DOMESTIC ANIMAL
Management Plan
2021 - 2025



CITY OF WODONGA VIC





Wodonga Council acknowledges
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
people as the First Peoples of the Country.
We also acknowledge them as Traditional Owners
and Custodians across various lands. We pay our deepest
respect to their Ancestors, Elders, children and young people.
We acknowledge the strength and resilience of all Aboriginal and
Torres Strait islander Peoples and recognise their continuous
connections to lands, waters and communities
across the country.

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Introduction

About the Plan

Under Section 68A of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, every council must prepare a Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) as follows.

SECT 68A Councils to prepare domestic animal management plans

S. 68A (1) amended by No. 35/2009 s. 21.

1. Every Council must, in consultation with the Secretary, prepare at four-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.

Overview

Wodonga Council's Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) endeavours to cater for the needs of companion animals (dogs and cats), their owners and promotes and enhances responsible pet ownership among the city's companion animal owners.

The plan supports **the council's mission** through effective management of domestic animals (dogs and cats) within the city of Wodonga while addressing the issues relating to animal management in our urban and rural areas.

In delivering this plan, the Civic Services team aims to provide a community-focused service which strikes a balance between community expectations and compliance obligations under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994 (the Act)*. The approach will use a mix of educational and regulatory processes to promote the notion of responsible pet ownership to gain compliance under the Act.

The preparation of the plan is in line with the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* (DAA) which requires all Victorian councils to have a four-year plan in place for the management of dogs and cats within their area.



Development of the plan

This plan has been developed based on the outcomes and learnings from the previous plan and a review of the existing data in areas such as complaints, dog attacks, registrations and impoundments. Community feedback and consultations with key stakeholders including veterinarians, animal businesses, volunteer groups, dog trainers and other service providers have also informed the plan.

Issues identified by these consultations include the following.

- Adherence to legislation (the Act)
- Increased compliance to the Act
- Identification of potential off-leash areas
- Reduction of the number of stray and wandering animals
- Local laws relating to dogs and cats towards responsible pet ownership
- Increased resourcing to help drive the council's animal management and education programs
- Increased community and domestic animal business awareness of animal welfare matters

The aim of the plan

The principle aim of this plan is to recognise that companion animals have come to play an important part in the lives of many people and to create an environment that meets the needs of pet owners and the community to co-exist.

To meet this aim, Wodonga Council will undertake the following.

- ✓ Encourage statutory compliance and promote responsible pet ownership through education, engagement and enforcement
- ✓ Support and facilitate the benefits of animal ownership and companionship
- ✓ Increase public safety and general amenity by reducing nuisances caused by dogs and cats, and non-responsible pet ownership
- ✓ Increase public safety by ensuring compliance of declared dangerous and restricted breed dogs
- ✓ Provide for the welfare of dogs and cats
- ✓ Reduce the number of unwanted animals bred and euthanised
- ✓ Ensure the council fulfills its legislative responsibility under the Act

The council's mission states:

"We will strengthen our community in all that we do."

The council's vision for domestic animal management:

"A community where pets are embraced as an integral part of a family, and where the safety of humans and the welfare of all animals underpins the delivery of the council's animal management programs."



About the city of Wodonga

Spanning 433.7 square kilometres, the city is located in Victoria's North East, about 300km from Melbourne. The city, along with its near neighbour Albury, in NSW, is located in a strategic location on the main Melbourne-Sydney freeway and railway.

The plan has been prepared for the needs of the Wodonga community, which is characterised by its relaxed lifestyle and preferred choice for residential and rural living. There are more than 80km of bike and walking paths with picturesque parks and gardens dotted throughout the community including the foreshore reserves of Lake Hume, including Kookaburra Point and Jacksons Point, the Murray and Kiewa rivers, Wodonga Creek frontage and reserves, all providing the perfect opportunity for pet activities.

The city includes the suburbs and rural localities of Bandiana, Baranduda, Barnawartha North, Bonegilla, Castle Creek, Ebden, Gateway Island, Huon Creek, Killara, Leneva, Staghorn Flat (part), West Wodonga and Wodonga.

- The population estimate for Wodonga as of June 30, 2020 is 42,662. Since the previous year, the population has grown by 1.38 per cent. Population growth in regional Victoria was 1.30 per cent.
- Wodonga is the largest and fastest-growing centre in North East Victoria and one of the fastest-growing regional Victorian cities
- For the cycle of this plan 2021 to 2025, Wodonga's population is expected to increase by about 4000 persons.
- The average household size in 2016 was 2.54
- The average household size in 2036 will be 2.55
- In 2036, people aged zero to four, 5 to 14, 15 to 19 and 20 to 24 will be the most populous forecast age groups (Av. 4150.5).
- It is expected the number of pets in the city will grow in proportion to the population growth. By 2036, it is estimated there will be at least 10,818 registered dogs in the city.

WODONGA	2016/17	2020/21
Number of registered dogs	7476	6715
Number of dangerous dogs	0	0
Number of restricted breed dogs	2	0
Number of menacing dogs	6	6
Average number of dogs impounded annually	432	312
Average number of dogs reunited with owners (percentage %)	35%	29%
Released – Owner (percentage %)	88%	80%
Released – Sold (percentage %)	5%	14%
Destroyed (percentage %)	7%	6%

*Annual statistics at the commencement of each plan period

DOMESTIC ANIMAL BUSINESS	2016/17	2020/21
Registered domestic animal businesses	3	3
Number of boarding establishments	1	2
Number of pet shops	0	0
Number of pounds / shelters	0	0

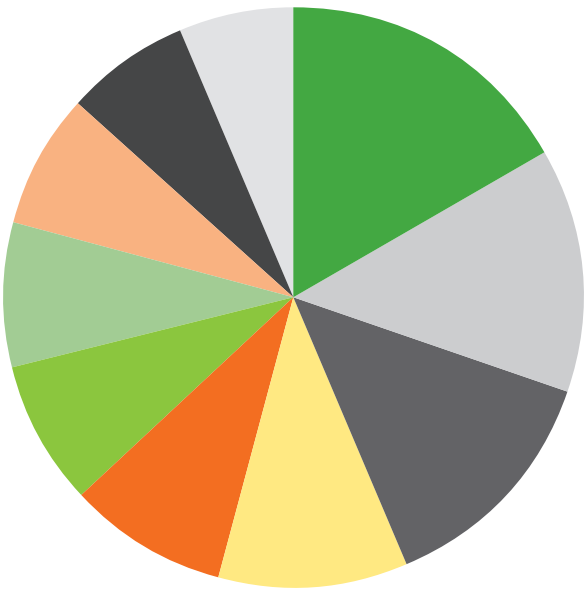
YEAR	INFRINGEMENTS ISSUED	WARNINGS ISSUED	PROSECUTIONS
2016-2017	726	81	1
2017-2018	573	49	0
2018-2019	687	61	2
2019-2020	491	22	0
2020-2021	520	14	1

