Companion Animal Management Plan 2015 - 2020

Adopted by the Council Services Committee: July 2015

Review Date: July 2020
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1. **Introduction:**

*Companion Animals in Fairfield City*

Fairfield City Council (FCC) has developed a Companion Animal Plan (the Plan) to provide a platform for achieving best practice and continuous improvement in relation to the investigation, education, compliance and enforcement of identified activities concerning matters of public health, environmental nuisance and animal control.

According to the Animal Health Alliance (1), in 2013 there were 4.2 million dogs and more than 3.0 million dog owning households in Australia, which equated to 19 dogs to every 100 people. With 39% of all households owning a dog, they are Australia’s most popular pet.

Cats are the second most common pet, with 29% of households owning a cat. There are estimated to be 3.3 million pet cats in Australia which equates to 15 cats for every 100 people.

The pet population in New South Wales and Victoria account for 60% of all pets in Australia, and 59% of the country’s human population with more than 1.1 million Australian households (14.9%) planned to get a pet in the next 12 months.

Pets were a normal part of childhood for more than 83% of Australians. Of the Australians who do not currently own a pet, 53% would like to do so in the future.

Promotion of responsible companion animal ownership is a guiding principle behind this Plan. FCC aims to encourage all companion animal owners to be responsible for their animal’s actions and supports this approach through education and enforcement.

At the end of 2014, records indicate a total of 21,131 dogs and 4,417 cats were registered in the Local Government Area (LGA).

2. **Rationale for the Plan:**

The Plan provides a framework for establishing effective animal management and procedural responsibilities under the Act and can be generally summarised as follows:

- To identify statutory obligations.
- To acknowledge that Companion Animals in NSW have a legal status.
- To identify how objectives will be met.
- To identify a range of strategies targeted to achieve a balance between the needs of pet owners and non-pet owners.
Aim of the Plan:

- To balance the needs of the community, the environment and companion animals
- To provide a framework for prioritising actions
- To provide support to the community through targeted information and education

3. **Main Benefits of a Plan to Council and Community**

The better FCC becomes at urban animal management the more responsible pet owners will become and the less problems pets will cause.

- The Plan disseminates clear intent and general information to the community on companion animals.
- Assists in reducing the number of complaints received due to increased understanding and implementation of responsible pet ownership.
- Identifies key objectives and performance areas.
- Provides guidance, support and procedures to relevant groups and welfare Organisations’ involved with companion animals.

4. **Facts about Fairfield City**

**Our Location**
Our City is located in Sydney's south western suburbs, about 32 kilometres from the Sydney GPO. Our City is bounded by Blacktown, Holroyd and Parramatta cities in the north, Bankstown City in the east, Liverpool City in the south and Penrith City in the west.

**Our Suburbs**
Our City includes 27 suburbs: Abbotsbury, Bonnyrigg, Bonnyrigg Heights, Bossley Park, Cabramatta, Cabramatta West, Canley Heights, Canley Vale, Carramar, Cecil Park (part), Edensor Park, Fairfield, Fairfield East, Fairfield Heights, Fairfield West, Greenfield Park, Horsley Park, Lansvale, Mount Pritchard (part), Old Guildford, Prairiewood, Smithfield (part), St Johns Park, Villawood (part), Wakeley, Wetherill Park and Yennora.

**Land Use**
Our City is predominantly residential, with substantial industrial and commercial areas, and some rural residential areas in the west. Major commercial centres are located at Fairfield and Cabramatta. The City encompasses a total land area of approximately 102.5 square kilometres.

**The Terrain**
Our City’s terrain is mainly flat with the land to the south being a drainage basin for an extensive network of creeks flowing south-east into the Georges River and ultimately Botany Bay, whilst to the west and north we have a ridge circling from Prospect to Cecil Park which in places rises to more than 100 metres.
**Major Features**

Major features of Fairfield City include recreation parks such as the Western Sydney Regional Park and Chipping Norton Lakes which consists of extensive waterways and recreation facilities. The City has more than 450 parks incorporating a diverse range of recreational settings including children’s playgrounds, youth facilities, public art, picnic areas and an extensive network of cycle ways, walking trails and sportsgrounds.

