Domestic Animal Management Plan

2026-2029

Mildura Rural City Council

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Acknowledgment of country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land, which now comprises the Mildura Rural City municipality. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and celebrate and respect their continuing cultures and acknowledge the memories of their ancestors.

Introduction

Cats and Dogs play a big role in the lives of locals and are part of our community.

Mildura Rural City Council recognises that pet ownership has considerable health and wellbeing benefits and that companion animals are valued and bring value to many residents.

It is Council's role to support our community to live safely and healthily alongside cats and dogs. We do this by:

- Promoting and supporting responsible pet ownership and animal welfare
- Protecting the community and local environment from nuisance cats and dogs
- Balancing the needs of pets and pet owners with the rest of the community
- Delivering animal management services and programs
- Partnering with animal health and welfare agencies, businesses and service providers
- Implementing and enforcing animal management rules and regulations

This Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) provides a formal framework for how Mildura Rural City Council will provide animal management services and initiatives over the next four years.
It was developed by staff in Council's Local Laws team and was informed through a review of previous plans, analysis of existing data, policies, procedures, laws and regulations, insights from customer and resident feedback and a formalised public consultation process.

This DAMP consolidates the aspirations and actions of previous Plans and meets Council's obligations under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*.

Responsible pet ownership and effective animal management – through the implementation of this Plan – will help contribute to key long-term strategic outcomes and priorities identified in our 2025-2029 Council Plan.

What is a Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP)?

The *Domestic Animals Act 1994 (The Act)* requires all Victorian councils to prepare a DAMP every four years.
Section 68A of The Act specifies that the DAMP must outline Councils services; programs and policies established to address the administration of the Act, and management of dog and cat issues in the community.
The Domestic Animal Management Plan is structured using the framework prescribed in The Act, and focuses on the following key focus areas:

- Training of Authorised Officers
- Responsible pet ownership
- Dog attacks
- Overpopulation and high euthanasia rates
- Registration and identification
- Nuisance dogs and cats
- Dangerous dogs
- Domestic animal businesses
- Other animal related matters

Reviewing and reporting

Council is required to review this Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) annually pursuant to Section 68A of the Act.

The annual review process ensures the DAMP is relevant, responds to current issues, maximises opportunities to promote responsible pet ownership and that actions can be achieved throughout the four-year lifecycle.

The annual review process will include an evaluation of Council's existing animal management programs and services, and the DAMP will be amended and updated to reflect the current situation.

Council publishes a copy of the revised DAMP on its website annually and submits it to the Animal Welfare Victoria.

Details of the annual evaluation of this DAMP's implementation are included in our Annual Report.

Our region

Mildura Rural City is located in the north-west of Victoria and covers an incredible 10 per cent of the state of Victoria.

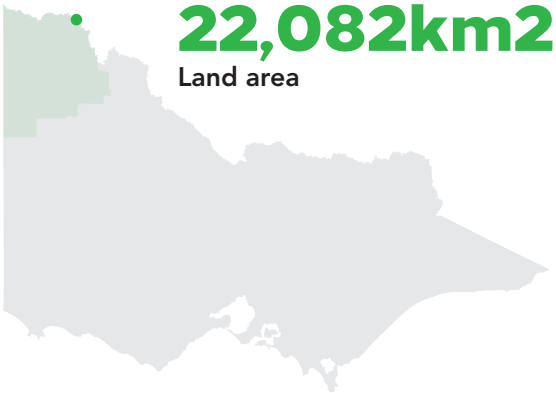
The local landscape boasts vegetation unique to the Mallee, while also being famous for broad acre grain properties, fresh fruit production (citrus, avocado, table grapes and wine grapes) and vibrant and welcoming townships.

The municipality shares borders with both New South Wales and South Australia, making it a regional service centre for all three states.

The jewel in the municipality's crown is its connection to the mighty Murray River, which winds its way through much of the region.
It's a focal point for visitors and those who call the region home.