*Annual statistics at the commencement of each plan period



CATS	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Complaints	401	370	158	189	184
Impounded	264	349	232	221	158
Released – Owner %	13	40	21	18	29
Released – Sold %	31	26	46	47	36
Destroyed %	60	34	33	35	35

TOP TEN DOG TYPES



CURRENT LOCAL LAWS AND ORDERS	
ORDER	DATE
Introduction of 12-hour cat curfew	January 2001
Mandatory desexing of all cats upon registration	June 2005
Removal of declared dangerous dogs	January 2006
Local Law 1/2014 Introduced	July 2014
Order for the 'Effective Control of Dogs' (Appendix A)	September 2020

1. Training of authorised officers

Context and current situation

Section 68 (A) (2)(b) of the Act outlines programs for the training of authorised officers to ensure they can properly administer and enforce the requirements of this Act in the council's municipal district.

The Civic Services team at Wodonga Council is responsible for animal management operations under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, other applicable laws and the council's local laws.

The team sits in the wider Environment and Community Protection team and consists of a team leader, administration officer and four rangers.

The service provides an emergency after-hours service throughout the year. As part of the after-hours service, officers are on call to attend emergencies such as threatening dogs, dog attacks and injured animals. Additionally, officers provide support for lost and found pets to reunite pets with owners quickly and attend to collect found animals.

Pound services were discontinued in Wodonga in 2016. Pound services were transferred by contract to Albury and was managed by a private contractor until 2021 when AlburyCity took over the management of the facility. Wodonga Council has a Memorandum of Understanding until 2024 for the Albury Animal Care Centre (AACC) to provide animal care for Wodonga. The centre also services the following local government areas.

- Albury City (NSW)
- Greater Hume (NSW)
- Indigo (Victoria)
- Towong Shire (Victoria)

Officers involved in animal control are fully qualified and trained to the required standards and able to perform all requirements of their position as delegated under legislation. Officer competency is developed through a mix of practical training, through structured courses and industry training. Civic Services Officers are appointed as Authorised Officers by delegation of the CEO, under the provisions of Section 72, (Appointment of Authorised Officers) of the *Domestic Animals Act (DAA) 1994*.

Annual skills audits have been undertaken and all authorised officers have the required skillset for their positions. Each officer also attends workshops with the North East Authorised Officers Association (quarterly) and undertakes a variety of animal handling courses as required.

Officers receive formal training in the following areas.

- Animal handling
- Animal control equipment use and care
- Breed identification
- Animal assessment
- Statement taking and brief preparation
- Evidence presentation and prosecution skills
- Computer skills
- Emergency first aid for domestic animals
- Court etiquette training
- Court warrants, issue and filing
- Aggressive dog handling

They also take additional health and safety training.

- Manual handling
- Emergency evacuation procedures
- Dealing with aggressive customers
- Conflict resolution
- Client interaction
- Council policies and procedures under OH&S legislation

OBJECTIVE 1.1

Ensure officers have the skills and equipment necessary to support the community and effectively perform their regulatory role.

ACTIVITY	WHEN	EVALUATION
Continually identify relevant training needs and in line with changes to the sector for civic services officers through consultation with management and the team and include in an annual training plan	Ongoing	Training needs identified and included in training plans for new and existing officers. All planned training undertaken and officer competency increased
Investigate the benefit of replacing all ranger vehicles with hydraulic lifts and better holding capacity based on organisational needs	July 30 2022	Purchase of a second new purpose-built ranger vehicles with specialised load lifting capacity
Investigate staff options to meet the increased demand of services.	June 30 2023	Preparation of business case for an additional Senior Compliance Officer Completion of internal service review

OBJECTIVE 1.2

Annually review all internal processes to ensure best practice investigation, compliance and enforcement processes.

ACTIVITY	WHEN	EVALUATION
Review all investigation, compliance and enforcement processes to ensure they are consistent with current practices, legislation and community expectations Undertake training relevant to any changes across the sector	By July annually	Annually – processes reviewed and officer guidelines developed, approved training undertaken and officers deemed competent Officers using a range of techniques including compliance and education dependant on council and community expectations
Review the use of Body Worn Cameras (BWC) for the collection of evidence and to assist with the prevention of occupational violence.	July 2023	Identify if there has been a reduction in occupational violence, and to reassess the ongoing use of BWCs
Review Wodonga Council Enforcement Directive 2021	July 2024	Review completed

2. Responsible Pet Ownership

Current situation

Pet registration is a legal requirement under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*. The council can take action for not complying. Every dog and cat three months of age and over must be registered with the local council with existing registrations renewed by April 10 each year. Microchipping is compulsory for all animals under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*.

Wodonga Council encourages animal owners to be responsible by ensuring their pets are microchipped, registered and securely contained, suitably tethered or on a lead.

