanic lakes, craters and plains in the north, to the lush forests of the Otway Ranges to the iconic Great Ocean Road coastline.

A large proportion of the southern half of the shire is National Park, boasting waterfalls, bushwalking and some of the most significant environmental assets found in Australia.

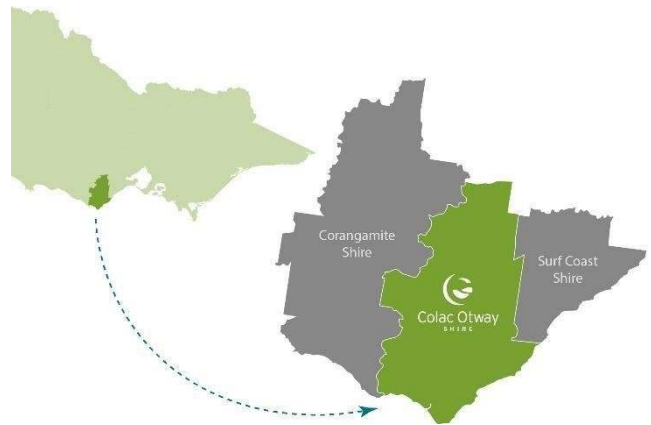
The northern area of Colac Otway features equally significant environmental features including Lake Colac, Lake Corangamite and the surrounding Ramsar wetlands, overlooked by Red Rock Reserve.

Over 21,000 people currently live in the Colac Otway Shire, with about 13,000 people living in the shire's major industrial, commercial and service centre of Colac (Colac and Elliminyt). The original inhabitants of the area are the Gulidjan people (from the Colac region) and the Gadubanud people (from the southern area of the municipality).

Colac's population is forecast to reach 20,000 by 2050, and Colac Otway Shire has a strategic plan to guide sustainable residential growth and infrastructure development.

The second major urban centre is Apollo Bay, which has a permanent population of 1,800 (Apollo Bay and Marengo) that swells to more than 15,000 during the busy tourist season. Many are accompanied by their pets.

The Shire has a land area of 3,433 square kilometers with a population density of 0.6 people to 2.5 acres. In 2024 there were 4,146 registered dogs and 1,421 registered cats.



Our Current Situation

Being a smaller rural council, Colac Otway Shire has a small local laws team that performs a broad range of animal management services amongst its many other regulatory responsibilities.

In addition to domestic animal management, responsibilities include administration of general local laws, parking control (Colac and Apollo Bay), litter enforcement, street furniture/footpath permits, infringement prosecutions, administration duties, pound operations and numerous other activities.

This broad range of responsibilities can significantly impact the ability of officers to attend to all animal management related matters promptly.

Our Services

Initiating registration and renewal process	4,146 Dogs registered and 1,421 cats registered in 2024-2025.
Identification and registration	Annually, shire wide. Specific locations when needed.
Responding to wandering/at large dogs	As soon as possible. Either returning to owner or impounding.
Responding to barking dog complaints	Issue complaints with noise log to diarise dates and times. Educate owners on best ways to manage barking dogs.
Animal welfare	Investigate complaints and where necessary assist and report to RSPCA.
Dog attacks/menacing	Investigate immediately, including after hours.
Routine street and park patrols	Inspect random streets daily and known problem areas weekly.
Pound	Receiving surrendered dogs and cats, rehousing wherever possible. Making cat traps available for capturing wandering, abandoned or feral cats. Pound operation, cleaning animal pens, minimum twice daily feeding and care of animals, microchipping, impounding and release of animals. Staffed seven days a week. 8.30am – 5.00pm by appointment only.
After hours emergency service	On call officer available after hours.

Domestic Animal Statistics 2023/24

Registered dogs	4,249	Dogs euthanised	28	Cats returned to owner	37
De-sexed dogs	3,327	Dogs declared menacing	3	Cats rehoused	45
Dogs returned home without impoundment	122	Dogs declared dangerous	3	Cats euthanised	179
Dogs impounded	197	Restricted breed dogs	0	Registered domestic animal businesses	5
Dogs returned to owner	144	Registered cats	1,415	Number of dog related complaints	252
Dogs rehoused	22	De-sexed cats	1399	Number of cat related complaints	38
Dogs euthanised	28	Cats impounded	266		

Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP)



The purpose of this plan is to assist Council with setting future guidelines and implementing changes surrounding domestic animal management.

