



# COMPANION ANIMALS MANAGEMENT PLAN 2007

Adopted: 26<sup>th</sup> April 2007



## CONTENTS

<b>Contents</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Definition of a companion animal</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Acknowledgement</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>MISSION</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>4</b>
WHAT IS A COMPANION ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN? .....	4
SCOPE OF THIS PLAN.....	5
<b>ANIMAL ISSUES</b> .....	<b>6</b>
IDENTIFICATION AND REGISTRATION OF COMPANION ANIMALS.....	6
WORKING DOGS.....	7
SEIZED ANIMALS .....	7
ANIMAL WELFARE .....	8
ASSISTANCE ANIMALS .....	8
<b>COMMUNITY ISSUES</b> .....	<b>9</b>
PUBLIC PLACES.....	9
DOG ATTACK (Definition) .....	10
DANGEROUS AND RESTRICTED DOGS.....	10
LEASH FREE AREAS .....	11
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES</b> .....	<b>12</b>
ANIMAL FAECES .....	12
CATS .....	12
NUISANCE CATS.....	13
NUISANCE DOGS.....	13
<b>ACTION PLANS</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>Key Issue Topics</b> .....	<b>14</b>
Identification and registration .....	15
Seized animals .....	16
Animal welfare .....	17
Assistance animals .....	18
Public places.....	18
Dog attacks.....	19
Dangerous and restricted dogs.....	20
Leash free areas.....	21
Animal faeces .....	22
Cats .....	23
Nuisance cats .....	24
Dogs .....	25
Nuisance dogs.....	26

## **DEFINITION: PART 1 — PRELIMINARY — SECTION 5**

### **A COMPANION ANIMAL MEANS:**

(a) A DOG

(b) A CAT, whether domesticated or not.

Feral cats are defined and dealt with under a separate policy, and included in this management plan.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Liverpool Plains Shire Council acknowledges that many of the issues relating to the management of companion animals are similar throughout most Council areas. This management plan has been prepared to reflect the positive concepts from a variety of other Council's animal management plans.

## **MISSION**

To enhance the quality of life and amenity for all residents of the Liverpool Plains Shire by promoting responsible pet ownership and providing appropriate community education to minimise the impact companion animals have on the natural environment.



## **INTRODUCTION**

The need has been identified to improve companion animal outcomes. New amendments to legislation and changing community expectations require that new and varied approaches have to be investigated. Additionally, it is recognised that the enforcement approach alone will not achieve or result in lasting changes in human behaviour or attitude. The need to introduce a balanced integrated approach, involving education and incentives, plus a range of strategies to achieving responsible pet ownership was evident.

In September 1998, the Companion Animals Act came into operation across NSW providing a framework for the management of companion cats and dogs. It replaced the Dog Act 1966, and introduced the legislation for management of cats under the companion animals' title as a direct response, reflecting the changing community expectations of their pet's role and place in society.

This approach acknowledges the beneficial role of companion animals in society, while promoting the rights of all community members to be free to enjoy a lifestyle they choose without interference or negative impact from other people's animals. Appropriate community education in responsible pet ownership includes an understanding of adequate housing, feeding requirements, control and care of the pets, as well as a responsible breeding program.

### **What is a Companion Animal Management Plan?**

A Companion Animal Management Plan (CAMP) is a document that provides a means for Council to fulfil its responsibilities under the Companion Animals Act over the next three to five years, by determining relevant objectives and priorities with a clear program of implementation.

Council's Plan identifies three primary factors in companion animal management, - the animals, community and the environment. Specific actions that provide measurable indicators have been chosen to assess the plan outcomes.

## Scope of the Plan

This Plan aims to:

Integrate NSW legislation and community expectations for council to participate by facilitating companion animal management.

Encourage relevant broadly catered community education programs that are not limited by age, learning difficulties or ethnic background.

Ensure all issues are addressed in the plan, including those prescribed under relevant legislation, with the generally understood notion of, “socially responsible pet ownership”.

