



WHITEHORSE
CITY COUNCIL

Domestic Animal Management Plan

2026-2029



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Acknowledgement of Country

Whitehorse City Council Community acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of the land. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.



1 | INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT



1.1 | DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN PURPOSE

The *Domestic Animal Act 1994* (the Act) requires Victorian Councils to deliver a Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) every 4 years. The aim is to balance differing community expectations, respond to emerging trends and enhance animal management within the City of Whitehorse. It has been developed through consultation with the community and key internal and external stakeholders.

This Plan addresses the issues identified during community consultation, includes Council's statutory obligations and supports developing and implementing a range of strategies. It also outlines current and future initiatives to address new and emerging issues that Council plans to address and improve on over the 2026–2029 period, as shown on the next page.



FUN FACT

Did you know the most popular off-lead park in Whitehorse is Gardiners Creek in Burwood



Encouraging responsible pet ownership of cats and dogs through education and enforcement approaches, especially for dog off-lead areas.



Raising the profile and importance of effective animal management.



Enhancing community safety by reducing the number of dogs not under effective control throughout the municipality.



Reviewing Council's animal management services, programs, procedures and policies, including Local Law provisions and existing Orders made under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* (the Act).



Ensuring Authorised Officers are adequately trained to fulfil Council's legislative, educational and enforcement functions.



Reducing the number of dog attacks and serious dog related incidents.



Promoting the benefits of owning companion animals within the community.



Addressing the overpopulation of unwanted cats and dogs while minimising euthanasia rates and promoting the benefits of desexing dogs and cats.



We will continue to return lost and found animals directly to their owners where possible, helping to reduce pound costs and euthanasia rates and improve owner education.



Addressing domestic animal welfare issues specific to the City of Whitehorse community.



Ensuring that domestic animal businesses (as defined under the Act) and declared dogs are registered and managed according to the relevant Codes of Practice



Developing and exercising plans and contingencies in the event of an emergency.

This DAMP also sets out a method for evaluating whether the animal management services provided by Council are adequate to give effect to the requirements of the Act and the Domestic Animal Regulations 2015 (the Regulations).

1.2 | LEGISLATION

A legislative requirement under the Act requires all Victorian councils to develop a DAMP every four years. The DAMP must outline council services, programs and policies established to address the administration of the Act and the council's management of dog and cat issues in the community. In addition, councils must annually review their DAMPs and include an evaluation of the past year's actions in their Annual Report (as outlined in Section 12 of this document). The complete requirements specified in the Act are outlined below.

68A Councils to prepare domestic animal management plans

(1) Subject to subsection (1A), each Council must, in consultation with the Secretary, prepare a domestic animal management plan on 4 December 2021 and at the end of each period of 4 years after that day.

(1A) A Council may apply to the Secretary for an extension of time within which to prepare a domestic animal management plan.

(1B) The Secretary may grant an extension of time under subsection (1A) if the Secretary believes that special circumstances exist that warrant the granting of an extension.

(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.

1.3 | PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION – PRE-DRAFT DAMP

Whitehorse City Council DAMP was developed through widespread community and stakeholder engagement to ensure that it identified and addressed specific animal management issues across the municipality.

PHASE 1: COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

A detailed community engagement program was developed to encourage the community of Whitehorse to provide feedback about domestic animal management issues. Council provided an online survey, attendances at community events and targeted stakeholder outreach that included community groups, sporting clubs and park committees. The feedback included:



267 online survey responses.



157 submissions at community events, pop-ups and festivals.

We took the opportunity to consult with the community around the 9 objectives outlined within the DAMP, which are discussed in various sections of this document. From the 424 submissions received, there was a common focus around the importance of promoting responsible pet ownership through Council-run programs, engagement and events, methods to reduce the risk of dog attacks within the community and, lastly, to ensure effective management of dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs.



Through the YourSay survey, we asked residents what programs they would like to see us continue or introduce, 76% of the submissions indicated the continuation of the 'Pups in Park' (dog behaviouralist in the parks for free training) and 59% for in-person dog behaviour seminars.

The key themes from the community consultation include the following.



Dog management

- 🐾 Interest in the creation of fenced, dedicated dog off-lead areas, including safe zones for small or reactive dogs.
- 🐾 Concerns about dogs off-lead in on-lead areas, dogs not under effective control in parks, and lack of owner awareness about good dog behaviour in public spaces; for example, picking up waste, not allowing their dogs to cause nuisance to other park users etc.
- 🐾 Requests to improve signage around leash rules and clarify expectations for dog and owner behaviour in public spaces.



Cat management

- 🐾 Strong support was received for a 24-hour cat curfew to reduce harm to native wildlife, prevent property intrusions, and improve public amenity.
- 🐾 Calls for mandatory desexing of cats to reduce stray populations, (which we currently have in place).
- 🐾 Requests for better enforcement of cat containment rules, including providing loan cat traps.



Enforcement and Council presence

- 🐾 Perception that current enforcement is too soft or inconsistent, particularly regarding off-lead breaches, barking complaints and cat roaming.
- 🐾 Strong community desire for more visible Authorised Officer patrols, random compliance checks, and meaningful penalties for repeat or serious offenders.



Education and responsible pet ownership

- ❗ Strong push for expanded education efforts to promote responsible pet ownership, delivered through multilingual resources, community workshops, online campaigns, and partnerships with groups such as the RSPCA and Animal Aid.
- ❗ Suggestions to provide free or subsidised training programs for dog owners, particularly targeting behaviour, obedience and socialisation.
- ❗ Fairer registration models that acknowledge indoor-only cats or well-trained dogs.



Infrastructure and amenities

- ❗ More waste bins and free waste bag dispensers in parks and reserves.
- ❗ Concerns about the condition and security of fencing in dog parks.
- ❗ Suggestions for better design of shared spaces to reduce conflict between dog owners, non-dog owners and other park users.



Other issues raised

- ❗ Regulation of backyard breeding and pet shops.
- ❗ Providing grants or subsidies to assist with pet desexing, especially for financially vulnerable owners.

PHASE 2: COMMUNITY CONSULTATION – PUBLIC EXHIBITION

Council sought feedback on the draft Domestic Animal Management Plan 2026–2029 (DAMP) through a range of opportunities, including:



188 responses via an online survey and direct email submissions



Key Stakeholder presentations



Four community pop-up sessions across the municipality

The public exhibition invited our community to provide feedback on the proposed actions within the draft DAMP, with a particular focus on the 5 key priority areas identified during phase 1 of consultation and outlined on page 10 and 11.

From the feedback we received, approximately 70% of respondents expressed support for the proposed actions, particularly in relation to

- 🐾 compliance, safety and regulation
- 🐾 animal welfare and support services
- 🐾 education and responsible pet ownership
- 🐾 partnerships and system improvements

Feedback on cat management was more divided with 57% of the respondents supporting the proposed actions and 33% were opposed.

We are committed to working with the community continuously to ensure the new 2026-2029 DAMP reflects both the planned goals and evolving community expectations.

Key Takeaways:

- 🐾 Respondents highlighted the importance of cat behaviour and education, recommending stronger collaboration with key partners and agencies, and the use of cat behaviourists.
- 🐾 Support was shown to not increase animal registration fees.
- 🐾 Positive feedback was received regarding Council's support for residents experiencing hardship, homelessness and family violence.
- 🐾 Respondents suggested increasing social media communication to better outline enforcement actions taken.
- 🐾 Feedback emphasised the need to help residents choose suitable dogs for their living arrangements (e.g. avoiding large dogs in high-rise apartments).
- 🐾 We made amendments to terminology to ensure the document is easier to understand and consistent across all sections.





1.4 | DEMOGRAPHICS AND PROFILE OF COUNCIL

The City of Whitehorse is located approximately 15 kilometres east of Melbourne and covers an area of 64 square kilometres. The municipality is largely residential, complemented by commercial, educational and recreational facilities. It shares boundaries with the cities of Manningham to the north, Maroondah and Knox to the east, Monash to the south and Boroondara to the west.

POPULATION AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Whitehorse has an estimated 183,462 residents (as of June 2024), living in more than 65,000 households. The city is characterised by cultural diversity, with 41.5% of residents born overseas and more than one-third of the population speaking languages other than English at home.

The most spoken languages, apart from English, include Mandarin (16.2%), Cantonese (5.5%), Greek (2.3%) and Vietnamese (1.4%). In total, more than 130 languages are spoken across the community.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

The median age of residents in 2021 was 39, slightly older than the Greater Melbourne median of 37. A significant portion (24%) of the population is aged 60 and over and 10% are aged 75 years and over, reflecting a higher proportion of older adults compared with regional averages. Meanwhile, areas such as Box Hill and Burwood have younger demographics, with nearly one-third of residents aged between 18 and 29.

HOUSEHOLDS AND EDUCATION

Whitehorse contains 65,115 households, with the most common household type being couples with children (33.1%). Single-person households and couples without children comprise nearly a quarter of all households. The average household size is 2.6 persons. Around 22% of households have a registered pet, reflecting a reasonable level of pet ownership in the community.

Educational engagement is strong in the municipality with 10.1% of residents attending a tertiary or technical institution, higher than the Greater Melbourne average. The area also supports a mix of public and private educational facilities.

WHITEHORSE SUBURBS

The city includes the suburbs of:

- 🐾 Blackburn, Blackburn North, Blackburn South
- 🐾 Box Hill, Box Hill North, Box Hill South
- 🐾 Burwood (shared with City of Monash), Burwood East
- 🐾 Forest Hill, Mitcham
- 🐾 Mont Albert (shared with City of Boroondara), Mont Albert North
- 🐾 Nunawading (shared with City of Manningham)
- 🐾 Surrey Hills (shared with City of Boroondara)
- 🐾 Vermont (shared with City of Maroondah) and Vermont South

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Population projections suggest continued steady growth over the coming years, with forecasts indicating an increase from 183,462 in 2024 to 234,277 by 2046. Suburbs such as Box Hill and Burwood are expected to see the most significant development, with Box Hill forecasted to grow by more than 160% in dwelling numbers by 2046.

CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITY PROFILE

Whitehorse has more than 340 well-developed open spaces, parks and reserves, which include 32 parks and reserves that have designated areas where dogs can be exercised off-lead. There are also 14 sports fields where dogs are prohibited. Our parks and reserves offer many varied recreational and leisure opportunities for residents and their pets. The city also includes key commercial centres, transport links and medical facilities, ensuring high liveability and community engagement.



FUN FACT

Dogs' and cats' nose prints are as unique as a human fingerprint.

1.5 | CONTEXT AND CURRENT SITUATION

The Whitehorse City Council Community Laws team comprises 10 Authorised Officers who ensure that Council meets its legislative responsibilities for managing domestic animals under the Act while also effectively addressing the community's needs and expectations.