Our towns

Cabarita	Koorlong	Nichols Point
Cardross	Merbein	Ouyen
Colignan	Meringur	Red Cliffs
Cowangie	Mildura	Underbool
Cullulleraine	Murrayville	Walpeup
Irymple	Nangiloc	Werrimull

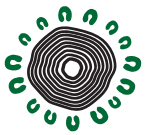


22,082km2
Land area

57,544
2025 estimated resident population

62,600
2035 projected resident population

9.4%
Born overseas



4.6%
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

12.3%
Speak a language other than English at home

Cats and dogs in our community

782
dogs impounded

576
domestic cats impounded

227
dogs rehoused

234
cats rehoused

7,123
dogs registered

1,409
cats registered

154
dogs euthanised

277
domestic cats euthanised

394
dogs claimed by owner

62
cats claimed by owner

Animal-related customer requests and enquiries

185
Dogs wandering at large

50
Dogs rushing and menacing

50
Dog attacks reported

119
Dog and cat trap requests

91
Dog welfare

7
Cat welfare

36
Livestock welfare

38
Livestock wandering and collection

653
Dogs to collect

586
Cats to collect

260
Dogs barking

Source: 2024-2025 Financial Year Figures

Our animal management services

Council's Local Laws team is responsible for animal management throughout the municipality. Their roles involve education, administration and enforcement. The key animal-related functions of the Local Laws team include:

- Administer annual cat and dog registrations
- Manage the Mildura Animal Pound
- Promote and encourage responsible pet ownership
- Respond to animal related enquiries and complaints
- Ensure people manage their pets in accordance with the law
- Establish and enforce Local Law animal control orders
- Patrol public open spaces, frequented by dog walkers
- Provide advice for ongoing management of Mildura Off Leash Dog Park(s)
- Work with local veterinarians, animal behaviour and related businesses and stakeholders to address animal-related issues in our community
- Partner with animal rehousing organisations to rehome cats and dogs
- Identify all dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs and ensure they are kept appropriately
- Administer Council's annual Responsible Pet Ownership Voucher Program

Further detail about the animal management related services, programs and initiatives undertaken by our Local Laws team is outlined throughout the body of this DAMP.

Mildura Animal Pound

The Mildura Animal Pound is a safe and secure environment for lost, stray and abandoned animals in our community. Council has made significant improvements to enhance the quality, safety and amenity of the facility and its operations in the past four years. Most notable is the completion of the new purpose built Isolation Building. The new area ensures compliance with the Code of Practice for Shelters and Pounds and provides a high quality environment to care for the dogs and cats requiring isolation.

Other recent key improvements and changes at the Mildura Animal Pound include:

- Improvements to the office area to accommodate staff and customers
- Ongoing floor repair and maintenance
- Increased security including improved cameras and lighting
- All animal management vehicles now fitted with K9–Kubes for improved Officer and animal safety during handling and transport
- Pound Supervisor now qualified and able to microchip dogs and cats prior to release. Other Local Laws Officers are also now undertaking this training
- Ongoing improvements to animal health management including vaccinations of unidentifiable dogs and cats upon entry to the Pound, and equipment such as F-10 Chemical Fogging machine to assist in reducing risk of diseases.

Work is continuing on the Mildura Animal Pound Masterplan, which will outline our vision for the Mildura Animal Pound. The Masterplan is intended to enhance the capabilities of the facility to meet emerging community expectations, while continuing to meet statutory requirements such as the Code of Practice for Shelters and Pounds.

Responsible Pet Ownership Vouchers

Since October 2018 Mildura Rural City Council have committed $25,000 annually to the Responsible Pet Ownership initiative. Our Local Laws Team have issued over 900 vouchers to our community members since 2018, ultimately aimed at increasing desexing, microchipping and vaccinations while also reducing the number of animals impounded at the Mildura Animal Pound.

Off Leash Dog Parks

Our regions first designated site for dogs to exercise off leash was established at Rio Vista Park on the Mildura riverfront in September 2017. Strong demand and use of the site during an eight month trial cemented its viability.