Council aims to minimise the number of companion animal's euthanased each year by:

(i) extending community awareness to include the need to microchip and register companion animals.

(ii) promoting the benefits of a thoughtful and responsible pet breeding programs.

(iii) promoting the importance of safety around companion animals.

(iv) the re-homing of suitable dogs from Council's animal shelter.

## ANIMAL ISSUES

### Registration and identification of companion animals

The Companion Animals Act requires that, companion animals, (cats and dogs) are to be identified from 12 weeks of age, and are to be registered on the NSW Pet Registry with Council, by 6 months of age.

The identification and registration process allows lost or straying companion animals to be identified and returned to their owners as quickly as possible, generally avoiding the need for the animals to be taken to Councils animal shelter. Financial support for these management programs comes with 80% of the revenue received from companion animal registrations returned back to Council's.

Many companion animals are microchipped in the Shire but not registered. An unknown number of companion animals are not identified or registered. A mix of education and enforcement strategies are used to address this issue when these animals are located.

A priority of the Plan will focus on raising the level of both dog and cat identifications through promotion of microchipping and raising awareness of owners to update their address details on the companion animals register whenever their contact details change.

Companion Animals are not to be sold or ownership transferred (this includes by gift), unless it is permanently identified (microchipped) even if it is less than twelve weeks of age.



## Working Dogs

A working dog is defined under the Act as: A dog **used** primarily for the purpose of droving, tending, working or protecting stock, and includes a dog being trained as a working dog.

Under the Companion Animals Act: **Only** working dogs that are ordinarily kept on rateable land that is categorised as "Farmland" under the Local Government Act 1993, are exempt by the Companion Animal Regulation 1999 from identification (microchipping) and registration.

Note: They are not just determined by breed.

## Seized Animals

Council responds to complaints and proactively patrols for animals straying in public places. When the animal is seized by a Council officer, the following procedures apply:

1. The animal is scanned for a microchip number, to retrieve contact details of the owner from the Register.
2. Contact with the owner is attempted, and if successful,
3. The officer returns the companion animal to the registered address, **or** if unsuccessful
4. The officer transports the animal to the animal shelter in accordance with the legislation.

Council aims to return as many animals to their owners as possible, however animals must be taken to Councils animal shelter when an owner cannot be identified or contacted. Once in the shelter, the animal is held for up to 14 days and is then either offered for sale, rehoused or euthanased.

Whenever animals are seized, the possibility of disease transmission, stress and animal welfare issues are considered. Council will review companion animal transport and housing protocols to ensure best practice guidelines are followed.

## Animal Welfare

Animal welfare is defined as providing a balance of appropriate nutrition, shelter, exercise, and the necessary social interaction to enhance mental and the physical wellbeing of an animal. Animal welfare is crucially linked to that of their owners and carers.

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) is the lead agency in managing animal welfare in NSW, it is therefore essential that Council cooperates with them to ensure that animal welfare issues are addressed. In cases of animal welfare that give rise to nuisance behaviours such as barking or straying, Council, may at times play a mediation role.

Many urban pet problems arise from animals experiencing frustration or boredom, resulting in reactions such as barking, chasing, and uninvited jumping up. By providing some changes including, environment enrichment, additional to basic dietary improvements, physical, sensor and social stimuli, the animal's physiological and psychological well being can be improved.

Cats recognised as being feral, may be managed under a separate Policy.

Desexing companion animals is encouraged through a reduction in the registration fee structure incorporated into the NSW Companion Animals Act 1998. Early desexing reduces the potential of adverse pet behaviour problems, such as roaming, mounting, and urine spraying by companion animals.

## Assistance Animals

A person with a disability is entitled to be accompanied by a *bona fide* assistance animal where the animal is used to assist the person, into any building or place open to or used by the public or on any public transport.

An assistance animal must not be denied entry to any place described above, or be charged an entrance fee into or onto any such place or be charged a transport fee on any public transport.