Equipped with the necessary knowledge, tools and legislative authorisations, the team works to promote responsible pet ownership and support animal welfare while contributing to safer, healthier environments for both the community and animals. The team's workload has significantly increased as community expectations continue to rise. Each customer service request often requires multiple inspections and ongoing negotiations to achieve the best animal and community outcomes.

Council's domestic animal services include:



Promoting responsible pet ownership through public engagement events, training and in-person and online animal seminars



Investigating nuisance animal complaints



Barking dog management



Dog attack investigations



Managing dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs



Animal management education programs



Educating children and adults through school visits, seminars and public events



Assisting with the cost of dog and cat desexing



Actively patrolling parks to ensure safe and enjoyable public spaces for all users



Proactive animal investigations and programs



Collection of wandering, nuisance and unowned domestic animals



Reuniting pets with owners directly where possible



Animal surrender and welfare management



Providing 365 days a year, 24/7 emergency animal response



Registering and inspecting domestic animal businesses



Managing animal registration records



FUN FACT

**Cats spend 70% of their
life span sleeping**

2 | DOMESTIC ANIMAL STATISTICS



A general summary of the current domestic animal population and related service statistics in the City of Whitehorse is provided in Table 1.

Program/Service	Service Level
Identification and registration	12,084 dogs and 5,670 cats in 2024-25
Identification and registration doorknock campaigns	Annually
Dog attack and dog at large complaints	Immediate response upon complaint
Menacing and dangerous dog inspections	Biannual
Park and street patrols	Daily with 1,670 completed in 2024-25
Pound facility – Animal Aid	Monday to Saturday 9am to 4pm Sunday 11.30am to 3.30pm
After-hours emergency service	365 days a year, 24/7
Cat trap program	Available to the community on request
Animals impounded	188 dogs in 2024-25 214 cats in 2024-25
Reclaimed animals	136 dogs in 2024-25 22 cats in 2024-25
Animals rehomed	33 dogs in 2024-25 128 cats in 2024-25
Animals euthanised	14 dogs in 2024-25 29 cats in 2024-25
Declared dogs	2 declared dangerous dogs 2021–25 5 declared menacing dogs 2021–25
Registered domestic animal business	15 in 2024-25

Table 1: Council animal management programs and services



3 | TRAINING OF AUTHORISED OFFICERS



To deliver animal services that meet the requirements of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 (the Act) under Section 68A(2)(b), to the level that the community expects, it is crucial to ensure that all Authorised Officers are appropriately trained and have the opportunity to participate in a robust training program.

3.1 | CONTEXT AND CURRENT SITUATION

The Community Laws team, which operates within the Community Safety Department, carries out the functions and responsibilities of animal management at Whitehorse City Council. The team comprises 10 multi-skilled Authorised Officers who deliver animal management and community laws services as part of their role.

All Officers hold the necessary authorisations and are equipped to manage enforcement and education duties and respond to community concerns. In addition to standard business hours operations, Council provides 365 days a year, 24/7 after-hours response services for urgent animal management matters.

Given the broad scope of their work, all Officers involved in animal management are required to hold a high level of knowledge, skills and competency. Council ensures this through comprehensive training programs, including accredited courses, regular team training sessions and annual refresher courses (see Table 2). Officers are also provided with specialised tools and personal protective equipment to ensure they can carry out their responsibilities safely, effectively, and in accordance with best practice standards.



FUN FACT

The top dog name is Whitehorse is Charlie

Qualification/training	Current	Planned
Certificate IV in Animal Regulation and Management, Certificate IV in Government Statutory Compliance or similar	Completed by all Officers	Newly appointed Officers to achieve if required
Animal Handling (multiple)	Completed	Officers to complete annually
Dangerous dog management and handling	Completed	Officers to complete every 2 years
Canine breed identification (Department of Agriculture)	In progress	Officers to attend next provided training as needs are identified
Conflict resolution	Completed	Officers to complete every 2 years
In-house training on relevant subject matter, e.g. brief preparation, statement taking	Completed	Officers to attend when required
Situational Awareness Training	Completed	Officers to complete every 2 years
Family Violence Awareness	Completed	Officers to complete annually
Mental Health First Aid Training	Completed	Renewed and completed as required
Animal Emergency Management Training/ Exercising	To be introduced	Officers to attend next provided training and exercises as needs are identified
Effective Communication	In progress	Officers to attend next provided training as needs are identified
In-house training and e-learning modules (i.e. Code of Conduct, Fraud and Corruption, Negotiation and Conflict)	In progress	Renewed and completed as required
Induction program for new staff	Completed by all Officers	Will be provided to newly appointed Officers
In-house training (i.e. Duress Alarms, Body-Worn Cameras and Incident Reporting)	Completed	Renewed and completed as required

Table 2: Authorised Officer training status—completed/in progress

3.2 | OUR PLAN

Whitehorse City Council is firmly committed to staff safety and development and ensures all employees possess or attain the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to continue to successfully and safely carry out their roles. Training and skill development requirements are identified through Whitehorse Council's 'My Performance and Goals' (MPAG) program. To achieve set objectives, staff training is offered to meet organisational and individual needs.

Objective 1: Enhance the skills and knowledge of Authorised Officers to ensure they can effectively perform their regulatory roles and support the community in animal management.

Activity	Timeline	Evaluation
Ensure Authorised Officers are highly trained in alignment with individual development plans to strengthen capability and deliver the best possible outcomes for the community	Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review annually to determine training goals and identification of skill gaps, as part of the learning and development plan for each Officer
Provide planned training of Authorised Officers as outlined in Table 2. Maintain a training register for individual Officers	Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of training programs undertaken Review training register
Identify additional training opportunities through industry best practice	Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of training courses and the amount of additional training
Additional training for Officers – Communication and De-escalation Skills / Conflict Resolution / Cultural Awareness	Annual refresher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Courses for Active Listening and Basic De-escalation
Authorised Officers to receive ongoing training relating to family violence and mental health awareness	Refresher 2028	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training delivered

Table 3: Authorised Officer training objectives



4 | RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERSHIP PROGRAMS



Promoting responsible pet ownership remains a top priority for Whitehorse, reflecting both community expectations and Council's commitment to creating a safe, harmonious environment for all. Through community consultation, residents clearly expressed a strong desire to address issues such as dogs not under effective control, nuisance behaviour and the responsibilities of pet owners.

In response, Council is enhancing its focus on educational initiatives including free pop-up events in parks and reserves, webinars and seminars to educate and empower pet owners and support positive behavioural change. These efforts are central to reducing serious incidents and ensuring residents continue to see the value and benefit of pet registration.

4.1 | CONTEXT AND CURRENT SITUATION

Council is committed to fostering a safe, compassionate and pet-friendly community by promoting responsible pet ownership through a range of supportive initiatives and educational programs. These efforts help pet owners understand their responsibilities and meet important legislative and regulatory requirements. Key initiatives include:

- ❗ sharing helpful information on responsible pet ownership, including the benefits of desexing, registration and microchipping
- ❗ actively following up on unpaid animal registration renewals to ensure all pets are safely and legally registered under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* (the Act)
- ❗ providing a discounted desexing program for Whitehorse residents who hold concession cards, helping to ease the financial burden for vulnerable members of our community
- ❗ maintaining, promoting and regularly patrolling designated on and off-lead parks and public spaces to ensure safe, welcoming spaces for all residents to enjoy
- ❗ providing a free cat trap hire service and assisting with the collection of trapped cats, supporting efforts to manage stray and roaming cats
- ❗ supporting dog owners through education and training resources with an animal behaviourist at 'Pups in Park' events and seminars to prevent dog-related incidents and encourage safe behaviour
- ❗ providing cat owners with information and education on the importance of containing their cats to protect both the cats and local wildlife and offer online webinars to support responsible pet ownership
- ❗ delivering fun and informative animal education programs to children, helping the next generation learn how to care for animals and treat them with kindness and respect



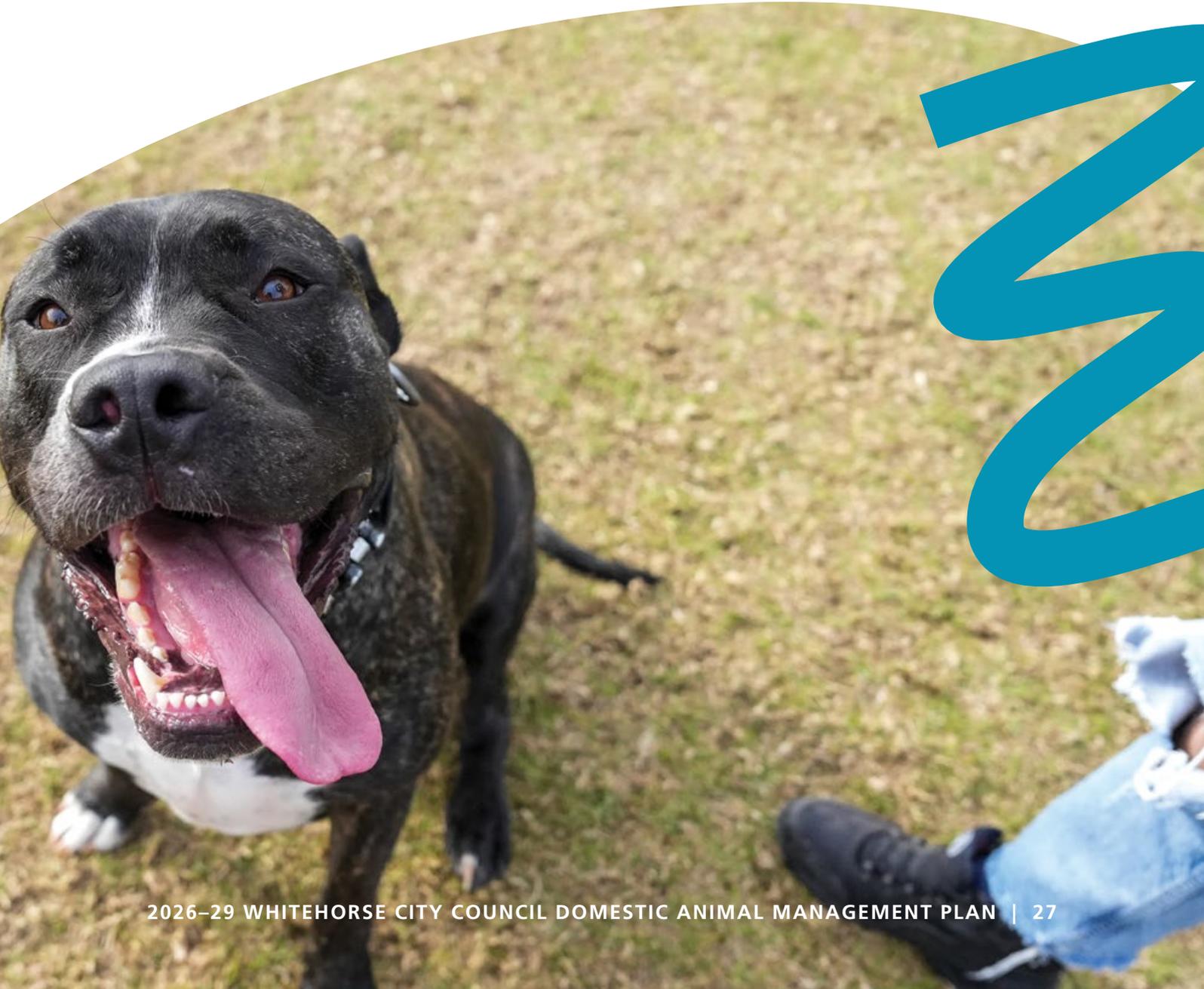
FUN FACT

**Dogs dream
like humans**

CURRENT EDUCATION/PROMOTION ACTIVITIES

Council recognises that education and access to information are critical to promoting responsible pet ownership. While a range of educational initiatives are already in place, Council will increase its focus on education over the next four years through:

- ❗ providing opportunities for the community to meet Authorised Officers at dog parks, community festivals and local events, such as 'Pups in Parks', engagement stalls and webinars
- ❗ partnering with registered dog trainers to deliver demonstrations and assist in animal behavioural issues through free events in parks and public spaces
- ❗ hosting information sessions through in-person seminars and online webinars
- ❗ conducting responsible pet ownership and dog bite prevention in school holiday programs
- ❗ running targeted social media campaigns to promote responsible pet ownership within the community



RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERSHIP PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN

Council is required to pay a levy to the state government for every animal registration payment received from registered pet owners in Whitehorse, contributing approximately \$80,000 in the 2024/2025 financial year.

Animal Welfare Victoria uses this funding to support a range of community and education programs, including:

- ✿ **We Are Family Program**—Supports expectant parents and families with children aged 0 to 4 by promoting pet safety in the home. It is delivered through sessions at 70 hospitals and 680 maternal and child health centres across Victoria each year.
- ✿ **Living Safely with Dogs Program**—This program reaches more than 65,000 kindergarten children and 18,000 parents annually through more than 2000 visits across Victoria. Pet educators, accompanied by suitability-tested dogs, teach children how to safely interact with dogs and provide their first hands-on experience.
- ✿ **Responsible Pet Ownership Program**—Aimed at children aged 5 to 12, this program has reached more than 1 million Victorian primary school students. Since 2020, it has visited more than 100 schools within the City of Whitehorse. The program features dog visits, multimedia tools, role play, songs and stories to promote dog safety and responsible pet care.

Additionally, the Community Laws team delivers extra education sessions on child safety around dogs and cats and dog bite prevention during school holiday programs and to any schools within the municipality that contact Council to deliver this program.



4.2 | OUR ORDERS, LOCAL LAWS, COUNCIL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

CURRENT ORDERS

Under Section 68A(2)(d) of the Act, councils may introduce and review animal management orders within their municipality.

- ❖ **Mandatory cat desexing:** Order Number 8 made under Section 10A(1) of the Act took effect in April 2020 and specifies that all cats registered for the first time must be desexed unless exempt under Section 10B(1) of the Act.
- ❖ **Cat confinement:** Order Number 9 made under Section 26(2) of the Act took effect in January 2020 and requires all cat owners to confine their cats within their property boundaries between 8.00pm and 6.00am daily.
- ❖ **Prohibited areas for cats:** Order Number 10 made under Section 26(2) of the Act took effect from January 2020 and prohibits cats from entering 11 designated Council bushland reserves, whether restrained or not, to safeguard sensitive ecosystems and native fauna.
- ❖ **Dog control in public spaces:** Order Number 11 made under Section 26(2) of the Act took effect from 1 September 2023 and outlines regulations for dog control in public spaces under Section 26(2). Summarised key points include that:
 - o dogs must be effectively controlled by their handler (on a leash no longer than 1.5 metres) in all public places, except in designated off-lead areas
 - o in designated off-lead reserves, dogs may be exercised off-lead provided they remain under effective control, stay within 25 metres and in clear view of the owner, respond immediately to voice commands, and the owner carries a leash (no longer than 1.5 metres) to restrain the dog if needed
 - o dogs are not permitted within 2.5 metres of children's play spaces, sports grounds during organised events, designated picnic or barbecue areas, and locations of organised community gatherings. They are also banned from specific dog prohibited areas outlined in Schedule 2 of this Order.

CURRENT LOCAL LAW

The Whitehorse Community Local Law 2024 (Local Law) sets out a range of requirements for keeping animals within the municipality. It includes the need for a permit to keep more than two dogs and two cats, along with conditions for other species to ensure the welfare of animals and the amenity of the community. The Local Law outlines animal housing, sanitation and fencing standards, as well as measures to prevent nuisance from noise, odour or unsanitary conditions. It also mandates that animal waste on public land be collected and disposed of appropriately reinforcing the Council’s commitment to public health and environmental responsibility.

Adopted in 2024, the Local Law included additional clauses related to animal keeping and housing to strengthen animal welfare protections and reduce nuisance impacts on the community of Whitehorse.

CURRENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Council has an internal guidelines document that outlines the procedures to be followed by Authorised Officers when addressing offences under the Local Law and the Act. This document serves as an operational reference, ensuring consistency, transparency and compliance with legislative requirements when investigating and responding to breaches. It includes guidance on evidence gathering, issuing notices and enforcement actions.



FUN FACT

Like humans have a dominant hand, cats and dogs can be left or right pawed

4.3 | OUR PLAN

Objective 2: Promote responsible pet ownership within the community through education and awareness initiatives.

Activity	Timeline	Evaluation
Apply statistical analysis to support evidence-based decision-making to guide animal management-related policy and process development	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant statistics used to drive projects and new initiatives
Improve reach of support and educational materials within culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities by providing additional multilingual resources to ensure all community members have access to clear and relevant information about the benefits of animal registration and responsible pet ownership	2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of people accessing education and support services provided in other languages • Number of different formats used to distribute information
Consult with a variety of multicultural groups to determine best approaches for delivery of animal management services to CALD communities	2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of multicultural groups involved in the consultation process
Provide information and advice to high-rise and multi-unit residential developments and tertiary institution accommodation providers to assist them in dealing with nuisance animal issues, focusing on noise management, waste disposal, containment and neighbourly behaviour, to address the unique challenges of pet ownership in higher density living environments	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources developed and distributed • Reduction in number of complaints in targeted areas
Create and share community information videos and social media content promoting community expectations about specific pet owner responsibilities to increase awareness and education of dog owners—picking up and properly disposing of dog waste, maintaining control in off-lead areas and awareness of other residents' rights when in public spaces	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of different formats • Number of people engaging with social media posts • Number of times accessed • Reduction in number of complaints related to non-compliance with regulated ownership behaviours

Activity	Timeline	Evaluation
Research options for alternative messaging (such as temporary signage, stencils, decals, posters etc) to assist with educating owners regarding pet behaviour to improve responsible ownership in public open spaces, using Council data and information systems to determine hot spots and locations for increased focus	2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of different formats • Resources developed • Reduction in complaints • Improvement in compliance
Investigate a Whitehorse-specific pet expo and other pet-specific events	2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research completed with internal stakeholders to develop and cost a proposal
Deliver ongoing free education sessions such as seminars, webinars, and pop-up events in parks throughout the life of the DAMP. These will feature Authorised Officers, animal behaviourists and qualified trainers who can provide advice to residents. They will be providing targeted information and education about the many responsibilities of pet ownership and other topics determined according to needs identified during the course of the DAMP.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of sessions conducted and the number of people attending the events
Provide clear and accessible education on breed traits, lifestyle compatibility, care needs and legal responsibilities, while connecting residents with local shelters and resources to support informed and responsible pet choices.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of resources made available

Table 4: Promote responsible pet ownership through education and awareness initiatives



FUN FACT

Did you know the most popular breed of dog in Whitehorse, is a Cavoodle?

5 | OVER-POPULATION RATE AND EUTHANASIA RATE

There is not an over-population of cats and dogs in Whitehorse. However, it remains an important area of focus to ensure euthanasia rates remain low and that preventive strategies are maintained to minimise impacts on wildlife, public safety and animal welfare.

Council continues to prioritise reuniting lost pets with their owners, increasing pet registration to support this, working with owners considering surrendering of their pet, and responding promptly to reports of cats wandering or nuisance behaviour to help prevent stray cats breeding. These efforts, along with proactive animal management and community engagement, help maintain low euthanasia rates and support responsible pet ownership.

5.1 | CONTEXT AND CURRENT SITUATION

Council is committed to reuniting lost pets with their owners quickly. In 2023/2024 Authorised Officers returned 140 registered dogs and cats directly to their owners, an increase of approximately 30% from the last DAMP.

Dog collections	21-22	22-23	23-24	24-25
Returned to owner by Council	166	144	140	145

Table 5: Pet/owner reuniting rates

Keeping pet registration information up to date and maintaining accurate microchip contact details significantly increases Council's ability to reunite lost pets with their owners and helps reduce the number of animals impounded. Since 2017, Council has contracted Animal Aid in Coldstream to provide a pound service.

Whitehorse Council also has an additional agreement with RSPCA Burwood under Section 84Y of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* (the Act), allowing that centre to temporarily hold lost or stray animals for up to 3 days to assist with reunification efforts. If the animals are not claimed within the timeframe, Council will collect and transfer them to Animal Aid, where further efforts are made to locate their owners.

Table 6 provides information on the number of animals impounded and surrendered and the outcomes, such as reunification and euthanasia rates.

	Dog collections	21-22	22-23	23-24	24-25
Dogs	Total dogs impounded	158	199	210	188
	Adopted	7	35	34	33
	Euthanised	11	11	10	14
	Foster/welfare/other	4	0	0	2
	Reclaimed	147	161	167	136
Cats	Total cats impounded	228	194	235	214
	Adopted	141	126	153	128
	Euthanised	39	55	37	29
	Foster/welfare/other	23	0	0	11
	Reclaimed	43	16	38	22

Table 6: Lost dog/owner reuniting rates

The animal data for the City of Whitehorse from 2021/2022 through to 2024/2025 reveals several encouraging trends in animal management, particularly in the areas of animal rehoming and reduced euthanasia rates.



DOGS

- 🐾 Council continues to prioritise the reuniting of lost pets with their owners as quickly as possible. This has led to an increase in direct returns to owners in the field, which in turn has reduced the overall number of dogs being impounded.
- 🐾 The number of dogs reclaimed from Animal Aid and the RSPCA by their owners has increased 13.6% between 2021/2022 and 2023/2024. This reflects improved pet identification and registration compliance, stronger community engagement and owner awareness regarding maintaining updated microchip and registration details to ensure lost pets can be reclaimed.
- 🐾 Adoptions have also risen significantly, from just 7 in 2021/2022 to 34 in 2023/2024, which indicates greater community interest in adopting animals through shelters.
- 🐾 Euthanasia rates have remained low and relatively stable, with only slight variations. This suggests practical assessment and intervention processes for impounded dogs and a commitment to prioritising welfare outcomes.