The Plan sets out Council's current policies surrounding domestic animal ownership and documents any planned changes over the next four years to best address community needs.

This includes engaging the community to improve responsible pet ownership and provide the community with a clear understanding of Council's expectations of pet ownership. In doing so, Council hopes to achieve a higher rate of compliance in relation to animal registrations and a reduction in nuisance animals.

The training of Local Laws Officers is an integral component of the plan so that they can best administer the requirements of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 and reduce the impact of nuisance animals of the community.

This Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) has been developed in accordance with the requirements set out under the Domestic Animals Act 1994. The plan is assembled from a number of sources including discussions with Council's Local Laws Officers, consultation with stakeholders such as the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority (GORCAPA), local veterinary clinics, RSPCA and a review of the previous plan.

All objectives of this current DAMP are reported annually to the State Government and published in Council's annual report as required by the Act.

1.0 Our People

The Colac Otway Shire Local Laws team currently comprises a Coordinator, four full time officers and an administration officer. All officers have a range of responsibilities and operate under a variety of legislation. Three of the full-time officers commenced employment in late 2019, the fourth officer commenced mid-2024.

Officers 1, 2, 3 and 4 have completed a Certificate IV in Animal Control and Regulation (RUV40104) and Certificate IV in Government Statutory Compliance PSP41404. Officer 5 will commence school/training in 2026.

Officers 2 and 4 have completed microchipping implantation training in 2024 and 2022 respectively.

The training options offered to officers undertaking Animal Management duties are annually reviewed to ensure relevant and up to date training and knowledge is available.

Officers are eligible to attend industry related seminars, conferences and briefings from Animal Welfare Victoria, Australian Institute of Management, RSPCA and other relevant associations.

Council is committed to maintaining and enhancing staff training.

The following table sets out the current training and qualifications of the animal management officers:

Training/Qualification	Authorised Officer	Current	Planned
Certificate IV in Animal Control and Regulation	Officers 1, 2, 3 & 4 Officer 5	Qualified	2025
Certificate IV in Government (Statutory Compliance)	Officers 1, 2, 4, & 4 Officer 5	Qualified	2025
Microchipping Implanters	Officers 2, 4 & 5	Qualified	
OH&S Dealing with Aggressive Customers, Working in Remote Areas, and Defensive Driving	All Officers	Provided to all staff	Annually
Industry Training – Animal Assessment, Prosecutions, Statement Taking and Evidence Gathering	All Officers	Provided to all staff	Ongoing and provided when available
Industry Training – Time Management	All Officers	Provided to all staff	Ongoing and provided when available
Customer Service Training – Conflict Resolution, Telephone Protocols	All Officers	Provided to all staff	Ongoing and provided when available
Animal Welfare – Agriculture Victoria Training and Information Days	All Officers	Coordinator determines attendance of selected staff	When available
Canine Anatomy and Identification Training Day	Officer 1	Provided	Completed
Dog Bite Prevention Training	Officers 2, 3, 4 & 5	Provided	Completed
First Aid and CPR	All Officers	Provided	CPR – Annually First Aid – every three years

1.1 Objective One

Develop a training plan that clearly identifies minimum training requirements and any additional training needs that should be undertaken by animal management officers.

Activity	When	Evaluation/Outcome
Identify minimum training requirement and additional training that should be undertaken by Authorised Officers in application of <i>the Domestic Animals Act 1994</i> and the <i>Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986</i> to ensure they can properly administer and enforce the Acts.	Annually	Authorised Officers will undertake training for continuous improvement in line with legislative changes. All staff meet performance standard in annual employee planning and performance reviews.
All Authorised Officers to attend First Aid training or undertake a refresher course.	2025 and ongoing	New staff to undergo training within 12 months of employment, and all staff to have refreshed training every three years.
All new officers will initially accompany a trained officer to provide accurate information and training for the job.	Ongoing	Review feedback from officers regularly to ensure effective development.
Officers to follow up any identified areas where additional training is required and provide feedback to improve skills.	Ongoing	Review at quarterly team meetings.
Develop a training plan in consultation with management and staff.	Bi-annually	Documentation to be finalised and incorporated into an approved council training policy.

1.2 Objective Two

Develop and maintain a training register for individual officers detailing completed and proposed training by December each year.