The City also has four major businesses and retail centres and a number of shopping centres including a range of cultural cuisines, markets and temples. Not to mention Fairfield Showground which is a host to many large cultural and special large-scale events.

**Today**

In 2015, the estimated population of Fairfield City is approximately 200,000 with approximately 60,000 dwellings. Fairfield City is one of the most culturally diverse council areas in Australia. More than half of our residents were born overseas, coming from mostly non-English speaking countries. Many new migrants to Sydney choose to live in our multicultural community. The majority of our residents speak a language other than English at home, with the most common being Vietnamese, Assyrian, Arabic, Cantonese and Spanish.

Our current population is relatively young compared to other parts of Sydney with many young families choosing to reside here. However, our fastest growing age group 65 years and over. We are now facing an ageing future which will place special demands on our services and facilities into the immediate future. As residents we are very proud of our diversity and see it as our major strength.
5. **Council’s Vision and Objectives**

*Our Shared Vision*

“We are Fairfield City - a welcoming, safe and diverse community where we are proud to belong, invest and prosper”

*Our Priorities for the Future*

In 2012, we were asked to define the things we would like to see in place by the year 2022 and to think again about the Vision and list the ten priorities to achieve our shared Vision. Set out below is a summary of what we said and the community priorities we identified. (2)

![THE TOP 10 THINGS WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN FAIRFIELD CITY BY 2022](image)

*Priority 1 - Improved Community Safety*

*Priority 2 - A Clean and Attractive Place*

*Priority 3 - Better Health Services*

*Priority 4 - Less Rubbish Dumping*

*Priority 5 - Cleaner Environment*

*Priority 6 - Improved Roads*

*Priority 7 - Better Public Transport*

*Priority 8 - Access to Schools, Universities and TAFE*

*Priority 9 - More Parking*

*Priority 10 - More Activities for Children and Youth*

5.1 Council seeks to meet its overall Vision and Objectives relating to companion animal management through the following strategies.

- Balancing community amenity, animal welfare and environmental preservation while promoting the benefits of responsible pet ownership.

- Provision of effective companion animal management through accessible and equitable use of community facilities in a manner safe and amenable for all.
These objectives are achieved through:

- Encouraging companion animal owners in the Local Government Area (LGA) to permanently identify, microchip and then lifetime register their companion animals.
- Supporting the community by providing effective and responsible care and management of companion animals.
- Applying an appropriate level of resources to handle and manage companion animal issues including but not limited to dog attacks, dangerous, menacing, restricted breeds and nuisance dog behaviour which includes noise associated with excessive barking.
- Development and provision of information to enhance an improved understanding of responsible pet ownership.
- Ensuring those acting on Council’s behalf operates ethically and legally in all aspects of companion animal management.

6. Key Performance Areas

There are a number of key performance areas that Council believes are particularly important to establishing responsible and effective management of companion animals within the LGA, those areas are further outlined below.

Animal Issues

Micro chipping:

Objective
- To encourage permanent lifetime microchip identification of all companion animals in the Fairfield Local Government Area allowing timely return of stray and lost animals to their owners.
- To encourage lifetime registration of companion animals in the LGA.

Issue
- All companion animals are required to be micro chipped by the age of 12 weeks or the point of sale if sooner however, a percentage of companion animals in the LGA are not micro chipped.
- Difficulties arise for Council in knowing who the owner of a non-micro chipped animal may belong to.
- Companion animals without microchips may be eventually be rehoused, resold, euthanized
- In the event an owner of a companion animal contacts the Pound to locate their non-micro chipped animal, the payment of substantial costs will be incurred before their impounded animal will be released.

**Action**
- Council has developed in depth information locatable on its website to guide and encourage responsible pet ownership including micro chipping.
- Council employs specialist animal enforcement staff that has access to technology to trace the owner of a micro chipped animal.
- Council hosts a number of free microchip days each year for dogs and cats.

**Registration:**

**Objective**
- To encourage lifetime registration of all companion animals living in the LGA.
- Provide fast and efficient service for customers updating and/or registering their details on the NSW Companion Animal Register.

**Issue**
- The Act requires all companion animals in NSW to be lifetime registered by the age of 6 months.
- A percentage of companion animals in the LGA remain unregistered.
- Costs to community pertaining to registration.