FUN FACT

Did you know Dalmatians are born completely white? Their spots develop over time. There are 38 registered Dalmatians living in Whitehorse.



FUN FACT

The top cat name is
Whitehorse is Luna.

CATS

- 🐾 Data shows a consistently high number of adoptions, increasing from 141 in 2021/2022 to 153 in 2023/2024. While this is a positive sign of community support for rehoming cats, the number of reclaimed cats remains very low. This trend highlights an ongoing challenge in cat ownership awareness, identification and containment.
- 🐾 Although euthanasia numbers for cats are higher than those for dogs, there has been a 30% reduction in euthanasia rates from 2022/2023 to 2023/2024. This suggests that rehoming strategies, public education and possibly early intervention efforts are having a positive effect.

This data supports the Council's continued focus on:

- 🐾 increasing pet identification and registration efforts, especially for cats
- 🐾 promoting the rehoming and adoption of animals from shelters
- 🐾 reducing euthanasia rates through education, early engagement and welfare support
- 🐾 addressing community concerns around stray and unowned cats
- 🐾 enhancing public education about responsible ownership and the risks of feeding or ignoring stray cat populations

Overall, the data reflects progress in animal welfare, particularly for dogs, and reinforces the importance of sustained community education, proactive animal management strategies, improvements in reclaim rates, and targeted efforts to address the challenges associated with cats.

Each year, Whitehorse Council demonstrates its strong commitment to responsible pet ownership through a range of targeted initiatives. These include delivering timely and accessible information via social media, online platforms and printed materials to educate and support pet owners. Council also actively connects with the community by hosting regular free pop-up dog behaviour training sessions in popular local parks, providing practical guidance in real-life settings. In addition, Council offers interactive online webinars and dog behaviour seminars and maintains a visible presence at major community events such as the annual Spring Festival. These combined efforts aim to foster safer, more responsible pet ownership and strengthen community awareness across the municipality.

5.2 | OUR ORDERS, LOCAL LAWS, COUNCIL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

CURRENT ORDERS

Whitehorse City Council has implemented several orders made under the Act to help manage overpopulation, reduce euthanasia rates and protect local wildlife.

- ❖ **Mandatory cat desexing:** Order Number 8 made under Section 10A(1) of the Act specifies that all cats registered for the first time must be desexed unless exempt under Section 10B(1) of the Act. This measure helps control the cat population and reduce the number of unwanted litters.
- ❖ **Cat confinement:** Order Number 9 made under Section 26(2) of the Act requires all cat owners to confine their cats within their property boundaries between 8.00pm and 6.00am daily. This policy aims to minimise disturbances caused by roaming cats and protect local wildlife.
- ❖ **Prohibited areas for cats:** Order Number 10 made under Section 26(2) of the Act prohibits cats from entering 11 designated Council bushland reserves, whether restrained or not, to safeguard sensitive ecosystems and native fauna.

CURRENT LOCAL LAWS

Whitehorse Community Local Law 2024: Part 6 – Keeping of Animals sets conditions regarding the keeping of animals including cats and dogs and limits on the number of animals that may be kept without a permit.

To ensure community amenity, animal welfare outcomes and to manage pet populations in the community, a once-off permit application and payment process allows Authorised Officers to inspect and assess applications and to consider possible conditions that may be needed to ensure there is minimal impact to the community while maintaining animal welfare.

CURRENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Council's procedure is to prioritise reuniting lost pets with their owners. When a wandering animal is found, Authorised Officers first attempt to identify the owner using registration tags, microchip numbers or other forms of identification. Equipped with microchip scanners, Officers can quickly access microchip information to make all reasonable efforts to locate the owner and prevent the impoundment of the animal.



5.3 | OUR PLAN

Objective 3: To reduce the incidence of stray, abandoned and unwanted pets, which can contribute to higher euthanasia rates.

Activity	Timeline	Evaluation
Inform the community of the negative animal welfare outcomes associated with feeding stray cats and encourage the full ownership/adoption of stray unidentifiable cats being fed by residents	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in number of complaints and reports about stray and unowned cats
Encourage reporting to Council of stray cats to assist with reuniting them with their owners	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of cats reported Social media posts on animal reuniting stories
Engage with stakeholders to investigate options for a centralised lost and found database in collaboration with relevant animal agencies and Animal Aid	2026-27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report prepared and presented to DAMPAC* and additional stakeholders to consider if a pilot program is practical and beneficial
Digitise lost and found forms on Council website to ensure Authorised Officers are notified and lost animals are reunited quickly	2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A lost and found database list is maintained to assist in reuniting lost pets with owners
Identify and engage with stakeholders that are actively providing pet surrender prevention programs and support within Whitehorse to identify and assess services available for Whitehorse pet owners	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of stakeholders identified and engaged Information made available to pet owners
Engage proactively with pet owners considering surrender to assess underlying needs and provide support or alternative solutions where possible, with the aim of reducing unnecessary surrenders and promoting long-term, responsible pet ownership	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of residents accessing support Surrender numbers

***DAMPAC:** Domestic Animal Management Plan Advisory Committee

Activity	Timeline	Evaluation
Facilitate welfare boarding and other supports for vulnerable residents (includes residents' with pets experiencing homelessness, domestic violence and mental health crises) where possible in conjunction with our pound provider and stakeholders to provide support and options	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of referrals and assisted residents
Partner with animal welfare organisations and related agencies to implement strategies aimed at reducing the number of stray animals in the community through education, early intervention and improved containment practices	2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of agencies consulted and partnerships developed • Number of strategies implemented • Reduction in related complaints
Work with Animal Aid to promote pet adoption, provide access to Council's social media and Council-run events to promote adoption as an option to residents (adopt not shop)	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of events attended and promotions undertaken

Table 7: Reduce the incidence of stray, abandoned and unwanted pets



Objective 4: Investigate options to provide low-cost and accessible desexing programs.

Activity	Timeline	Evaluation
Investigate options to provide support for low-cost and accessible desexing programs, promote and encourage access to discount/free community desexing programs, including participation and support with government grant opportunities as they become available	2026-27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report on options presented and considered • Grant application programs accessed
Broaden the criteria for eligibility of residents for desexing fee assistance (Officer assessed, case-by-case basis)	2026-27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of residents accessing assistance
Approach animal welfare organisations to explore partnerships and pet desexing options/funding. Investigate available providers/programs to receive Council funding for the provision of discount/free desexing programs to our community	2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the preferred options
Continue to honour the previous statewide voucher scheme (contributing to the cost for desexing for concession card holders or vulnerable residents for participating vets)	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vouchers issued

Table 8: Options to provide low-cost and accessible desexing programs



FUN FACT

Kittens in the same litter can have different fathers



FUN FACT

A group of cats is called a clowder.

6 | REGISTRATION AND IDENTIFICATION



The registration and microchipping of pets is a legislative requirement under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* (the Act). This provides Council with an understanding of the level of pet ownership in the municipality and allows for the development of relevant services and programs. This also assists in the safe and quick return of lost dogs and cats to their owners.

All dogs and cats over three months old must be microchipped and registered with Council. Animal registration is renewed annually by 10 April. Newly registered cats must also be desexed, unless exempted under the Act.

In Victoria, local Councils are responsible for managing pet registrations on behalf of the Victorian Government, including setting and collecting annual registration fees and payment of the state levy.

6.1 | CONTEXT AND CURRENT SITUATION

At mid 2024, Whitehorse had 12,524 registered dogs and 5867 registered cats (see Table 9). It is difficult to capture data on the ownership population of animals, as it is widely recognised that not all cats and dogs are registered. Whitehorse registration numbers have remained consistent.

Registration numbers	21-22	22-23	23-24	24-25
Cats	6,026	5,935	5,867	5,670
Dogs	12,937	12,718	12,524	12,084

Table 9: Whitehorse council cat and dog registration numbers

As well as being a legal requirement, the registration and identification of dogs and cats enables lost and found animals to be reunited with their owners in the shortest possible time. Animal registration also allows Whitehorse to plan and target services such as park patrols and education programs and supports Authorised Officers in investigating domestic animal complaints.

Council provides the following educational and community awareness activities:

- ❗ New applicant registrations are half-priced from 10 October to 9 April the following year.
- ❗ We provide follow-up on registration for cats and dogs purchased from domestic animal businesses.
- ❗ Microchip scanners are used during park and street patrols, and when collecting stray animals, to quickly identify pets, reunite them with their owners, and check that microchip details are up to date.
- ❗ There is free first-year registration for microchipped puppies and kittens under the age of 3 months.
- ❗ There is tailored educational information for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities.
- ❗ We develop and distribute promotional material and reminders via post, text messaging, Officers on patrol, corporate communications such as *Whitehorse News*, and phone messages while on hold to Council.





In May 2024, 6 tiny American Staffordshire puppies were found cruelly dumped in a box at a local park. Cold, frightened and abandoned, their future looked uncertain.

Thankfully, our Community Laws Officers responded quickly to the report. They collected the puppies and made sure they were no longer in danger. Thanks to our partnership with Animal Aid, the litter was transferred into expert care straight away.

Over the following weeks, the pups grew stronger and more confident under the dedicated care of the Animal Aid team. Each one was given the chance to be adopted into a safe and loving home.

One of those pups was Erik. His new family fell in love with him from the very first day. Now 15 months old, Erik is a happy, energetic dog who loves chasing his ball, greets life with endless enthusiasm, and even enjoys trips back to the vet.

“It’s hard to believe Erik once started life in a box left at the park,” says his mum. “I’m forever grateful to Whitehorse and Animal Aid for giving Erik and his littermates the chance to thrive, and for bringing Erik into my life.”

Erik’s story is proof that even the most uncertain beginnings can blossom into lifelong bonds of love and companionship. It also shows the vital role Whitehorse Community Laws Officers play every day in protecting the most vulnerable animals in our community.





6.2 | OUR ORDERS, LOCAL LAWS, COUNCIL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

CURRENT ORDERS

Mandatory cat desexing: Order Number 8 made under Section 10A(1) of the Act specifies that all cats registered for the first time must be desexed unless exempt under Section 10B(1) of the Act.