Activity	When	Evaluation/Outcome
Create a spreadsheet listing each officer's name and their completed training along with proposed training.	Annually	People and Culture to review and coordinate and deliver any proposed training opportunities.

2.0 Registration and Identification of our Animals

This section outlines programs, services and strategies to encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats in accordance with Section 68A(2)(c)(v) of the Domestic Animals Act (1994), and addresses sections 68A(2)(a),(c)(i),(c)(ii),(d),(f) of the Act.

All cats and dogs over the age of three months must be registered with the Colac Otway Shire as per State legislation. Newly registered animals must also be microchipped before registration can be accepted. Registrations must be renewed annually by the 10th of April.

Under the Domestic Animals Act 1994, animal registration periods expire on the 10th of April each year.

Animal renewal notices are sent out every year, allowing pet owners to renew their pet's registration via the internet, via the phone or in person.

Council audits the registration renewal process every year to ensure animal registration is renewed.

Animals found unsecured or at large from their property that are identifiable by means of an allocated Colac Otway Shire identification tag have a higher chance of being reunited with their owners and therefore not impounded.

When dogs and cats are outside of the owners' premises, Colac Otway Shire identification tags must be worn as outlined in Section 20 of the Domestic Animals Act (1994).

The registration of animals provides the Shire with an understanding of the level of pet ownership in the community and in turn helps the Shire plan for services, information and programs associated with pets in particular areas of the community.

2.1 Our Fees

Dogs	Full Fee	Pensioner Reduced Fee
Microchipped only	\$155.00	\$77.50
Microchipped and de-sexed	\$35.00	\$17.50
Over 10 years of age	\$50.00	\$25.00
Dogs kept for breeding by the proprietor of a domestic animal business conducted on a registered premises	\$50.00	\$25.00
Dogs registered with an applicable organisation, if their owners are members of the applicable organisation with the dog registered (proof required). Dogs Victoria, Master Breeders Associations, Responsible Pet Breeders	\$50.00	\$25.00
Dogs that have undergone obedience training which complies with the regulations	\$50.00	\$25.00
Dogs kept for working stock	\$33.00	\$16.50
Declared dangerous and menacing dog	\$170.00	No reduction available

Cats	Full Fee	Pensioner Reduced Fee
Microchipped only	\$132.00	\$66.00
Microchipped and de-sexed	\$25.00	\$12.50
Over 10 years of age	\$50.00	\$25.00
Cats kept for breeding by the proprietor of a domestic animal business conducted on a registered premises	\$50.00	\$25.00
Cats registered with an applicable organisation, if their owners are members of the applicable organisation with the cat registered (proof required). Australia National Cats, Feline Control Council, Responsible Pet Breeders, The Governing Council of the Cat Fancy Australia	\$50.00	\$25.00

The above fees apply to the 2025/26 financial year and will be adjusted by Council each year as part of the annual budget adoption process.

2.2 Registered Animals

Colac Otway Shire	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Dogs registered	4,289	4,279	4,349	4,249	4,146
Cats registered	1,483	1,450	1,479	1,415	1,421



3.0 Our Policies and Procedures

On 1 November 2023, Council approved Cat Confinement Order No. 1. The purpose of the Order is to keep cats confined within the property between the hours of sunset and sunrise (7.00pm to 7.00am).

The owner of any cat within the Shire must confine the cat to the boundaries of the owner's property between the hours of sunset and sunrise, by either containing the cat to:

- The owners' dwelling or another building on the property; or
- An escape proof structure located outside the dwelling or other building on the property.

Under the Domestic Animals Act 1994 Council provides:

- Registration and identification for dogs and cats, including renewal follow ups
- Registration and identification of menacing and restricted breed dogs including renewal and random inspections

Council provides the following education and information services for the community:

- Advertisements in the local print media and local radio
- Animal information pamphlets made available at local events/shows/fairs
- Information pamphlets including maps available at Council Offices
- Direct communication and interaction by Authorised Officers with the community
- Information on the Colac Otway Shire Web Site
- Provision of online registration and a range of registration payment methods

Council's current compliance activities:

- Renewal follow-ups for registration and identification for domestic dogs and cats
- Vehicle patrols re dogs at large
- Nuisance complaint response and investigation
- Domestic animal pound facility
- Cat-trap hire services
- Infringement notice system
- Prosecution service for infringement offences



3.1 Objective One

Increase the number of dog and cat registrations within the municipality by 5%.