There has been a range of improvements at the Rio Vista Off Leash Dog Park since the initial trial. Council invested a $192,000 grant from the Victorian Governments Suburban Parks Program to install new infrastructure on site in 2021 that significantly enhanced the site and how dogs and pet owners can use it.

After extensive community consultation, Mildura Rural City Council has now commenced construction of a second Off Leash Dog Park at Kenny Park Merbein, which will be operational at the end of 2025. Further locations will be investigated during the period of this DAMP.

Dog park sites include:

- Full perimeter fencing
- Dividing fence to create separate areas for large and small dogs
- Upgraded gates and transition area
- Improved ground conditions to reduce prickles
- Tree planting to provide more shade
- Sand area for dog play
- Public seating and tables
- Improved access and connections from nearby walking tracks
- New signage including dog behaviour information

The Rio Vista Off Leash Dog Park continues to be well utilised by dog owners in our community and are confident the Kenny Park site will also be well utilised.

Free First Registration initiative

The First Free Animal Registration Initiative aims to directly increase dog and cat registration numbers and make the process of compliance much easier in the first instance.

Animal registration is mandatory throughout Victoria, this initiative has been researched and benchmarked within Victorian Local Government areas. A significant increase in animal registration has been experienced since the introduction of the initiative. The initiative is an action of the Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-2025 and is a major part of responsible pet ownership. Under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* all domestic dogs and cats must be registered with their local Council. Since Covid registration numbers have steadily declined.

Since its introduction in February 2025, this initiative has been a "game changer" to significantly increase registration numbers, to assist officers in the field and at the pound to remedy complaints and achieve compliance. Overall, the administrative burden and time gaining compliance are greatly reduced, as is the need for infringements to be issued. The biggest benefit to registering dogs and cats is that they can be reunited with their owner when they are lost or end up in Council's care at the animal pound.

Rehousing partnerships

Council has a long and proud history of strong community partnerships to improve animal welfare, health and wellbeing and encourage responsible pet ownership. In line with Section 84Y of the Domestic Animals Act, Mildura Rural City Council has written agreements with 12 Rehousing Groups, to support the rehousing of lost, stray or abandoned cats and dogs in our region.

Our Animal Pound and Local Laws staff have established strong collaborative relationships with these organisations to find new homes for abandoned or lost animals and reduce instances of animal euthanasia.

Training of Authorised Officers

This section of our DAMP addresses Section 68(A)(2)(b) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 by outlining Mildura Rural City Council's approach to the training of Authorised Officers to ensure that they can properly administer and enforce the requirements of the Act.

Animal management services are undertaken by Mildura Rural City Council's Local Laws Department, which forms part of the Civic Compliance Branch. Eight authorised Officers share responsibilities for animal management, including a designated Animal Pound Supervisor. Officers are responsible for covering animal management across an area of 22,028 square kilometres.

In the 2024-25 Financial Year, Officers responded to 2,927 animal management requests.

As of March 2025, there were 8,532 animals (7,123 dogs and 1,409 cats) registered and seven registered domestic animal businesses, including three pet shops, three boarding establishments and the Council operated Pound.