CURRENT LOCAL LAWS

Whitehorse Community Local Law 2024: Part 6 outlines the keeping of animals within the municipality and sets limits on the number of animals residents can keep without a permit to help manage the pet population in Whitehorse. A one-off permit payment enables Officers to apply conditions that help minimise any impact on the community

CURRENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Council has a procedure for managing stray dogs and cats, as outlined in its internal guidelines. A key priority is reuniting lost pets with their owners wherever possible. When a stray animal is found, Authorised Officers first attempt to identify the owner using registration tags, microchip numbers or other forms of identification. Equipped with microchip scanners, Authorised Officers can quickly access microchip details and make all reasonable efforts to contact the owner, helping to prevent the need for impoundment.

OUR CURRENT COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES

Whitehorse City Council adopts a comprehensive strategy to ensure pet registration compliance and promote responsible pet ownership. Key initiatives include:

- 🐾 issuing annual registration renewal notices each year, followed by SMS reminders, personalised emails, phone calls, and, if necessary, property inspections to encourage timely registration
- 🐾 proactively following up on the registration of cats and dogs purchased from domestic animal businesses to ensure they are registered
- 🐾 investigating all reports of unregistered animals. Infringement notices are issued to those who fail to register or re-register their pets, as mandated by the Act
- 🐾 use of microchip scanners and mobile devices by Authorised Officers to verify pet registrations during street and park patrols
- 🐾 registration and microchipping of any seized or impounded animals before they are released to ensure accurate owner identification

6.3 | OUR PLAN

Objective 5: Increase pet registrations within the municipality by effectively communicating the benefits and purpose of the registration fees.

Activity	Timeline	Evaluation
Continuing free first-time registration for pets under 3 months	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of registrations
Investigate and evaluate options for free first-time registration for animals adopted from shelters and pounds	2028	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost analysis • Adoption numbers
Cost of living impacts – to assist with the cost of living, review and undertake cost analysis of current fees charged: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration fees—to consider reducing registration fees and further pro rata fee options • Permit applications – consider removing or reducing application fee for excess animal permits 	2026-27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviews undertaken, report to Council delivered and outcomes determined • Fee schedules amended if required
Transition existing registration packs for new pet owners from hardcopy to digital	2028	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process completed and implemented
Improve registration renewal rates by the due date	Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of payments received by due date
Preliminary SMS reminding residents to check and update details	Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of responses advising updates
SMS reminders sent to residents who have not renewed animal registration	Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of responses
Personalised emails for registration renewal follow-up and data cleansing	Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in outstanding unregistered animals • Number of records updated
Create and distribute e-newsletter to registered dog and cat owners using email and SMS to promote events, provide updates, and to remind pet owners to ensure pet microchip details are kept up to date if opt-in is selected	2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newsletter developed and distributed

Activity	Timeline	Evaluation
Promote Council identification markers and Council animal tags to help ensure animals can be reunited quickly	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council to provide ID markers and other personalised animal tags at animal-related events
Identify areas with lower rates of animal registration and implement targeted education and enforcement strategies to improve registration rates and promote responsible pet ownership within these areas. Conduct doorknock in areas identified as having lower registration as part of annual door knock	2028	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Available data analysed and results compiled, project undertaken to analyse data and evaluate • Mapping of cat and dog ownership on Council's GIS system to identify areas of low pet registration completed • Number of additional registrations
Undertake annual door knock and registration program	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numbers of unregistered pets detected • Number of animals subsequently registered
Implement a regular microchip database reconciliation process by cross-checking Council's animal registration records with microchip registry data to identify discrepancies, unregistered animals or outdated owner information	2027-28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process developed and implemented • Data evaluated and number of pet owners contacted

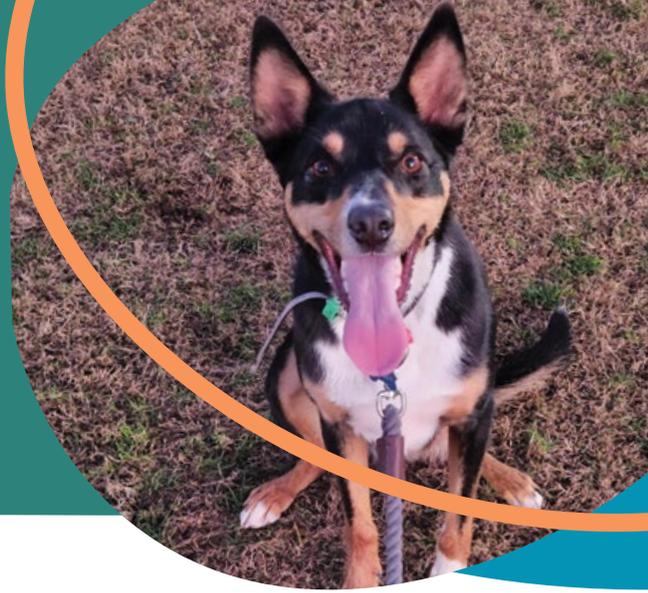
Table 10: Increase pet registration rates within Whitehorse



FUN FACT

**Dog tail-wagging
is a language**

7 | NUISANCES



Feedback from the community consultation identified several key nuisance themes. Residents noted concerns about wandering cats impacting wildlife and the impacts on neighbours from cats found on neighbouring private property, including concern about cat waste.

Residents also indicated high concerns about dog owners failing to manage their dogs effectively in public spaces and not complying with the on-lead requirements of Council’s Order 11. Themes included not picking up dog waste and allowing dogs to affect other park users.

Council has a role to protect the community from unnecessary nuisance from cats and dogs through its services and community education.

7.1 | CONTEXT AND CURRENT SITUATION

Council acknowledges that most pet owners are aware of and committed to managing their pets responsibly and respectfully. However, for those who may not fully understand their responsibilities under current pet ownership requirements, ongoing education and community awareness programs are essential to promote responsible pet ownership across the municipality.

Over the life of the 2021–2025 DAMP, the number of requests received by Council relating to animal nuisance has been steady, as shown in the table below.

Service type	21-22	22-23	23-24	24-25
Dog at large – contained	224	274	194	149
Cat at large	391	302	258	243
Dog barking	315	364	333	399
Dog at large – not contained	205	196	191	176
Dog litter	38	32	44	40
Nuisance animal	32	67	81	73

Table 11: Animal nuisance request history

The data reveals that cat-at-large complaints have reduced by 38% since 2021/2022. This suggests that there have been improvements in cat containment and also a reduction in stray and semi-owned cat sightings as supported by the lower number of requests for the use of cat traps as per Table 13.

Reports of dogs at large have decreased by approximately 59% over the past eight years, falling from 476 in 2017/2018 to 194 in

2023/2024. While dog registration numbers have remained steady, this reduction in reports suggests improved containment practices within the community. This trend is further supported by an increase in nuisance animal reports, many of which relate to concerns about dog containment. These reports have enabled Authorised Officers to proactively visit identified properties and educate dog owners on the importance of securely containing their pets, leading to fewer incidents of escaped dogs.

DOG LITTER

The issue of uncollected dog litter can potentially pose health and environmental risks to the community. The Local Law requires dog owners to carry waste bags and to responsibly remove and dispose of their dogs' litter from public spaces. Failing to do so can significantly impact residents' enjoyment of these spaces by creating hygiene concerns.

This remains a significant concern for Council and the broader community, especially in recreational areas used for both informal and organised activities. While reports of dog litter have increased, anecdotal evidence suggests the problem is far more widespread than reported. Many residents express frustration with uncollected dog waste when reporting other concerns, but may not formally report each incident because they are not able to provide further information about the person responsible.

The majority of dog owners act responsibly, but there remains a clear need to strengthen public education and reinforce that cleaning up after one's dog is a core responsibility of pet ownership. This requires consistent enforcement and education measures to improve compliance, which include:

- 🐾 targeted and random patrols of parks and sporting grounds
- 🐾 footpath signage using stencilled messaging
- 🐾 distribution of dog litter bags
- 🐾 letterbox drops and educational posters
- 🐾 temporary signage and media campaigns



DOGS NOT UNDER EFFECTIVE CONTROL

In 2023 Council undertook further consultation specifically regarding dogs in public space and, as a result, in September 2023 Order 11 was adopted. The order increased the number of off-lead areas, provided a mix of on and off-lead areas within a number of Council parks and reserves and create a number of dog-prohibited sports fields. The changes aimed to accommodate the diverse needs of the community, ensuring that dog owners, families with children, older residents, sporting groups and general park users all have safe and accessible spaces.

In 2025 Council conducted community consultation for this current plan. Feedback from the community has highlighted several ongoing issues, particularly relating to how dogs are managed in shared public spaces and that some dog owners appear unfamiliar with the requirements for maintaining effective control of their dogs in public areas.

There were three key themes from the community feedback.

- 🐾 More than 45% of survey participants highlighted the importance of keeping dogs on-lead where required. This aligns with a rise in related reports over the past two years, indicating increased awareness and a collective desire to minimise conflict and improve the experience for all park users.

- 🐾 There is a growing awareness and support for increased community education and appropriate enforcement through increased patrols, fines and monitoring, particularly during peak usage times such as mornings and evenings, to ensure all park users can enjoy public spaces safely and comfortably.
- 🐾 There is a strong desire for clearer signage and park rules to be displayed in prominent locations. This includes more visible information on what constitutes “effective control” for dog owners, ensuring everyone understands the expectations.

In response to this feedback, Council will implement a balanced approach that includes increased education, targeted enforcement and improved management of shared spaces. Our goal is to ensure that all park users, both dog owners and non-dog owners, can enjoy our parks safely and respectfully.



BARKING DOGS

In recent years, there has been a consistent number of complaints related to nuisance barking, a trend supported by the figures (refer Table 12). These trends suggest that while barking dogs remain a key issue for residents, Council’s early intervention and education-first approach is helping to curb an escalation in complaints.

Previously, Council implemented an education-based strategy for managing barking dog complaints. When a complaint is received, Council proactively communicates with both the affected resident and the dog owner. This has allowed for early engagement so that owners are informed about the concern and, simultaneously, complainants are briefed on the complaint process and provided with the tools needed to record ongoing issues if necessary.

While barking dog investigations can be time and resource-intensive, many complaints are resolved at this early stage. Often owners are unaware their dog is creating a disturbance and take swift action once notified.

When resolution is not achieved through early engagement, Council may request barking nuisance logs from the affected resident,

conduct onsite inspections and community impact surveys, and use noise recording equipment to support investigations to determine whether a nuisance offence has occurred.

Over the past four years, there has been a notable reduction in formal nuisance log submissions, indicating that many issues are being addressed and resolved before formal escalation. This outcome reflects the success of several key efforts, such as:

- 🐾 increased access to online resources about noise nuisance, dog behaviour and responsible pet ownership
- 🐾 information provided about accessing veterinary behaviourists and training resources plus active support from Council’s dedicated Authorised Officer
- 🐾 improvements to the complaints process that promote early resolution and owner accountability

This model has led to more timely and satisfactory outcomes for residents and dog owners, reduced pressure on Council resources and reinforced the community expectation that barking issues should be addressed fairly and responsibly.