A reasonable charge may be imposed for the supply of accommodation to an assistance animal.

## COMMUNITY ISSUES

### Public Places

Companion animals play an important role in Australian society and culture. Many people in Council's area assimilate companion animals into their every day life, while others prefer not to associate with animals. Balance and harmony between these groups may be difficult to achieve but can be when it is based on mutual respect and responsibility.

Owners of dogs are reminded that all public places are to be considered 'on leash' areas unless Council has declared them as 'leash free' areas.

Under the Companion Animals Act 1998, dogs are prohibited in the following public places; wether or not they are leashed or otherwise controlled.

- In or within 10m of any children's play areas;
- Food preparation or consumption areas (unless it is a public thoroughfare such as a road, footpath or pathway);
- Recreation areas where dogs are declared prohibited;
- Public bathing areas where dogs are declared prohibited;
- School grounds (unless with the permission of the person controlling the grounds);
- Child care centres (unless with the permission of the person controlling the centre);
- Shopping areas where dogs are prohibited (unless secured in a vehicle, with the permission of the person controlling the place or going to or from a vet or pet shop); and
- Wildlife protection areas.
- Dogs are prohibited in places appropriately signposted when and where so designated by a Council Order.

Under the Companion Animals Act 1998, cats are prohibited in the following public places:

- Food preparation or consumption areas; **or**
- Cats are prohibited in places appropriately signposted when and where so designated by a Council Order.
- Wildlife protection areas (accept a public thoroughfare, such as a road, footpath or pathway within, not covered by an order.

Note: A wildlife protection area is a public place that has been declared and appropriately signposted by Council for the protection of wildlife.

## Dog Attack

**Definition: Section 16. Is: If a dog rushes at, attacks, bites, harasses or chases any person or animal (other than vermin), whether or not any injury is caused to the person or animal:**

Dog attacks compromise the wellbeing of members of the public and encroach on their right to walk the streets safely or undertake recreational activities and the farming of livestock, without threat.

Research indicates 58% of dog attacks in public places occurred on the footpath or roads bordering their property. Only 9% of dog aggression incidents in public places occurred in parks or reserves.

Liverpool Plains Shire Council **will** investigate all reported dog attacks. Where the offending dog can be clearly identified, an appropriate course of action will be taken, governed by the relevant section of the act and circumstances of the incident.

## Dangerous and Restricted dogs

Council may allow a dog that is declared to be “a dangerous dog” or “a restricted breed” of dog to be kept in its area. All the Legislated restrictions **will** apply and owners **must** comply with **all** the detailed and stringent specified control requirements.

The Companion Animals Regulations 1999 clearly defines the specifications of the enclosure the dog **must** be kept in, the type of collar the dog **must** wear and the signage that **must** be displayed on the dog owners’ property. Additionally there are restrictions and conditions placed on both the dog and the competent person in charge that **must** be complied with, when the dog is out in public.

Council will conduct half yearly audits of premises where declared dangerous and restricted dogs are kept to ensure ongoing compliance with the legislation.

Division 5 provides that, the following breeds of dog **are automatically** classed as restricted dogs, under Division 6 of the Act.

Including:

- American pit bull terrier or pit bull terrier,
- Japanese tosa,
- dogo Argentino (Argentinian fighting dog),
- fila Brasileiro (Brazilian fighting dog),

An authorised officer of Council may in accordance of Division 6 give a notice of intention to **declare as restricted**, a cross-breed of any such breed or kind of dog.

## Leash free areas

Dogs need regular exercise to maintain good health. Council has designated areas within the Shire where dogs can be exercised in a leash free area and are listed below.

**Note:** Dog owners must be with their dogs at all times in a leash free area. Owners must be able to exercise verbal control over their dog. All faeces left by their dog, must be removed at the time of deposition and disposed of in the bins provided.