**Action**
- Council has developed in depth information locatable on its website to guide and encourage responsible pet ownership.
- Council is delegated to issue a fine to the owner of an unregistered companion animal.
- Reduced one off cost for registration applies to pensioners, recognised breeders and owners of de-sexed animals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Micro chipped</th>
<th>Registered</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cats</td>
<td>6,499</td>
<td>4,417</td>
<td>10,916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dogs</td>
<td>28,176</td>
<td>21,131</td>
<td>49,307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>34,675</td>
<td>25,548</td>
<td>60,223</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total number of animals recorded on Companion Animal Register (CAR) as at 30 June 2014.
Seizing dogs:

**Objective**
- To reduce the number of dogs wandering on public land not under effective control.

**Issue**
- A dog that is in a public place must be under the effective control of some competent person (16 years of age and above) by means of an adequate chain, cord or leash that is attached to the dog and that is being held by (or secured to) the person.
- Generally a dog is not considered to be under the effective control of a person if the person has more than 4 dogs under his or her control.

**Action**
- Any person (including an authorised officer) can seize a dog that is in a public place in contravention.
- Seized animals must be delivered to owner, Council Pound or approved premises.
- Fees and charges will be payable when animal detained or held and fines may be issued.
- Dogs must be micro chipped and registered before release from Council Pound.
- Unclaimed seized animal may be sold or destroyed or rehoused with a rescue organisation.
- Surrendered animals may be sold or destroyed or rehoused with a rescue organisation.

Seizing cats:

**Objective**
- Reduce the number of feral cats entering onto and damaging private property.

**Issue**
- Council does not collect stray cats because; it is not against the law for a cat to stray onto public or private property.
- Criteria which allows members of the public to trap and convey a cat to Council’s Animal Pound is limited to those outlined below.

**Section 30:** If a cat is in a public place prohibited under the CAA (E.g. food preparation area such as a BBQ area in public park/consumption area or wildlife protection area) a member of the public, the cat could be seized and taken to the Pound (Sydney Dogs & Cats Home).

**NB:** Fairfield Local Government Area does not have any Wildlife Protection Areas.

**Section 32:** Seizing the cat is reasonable and necessary for the protection of any person or animal. (3)
Action
- Council has developed in depth information locatable on its website to guide and encourage responsible pet ownership.

Impounding:

Objective
- To reduce the number of companion animals being impounded at Council’s Pound.

Issue
- Companion animals that have been seized and impounded at Council’s Pound may be sold or destroyed or sent to a rescue organisation.
- After a period of 14 days if the animal is identified and registered.
- After a period of 7 days if there is no identification on the animal.

Action
- Council has developed in depth information locatable on its website to guide and encourage responsible pet ownership.
- Council aims to return as many companion animals to their owners as possible. Many find new homes through various animal rescue networks however, animals must be impounded when the owners are unknown or cannot be contacted.

Animal Welfare and Rescue

Objective
- To support animal welfare and the safe rehousing of as many companion animals as possible.

Issue
- To encourage micro chipping and registration of all companion animals in Fairfield LGA and thereby reduce the number of animals being impounded.
- Encourage animal rescue groups to link into Council's Pound to rehouse as many impounded animals as possible.

Action
- Council maintains strong working relationships with a number of dog and cat voluntary rescue associations.
- Council is able to waive certain fees associated with the release of rescued animals to those associations based on certain criteria having been met under 16D of the Companion Animals Regulation 2008.
Council's Companion Animal Pound

Council is engaged into a Memorandum of Understanding with Sydney Dogs & Cats Home at which companion animals from within the LGA are received and handled.

Address: 77 Edward Street, Carlton, NSW 2218
Email: info@sydneydogsandcatshome.org
Webpage: http://sydneydogsandcatshome.org/

Phone: (02) 9587 9611

Open hours
Monday to Friday 9.30am to 4.30pm
Saturday 9.30am to 4.00pm
Sunday & Public Holidays 9.30am to 2.00pm

Viewing hours
Monday to Friday 9.30am to 4.00pm
Saturday 9.30am to 3.30pm
Sunday & Public Holidays 9.30am to 1.30pm

Community Issues

Public Safety:

Objective
▪ Treat public safety and responsible pet ownership as a high priority, paying particular attention to safety in public places.