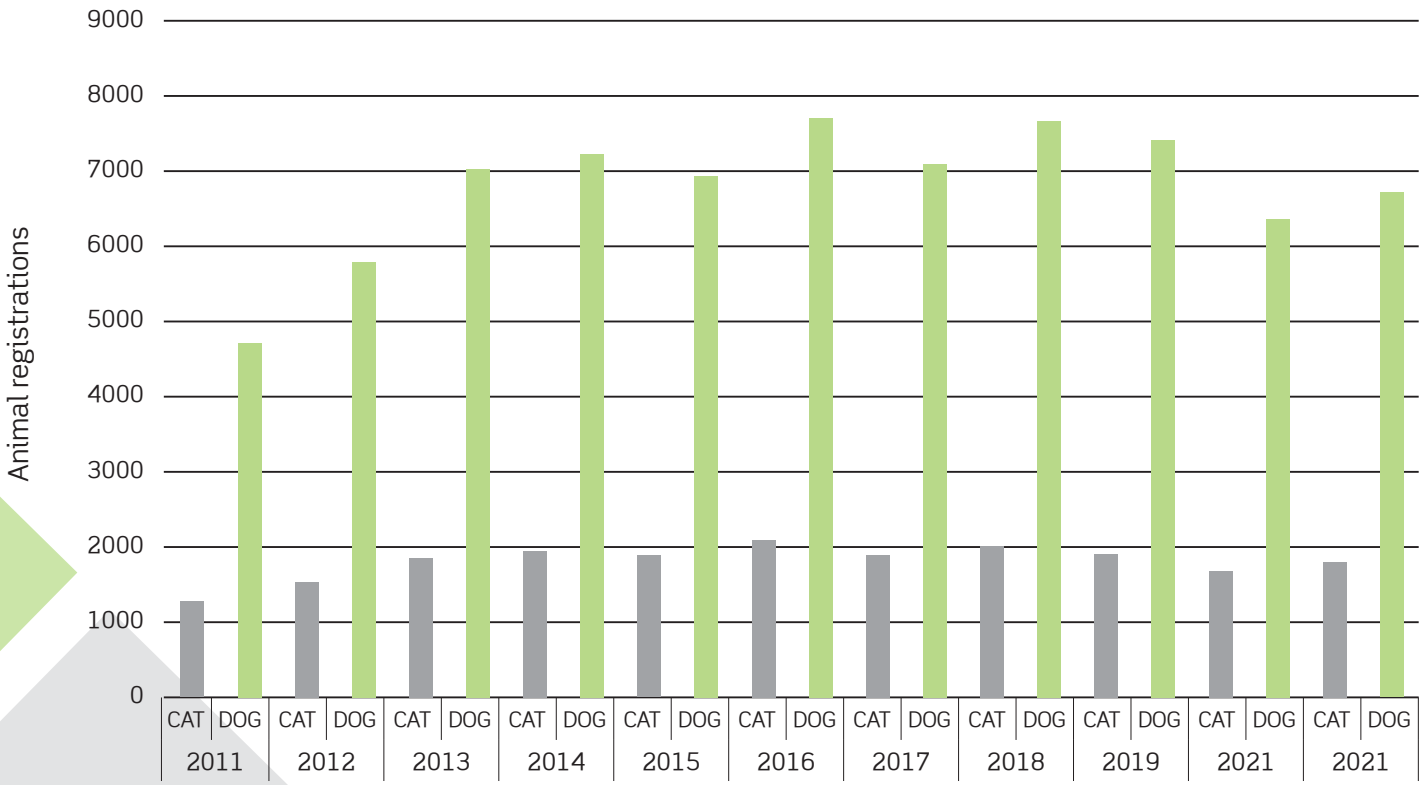
There are 6715 registered dogs and 1801 registered cats in Wodonga with animal registration numbers varying in proportion to population growth over the past 10 years. During the past DAMP cycle (2017-2021), dog and cat registrations were trending down in the latter part of the cycle but are starting to increase in the 2021-2022 registration year. Data shows an overall upwards trend in registrations across Wodonga for both dogs and cats, which can be attributed to the council's proactive educational programs such as the annual door knock registration checks, increased animal management services and responsible pet ownership by pet owners.

A significant drop in registrations occurred in the 2019-2020 registration year at the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, with anecdotal reports suggesting pet owners did not prioritise animal registrations payments. The evidence suggests there is a significant number of owned pets but a reduction in the registration renewals compared to previous years.

Wodonga Council will continue to promote the benefits of responsible pet ownership as it is recognised they play an integral part in people's lives, providing company, emotional wellbeing, physical activity and they also teach children responsibility and develop their social and nurturing skills (Agriculture Victoria, 2017).

The city will continue to promote these benefits along with responsible pet ownership being the key focus to help drive this plan into the future.

TEN YEAR ANIMAL REGISTRATION TREND



DESEXED V ENTIRE PETS



- CAT - Desexed female 11%
- CAT - Desexed male 10%
- DOG - Desexed female 30%
- DOG - Desexed male 28%
- DOG - Female 9%
- DOG - Male 12%

Compared to the 2017 registration data, animal registrations in 2021 have decreased by 5% however, the number of unregistered pets estimated to be approximately 1367, which, is an actual increase of 10% in pet ownership. It has been identified that more work needs to be done in promoting responsible pet ownership in the current 'Covid Normal' environment.

Current activities

- Annual registration renewal follow-up
  - Reminder notices sent after May 10
  - Phone audit
  - Annual Animal Registration Door knock is conducted between May and June each year by an external contractor.
- Encouraging pet identification at every opportunity
- Random door knocking audit for unregistered animals
- Maintaining and updating the animal registration database
- Online registration via the council website
- Fee reduction for pets that meet the following criteria
  - Puppies (between three and six months) reverting to full fee if evidence of desexing is not provided at next registration cycle.
  - Desexed (evidence must be provided)
  - More than 10 years of age
  - Part of a domestic animal business or the owner is a member of an applicable organisation*
  - A pet that has undergone specific training
  - A working dog



Applicable organisations
- *Australian National Cats Inc.*
- *Feline Control Council (Victoria) Inc.*
- *Master Dog Breeders and Associates*
- *Greyhound Racing Victoria*
- *Dogs Victoria*
- *The Governing Council of Cat Fancy Australia and Victoria Inc.*

- All impounded animals released from the AACC must be microchipped and registered.
- The AACC website and Facebook page provides photographs of impounded wandering pets to enable owners to locate lost animals quicker.
- Information on wodonga.vic.gov.au/Services/People-and-Pets/Pets relating to registration, identification, return of lost animals and responsible pet ownership
- Registration and identification brochures supplied to all local vets, community facilities and dog training facilities
- Supporting Agriculture Victoria agriculture.vic.gov.au/pets unique community initiatives including responsible pet ownership program for schools and Animal Welfare Fund Grants Program
- Use of media releases, paid advertising to advise residents of registrations, new pound service arrangements, changes to legislation and responsible pet ownership requirements
- Registration and animal-related information on all new resident packs
- Civic services officers available to present to school and community groups on responsible pet ownership
- High-profile ranger vehicle and uniforms for civic services officers

Current compliance activities

- Investigation of unregistered animals
- Patrols of the municipality
- Issue of registration renewals annually
- Follow-up on non-renewal of registrations
  - Phone call; and/or,
  - Visit to the property.
- Random unregistered animal audits
- Follow up on animals notified as sold by domestic animal businesses
- Regularly update and audit registration database to ensure data is current (eg. notification of deceased animal, change of address, change of owner)
- Ensure all seized and impounded animals are identified, registered and microchipped prior to release back to their owner
- Visiting premises with puppies and kittens for sale to ensure they are microchipped as required under the Act

Future plans

OBJECTIVE 2.1

Improve the ongoing accuracy of the council's registration database by cross-referencing with microchip registry data.