### Quirindi:

- RSL Park – all of park.
- Rose Lee Park — Northern end area near creek: — **Not** within 10m of buildings **or** play equipment and **not** when grounds are being used for community activities.
- Golland Sporting Fields — car park and green belt area. — **Not** on the sporting field **or** within 10m of buildings **or** play equipment and **not** when grounds are being used for sporting **or** community activities.

### Werris Creek:

- David Taylor Park — Northern end area – **Not** on the sporting field **or** within 10m of buildings **or** play equipment and **not** when grounds are being used for sporting **or** community activities.

### Currabubula:

- Currabubula Rec Grounds — **Not** on the sporting field **or** within 10m of buildings or play equipment and **not** when grounds are being used for sporting or community activities.

### Willow Tree:

- Recreation Ground — **Not** within 10m of buildings **or** play equipment and **not** when grounds are being used for community activities.

### Wallabadah:

- Picnic Area on North side of First Fleet Memorial — **Not** within 10m of buildings **or** play equipment and **not** when area is being used for community activities

### Premer:

- Premer Sports Ground — **Not** on the sporting field **or** within 10m of buildings **or** play equipment and **not** when grounds are being used for sporting **or** community activities.

## ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

### Animal faeces

The faeces of Companion animals is a significant environmental and public health issue in urban areas. Polluted of domestic yards, footpaths, parks, and reserves by animal faeces can allow diseases to be transmit such as; parasites, protozoa and bacteria. Eggs from parasites such as Hookworm and Roundworm can remain dormant but viable in the environment for up to one year.

The Act requires owners to remove their dogs' faeces and properly dispose of them at the time of deposition. (In practice, this is extremely difficult to enforce and may need to be an early priority for any public education activities.)

Council will continue to provide sufficient rubbish receptacles for this purpose.

### Cats

The management of Feral Cats is dealt with specifically under a separate Council Policy.

A distinction is made in the policy between feral cats and owned domestic cats. Both feral and free-ranging domestic cats are responsible for a significant number of wildlife deaths every year.

Cats straying can also be a nuisance to surrounding neighbours, so cooperation and understanding needs to be embraced, by and large within the community.

Community education and responsible pet ownership programmes will emphasise that, dumping of unwanted litters in bushland, industrial estates or nature reserves **is** irresponsible, environmentally destructive and illegal. A strong emphasis is placed on desexing and a responsible breeding program for the control of domestic cat numbers.

Other options to be considered for the protection of wildlife include education, to encourage people to:

- (i) keep their cat indoors.
- (ii) provide cat proof fenced-in, enclosures.

## Nuisance cats

Noise of cats fighting in the middle of the night is a less common complaint but remains a source of general community concern.

A cat may be declared a nuisance by an authorised officer following investigation if it:

- Makes a persistent noise; **or**
- Repeatedly damages anything outside the property on which it is ordinarily kept.
- If the cat habitually contravenes The Inclosed Land Protection Act 1901

This will be handled in similar manner to a nuisance dog complaint with each complaint to be examined, case by case and dealt with individually.

## Nuisance dogs

Nuisance dog provisions are straightforward with the words '*repeatedly*' and '*habitually*', will be important in determining if the *nuisance factor* does exist/apply but

it may be declared by Council if it:

- is habitually at large;
- makes a noise by barking or otherwise, that persistently occurs or continues to such a degree or extent that it unreasonably interferes with the peace, comfort or convenience of any person in any other premises;
- repeatedly defecates on another person's property;
- repeatedly chases any person, animal or vehicle;
- endangers the health of any person or animal; **or**
- repeatedly causes substantial damage to anything outside the property on which it is ordinarily kept.

Inadequate fencing in rural and semi-rural areas makes it difficult for owners to responsibly confine their dogs. In urban areas, where no or low front fence requirements also make it difficult for owners to confine their dogs to their property. The responsibility to contain the dog remains with the owner.

The rise in barking complaints over recent years is consistent with the experience in other areas. Such complaints are time consuming and often prove difficult to resolve.