▪ Improve owner awareness of their responsibility to maintain their animal under effective control in public places through ongoing education.

▪ Ensure Council has efficient and effective response to reported dog attacks.

Issue
▪ Conflict between humans and animals is inevitable; this is particularly due to the close proximity of neighbouring dwellings. The type of issues raised by the community submissions and council records shows that this type of conflict is widespread, with the most common complaints being: barking dogs; menacing roaming cats/dogs; cat/dog faeces; number of animals per household.

Action
▪ Council monitors and enforces the general responsibilities of owners when their dogs are in public places.

▪ Council is legislatively required to provide at least 1 leash-free area and people using these facilities must have control of their animals.

▪ Council provides 3 leash-free areas located at;
  ❖ Canley Vale (Freeman Ave Reserve, Railway Parade)
  ❖ Wakeley (Corner of Kembla Street and Townsville Road)
Wilson Road Bonnyrigg

Rules are sign posted at the off leash areas. Public toilets are located nearby.

Dangerous & Menacing Dogs:

Objective
- To ensure that dogs declared as dangerous or menacing are dealt with according to legislation by owners and Council.

Dangerous Dog Definition:
A declared dangerous dog is a dog that an authorised council officer or a Local Court has declared as dangerous because it:

- Has, without provocation, attacked or killed a person or animal (not including vermin), or
- Has, without provocation, repeatedly threatened to attack or repeatedly chased a person or animal (not including vermin), or is kept or used for hunting (not including a dog used for locating, flushing, pointing or retrieving birds or vermin), or has been declared a dangerous dog under a law of another State or a Territory that corresponds with the Act.

Menacing Dog Definition:
A declared menacing dog is a dog that an authorised council officer or a local court has declared as menacing because it:

- Has displayed unreasonable aggression towards a person or animal (other than vermin), or
- Has, without provocation, attacked a person or animal (other than vermin) but without causing serious injury or death, or has been declared a menacing dog under a law of another State or a Territory that corresponds with the Act.

Issue
- Conflict between humans and animals is inevitable; this is particularly due to the close proximity of neighbouring dwellings. The type of issues raised by the community concern submissions and council records shows that this type of conflict is widespread, with the most common complaints being: barking dogs, dangerous dogs, menacing dogs, roaming cats/dogs; cat/dog faeces, acceptable number of animals per household.

Action
- Council has developed in depth information locatable on its website to guide and encourage responsible pet ownership.
- Council monitors and enforces the general responsibilities of owners when their dogs are in public places.
Nuisance Dog

Nuisance Dog Definition:

Nuisance includes but is not limited to excessive barking, wandering without being under effective, repeatedly causes substantial damage to anything outside the property it’s kept, repeatedly defecates, repeatedly runs at or chases any person, animal or vehicle (except vermin).

Objective

- To reduce the number of complaints received connected with alleged nuisance dog behaviour.

Issue

- Conflict between humans and animals is inevitable; this is particularly due to the close proximity of neighbouring dwellings. The type of issues raised by the community concern submissions and council records shows that this type of conflict is widespread, with the most common complaints being: barking dogs, dangerous dogs, menacing dogs, roaming cats/dogs; cat/dog faeces, acceptable number of animals per household.

- Nuisance reports take up much of Council’s time to investigate and resolve.

Action

- Council can take legal action against the owner of a companion animal considered to be a nuisance.

- Council has developed in depth information locatable on its website to guide and encourage responsible pet ownership.

Restricted Breeds

Restricted Dog Definition:

A full definition of a restricted dog can be found at Section 55 of and Act and includes:

- American Pitbull terrier or Pit-bull terrier
- Japanese Tosa
- Dogo Argentino (Argentinean fighting dog)
- Fila Brasiliiero (Brazilian fighting dog)
- Any other dog of a breed, kind or description whose importation into Australia is prohibited by or under the Customs Act 1901 of the Commonwealth;
- Any dog declared by a Council under Division 6 of the Act to be a restricted dog (Council declared restricted dog refers to any dog where the council is of the opinion that a dog is of a breed or kind of dog on the restricted dog list or a cross-breed of any such breed or kind of dog)
- Any other dog of a breed, kind or description prescribed the Regulations for the purposes of this section
Objective
- To ensure that dogs declared as restricted breeds are dealt with according to legislation by owners and Council.