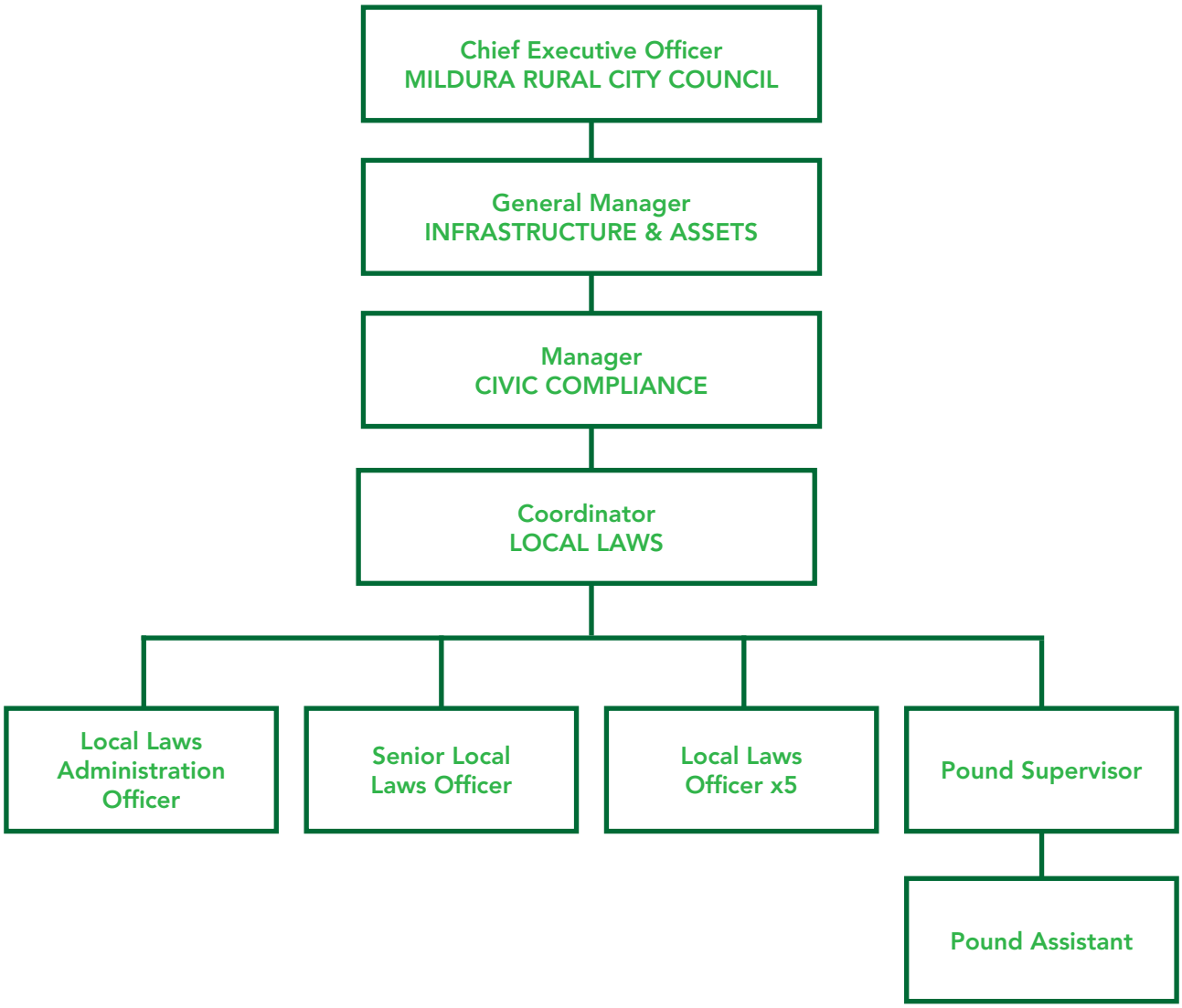
A variety of training is offered and provided for all Council Authorised Officers; training options are reviewed annually to ensure they are relevant and up to date.

Options include:

- Certificate IV - Animal Management and Local Government
- Microchip implantation course
- Animal handling courses
- Animal behavioural training
- Investigation and statement taking courses
- Prosecution courses
- Information technology courses and industry related seminars
- Conferences, training and briefings from:
    - Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
    - Agriculture Victoria
    - Animal Welfare Victoria
    - RSPCA Victoria
    - Mildura Rural City Council contracted Veterinary provider
    - Australian Institute of Animal Management Inc. (AIAM)
    - Warner Institute of Business
    - other relevant Associations/Organisations

Annual performance reviews help to identify any skills and training gaps which are used to plan future skills development.

Current organisational structure of Local Laws Unit



2026-2029 Action Plan

Objective 1: Ensure Authorised Officers have the knowledge and skills required to administer their roles safely and effectively.