## **ACTION PLANS AND THE KEY ISSUE TOPICS INCLUDE:**

- Identification and registration; (Collars and tags)
- Seized animals;
- Animal welfare;
- Assistance animals;
- Public places and Inclosed Land
- Dog attacks;
- Dangerous and restricted dogs;
- Leash free areas;
- Animal faeces;
- Cats
- Nuisance cats;
- Dogs;
- Nuisance dogs;

## Identification and registration

### Objective:

- To ensure all dogs and cats are identified and registered in accordance with the Companion Animals Act.

### Target groups

- Pet owners
- Prospective pet owners

Strategies	Responsibility	When	Performance Indicator
<p>Participate in community education and responsible pet ownership programs that emphasises:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The importance of permanent identification of pets;</li> <li>• The importance of lifetime registration of pets;</li> <li>• The importance to the whole community for all owners to comply with the legislated responsibilities.</li> </ul>	<p>Compliance (Companion Animals Officers)</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>Reduction of all companion animals being found, not to be permanently identified (microchipped) and unregistered.</p>

## Seized Animals

### Objective:

- To ensure all seized cats and dogs are given appropriate care whilst owners are being located.
- If owners cannot be identified or located, suitable animals, may be re-homed.

### Target groups:

- Pet owners
- Prospective pet owners

Strategies	Responsibility	When	Performance Indicator
Inform the community that, identification and registration enables owners of lost pets to be located.	Compliance (Companion Animals Officers)	Ongoing	All systems and procedures screened to promote identification and registration.
Participate in community education about responsible pet ownership programs that emphasise owning a pet, “is for the term of its natural life”.	Companion animals Officers	To be determined	Participate in education programs
Council to ensure all animals in council's animal shelter are given appropriate care.	Shelter operators	On-going	Records kept of veterinary treatment required for animals treated or die in the shelter.

## Animal welfare

### Objective:

- To ensure that pet owners are aware of their responsibilities, in relation to welfare and safety of their animals.

### Target groups:

- Pet owners.
- Prospective pet owners.

Strategies	Responsibility	When	Performance Indicator
Publicise the advantages of desexing pets, during all public contact and education activities.	Compliance (Companion Animals Officers)	On-going	All systems and procedures screened to promote permanent identification and registration.
Participate in community education and responsible pet ownership programs that emphasise owning a pet “is for the term of its natural life”.	Compliance (Companion Animals Officers)	To be determined	Participation in developed programs

**Assistance animals**

**Objective:**

- To insure the community is aware of assistance animal issues.

**Target groups:**

- Entire community.

Strategies	Responsibility	When	Performance Indicator
Integrate education programs with information on the rights of assistance animals	Companion animals Officers	To be determined	Participation in programs.

**Public places and Inclosed Lands**

**Objective:**

- To educate cat and dog owners as to where their pets are allowed to be and are not allowed.

**Target groups:**

- All pet owners
- Prospective pet owners

Strategies	Responsibility	When	Performance Indicator
Participate in education programs and provide the appropriate signs in accordance with priorities outlined in this strategy	Companion animals Officers	To be determined	Participation in education programs and the installation of appropriate signs in those areas.

## Dog attacks

### Objective:

- To encourage all community members to report dog attacks when they happen.
- To promote responsible pet ownership.

### Target groups:

- The entire community
- Pet owners
- Prospective pet owners
- Council employees

Strategies	Responsibility	When	Performance Indicator
Participate in education program in accordance with the priorities outlined in this strategy	Companion animals Officers	On-going	Participation in education programs and press release opportunities
Ensure Council's officers are aware of procedures for reporting dog attacks and the resulting consequences.	Compliance (Companion Animals Officers)	On-going	Annual reviews conducted

## Dangerous and restricted dogs

### Objective:

- Ensure compliance with the legislative requirements.
- To inform the community about restricted dog breeds.
- To inform the community about the processes of declaring a dog to be dangerous.
- To ensure that the appropriate procedures are in place for dealing with dangerous dogs.