ACTIVITY	WHEN	EVALUATION
Undertake a sample review of newly microchipped dogs and cats in the municipality by cross checking registration microchip registries. Check all animals listed on the council's pet registration database and follow up those that are not	Annually	Demonstrate the council's pet registration database can be accurately cross-referenced with microchip registries Engagement of contractor to carry out random door knocks for pet registrations

OBJECTIVE 2.2

Increase dog and cat registrations in line with population growth each year.

ACTIVITY	WHEN	EVALUATION
Promote benefits of registering, microchipping, desexing animals through social and local media, and educate resident pet owners	Ongoing	Quicker identification of registered roaming/ lost animals and return to owner awithout need for impounding Decrease in number of pets impounded
Investigate enforcement / compliance campaign relating to unregistered animals	Annually in May	Increase the registration of pets over the next DAMP cycle compared to the previous registration year
Investigate grants and/or other funding opportunities to assist at risk families with subsidies for desexing programs and registration	December 2022	Spot checks on animals outside of premises not under the effective control of an owner. Increase in the registration of desexed pets in Wodonga
Explore the expansion of online registrations and investigate electronic annual animal registration renewal process	April 2023	75 per cent of pet owners re-register their pet's registrations online in the 2023 registration year



OBJECTIVE 2.3

Improve community understanding of responsible pet ownership.

ACTIVITY	WHEN	EVALUATION
Develop a strategic approach to educating and informing the community through council platforms and community networks	June 30, 2023	Development and implementation of a communications and marketing plan Regular liaison with key stakeholders including local vets, dog trainers and domestic animal businesses
Continue to explore programs and relationship opportunities with stakeholders including AlburyCity and local dog training centres and puppy schools at local veterinary clinics	June 30, 2023	Increased awareness in the community of responsible pet ownership Increased community and stakeholder participation in programs
Authorised officers increase their visible presence in the community by having pop-up sessions in local parks with education sessions in partnership with vets and/or key stakeholders	June 30, 2023	Decrease in complaints regarding pet behaviour Increased awareness in the community of responsible pet ownership Increased community and stakeholder participation in programs
Active enforcement of effective control local law to reinforce responsible pet ownership principles	Ongoing	Regular after-hours reviews conducted Reduction in dog nuisance complaints



3. Programs to address animal nuisance complaints

Current situation

The council is guided by the Act, state legislation and local laws to ensure all members of the community are complying with the legislation.

The council's rangers aim to inform, educate and communicate to the community about their responsibilities on pet ownership. The council can issue letters, formal warnings, notices, infringements, or as a last resort issue a court summons and make referrals to the Dispute Centre of Victoria for neighbourhood disputes over unproven barking complaints.

Rangers can also draw upon other internal team including the building team, planning team and environmental health team to deal with more complex issues relating to animal welfare and/or compliance of animal ownership, and the housing of pets in the municipality under local law and planning laws.

Dogs

Barking dogs

Barking dog complaints vary from year to year. Officer investigations indicate this is an outcome of:

- Increase in pets being left alone during the day;
- Increased working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Increase in higher density housing and newer estates; and,
- Declining levels of tolerance.

Excessive barking is caused by but not limited to:

- Boredom;
- Separation anxiety;
- Fear;
- Territorial behaviour;
- Attention-seeking behaviour; and,
- Communication to each other.

In most cases, the owner of a dog is not at home to hear or stop excessive barking or might not notice or acknowledge the barking is problem. The council has policies and procedures to deal with barking complaints including notifying a neighbour, keeping log sheets before taking escalated action.

- In 2020-2021, the council investigated 558 barking dog complaints.

Wandering dogs

Dogs wandering or inadequately confined to their premises are also considered a nuisance and are a hazard to motorists and the public in general. In these circumstances, the council can use local laws or powers under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* to resolve these issues through notices or impounding a pet found wandering at large off an owner's premises.

- The council investigated 348 wandering dogs and impounded 312 dogs.
- The council investigated 46 nuisance dog complaints.

Cats

- The council impounded 158 cats.

The council uses local laws and the Act to control the implications of irresponsible cat ownership.

Cat owners are encouraged to be responsible pet owners and desex their cats. Aside from preventing accidental litters, there are many health and behavioural benefits to desexing.

Cats start breeding as young as five months of age. If left un-desexed, just one female cat and her offspring can produce up to 420,000 cats in seven years.

Desexed cats:

- Live longer and healthier lives;
- Are more affectionate and are less inclined to wander, run away or get into fights; and,
- Do not experience heat cycles and males do not spray to mark their territory.

Out of all cats impounded:

  - 29 per cent were returned to their owner;
  - 36 per cent were not claimed and sold; and,
  - 35 per cent were euthanised (either being feral or not suitable for rehoming).

Current activities

Animal Welfare Victoria operates state-wide educational programs and activities. In Victoria, legislation aims to encourage responsible pet ownership, to protect the community from dangerous or nuisance animals and to prevent animal neglect and cruelty. Agriculture Victoria is responsible for overseeing the development of this legislation, along with associated regulations and codes of practice. The council builds on these programs and operates its own education programs to reflect local priorities.

The council hosts information on the Wodonga Council website including registration, responsible pet ownership, animal welfare, lost animals, dangerous and restricted dogs, permit requirements for housing more than two dogs and or cats and information on impounded pets.



Current compliance activities

The council's Environment and Community Protection Local Law (local law No.1/2014) provides additional requirements to assist with animal management.

These include:

- Section 13 – notice to comply;
- Section 14 – power of an authorised officer to act in urgent circumstances;
- Section 57 – restrictions on the number of animals kept on premises;
- Section 58 - conditions under which animals are kept;
- Section 59 – noise and smell;
- Section 60 - animal litter; and
- Section 61 – wandering animals.

The current Local Law is under review and the sections may be subject to change in the updated 2024 version.