Activity	When	Evaluation/Outcome
Increase registrations by conducting door knocks throughout the municipality to ensure dogs and cats are registered.	June – August annually	Document new registrations after inspection period.
Utilise reporting of microchipped animals from Central Animal Records to ensure all animals are registered.	Quarterly	Letters sent to animal owners that have not registered - follow up inspections if not registered.
Increase awareness among culturally and linguistically diverse communities of pet registration requirements.	June – August annually	Document new registrations after inspection period.

3.2 Objective Two

Improve community awareness around registration and the requirements for dogs to be under effective control.

Activity	When	Evaluation/Outcome
Ensure community is aware of the difference between registration and microchipping.	Ongoing	Council's website to contain information clarifying the difference between microchipping and registration.
Ensure community has a clear definition of 'under effective control'.	Ongoing	Promotion of State and Local information to ensure the community are aware of legislated requirements.

3.3 Objective Three

Introduction of a designated fully fenced, off-lead dog park, in Colac

Activity	When	Evaluation/Outcome
Community awareness of the requirement for dogs to be supervised and under effective control within the dog park.	2025-2026	Maintaining a safe and controlled environment for animals to socialise and exercise.
Review operation of the dog park, once established, to provide information and data for any future consideration of establishing township dog parks elsewhere.	2026-2027	Tracking compliments and concerns from the community and education visits to the park and monitor Council costs associated with the Dog Park.

3.4 Objective Four

Expansion of dog on lead requirements.

Activity	When	Evaluation/Outcome
Review extent of dogs on lead areas within townships to assist with safety for animals and the community.	2025-2026	Community will be engaged during implementation and review of the township zones
Trial a dogs off leash area in the northern section of Barongarook Creek in Colac	2025-2026	Dogs allowed to be off-leash but without complaint from the community concerning public safety.
Review options for future management of dogs on sporting reserves to reduce impacts to reserve playing surfaces	2026-2027	Reduced impacts to sporting reserves from dog activity
Apply dogs on lead requirement to all sporting grounds within townships.	2026-2027	Reduced damage to playing surfaces.

4.0 Nuisance Animals

4.0 Dogs

The majority of complaints received by Council relate to dogs at large and barking dogs. Complaints are documented and monitored through Council's customer management system.

Dogs at large, when located by officers, are impounded. The first offence is an official warning. Ongoing offences are penalised by an infringement issued under Part 11.4 of Councils General Local Law 1 which states:

- a) that an owner or occupier of the land must ensure that any animal or bird on that land are kept in a secure shelter or enclosure or confined to the land unless they are under the effective control of a person.
- b) the owner or person in charge of an animal must, while on Council land or a road or in a public place, have effective control of that animal.

Council has an order made under Section 26 of the Domestic Animals Act 1994, requiring dogs to be under effective control by means of a chain, cord or leash in areas listed in the notice in the Government Gazette dated 8 December 2005 (page 2,851).

The installation of bag dispensers in popular areas has resulted in minimal complaints regarding dog excrement in public areas.

In conjunction with General Local Law No. 1 – Section 11.5 – the owner or person in charge of an animal must, while on Council land or a road or in a public place, have in their possession a bag or container which can be used for the collection of that animal's excrement, and immediately collect and remove excrement.

4.1 Cats

While nuisance cats are also a large problem within the Shire, this mainly relates to cats wandering from their owner's properties. The issues relate to conflicts with other cats, leaving excrement in other properties, and feral cats posing a threat to the natural environment.

The current local law controls the maximum numbers of domestic animals on certain size allotments and requires that a permit be obtained for animals that exceed these numbers. The Local Law is as follows:

"An owner or occupier of land must not without a permit; keep or allow to be kept any more in number for each type of animal as is set out in the following table":

Animal	Property Size (up to 0.25ha)	Property Size (0.25 – 1ha)	Property Size (1ha and above)
Dogs registered	3	4	5 (other than dogs kept for working stock or primary production)
Cats registered	3	4	5

The aim is to reduce the number of dogs and cats at large and deal with barking dog complaints in a timely manner.

The issue of dogs at large presents problems of dog attacks on other animals, livestock and persons. They can also cause a serious incident when wandering on roads. Considerable time and resources are deployed by Council addressing this problem. Many people have an absolute fear of dogs and the mere sight of a dog at large can cause fear and panic to many people whether warranted or not.