### Target groups:

- Owners of restricted and dangerous dogs
- Pet owners
- Prospective pet owners

Strategies	Responsibility	When	Performance Indicator
Continue to improve procedures for dealing with and monitoring the presence of dangerous dogs.	Compliance (Companion Animals Officers)	On-going	Annual reviews conducted
Participate in developing community education programs in accordance with the priorities outlined in this strategy	Compliance (Companion Animals Officers)	To be determined	Participation in developed programs

## Leash free areas

### Objective:

- To provide areas where dog owners can exercise their dogs off-leash

### Target groups:

- Pet owners
- Prospective pet owners
- Council

Strategies	Responsibility	When	Performance Indicator
Review current leash free areas and plan to provide appropriate additional leash free areas in the Shire.	Companion Animals Officers Councils planning department.	On-going	Annual reviews conducted
Monitor use of leash free areas.	Compliance (Companion Animals Officers)	On-going	Procedures and systems established.
Promote the importance and benefits of dog socialisation in all Council education and enforcement activities.	Compliance (Companion Animals Officers)	On-going	Participation in developed programs

## Animal faeces

### Objective:

- To provide sufficient rubbish receptacles for the disposal of dog faeces and encourage owners to use them.

### Target groups:

- Pet owners
- Prospective pet owners
- Council

Strategies	Responsibility	When	Performance Indicator
Install sufficient rubbish receptacles for the disposal of dog faeces.	Council	To be determined	Provision of appropriately located receptacles.
Enforce the requirement for people to remove and dispose of their dog's faeces correctly.	Compliance (Companion Animals Officers)	On-going	Conduct regular patrols and provide surveillance of these areas
Participate in education programs in accordance with the priorities outlined in this strategy	Companion Animal Officers	To be determined	Participation in the programs developed

## Domestic Cats

### Objective:

- Encourage people to be responsible cat owners.
- Ensure cat owners identify and register their cats in accordance with the Companion Animals Act.

### Target groups:

- cat owners
- prospective cat owners

Strategies	Responsibility	When	Performance Indicator
Education programs to include information about the incentive and advantages of de-sexing cats.	Companion Animal Officers	On going	Participation in developed programs
Provide information about the benefits of keeping cats indoors at night and of “runs” to contain them.	Companion Animal Officers	On going	Participation in developed programs

## Nuisance cats

### Objective:

- To encourage people to be responsible cat owners

### Target groups:

- Cat owners
- Prospective cat owners

<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Performance Indicator</b>
Establish procedures for dealing with nuisance cats	Companion Animal Officers	To be determined	Establish procedures and systems
Distribute information about the benefits of keeping cats indoors at night and creating runs to contain cats.	Companion Animal Officers	On going.	Provide the available information.
Provide information to the community as to what constitutes a nuisance cat.	Companion Animal Officers	On going	Minimise complaints

## Dogs

### Objective:

- Encourage people to be responsible dog owners.
- Ensure dog owners identify and register their dogs in accordance with the Companion Animals Act.

### Target groups:

- dog owners
- prospective dog owners

Strategies	Responsibility	When	Performance Indicator
Education programs to include information about the incentive and advantages of de-sexing dogs	Companion Animal Officers	On going	Participation in developed programs
Provide information about the benefits of the dogs wellbeing as an integrated, balanced and total package	Companion Animal Officers	On going	Participation in developed programs

## Nuisance dogs

### Objectives:

- To resolve nuisance dog complaints efficiently and effectively
- To educate the community about nuisance dogs

### Target groups:

- Dog owners
- Prospective dog owners
- Builders and developers of new housing estates

Strategies	Responsibility	When	Performance Indicator
Encourage developers and builders to provide adequate fencing in new housing developments	Strategic Planning	To be determined	To be determined
Council to continue investigations into nuisance dog complaints	Compliance (Companion Animals Officers)	On-going	Procedures and systems established.
Continue with a diary system for the investigation of barking dog complaints	Compliance (Companion Animals Officers)	On-going	Procedures and systems established.