The council can make orders under the Act to deal with animal management issues. Orders such as the *Order for the Control of Dogs* and cat curfew are examples.

The council during the past DAMP cycle (2017-2021), amended a previously introduced council order for the *Effective Control of Dogs* requiring all owner to have effective control over their dogs when outside of their property, by leash unless in a designated off-leash area.

The council further identified several park areas and designated off-leash parks while continuing to prohibit dogs entering certain areas within the municipality such as in the immediate perimeter of a public area children playgrounds and set distances away from public barbecues within parks. This law was updated in response of community concerns and views on responsible pet ownership and a significant increase in dog attacks when the COVID-19 lockdown commenced in March 2020. The order was introduced in September 2020. The current order is listed in *Appendix A – Effective Control Order*.

Ongoing activities include the following.

- Patrols of the municipality including local parks and walking tracks outside of normal office hours
- Responding to animal nuisance and wandering animal complaints
- Issuing of notices to comply and infringements
- Undertaking legal action
- Working with residents to record barking nuisances
- Use of electronic measuring device 'NoiseNet' to support manual barking dog log sheets
- Provision of cat traps to assist residents with trespassing cats

OBJECTIVE 3.1

Reduce dog nuisance complaints

ACTIVITY	WHEN	EVALUATION
Research and review the need for additional off-leash areas and consideration of gated dog parks, in conjunction with planning staff and property developers	June 30, 2023	Identification and implementation of new off-leash areas Identification and development of additional gated dog parks
Review barking dog complaint / investigation policy / procedural guidelines	June 30, 2023	Review undertaken, improvements identified and implemented and officers trained in managing complaints Reduction in barking dog complaints Decrease in nuisance dog complaints and reduction in infringements being issued
Increase community awareness regarding confinement, barking, wandering animals	June 30, 2023	Reduction in nuisance dog complaints
Review of current of local law *Order for the Control of Dogs*.	December 2023	Regular review of council's effective control order that introduced in September 2020

OBJECTIVE 3.2

Reduce cat nuisance complaints

ACTIVITY	WHEN	EVALUATION
Provide educational material to owners about cat enclosures and nuisance issues	June 2023	Reduction in the number of cats impounded for being outside during curfew hours
Increase cat trapping by assisting residents with cat trespass/ nuisance problems by providing advice and traps through the council's trap program	Ongoing	Decrease in cat nuisance complaints Increase in number of cats registered
Continued promotion of current cat curfew (7pm to 7am)	Ongoing	Reduction in the number of cats impounded for being outside during curfew hours Review of cat curfew in this DAMP cycle

OBJECTIVE 3.3

Increase community knowledge of cat disease issues

ACTIVITY	WHEN	EVALUATION
Provide educational material about cat diseases which highlight the effect on animals and the impacts on the community	Ongoing	Decrease in cat nuisance complaints
Seek feedback from animal industry and vets on key issues for education to community	Ongoing	Increase in community awareness of cat diseases and their impacts
Collate and monitor the number of disease-related cat deaths	Ongoing	Data from Albury Animal Care Centre and local veterinaries on cat flu detected numbers



4. Dog attacks

Current situation

Council officers carry out regular enforcement activities relating to wandering dog including the following.

- Respond to wandering dog complaints
- Attend after hours emergency dog complaints
- Attend to reports of dogs showing aggressive tendencies as a matter of urgency
- Investigate all alleged dog attacks and ensure legal action is instigated where required
- Declare animals as dangerous or menacing as required
- Ensure the controls that are put in place under state legislation, local laws and council orders are effectively enforced.

The purpose of these measures is to ensure the risk to the community is controlled, reduced or removed.

In the 2020-2021 financial year, there were:

- 21 reported dog attacks on persons; and,
- 48 reported dog attacks on animals.

The council will continue with its strict enforcement approach to all reported dog attacks and aggressive dog complaints in the municipality.

Current activities

- Information on the council's website relating to responsible pet ownership and the owner's responsibilities relating to aggressive, menacing and attacking animals
- Links on the council's website to the relevant state and non-government organisations which have a vested interest in animal welfare, responsible pet ownership and the provision of support services to pet owners and the animals themselves
- Promote and provide registration and information at organised animal and pet events.

Current compliance activities

The council investigates all dog attacks and safety concerns by:

- Conducting regular patrols of the municipality and known hotspots;
- Declaring dogs as menacing, dangerous or restricted breeds as required;
- Providing after hours emergency response for dog attacks and dogs acting aggressively;
- Issuing infringements and summons to attend court where applicable;
- Seizing all dogs involved in dog attacks resulting in a serious injury; and,
- Maintaining the ban on declared dangerous dogs.



Future plans

OBJECTIVE 4.1

Increase the reporting of dog attacks in the community

ACTIVITY	WHEN	EVALUATION
Improve public awareness of what is a dog attack and what is a dog rushing Increase awareness among the community in reporting wandering animals Increase awareness of the possible penalties and possible legal actions that may result in the event of attack	Ongoing	Decrease in the number of serious dog attacks Review of the current council effective control order during this DAMP cycle

OBJECTIVE 4.2

Decrease the time delay between when an attack occurs and reporting to council

ACTIVITY	WHEN	EVALUATION
Increase community awareness on timely reporting all dog attacks	Ongoing	Reduction in time between dog attack and reporting to council Improved process between local police and council for reporting Improved information available on council's website

5. Dangerous, menacing and restricted breeds

Current situation

Wodonga Council has the following dogs listed as dangerous, menacing or restricted breed

- Dangerous dogs (a dog that has attacked and caused serious injury) - Nil
- Dangerous dog that is a trained guard dog - Nil
- Menacing dogs - 12

Council officers ensure the owners of these dogs are adhering to the requirements through the following activities.

- Maintaining the Victorian Dangerous Dog (VDDR) database
- Conducting inspections and random audits
- Investigating complaints
- Prosecution of non-compliant owners
- Audits of industrial/residential areas for non-declared dogs
- Identify declared dogs which are impounded
- Information on the council website and links to the Animal Welfare Victoria website
- Promotion of the Dangerous Dogs Hotline 136 186.