The issue of cats wandering and feral cats is the subject of many complaints due to the fouling of gardens/yards, attack on their own cat by the offending cat, destruction of wildlife and spread of disease.

Council will ensure the community is educated on the importance of animal confinement and information packages/pamphlets will be made available from Council offices and other relevant locations.

Council's Animal Management Officers will also continue to provide a trapping service in areas where stray and feral cat numbers are noticed and will also continue to offer a cat cage hire program where individual cats are causing a nuisance.

Council treats the issue of animal nuisance seriously and undertakes the following compliance activities in support of nuisance offences:

Our current compliance activities:

- Vehicle patrols and nuisance complaint response
- 24-hours on call Ranger service - Dog attack (immediate response)
- Registration and identification of menacing and dangerous dogs and identification of restricted breed dogs
- Annual property inspections and door knocks
- Cat-trap hire service
- Notices to comply, verbal and written warnings and infringements
- Council pound operation for the impounding of animals

5.0 Impounded Animals

Colac Otway Shire	2019/20	2021/22	2023/24	2024/25
Number of impoundments (dogs)	163	211	197	205
Number of dogs returned to owner	142	158	144	149
Number of dogs rehomed	18	30	22	17
Number of dogs euthanised	3	21	28	39
Number of impoundments (cats)	163	252	266	302
Number of cats returned to owner	15	36	37	38
Number of cats rehomed	75	57	45	58
Number of cats euthanised	73	155	179	206

5.1 Objective One

Reduce dog nuisance complaints.

Activity	When	Evaluation/Outcome
Review further options for reducing barking dog complaints.	Annually	Reduced number of barking dog complaints.
Increase education and information on Council's website and social media channels around responsible dog ownership and the effects of barking – with an emphasis on coastal areas during holiday periods.	Annually and holiday periods	Number of reduced barking dog/welfare complaints.
Update/review barking dog complaint packs.	Annually	Council will provide information for owners and concerned parties.
Direct interaction with complainants and offending parties regarding compliance.	Annually	Measure and report results.
Enforcement of official warnings, infringements and prosecutions.	Annually	Measure and report results.
Investigate opportunities to support community groups and to install and manage dog poo dispensers in problem areas.	Ongoing	Community feedback.

5.2 Objective Two

Reduce cat nuisance complaints.

Activity	When	Evaluation/Outcome
Provide education material about cat nuisance issues to cat owners with information packs made available.	Ongoing	Number of reduced cat complaints.
Assist residents and community groups to deal with cat trespass nuisance problems by advertising cat traps availability.	Ongoing	Record number of traps hired out. Keep records of number of cats impounded.
Extension of the cat curfew to 24hrs throughout the Municipality, applicable to newly registered cats after 1 April 2026. An overnight curfew would continue to apply to cats registered prior to this date.	2025-26	Community engagement around the 24hr cat curfew to prevent native wildlife and cats being injured or killed.
Provide information to assist residents in the use of cat traps and the humane use of looking after the cat's welfare.	Ongoing	Information on Council website and on the provision of traps.
Educate community to contain cats securely to their property.	Annually	Website information and social media campaigns.
Enforcement of official warnings, infringements and prosecutions.	Annually	Measure and report results.

5.3 Objective Three

Reduce the number of dogs and cats at large within the Municipality.

Activity	When	Evaluation/Outcome
Documentation to be given to owners on the return of dogs or cats found at large and not impounded.	Annually	Measure annual results.
Provide information to pet ownership clubs/groups and relevant information to new pet owners.	Annually	Evaluate and work with identified groups Measure and report results.
Public promotion via media articles, website, mail out with Council rates in quarterly newsletter, website, on hold messages, flyers and pamphlets for distribution in local veterinaries and pet shops.	Annually and ongoing	Measure and report results.
Official warnings, regular patrols for offences, infringements and prosecution where required.	Annually	Compare number of offences from previous years – warnings, infringements and prosecutions. Measure and report results.

5.4 Objective Four

Ensure domestic animals are considered during emergencies.

Activity	When	Evaluation/Outcome
Update Emergency Animal Management Plan and include impounded animals.	2025-2026	Work with the Emergency Management Team to review and rewrite the Animals in Emergency Plan
Ensure Council Emergency Relief Centres have procedures and the capacity to cater for domestic animals.	2025-2026	Work with the Emergency Management Team and Collaboration Councils to plan for capacity and capability across the region.