	21-22	22-23	23-24	24-25
Barking dog matters	315	364	333	399
Nuisance complaints	32	67	81	73
Nuisance logs received	22	19	20	17

Table 12: Barking dog complaint statistics

CATS

Council's cat curfew was first implemented in 2010. It was introduced to protect native wildlife, reduce nuisance behaviours such as spraying and fighting and improve cat welfare by limiting wandering. In January 2020 the order was reviewed and Order Number 9 adopted.

Council continues to receive complaints from residents regarding nuisance cat behaviour, including sightings of unknown cats on private property and cats seen wandering during the curfew hours.

To assist in the management of complaints where investigation cannot identify the cat owner, Council provides a cat trap free of charge to residents. The number of cat traps borrowed has remained mostly consistent, with direct education to owners of identified cats reducing the need to use traps.

While cat trespass has not historically been a major issue in Whitehorse, between 25% and 50% of respondents to the recent consultation indicated that they were affected by cats. These included cats being present and spraying on private property at all times of the day and

concerns about cats attacking wildlife. 35% of respondents indicated that they were not affected by cats.

Reports to Council regarding wandering cats have decreased notably from 378 in 2021/2022 to 232 in 2023/2024. This downward trend may reflect increased community compliance with containment expectations and advice provided to new cat owners from breeders and adoption providers about the benefits of fully containing cats indoors or in escape-proof enclosures.

Additionally, the introduction of pole microchip scanners has improved operational efficiency and animal welfare outcomes. Officers can now more safely scan cats in the field and return them to registered owners without requiring impoundment.

Council continues to advocate for responsible containment practices, including cat enclosures and cat-proof fencing.

Council will continue working with partners to promote desexing, microchipping and education campaigns that highlight the benefits of keeping cats contained to their owners' properties.

Cat cages borrowed	21-22	22-23	23-24	24-25
Total	64	54	35	57

Table 13: Cat cage borrowing history

Cat at large complaints	21-22	22-23	23-24	24-25
Total	378	272	232	243

Table 14: Cat at large complaint history

7.2 | SUMMARY

Council continues to take a proactive and balanced approach to managing animal nuisance and promoting responsible pet ownership. While cat trespass and at-large reports have decreased, ongoing issues such as uncollected dog litter, barking dogs, and dogs not under effective control in public spaces remain key concerns for the community.

The importance of increased education was highlighted in the feedback from the community consultation, as well as more visible enforcement and improved infrastructure such as signage. Council's strategies, ranging from targeted patrols, education campaigns and accessible complaint resolution processes, are showing positive outcomes including increased compliance and community engagement.

7.3 | OUR ORDERS, LOCAL LAWS, COUNCIL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

CURRENT ORDERS

Whitehorse City Council has implemented cat and dog management orders to protect local wildlife and minimise nuisance.

Cat confinement: Order Number 9 under Section 26(2). Cats must be confined to their owner's property between 8.00pm and 6.00am.

Prohibited areas for cats: Order Number 10 under Section 26(2). Cats are prohibited from entering 11 designated bushland reserves at any time.

Dog control in public spaces: Order Number 11 under Section 26(2) of the Act outlines regulations for dog control in public spaces.

CURRENT LOCAL LAWS

Part 6 of the Local Law outlines the limits on the number and types of animals residents can keep without a permit, along with specific requirements for housing, waste management and nuisance prevention.

CURRENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Council has procedures, outlined in internal guidelines, for managing issues such as barking dog complaints and cat trap borrowing.

OUR CURRENT COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES

Authorised Officers respond to complaints, conduct investigations, issue infringements and undertake prosecutions when necessary. While education and prevention remain Council's primary approach to managing animal-related issues, community consultation has highlighted a strong desire among residents for increased enforcement measures.

Authorised Officers patrol on and off-lead areas in parks and surrounding streets daily, including on weekends, early mornings and evenings during daylight saving months. These patrols aim to educate the community and enforce local laws to reduce animal nuisances and prevent dog attacks.

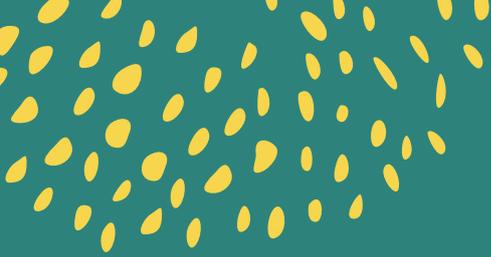
7.4 | OUR PLAN

Objective 6: Education and reduction in dog barking complaints.

Activity	Timeline	Evaluation
Utilise Council mapping system to identify barking dog complaints to plan targeted communication to residents in locations identified with increase in complaints	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in number of complaints • Number of pet owners educated/referred
Develop a program providing additional resources and materials to educate and inform dog owners of the potential for nuisance issues (barking) and enhance awareness of options for monitoring pets to ensure that welfare needs are met and that nuisance behaviours are not occurring	2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of resources and information materials developed and made available

Table 15: Education and reduction in barking dog complaints





Objective 7: Explore the feasibility of introducing of a 24/7 cat containment curfew.

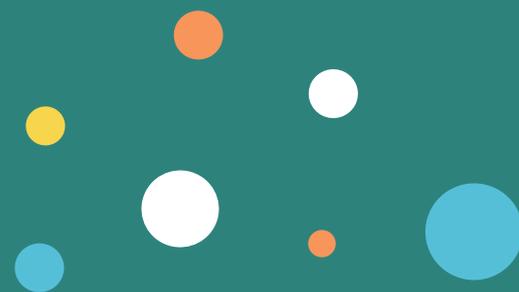
Activity	Timeline	Evaluation
Cat nuisance complaints and hire of cat cages tracked and data analysed to assess current state and issues using Council’s systems to identify hot spots	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of areas with higher incidence of complaints and trap requests identified • Number of targeted communication programs to residents in locations undertaken
Conduct community consultation considering the introduction of 24/7 a cat curfew	2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of the current cat curfew Order Number 9 • Results of the community consultation assessed • If required – draft cat curfew policy/ order developed and adopted
Provide cat owners with resources and information to assist with transitioning their cat to an indoor lifestyle	2027-28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of requests for assistance and resources provided • Fee schedules amended if required
Provide DIY cat enclosure workshops and information including an online video and webinars with animal behaviourist	2027-28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of resources developed and workshops delivered
Review the cat trap process to ensure best practice and welfare needs are considered	2028	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process reviewed and updated if needed

Table 16: Feasibility of introducing a 24/7 cat containment curfew

Objective 8: Measures to improve effective control of dogs within Whitehorse.

Activity	Timeline	Evaluation
Continue to research current best practice and educational resources with animal behaviourist to provide updated information, resources and assistance for dog owners	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Materials updated as required
Utilise a range of evidence-gathering methods and analysis of Council’s available data to support targeted enforcement actions	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data analysed and results utilised
Continue to conduct targeted park patrols to identify breaches and undertake enforcement action where necessary	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of enforcement actions
Conduct dog litter enforcement patrols and undertake enforcement when breaches are detected	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of enforcement actions • Number of targeted patrols conducted
Installation of temporary advisory dog litter stencils on footpaths	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of stencils installed
Install poster/A boards/signage regarding dog litter in identified areas	2026-27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posters developed and displayed
Use direct communication/education to residents in areas identified as litter hot spots from data analysis	2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of areas receiving direct communication
Reassess with internal stakeholders and consider provision of litter bags, bins, bin collections	2028	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results obtained

Table 17: Improve Effective Control of Dogs





8 | DOG ATTACKS



Dog attacks on people and other animals unfortunately do occur within the local area. Council data identifies footpaths and parks as the two most common locations where these incidents take place in Whitehorse.

A significant number of reported cases are linked to dogs that are not securely contained on their owner's property. This highlights the need to ensure that dog owners are aware of their responsibilities to ensure that dogs are securely contained at all times, including when the dog is in the front yard.

8.1 | CONTEXT AND CURRENT SITUATION

Council is strongly committed to reducing the number, impact and severity of dog attacks within the community. Recognising the risks posed by aggressive dog behaviour, Authorised Officers prioritise swift and efficient investigations into all reported incidents. Through enforcement powers granted under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* (the Act), Council takes a proactive role in managing risks and upholding public safety.

Community consultation has revealed that the risk of dog attacks is among the top concerns for residents, ranking in second place in the areas of resident concern. In response, Council has adopted a proactive and education-focused approach. This strategy is grounded in fair but firm investigation practices and the application of appropriate enforcement measures where required.

A key priority for Council is ensuring all Authorised Officers responsible for investigating and managing dog attacks are equipped with the necessary skills, knowledge and tools. This includes a thorough understanding of investigative procedures under the Act.

While many dog attacks are reported to Council, it is acknowledged that a significant number of incidents go unreported. To improve the reporting rate, Council plans to collaborate with external stakeholders to increase community awareness about the importance of reporting dog bite injuries. Additionally, Council offers multiple channels for residents to report incidents, with detailed information available on its website.

Authorised Officers follow a systematic and comprehensive approach when investigating dog attacks. This includes:

- 🐾 interviewing the victim, any witnesses and the owner of the dog believed to be involved in the incident
- 🐾 reviewing available CCTV footage
- 🐾 collecting veterinary and medical reports to assess injuries
- 🐾 investigating any past reports or history involving the dog
- 🐾 gathering any other relevant evidence

Council’s investigations cover all incidents, from non-serious to serious dog attacks. A non-serious dog attack involves an incident where no injury occurs or only minor injury is sustained. A serious dog attack, as defined under the Act, involves a dog biting or attacking in a way that causes serious injury or death to a person or animal.

Most reports involve non-serious attacks, often characterised by dogs behaving aggressively or interacting roughly without causing significant injury. These incidents are frequently linked to dogs not being properly controlled in public or not securely contained on private property.

In cases where serious injuries occur, each incident is investigated thoroughly, with all evidence assessed individually. Enforcement actions available to Council may include:

- 🐾 seizure of the dog involved
- 🐾 declaring the dog dangerous or menacing
- 🐾 issuing infringements
- 🐾 prosecuting the owner or seeking court orders
- 🐾 in the most serious cases, considering the destruction of the dog

The table below outlines the number of dog attack investigations conducted by Council over the past four years.

Dog attack	21-22	22-23	23-24	24-25
Serious attack	22	30	19	23
Non-serious attack	61	85	96	92

Table 18: Dog attack investigation history

8.2 | SUMMARY

Council's strategy aims to protect the public by managing dog behaviour in the community.

Dogs that show signs of aggression are proactively managed through education, investigation and enforcement.

Dog attacks are addressed under the Act, which allows for prosecution of owners and declaration of dogs as dangerous or menacing.

All dog attack reports are assessed against legislative criteria to determine appropriate action.

In serious cases, dogs may be seized and held until legal proceedings are complete to ensure public safety.