Current compliance activities

- Attend to complaints in relation to suspected dangerous, restricted breed and menacing dog
- Inspect all declared dog enclosures and premises annually and conduct random audits
- Examination of the council's registration database to identify and follow up on suspected (non-declared) restricted breed dogs
- Declaration included on all registration forms as to status of animal under restricted breed legislation
- Update and maintain Dangerous Dog Register database with Animal Welfare Victoria
- Patrol industrial areas for non-registered guard dogs (dangerous dogs by definition)
- Check signage and collars of all dangerous dogs
- Continue to ensure dangerous dogs leave the municipality by April 10 on the next registration year.

Future plans

The level of compliance is high within Wodonga and there is not a need to introduce new activities in relation to this category of dogs.

The council's focus on responsible pet ownership will continue to positively impact on this high level of compliance through the following complementary activities.

- Continue to inform pet owners about responsible pet ownership including selecting the right pet for their circumstances and legal obligations
- Ongoing review of council's policy on refusing dangerous dogs to be registered in the municipality.

OBJECTIVE 5.1

Continue to obtain a high level of compliance

ACTIVITY	WHEN	EVALUATION
Continued inspections of all declared dangerous, menacing or restricted breed dogs with zero tolerance for non-compliance as detailed in the *Domestic Animals Regulations 2015*	Ongoing	All premises and owners comply with the requirements

6. Overpopulation and high euthanasia rates

Current situation

The council together with the Albury Animal Care Centre are achieving good rates of return of lost animals to owners and re-housing to new owners. Desexing of dogs and cats, microchipping and regulation of animal businesses and local laws all assist in reducing over population and high euthanasia rate of dogs and cats.

Over the past four years, council staff annually impounded on average 343 dogs. **Since 2017, about half of dogs picked up by a ranger go straight back home, 73 per cent of the dogs that go to the pound are collected by their owners and another 17 per cent are rehomed. Ten per cent are deemed unsuitable for rehoming and are euthanised under the requirements of the Code of Practice for Pounds and Shelters and Domestic Animal Regulations.**

Over the past four years, council staff annually impounded on average 240 cats. Of these, 18 per cent were released back to their owners, 38 per cent were sold and an average of 39 per cent were euthanised under the requirements of the Code of Practice for Pounds and Shelters and Domestic Animal Regulations. There has been an increase in the number of cats impounded and subsequently euthanised by council due to an increased number of feral cats being trapped. The council also increased the availability of traps to be used by the community due to an increase in complaints regarding nuisance cats.

Semi-owned cats

Animal Welfare Victoria states the cat overpopulation problem is due to several factors such as supply exceeding demand and the ability of cats to breed extremely quickly. Research has also found that a major contributing factor to this problem is people feeding unowned cats but not taking full ownership or responsibility for them.

People feed unowned cats because they genuinely care about them and feel sorry for them. However, many people don't realise they are causing a bigger problem by feeding, but not owning (eg. desexing and identifying) these cats.

Feeding unowned cats helps keep them alive and strong enough to reproduce. They keep breeding kittens into a life of disease and neglect. This contributes to the tragic cat overpopulation problem in Australia.

Current activities

- Promotion of organisations that encourage responsible pet ownership such as Animal Welfare Victoria, local veterinary practices and the Albury Animal Care Centre
- Promotion of responsible pet ownership on the council's website
- Reduced registration fee for all cats that are desexed and microchipped
- First year reduced registration fee for dogs under six months of age until they have been desexed
- Placement of all found cats on the Albury Animal Care Centre website page
- Promote and provide registration and information at the organised animal and pet events
- Council support for "Who's for Cats" campaign from the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy.

Current compliance activities

- Investigate complaints of animal hoarding
- Investigate reports of unauthorised backyard breeders
- Provision of cat traps to community delivered by authorised officers
- All released pets to be desexed and microchipped.



Future plans

OBJECTIVE 6.1

Explore options to encourage cat owners to register their cats such as incentives, programs and other methods.

ACTIVITY	WHEN	EVALUATION
Investigate programs, fee reductions and other methods to increase cat registrations	Ongoing	Increase in cat registration numbers

OBJECTIVE 6.2

Increased activities to reduce feral cat population.

ACTIVITY	WHEN	EVALUATION
Hot spot trapping in residential, commercial, industrial and environmentally sensitive areas	Ongoing	Number of cats trapped increasing as per data Reduction in cat nuisance complaints

OBJECTIVE 6.3

Explore programs and tools to reduce roaming cats including a 24-hour cat curfew.

ACTIVITY	WHEN	EVALUATION
Increase community awareness to highlight issues of roaming cats and various methods and programs to reduce roaming cats.	Ongoing	Reduction in nuisance complaints Decrease in impounded cats
Review present cat curfew	December 2023	Review of cat curfew and implementation of outcomes



7. Domestic animal businesses

Current situation

Numbers of registered domestic animal businesses remain low in the city with no pet stores located in Wodonga and two local boarding kennels and one dog day care and training facility. This does not consider domestic animal businesses interstate across the border in NSW.

In 2019, legislation was introduced to tighten registration and licensing requirements for pet breeders and plans include mandatory registration for foster care networks and animal rescue agencies. This included any pet sales and re-housing of rescue pets requiring a mandatory registration for a source number so pet sales can be tracked.

DOMESTIC ANIMAL BUSINESS	2021
Registered domestic animal businesses	3
Number of boarding establishments	2
Number of pet shops	0
Number of pounds / shelters	1 (Albury Animal Care Centre)
Number of Dog Training Establishments	1

Current activities

- Visit facilities and provide information including mandatory code of practice to proprietors/ staff of existing and any new domestic animal businesses
- Ensure domestic animal businesses are advised of any review of the code of practice applicable for their business.

Current compliance activities

- Register all identified domestic animal businesses within the community
- Conduct annual inspections and audits of premises and follow up any non-compliance
- Liaise with other units within the council to provide advice when planning applications for domestic animal businesses are received to ensure appropriate conditions are placed on construction and operation
- Investigate and act on complaints received
- Investigate reported businesses advertising in local newspapers to determine if the business falls into the new definition under the Act for a domestic animal business and their compliance with the legislation.



Future plans

OBJECTIVE 7.1

Identify and register all domestic animal business (DAB) in the municipality

ACTIVITY	WHEN	EVALUATION
Identify all businesses that should be registered DABs in the municipality and determine whether they are and should be registered with the council	Annually	All DABs monitored and operating according to legislation

OBJECTIVE 7.2

All domestic animal businesses meet their registration and mandatory codes of practice standards.