6.0 Dog Attacks

During 2023/2024 there were 5 reported dog attacks resulting in 3 infringements being issued and one prosecution. It is believed that the number of reported dog attacks is significantly lower than the actual number which could be attributed to a number of things including the victim knowing the animal owner or attacks on livestock where the property owner cannot find the source of the attack.

The number of dog attacks within Colac Otway Shire has remained relatively low due in part to Council's ongoing enforcement of wandering dogs and education of the public in relation to confining of dogs to their property. A de-sexed animal is statistically less likely to wander, and Council will therefore continue to encourage and educate in relation to de- sexing.

Council currently enforces the provisions of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 regarding dog attacks. All reported dog attacks are investigated as a matter of priority including after hours by the on-call officer. Appropriate action is taken in accordance with legislation. Council has developed guidelines for Authorised Officers regarding the seizure of offending dogs after an attack.

As referred to in an earlier section – 'Nuisance Animals', Council also has an order relating to dogs being under effective control by means of chain, cord or leash thereby preventing an animal's ability to rush and potentially attack.

Council currently undertakes the following compliance activities to raise awareness and decrease the number of dog attacks/ dog rushes:

- Vehicle patrols and nuisance complaint response
- Immediate response (including after-hours emergency call out) for dog attacks and aggressive dogs at large
- Registration and identification of menacing and dangerous dogs including monitoring of declared dogs and spot checks
- Issuing of infringements and potential prosecution of dog attack
- Operation of a domestic animal pound for impounded animals

6.1 Objective One

Improve awareness and education of safety around dogs

Activity	When	Evaluation/Outcome
Improve awareness and education in relation to dog attacks and the need to report all incidents.	Ongoing	Measure and report on results in annual review of plan to determine whether third parties are reporting any attacks. Compare numbers of reports and the source of reporting. Collaborate with local vets, doctors and hospitals to ensure they are reporting incidents to Council.
Educate pet owners in relation to responsible pet ownership including de-sexing to prevent dogs wandering and the need to keep dogs confined to their property.	Ongoing	Record the quantity of distributed educational materials. Comparative evaluation of previously reported dog attack numbers.
Undertake education and promotion activities through the following outlets: media articles, on-hold messages, mail-outs with Council rates, website updates, issue specific flyers and brochures. Collaborate with vet clinics to encourage dog-on-dog attack reporting.	Annually	Record numbers of media articles published Annual mail-out with Council rates Monthly website updates. New owner information kit developed. Maintain relationships between Council and relevant agencies to ensure reporting of dog attacks. Measure and report on results in the annual review of this Plan.
Ensure owners of menacing and dangerous dogs are aware of their legal obligations.	Annually	Measure and report results.
Enforcement, doorknocking and random domestic animal registration inspections, reminder notices.	Annually	Reduce number of dog attacks on previous year. Random domestic animal registration inspections established
Maintenance of official warning register. Conduct investigations and regular patrols Seek compliance of this legislation by official warnings, infringement notices and prosecution.	Annually	Official warning register maintained. Continue to support prosecution unit Periodic report to executive Measure and report on results in the annual review of the Plan

6.2 Objective Two

Improve reporting of dog attacks

Activity	When	Evaluation/Outcome
Improve information on Council's website relating to dog attack investigations and reporting.	Ongoing	Continuous updating of website.
Improve public awareness of what a dog attack is and how to report Collaborate with local vets around the importance of reporting, public notices in parks, mail out with rates notices.	Ongoing	Comparatively report number of reported dog attacks from previous years. Social media articles

7.0 Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Dog Breeds

Under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, all restricted breed, dangerous and menacing dogs must be reported on the Victorian Declared Dog Register and all owners of such dogs have a number of legal obligations they must comply with. Within the Colac Otway Shire there are currently no restricted breed dogs registered but records indicate there is one dangerous and three menacing dogs registered at the time of preparing this plan.

Dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs are controlled by the Domestic Animals Act (1994). Council ensures that all declared dogs are kept in compliance with the Act.