Council uses a combination of education, responsible pet ownership advocacy, investigations and enforcement to reduce dog attacks and provide a safer community.

8.3 | OUR ORDERS, LOCAL LAWS, COUNCIL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

CURRENT LOCAL LAWS

Whitehorse City Council Order Number 11 outlines provisions for managing dogs to support community safety.

This Order includes requirements for dogs to be kept on a lead in public areas (unless in a designated off-lead area), maintaining effective control in off-lead areas, and prohibiting dogs from being within close proximity to playgrounds, sports grounds during events, picnic and barbecue areas.

CURRENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Council has processes contained in internal guidelines including the use of assessment criteria for Authorised Officers investigating dog attacks, dog rushes and threatening dog complaints, as well as for the seizure and prosecution of dogs involved in attacks.

Council operates a 24/7 emergency after-hours service to respond to animal-related issues.

OUR CURRENT COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES

- 🐾 Council responds immediately to reports of dog attacks, rushes and dogs wandering at large, both during and after business hours.
- 🐾 Owners of the dog(s) involved in alleged incidents are informed of the investigation process and potential outcomes, including the possibility of enforcement actions.
- 🐾 Authorised Officers may seize dogs involved in serious attacks and conduct random patrols in problem areas.
- 🐾 Regular audits and unannounced inspections are carried out for properties housing declared dogs, and all records are maintained on the Victorian Declared Dog Registry and internal systems.
- 🐾 Complaints are linked directly to the relevant animal registration for ongoing monitoring and enforcement.

8.4 | OUR PLAN

Objective 9: Reduce the number of dog attacks in the community through education and compliance.

Activity	Timeline	Evaluation
Ensure dog attack and wandering/incident report information is captured and recorded (reports of wandering, not contained, not under effective control etc) to identify high-risk areas and dog behaviour trends to provide targeted park patrols	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of targeted Officer attendances in parks/areas identified • Reduction in reports of incidents in identified areas
Review and improve internal processes for collecting, recording and analysing dog attack data	2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data collection forms/ processes updated to ensure all relevant data is captured for analysis
Strengthen Council's dog attack response through accurate and timely reporting, improved data collection and transparent investigation procedures	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular reporting with data collected for outcomes
Regular cross-reference of the current microchip database information with current Council registration database to check for potential declared dogs	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring accuracy of registration data • Process conducted and unregistered animals followed up
Continue to ensure a quick response rate to reported dog attacks, dog rushes and dog incidents	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop reporting process to ensure accountability
Increase patrols of properties with dogs with history relating to containment and incidents	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of patrols undertaken

Table 19: Community education and compliance for dog attacks

Objective 10: Educate and improve the reporting of dog attacks in the community.

Activity	Timeline	Evaluation
<p>Create specific communication material, including social media and website, to educate the community about why reporting dog attacks is important, what actions Council can take, and how this helps reduce risk and improve safety</p>	2026-27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of social media posts delivered • Number of engagements with social media posts
<p>Use available data from external stakeholders relating to dog bite incidents that are not reported to Council, then engage with stakeholders to provide information to residents about how to report dog bites to Council and the importance of reporting</p>	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data is gathered and analysed, demographic or incident type trends determined, and hot-spot locations determined
<p>Encourage schools to participate in Victorian Government programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pet Town learning tool. • We Are Family Program. • Kindergarten Program. • Primary School Program. <p>Investigate reasons for non-involvement and what might encourage school involvement. Assess potential for Council’s role ongoing</p>	2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of schools taking part in relevant programs • Types of programs provided identified (e.g. schools with Agriculture Victoria programs, own school-based programs, other) • Increase in the number of schools utilising dog safety programs • The number of establishments interested in working with Council • Educational material identified and sourced • Number of resources provided
<p>Council to offer activity sessions regarding child safety around dogs focusing on dog bite prevention for school holiday programs within Council</p>	2026-27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of school holiday providers contacted, and number of sessions requested and/or conducted

Table 20: Improve the reporting of dog attacks



9 | DANGEROUS, MENACING AND RESTRICTED BREED DOGS



The community's understanding of what defines a dangerous or restricted breed dog does not always align with the legal definitions set out in the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* (the Act).

The community's perception of "dangerous dogs" is shaped by a combination of breed-related concerns, individual dog behaviour and public safety issues.

Feedback from community consultation indicates that further education is needed particularly regarding dog and owner behaviour in public areas and the impact of poor dog management.

9.1 | CONTEXT AND CURRENT SITUATION

Council maintains an ongoing commitment to public safety and responsible dog ownership.

Management of known restricted breed, declared dangerous and menacing dogs within Whitehorse is a high priority. In line with the requirements of the Act, Authorised Officers monitor the housing and management of dogs that are declared dangerous, menacing and restricted.

Council follows-up all reports of dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs promptly to reduce risk to the community. In addition, the housing and containment of all declared dogs on Council's database are inspected annually to ensure that they are compliant with the relevant legislation and regulations.

Following are the definitions in the Act for dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs.

A dangerous dog is a dog that meets any of these criteria:

- 🐾 a dog declared dangerous by Council due to an attack (e.g. it has caused death or serious injury to a person or animal)
- 🐾 a dog that is kept as a guard dog for the purpose of guarding non-residential premises
- 🐾 a dog trained to attack or bite any person

Council may declare a dog as dangerous if it has previously been declared dangerous in another Australian state or territory, or if it is already classified as a menacing dog and the owner breaches the related regulations.

A menacing dog is a dog declared menacing by Council because it has:

- 🐾 rushed at or chased a person
- 🐾 bitten any person or animal, causing a non-serious injury
- 🐾 been declared a menacing dog under an Act of another Australian state or territory

A restricted breed dog includes any one of the following breeds:

- 🐾 Japanese Tosa
- 🐾 Fila Brasileiro
- 🐾 Dogo Argentino
- 🐾 Perro de Presa Canario (or Presa Canario)
- 🐾 American Pit Bull Terrier (or Pit Bull Terrier).

Since 2021, Council has declared a total of 7 dogs: 5 as menacing and 2 as dangerous. These declarations were made following thorough investigations into incidents involving aggressive or threatening behaviour, in accordance with the provisions of the Act. Where non-compliance with restricted breed or declared dog provisions is identified, Authorised Officers take enforcement action in line with the requirements of the Act.



9.2 | OUR ORDERS, LOCAL LAWS, COUNCIL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

CURRENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Council's animal registration form requires all dog owners to specify if their dog has been declared menacing. Owners wishing to register a dangerous or restricted breed dog must seek Council's approval, as set out in Section 17 of the Act.

Council also has an internal process regarding menacing, dangerous and restricted breed dogs, aligned with the Act and *Domestic Animals Regulations 2015* (the Regulations).

CURRENT COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES

- 🐾 Proactively inspecting the housing of dangerous and dangerous dogs to ensure compliance with the Regulations.
- 🐾 Taking enforcement action on any non-complying keeping of declared dogs.
- 🐾 Maintaining data on the Victorian Declared Dog Registry.
- 🐾 Annually inspecting properties housing declared dangerous, restricted breed and menacing dogs.

9.3 | OUR PLAN

Objective 11: Ensure compliance through monitoring of declared dogs and enhance dog attack outcomes by applying consistent and transparent decision-making processes.

Activity	Timeline	Evaluation
Ensure compliance with declared dog regulations through ongoing monitoring, property inspections and enforcement when necessary	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All inspections completed
Prosecution and enforcement action of any non-compliance of declared dogs	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prosecutions undertaken if required
Inspect non-residential properties in the municipality for dogs housed or kept for guarding purposes	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspections conducted; any required enforcement undertaken
Cross-reference microchip database information with current Council registration database for potential restricted breed and declared dogs	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following up any discrepancy found

Table 21: Monitoring of declared dogs



10 | DOMESTIC ANIMAL BUSINESSES



A Domestic Animal Business (DAB) refers to any operation that involves keeping, breeding, boarding or training domestic animals for commercial purposes. This includes:

- ❗ **pet shops** – are defined as shops that are open at least 5 days a week that sell animals, including dogs, cats, birds, reptiles, rats, guinea pigs, rabbits, and other similar animals
- ❗ **animal shelters and pounds** – is a premise that provides temporary care for, or finds new homes for stray, abandoned and unwanted dogs or cats (it does not include foster carers at their homes)
- ❗ **breeding establishments** – are premises that carry out the breeding of dogs or cats to sell (there are rules about when this applies depending on the number of breeding animals in certain situations)
- ❗ **dog training facilities** – are premises that train or board dogs for the purpose of profit
- ❗ **boarding facilities** – are premises that take custody or possession of dogs or cats for fee or reward – this can be short term- eg. dog daycare or longer-term overnight care and includes boarding (caring) of cats and dogs in a home.

Businesses must adhere to the relevant mandatory Victorian Government Domestic Animal Business Codes of Practice and must register with their local Council, with registration renewed annually in April.

These businesses play a vital role in the community by providing breeding, boarding, fostering and rehoming services.

Under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* (the Act), local councils have the authority to:

- ❗ Refuse business registration if the business fails fail to comply with the legislation and the relevant code of practice
- ❗ Set special conditions on the registration of any domestic animal business

10.1 | CONTEXT AND CURRENT SITUATION

To safeguard animal welfare and ensure compliance with legislation, all DABs must apply to be registered with Council and are subject to ongoing oversight.

Upon receiving a registration application, Authorised Officers inspect and audit the premises in accordance with the relevant code of practice. If the business is found to be compliant, a registration certificate is issued. Registrations are renewed annually and inspections are also conducted annually to ensure continued compliance.

Where non-compliance is identified, Authorised Officers work collaboratively with business owners to implement corrective actions and ensure adherence to the required standards. Council's current DAB responsibilities include:

- 🐾 Registration and annual renewal
- 🐾 Scheduled inspections and audits
- 🐾 Ongoing support and guidance regarding legislative obligations
- 🐾 Investigation of complaints related to their operation

In recent years, several legislative changes have influenced the regulation of DABs including:

- 🐾 Introduction of the the *Domestic Animals Amendment* (Puppy Farms and Pet Shops) Act 2017
- 🐾 Restrictions on selling dogs and cats in pet shops unless sourced from approved providers, which include registered community foster care network foster carers.
- 🐾 Establishment of the Pet Exchange Register and the requirement for source numbers in pet sale/rehoming advertisements.
- 🐾 Mandatory inclusion of microchip and source numbers in advertisements, which can be verified online.
- 🐾 Prohibition on microchipping unless the breeder or owner provides a valid source number.
- 🐾 Recognition and registration of voluntary foster carers and animals in their care for community foster care networks.
- 🐾 Reduced registration fees for animals being fostered through registered networks.

The following table provides a breakdown of registered DABs within the City of Whitehorse.