ACTIVITY	WHEN	EVALUATION
Conduct an annual inspection of each registered DAB for compliance	Annually	100 per cent of all DABs inspected prior to renewal and action taken for any non-compliance Number of non-compliances recorded and actioned

OBJECTIVE 7.3

Promote the requirements for domestic animal businesses to the community and domestic animal businesses to increase awareness.

ACTIVITY	WHEN	EVALUATION
Provide information regarding domestic animal businesses with links to relevant codes of practice.	Ongoing	Up-to-date and correct information readily available to the community
Conduct a forum with prospective domestic animal businesses to provide information relating to their requirements under the Act	April 2023	Attendance at forum by relevant stakeholders

8. Other matters

Current situation

Animal care services

In 2016, Wodonga Council awarded a tender to outsource the Wodonga pound services.

Wodonga still has a pound service, using the regional service offered by AlburyCity at the Albury Animal Care Centre, and Wodonga rangers still carry out animal management in the city including collecting and returning pets, dealing with dangerous and restricted dogs, investigating disputes and fulfilling the council's legislative obligations. Registration fees continue to cover this and the costs of a pound service.

The city had outgrown the existing pound building which was not suited to the long stays or the Victorian code standard required of an animal shelter.

Its location, inside the Waste Transfer Station site, also restricted its use as a community facility as public access is limited to after hours and some public holidays.

The council entered into a contract with AlburyCity Council which took over the management of their pound in July 2020, now known as the Albury Animal Care Centre. The council has a contract with AlburyCity for these services until 2024.

Animals are now impounded in a fit-for-purpose' facility with increased accessibility for pet owners.

Future plans

OBJECTIVE 8.1

Identify and register all domestic animal business (DAB) in the municipality

ACTIVITY	WHEN	EVALUATION
Ensure continued partnerships take into account animal pound capacity will be sufficient to meet the needs of an increasing population across the city of Wodonga	Ongoing	Ongoing contractual arrangements are met Regular discussion with Albury Animal Care Centre

9. Annual review of the plan and annual reporting

Section 68A (3) of the Act states every council must:

(a) Review its Domestic Animal Management Plan annually and, if appropriate, amend the plan;

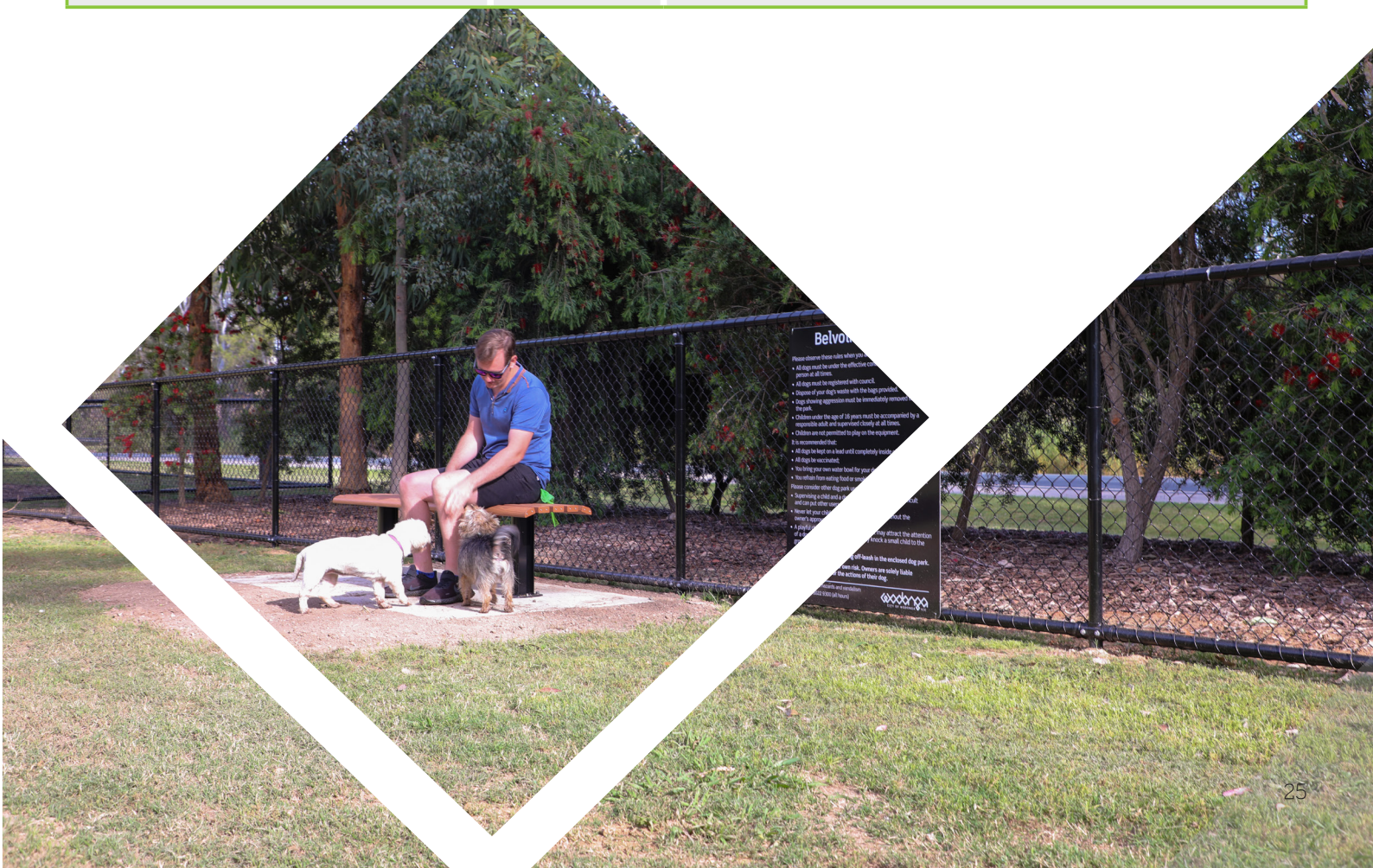
(b) Provide the secretary with a copy of the plan and any amendments to the plan; and

(c) Publish an evaluation of its implementation of the plan in its annual report.