Issue
- It is an offence in New South Wales to sell, acquire or breed dogs defined as restricted.

Action
- Council may take legal action against breaches of the Divisions 5, 6 & 7 of the Act.

Prohibited Areas

Objective
- To prevent companion animals from entering onto selected public areas.

Issue
Dogs are prohibited from:
- Being within 10 metres of a children’s play area
- Recreation and public bathing areas where dogs are declared to be prohibited
- School grounds and child care centres and community event areas
- Shopping areas where dogs are prohibited

Cats and dogs are prohibited from:
- Wildlife protection areas,
- Food preparation or consumption areas.

Action
- Council has developed in depth information locatable on its website to guide and encourage responsible pet ownership.
- Council monitors and enforces the general responsibilities of owners when their dogs are in public places.

Off Leash Areas

Objective
- To facilitate and encourage the use of designated “Off Leash” area in the LGA.

Issue
- “Off Leash areas are designated public areas owned and regulated by Council that permits dog owners to exercise dogs without a leash. These are the only areas where a dog can run free without a lead.

Action
- Fairfield City Council has two “Off Leash” areas which are located.
1. Freeman Ave Reserve, Railway Parade Canley Vale

2. Corner of Kembla Street and Townsville Road Wakeley.
“Off Leash” areas have seating for the comfort of users, are sign posted and fully fenced. The areas are also provided with degradable doggie poo bags, a waste bin and a self-filling drinking bowl for dogs. The areas were selected for their large open area and availability of car parking and toilet facilities.

It is recognised that dogs benefit greatly from a chance to run freely and socialise with other dogs, this reduces boredom and pent-up energy and reduces barking and other nuisance behaviour.

Additional information about pet awareness can also be located in an informative publication titled, “Pet Awareness – Frequently Asked Questions” which provides many answers about responsible pet ownership.

Environmental Issues

Companion animals can adversely affect the environment in a number of ways – noise pollution, water pollution, faecal pollution and predation of native fauna. Educating owners to take responsibility for their animals will help to redirect their animal's activity to minimise impact on the surrounding environment.

Noise Pollution

Objective
- To minimise noise pollution caused by companion animals and improve public amenity.

Issue
- Barking dogs account for a large percentage of all companion animals complaints received at Council.

- Barking dog complaints more often than not result in neighbourhood conflict.

Action
- Community Justice Centre (CJC) is able to assist in settling neighbourhood disputes.
- Owners are encouraged to adequately exercise their dogs to avoid the possibility of boredom and anxiety of the animals.
- Council provides off leash areas for dogs to exercise.
- Council has developed in depth information locatable on its website to guide and encourages responsible pet ownership.
- Council investigates and enforces breaches of owner responsibilities.
Water Pollution

**Objective**
- Minimise the impact of companion animals and their faeces on the water catchments of the Fairfield Local Government Area.

**Issue**
- Pollution of domestic yards, footpaths, parks and reserves by animal faeces and the consequent pollution of waterways by stormwater run-off are of great environmental concern.

**Action**
- Council promotes the use of its current two off leash areas and maintains those areas in clean state.
- Council provides free Poo Pouches to owners of companion animals on request
- Council responds to complaints of irresponsible pet owners who fail to collect their animal’s waste in public areas.
- Council promotes responsible pet ownership through a number of media outlets.

Biodiversity

**Objective**
- To increase awareness and minimise impact of companion animals on the biodiversity of Fairfield LGA.

**Issue**
- Free ranging companion cats and feral cats have a significant detrimental effect on birdlife.
- Domestic cats provide a reservoir of breeding animals for wild breeding animals and continually increase the wild cat population.

**Action**
- Council has developed in depth information locatable on its website to guide and encourages responsible pet ownership.
- Council investigates and enforces breaches of owner responsibilities.
- Council hosts a number of free microchip days each year for dogs cats.
References & Acknowledgements


3. *Companion Animals Act 1998 No 87*

Acknowledgements:

In preparing this Plan, Council wishes to acknowledge additional reference was to the Companion Animal Management Plans of the following NSW Councils;

- Cowra Shire Council
- The City of Newcastle Council
- Eurobodalla Shire Council