Type of Domestic Animal Business	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25
Pet shop	8	8	7	7
Training establishment	2	2	2	2
Boarding kennel or establishment	3	5	5	5
Pound/shelter	1	1	1	1

Table 22: Registered domestic animal business numbers

10.2 | SUMMARY

All DABs within Whitehorse are subject to annual inspections and regular spot checks to ensure compliance with the relevant code of practice. Council maintains accurate registers of all DABs and works collaboratively with business owners to achieve compliance, with appropriate enforcement action taken when required.

10.3 | OUR POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

CURRENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- 🐾 All DABs must be registered with Council and registration renewed annually, with regular audits and compliance inspections in line with the relevant code of practice.
- 🐾 Any new DAB must be inspected by Council prior to registration approval.
- 🐾 Registered DABs are required to notify Council where the owner resides whenever animals are sold or given away to ensure accurate registration records.
- 🐾 DAB registration application forms and detailed guidance are available on Council's website and at customer service centres.



10.4 | OUR PLAN

Objective 12: Ensure all domestic animal businesses (DABs) in Whitehorse are registered, inspected annually and comply with the code of practice.

Activity	Timeline	Evaluation
Identify businesses that should be registered DABs in the municipality	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all DAB registrations are reviewed annually
Conduct inspections of DABs to ensure compliance with the relevant code of practice	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All DABs audited and any compliance issues addressed
Liaise with DABs to provide advice and education and promote their services to residents at Council-run pet events	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of DABs consulted • Number of DABs attending Council-run pet education events

Table 23: Whitehorse DAB registration inspection and code of practice compliance



FUN FACT

Cats can hear better than dogs



11 | OTHER MATTERS



11.1 | POUND SERVICE

Whitehorse City Council has been in partnership with the Victorian Animal Aid Trust (Animal Aid) located in Coldstream since 2017 to provide pound services for seized and impounded animals. Animal Aid is a reputable, not-for-profit organisation with a long-standing commitment to animal welfare.

Animal Aid ensures that impounded animals receive high standards of care, including veterinary treatment, shelter and behavioural support where required. Through this partnership, Council ensures animals are housed safely and ethically while efforts are made to reunite them with their owners. Animal Aid also facilitates pet adoptions for unclaimed animals, supporting responsible rehoming and contributing to positive welfare outcomes in the community.



11.2 | DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE (DAMPAC)

Whitehorse City Council established the Domestic Animal Management Plan Advisory Committee (DAMPAC) to provide ongoing feedback and review of Council's Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP).

Together, DAMP and DAMPAC provide a robust framework through which Council can fulfil its responsibilities under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* (the Act), while proactively responding to the evolving needs of the community in managing domestic animals.

The purpose of DAMPAC is to provide strategic guidance and foster collaboration between Council, stakeholders and the community. DAMPAC supports Council in strengthening partnerships, promoting a shared understanding of domestic animal management practices, and encouraging responsible pet ownership through integrated planning and education. It also plays a key role in identifying better practice approaches and advising on the development of initiatives that enhance animal welfare, community safety and amenity within the urban environment.

In practice, DAMPAC acts as a strategic advisory body that provides informed advice to Council on a range of issues related to domestic animal management. This includes:

- ❧ identifying opportunities to promote and enhance responsible pet ownership
- ❧ evaluating activities undertaken as part of the DAMP and supporting continuous improvement
- ❧ facilitating knowledge-sharing among stakeholders and the community
- ❧ advising on the design and delivery of community education strategies

DAMPAC also functions as an important channel for communication of community feedback, enabling Council to better understand emerging concerns, expectations and opportunities in animal management. Through this collaborative approach, DAMPAC helps ensure that domestic animal management strategies are not only compliant and effective, but also informed by current trends, community values and best practice standards.

As outlined in its Terms of Reference, DAMPAC is required to meet at least once annually. However, in practice, it typically convenes three times per year to monitor the implementation of the DAMP, assess Council's service delivery and provide recommendations for improvement.





FUN FACT

Most orange cats are male

11.3 | EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Whitehorse City Council has developed the Whitehorse Animal Emergency Complementary Plan (AEC Plan), which outlines the Council's roles and responsibilities in managing animal welfare during emergencies. The purpose of the AEC Plan is to provide a coordinated approach within Council for the planning, prevention, response, relief and recovery for residents with companion animals and livestock affected by emergencies.

The AEC Plan ensures that Council can effectively support emergency-affected communities by coordinating animal welfare services, including in partnership with neighbouring councils. It aligns with the broader Municipal Emergency Management Plan (MEMP), providing clear procedures for when animal management staff, community resources and Council support are needed in an emergency. The AEC Plan ensures a smooth response to natural disasters, fires, floods, storms and major accidents, which can all significantly impact animal welfare.

Whitehorse, while generally low risk, could experience a range of emergencies such as severe weather, hazardous material spills or localised fires, including building fires and floods that may require immediate intervention. The AEC Plan also considers the welfare of animals during large-scale events that may cause displacement or distress. The AEC Plan is regularly reviewed and updated to ensure its relevance and readiness in the face of evolving risks and challenges, providing proactive prevention and effective relief strategies during times of crisis.

This approach ensures that Council is well-prepared to manage animal welfare issues in different types of emergencies, enabling a coordinated response that prioritises the safety and wellbeing of animals within the community.

11.4 | ANIMAL WELFARE AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Council acknowledges the critical link between animal welfare and family violence. By incorporating specific initiatives into our DAMP, we aim to provide comprehensive support to victims, ensuring both human and animal members of the community are assisted.

Council offers urgent temporary care for pets on a case-by-case basis, in conjunction with Animal Aid, for residents experiencing family violence, homelessness and other emergency situations when they may be unable to care for their pets and need immediate short-term assistance.

11.5 | OUR PLAN

Objective 13: Increase community awareness and promote services available for victims of domestic violence with animals.

Activity	Timeline	Evaluation
Work with Domestic Violence (DV) organisations and stakeholders (Victoria Police, charities etc.) to help promote awareness of assistance for pet owners experiencing domestic violence and homelessness	2026-27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information developed and distributed Number of organisations and residents accessing assistance and information
Engage with DV and homeless organisations and stakeholders to identify issues and opportunities to better support pet owners in DV and homeless environments	2026-27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of organisations engaged with, and services made available to residents
Engage with stakeholders and Animal Aid to identify any capacity for the organisations to be part of a support network	2026-27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of organisations providing support

Table 24: Animals and domestic violence

Objective 14: Ensure Council's Animal Emergency Complementary Plan is current and effective.

Activity	Timeline	Evaluation
Review and update the Council's Animal Emergency Complementary Plan to ensure it reflects current knowledge, contingency planning and best practices	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewed and required updates made

Table 25: Currency and effectiveness of the DAMP



12 | ANNUAL REVIEW AND REPORTING OF THE DAMP



In line with Section 68A(3) of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* (the Act), Council must review its DAMP annually and amend the plan as needed. Council must provide Agriculture Victoria, via the Secretary of the Department of Energy Environment and Climate Action, with a copy of the plan, including any amendments, and publish an evaluation of the plan’s implementation in Council’s annual report.

12.1 | EVALUATION OF DAMP IMPLEMENTATION

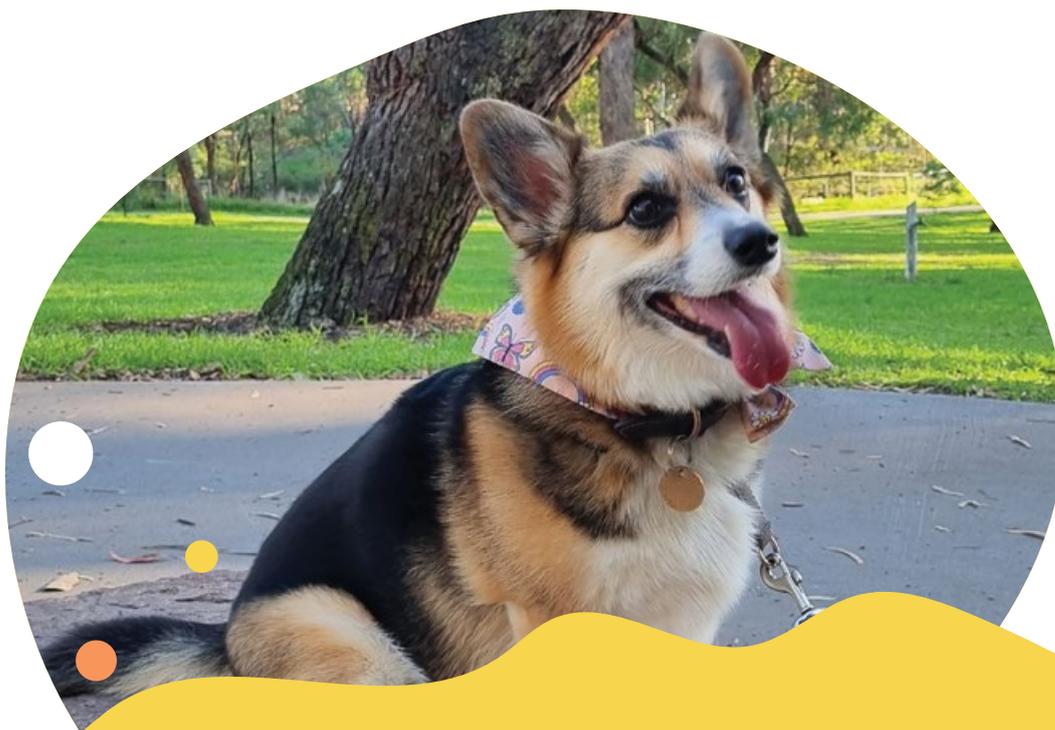
Activity evaluation	Evaluation result
Was each activity completed?	Yes/No
Describe any changes you will make if you do that activity again	
Was an activity not done or is now not planned to be done? If so, why?	
If an activity was unsuccessful and you don’t plan to do it again, outline insights you have into why it didn’t work	
(a) Complete for each objective	Yes/No
(b) Did you meet your objective by carrying out the planned activities?	Yes/No
(c) Describe your level of success/progress in meeting the objective	

Table 26: DAMP implementation register

Objective 15: Comply with Section 68A(3) of the Act.

Activity	Timeline	Evaluation
Provide the Secretary with a copy of the DAMP and any amendments to the plan	December 2025, Year 1 and annually	Copy of DAMP provided to the Secretary
Review the DAMP and, if appropriate, amend the plan	Annually	Plan reviewed annually
Publish an evaluation of the implementation of the DAMP in Council's Annual Report	Annually	Evaluation report published in Council's Annual Report
Council will undertake a major review of the DAMP after four years	2029	Major review undertaken

Table 27: Complying with Section 68A(3) of the Act





FUN FACT

Most dogs can run at around 30 km/h, but Greyhounds reach up to 72 km/h



WHITEHORSE
CITY COUNCIL