Council currently undertakes the following educational and promotional activities, including providing information of dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dog:

- Use of Media to inform the community of their responsibilities and the consequences of non-compliance
- Distribution of pamphlets and flyers with relevant information
- Use of on-hold messages and Council's website to inform pet owners
- Education and information services provided, as resources and opportunity allow

Council treats all dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs very seriously. Council currently undertakes the following compliance activities in support of such offences:

- Vehicle patrols and complaint response
- Immediate response to dog attack (including 24-hour emergency service)
- Response to Dog at large (as soon as possible during business hours, including weekends and public holidays)
- Registration and identification of menacing and restricted breed dogs including monitoring of declared dogs to ensure compliance; and Infringement notice system
- Prosecution where required.



Council currently reviews the Victorian Declared Dog Register and monitors the animals recorded on same and ensures compliance is being adhered to. Council's promotional, educational, community and enforcement activities are all targeted at achieving compliance in line with the relevant State legislation involving these matters.

Colac Otway Shire	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Restricted breed dogs	0	0	0	0	0
Declared dangerous	1	1	1	2	1
Declared menacing	3	3	3	3	2

7.1 Objective One

Identify and register all declared dogs in the municipality

Activity	When	Evaluation/Outcome
Ensure all declared dogs are recorded correctly on Victorian Declared Dog Registry and that owners of such dogs are aware of their legal obligations.	Ongoing	Audit database annually and compare to Council records.
Monitor Animal Registration Forms for potential registration of a restricted breed dog.	Ongoing	Monitor number of restricted breed dogs in database.

7.2 Objective Two

Ensure declared dogs are compliant with relevant legislation and regulations.

Activity	When	Evaluation/Outcome
Inspect and audit declared dog premises quarterly to ensure compliance with legislation.	Annually and ongoing	Create checklist to record, measure and report results.

8.0 Overpopulation and Euthanasia

Statistics from 2023/2024 indicate that from a total of 463 impounded animals 28 dogs and 179 cats were euthanised highlighting the ongoing issue of cat over population. While the euthanasia rates for cats are significantly higher than those for dogs, the majority of cat's euthanised are deemed feral and unsuitable for rehoming.

The large number of cat euthanasia could be attributed to the cat trapping program that Council has been undertaking in known problem areas.

In 2023/2024 only 37 of the 266 cats impounded by Colac Otway Shire were collected by their owners in comparison to 144 dogs collected by their owners out of the 197 impounded. Council would like to increase the registration of cats in the hope of being able to return more home to their owners and reduce the amount of euthanasia.

Council currently offers free registration for the first year to all rehomed cats. This ensures the data is captured in the registration database and ongoing registrations can be monitored.

Council partners with a local vet who has established a cat adoption program through which many of the impounded cats are rehomed. Each cat is de-sexed, vaccinated and microchipped at a reduced fee and receive free registration for the first year.

Council's pound and euthanasia policies are guided by the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*. Council policy is, wherever possible, to return any lost or seized at-large animal to its owner or to rehome suitable animals where their owner is not found. Prior to any animal returning to its owner, all animals must be microchipped and registered.

Council's current local law controls the maximum numbers of domestic animals on certain size allotments and requires a permit for excess animals.

Council will:

- Continue to educate the public through social media, print publications, pamphlets and telephone on-hold messages to promote responsible pet ownership in the hopes of reducing euthanasia rates.
- Continue making cat traps available to the public to alleviate problems associated with feral cats
- Offer free registration for the first year to newly de-sexed cats
- Continue working with local vets in rehoming cats through an adoption program
- Utilise multiple social media platforms for education and rehoming purposes

8.1 Objective One

To increase the number of cats registered.

Activity	When	Evaluation/Outcome
Offer free registration for newly de-sexed cats.	2025-2029	Compare number of cat registrations over previous years to see whether numbers have increased.

8.2 Objective Two

To reduce the number of cats euthanised.

Activity	When	Evaluation/Outcome
Promote rehoming of suitable cats in conjunction with local vet.	Ongoing	Compare number of euthanised cats over four years and continue to reduce numbers.
Use of multiple social media platforms to assist with locating owners of impounded animals.	Ongoing	Where an impounded cat is unregistered and not microchipped, posting on social media to locate owner.
Educate public on de-sexing and responsible pet ownership.	Ongoing	Measure number of wandering cats and reduction of kittens needing rehoming. Compare data over four years.

8.3 Objective Three

Raise awareness in relation to the unregistered cat population.

Activity	When	Evaluation/Outcome
Reinforce the need to register all cats, emphasising the discounted registration for de-sexed cats.	Ongoing	Increase in the number of registered cats - Compare data to previous years
Feral cat trapping program.	Ongoing	Cat trap hire service is maintained for the community.