OBJECTIVE 9.1

Identify and register all domestic animal business (DAB) in the municipality

ACTIVITY	WHEN	EVALUATION
Conduct annual review of the plan	Annually	Actions delivered as per the plan and content remain current with community expectation and legislative requirements
Update the plan as required	As required	Provide the plan to state department
Incorporate the annual evaluation in the council annual report	Annually	Report completed



Appendix A – Order for Effective Control of Dogs

WODONGA CITY COUNCIL

Order Made Under Section 26(2) of the **Domestic Animals Act 1994**

This Order repeals Wodonga City Council Order made under section 26(2) of the **Domestic Animals Act 1994**, on 14 April 2014.

Order for the Control of Dogs

(1) A person must not bring or permit a dog to be brought into a public place unless the dog is under the person's **effective control**.

(1A) A dog is not regarded as being under **effective control** unless:

(a) the owner is physically able to bring the dog under control by the means of a leash, chain or cord in a public place or other areas as designated; or

(b) the dog is tethered to a fixed object and is under the continuous supervision of a person who is physically able to control the dog;

(c) the dog is participating in an obedience trial, or training for an obedience trial, under the supervision of an organisation recognised by the local government for the purposes of this section; or

(d) the dog is being exhibited at an exhibition under the supervision of an organisation recognised by the local government for the purposes of this section.

(2) When in a designated off-leash area, an owner must bring their dog under **effective control**:

(a) within 10 metres of:

i. any playground or children's play equipment,

ii. the principal location of an **organised sporting** or community event or festival as determined by council,

iii. the principal location of an organised public meeting, or

iv. stock in council-owned leased areas, which includes fire trails when stock are being used for fire prevention activities.

(b) within 3 metres of:

i. a permanent barbecue or picnic area when in use.

(c) on other sites including:

i. WREN reserves;

ii. Gateway Village precinct;

iii. public viewing areas at organised sporting events;

iv. any area or **organised event** designated by council, e.g. Children's Fair, Chryslers on the Murray Show, Australia Day Events, public concerts, etc.,

v. unless otherwise signposted.

(3) Dogs are prohibited from the following areas at all times:

- inside all public gated and/or secured playgrounds;
- within 3 metres of open playgrounds with equipment and soft fall area;
- on the playing field at any time during a scheduled event/game/match;
- Wodonga Athletics track;
- any area designated by council as environmentally sensitive, or
- any event designated by council as being a pet-free event.

(4) All dogs must be under **effective control** at all times unless in a designated park or reserve or other designated off-leash gated or ungated dog park where a dog may be exercised off a leash if:

- a dog/s is accompanied by a competent person in an area declared to be an off-leash area by a declaration under this section (but only if the total number of dogs that the person is accompanied by or has control of, does not exceed 4 dogs;
- the owner has the dog/s under voice or hand control to sufficiently prevent the dog/s from behaving in a manner which threatens or causes a nuisance to any person or animal;
- the owner carries a leash, chain, cord or similar not exceeding 1.5 metres in length so as the dog/s can be brought under effective control if it is behaving in a manner which threatens or causes a nuisance to any person or animal; and
- the owner is within 25 metres and has a clear unobstructed view of the dog/s at all times; and
- the dog/s immediately returns to its owner upon command.

(5) This section does not apply to –

(a) an approved dog belonging to a primary producer or stockman that is engaged in the droving, tending or working stock, or

(b) a police dog, or

(c) a corrective services dog.

(6) Designated off-leash areas are subject to change as the municipality develops. Accordingly the Wodonga Chief Executive Officer has the power to amend, remove or add new sites and they will be listed in Schedule 1.

In this Order:

Designated Reserve/Park means any reserve determined or posted by council, whether or not delineated by a sign, as set out at Schedule 1.

Effective control means placing a leash, chain, cord or similar not exceeding 1.5 metres in length on a dog and held by the owner.

Organised meeting means a planned community meeting during a nominated period of time, to undertake such an activity under licence, agreement or casual use agreement or Local Laws permit with Council.

Organised sporting event means is a planned training session or competition session or similar where the ground, field, court or similar is required for a nominated period of time to undertake such an activity under a seasonal licence, agreement or casual-use agreement with Council.

Owner has the same meaning as described in the **Domestic Animals Act 1994**.

Public place has the same meaning as described in the **Summary Offences Act 1996**.

Schedule 1 sets out areas within the municipality which are designated as being off-leash areas, but with dogs under voice control.

SCHEDULE 1

The following areas are designated as off-leash areas.

Number	Designated Off-Leash Location/ Area Name	Notes	Date Added	Date Amended
1	Unnamed Park B/W Felltimber Creek Road to Kirner Court	Between Felltimber Creek Road and Kirner Court (parallel to Argyle Way)	24 Sept 2020	
2	Gordon Craig Park	Between Lawrence Street and Yanco Court, West Wodonga	24 Sept 2020	
3	Gayview Park	Off Serpentine Avenue, West Wodonga	24 Sept 2020	
4	Susan Campbell Reserve/Kent McKoy Reserve	Between Yarralumla Drive and Huon Creek Road north of Huon Creek	24 Sept 2020	
5	Willow Park – south	Between McFarland Road and playing fields	24 Sept 2020	
6	Willow Park – north – Carl Fietz Park	Off Hereford Street	24 Sept 2020	
7	Unnamed Park identified as the Old Horse Paddocks	South of Huon Creek Road to Yarralumla Drive opposite David Bayne Park	24 Sept 2020	
8	Unnamed Park off Throssell Crescent	Between Throssell Crescent and Jeffries Rise, Whitebox Rise Estate	24 Sept 2020	
9	Pam Stone Park	Between Melbourne Road and Lawrence Street	24 Sept 2020	
10	Phil Adams Park	Between Melbourne Road and South Street	24 Sept 2020	
11	Arthur Dunstan Park	Between Thomas Mitchell Drive and Lawrence Street	24 Sept 2020	

12	Wodonga Creek/Old Stock Route Bridge swimming area	Wodonga Creek foreshore only (north of freeway overpass)	24 Sept 2020	
13	Kiewa River foreshore Killara	Murray Valley Highway West and east of bridge	24 Sept 2020	
14	Unnamed Baranduda Reserve	Between Juniper Way and Foxglove Terrace, Baranduda	24 Sept 2020	
15	Lake Hume Foreshore reserves	Jackson Point/Kookaburra Point/ Ebden Reserve/Ludlows Reserve	24 Sept 2020	

Dated 24 September 2020

MARK DIXON
Chief Executive Officer – Wodonga Council

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CITY OF WODONGA VIC