9.0 Domestic Animal Business

Colac Otway Shire has a variety of domestic animal businesses and currently has registered one cat boarding facility, one pet shop and the Council pound facility all of which are audited annually to ensure that they comply with all regulations and legislation.

Council monitors websites, community notice boards, flyers and the local newspaper to ensure that all advertised animals are microchipped and a source number is provided. This enables Council to monitor whether there may be a non-registered domestic animal business operating.

Domestic Animal Business registration is controlled by the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*. There are approved Codes of Practice for the operation of breeding and rearing establishments, boarding establishments, and shelters and pounds. Pet shops are also included.

Council is obliged to ensure each establishment complies with the relevant Code of Practice with regular audits. This is an area of intense public scrutiny.

Council has a zero-tolerance of non-compliance in domestic animal businesses and will continue to investigate all reports on domestic animal breeding businesses and seek compliance for any non-registered domestic animal business by conducting door knocks and property inspections.

9.1 Objective One

Identify and register all Domestic Animal Businesses (DABs) in the municipality.

Activity	When	Evaluation/Outcome
Identify all businesses that should be registered DAB's in the municipality, including businesses selling pets in the municipality.	Ongoing	Compare number of registered DAB's before and after activity.
Monitor Councils registration database to ensure owners comply with the requirements to be a Micro Breeder, Recreational Breeder and Commercial Breeder.	Ongoing	Compare data over previous years.

9.2 Objective Two

Annually inspect and audit all registered DAB's.

Activity	When	Evaluation/Outcome
Conduct annual inspection of all registered DAB's.	March/ April each year	Prepare checklist and compare data.

10.0 Other Matters

10.1 Objective One

Collaboration with Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority (GORCAPA) as a stakeholder.

Activity	When	Evaluation/Outcome
Council will adopt a collaborative approach with the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority (GORCAPA) in respect of local law enforcement. The compliance activities of the coastal land managed by GORCAPA will remain with the Authority. Council will continue to respond to any reports of dog attacks.	Ongoing	Council limits its responsibility for compliance with dog related regulations to land outside of GORCAPA managed areas and will work with the Authority to communicate with the community and visitors.

11.0 Annual Review of Plan and Reporting

This section provides for the annual review of the Plan and Annual Reporting.

Compliant with Section 68A(3)(a)(b)(c) of the Domestic Animal Act (1994) as below: 68A(3) Every Council must review its domestic animal management plan annually and, if appropriate, amend the plan

- a) provide the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
- b) with a copy of the plan and any amendments to the plan
- c) publish an evaluation of its implementation of the plan in its annual report.

Performance in domestic animal management should be a regular management focus. Appropriate performance statistics should be completed and reported. A review of performance under the DAM Plan is required to be included in Council's Annual Report (see Section 68A (3) (c) of the Domestic Animal Act (1994)

Measurements should relate to activities and targets in this Plan and should include educational programs, increased registration of domestic animals, reduction of animals at large, decreased numbers of dog attack, increases in compliance and levels of community satisfaction as a measure of success.

It should be noted that if performance under the DAMP is not sufficient, further revision of the Plan and its methods may be required and should be recommended.

11.1 Objective One

To review progress on this Plan in a report to Council, including a summary report in the Annual Plan.

Activity	When	Evaluation/Outcome
Monitor Authority system regarding complaints by the Community.	Annually	Evaluate complaints and action taken Measure and report on results.
Community Focus on customer service, community education and encouragement of responsible pet ownership.	Annually	Continue to improve customer relations and education.
Promotion/Publicity Undertake media, newsletter, internet publicity for key messages about responsible pet ownership.	Annually	Record published media articles. Annual mail-out with Council rates Monthly website updates. New owner information kit developed. Measure and report on results in the annual review of this Plan.
Other Review and revise activities in Plan as required.	Annually	Revise Action Plan if required
Enforcement Review and revise activities as required.	Annually	Measure and report on results in the annual review of this Plan.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS

Colac Otway Shire Council respectfully acknowledges the Gulidjan and Gadubanud peoples of the Maar Nation as the Traditional Custodians of the Colac Otway region, the land and waterways upon which the activities of the Colac Otway Shire Council are conducted. We pay our respects to their ancestors and elders, past and present. We recognise and respect their unique cultural heritage, beliefs and uphold their continuing relationship to this land.