Action	Frequency	Measure
Establish and maintain an ongoing training register for all Authorised Officers	Register set up as part of Performance and Development Plan (PDP) at start of employment	PDPs reviewed and updated annually
Authorised Officers to complete minimum training requirements within first two years of employment	Upon start of employment and ongoing	Regular checks at 6 month, 12 month and 2 year anniversary
Identify additional training opportunities for Authorised Officers e.g. prosecutions training, conflict management, time management, investigation & case management and animal behaviour training/ workshops.	PDP's developed annually and updated regularly as training opportunities identified.	Annually

Responsible pet ownership

This section of our DAMP addresses Section 68(A)(2)(c)(i) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 by outlining Mildura Rural City Council's approach to promoting and encouraging the responsible ownership of cats and dogs.

Council uses a combination of education, promotion and enforcement to encourage residents to look after their pets' responsibly.

A coordinated and ongoing plan of communication programs is implemented each year. Ad hoc strategies are also implemented in response to issues as they emerge.

Mildura Rural City Council develops an annual Responsible Pet Ownership Communications Plan, which focuses on increasing pet owners' awareness, understanding and behaviour. Key messages and topics in the plan include:

- Registering and microchipping
- Desexing
- Vaccinations and pet health
- Exercising and socialising your dog
- Use of on and off-leash areas
- Picking up after your pet
- Adopting a pet
- Local Laws relevant to animals

In order to meet the communities' diverse and varying needs, preferences and abilities, we utilise a range of different communication methods and channels to encourage responsible pet ownership. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Presentations at schools
- Stalls and displays at markets and community events
- TV, radio, print and digital advertising
- Information on Council website
- Media releases and interviews
- Posts on Council's social media platforms (Facebook and Twitter)
- Articles in local newspapers, magazines and community newsletters
- Annual animal registration renewal mail-out
- Signage in parks, reserves and walking tracks
- Printed materials, brochures and flyers at Council Service Centres, local vets, pet and animal supply stores
- Annual Responsible Pet Ownership Voucher Program
- Free First Pet Registration Initiative

Our front-line staff, including the Pound Supervisor, Local Laws Officers and Customer Support Officers play a vital role in delivering responsible pet ownership information and messages. Through face-to-face, telephone and email conversations, they have a significant capacity to educate and inform pet owners about animal-related legislation, obligations, services and programs. Communicating in a one-on-one environment also provides opportunity to understand pet owners' individual circumstances and target responsible pet ownership messages and services accordingly.

Public questions, customer enquiries and data from complaints highlights the need for clear, simple, ongoing and repeated communication about responsible pet ownership.

Clarity around dog regulations in public places, including providing a consistent and accurate approach to dog control signage is also a priority. Pet owners and non-pet owners have requested ongoing education and communication around responsible pet ownership, to ensure greater community compliance with and enforcement of regulations.

Relevant Orders, Local Laws, Policies and procedures

Order made under Section 26 (2) of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* - On leash and Off leash areas.

A range of policies and procedures are in place, aimed at improving community understanding of responsible pet ownership, including:

- Registration forms and Responsible Pet Ownership information packs posted to new pet owners.
- Regular reviews and updates on pet ownership content on Council website
- Attendance at community events support animal welfare initiatives
- Weekly patrols to provide education to pet owners
- Regular media interviews and features

2026-2029 Action Plan

Objective 2: Utilise a range of communications channels to deliver simple, clear responsible pet ownership messages

Action	Frequency	Measure
Maintain a Responsible Pet Ownership Communications Plan in partnership with Marketing and Communications Unit	Annually	Number of Plan actions completed
Host school visits and other public information opportunities	Ongoing	Number of promotional events/activities attended
Review all animal promotional materials and web content	Annually	Accuracy of information
Maintain annual Responsible Pet Ownership voucher program	Annually	Number of vouchers issued and redeemed
Administer and evaluate the First Free Animal Registration Initiative	Ongoing	Number of new animals registered

Registration and identification

This section of our DAMP addresses Sections 68A(2)(c)(v) and 68A(2)(a),(c)(i),(c)(ii),(d),(f) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 by outlining Mildura Rural City Council's services and strategies to encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats.

Council invests considerable resources, time and effort on identifying and registering cats and dogs.

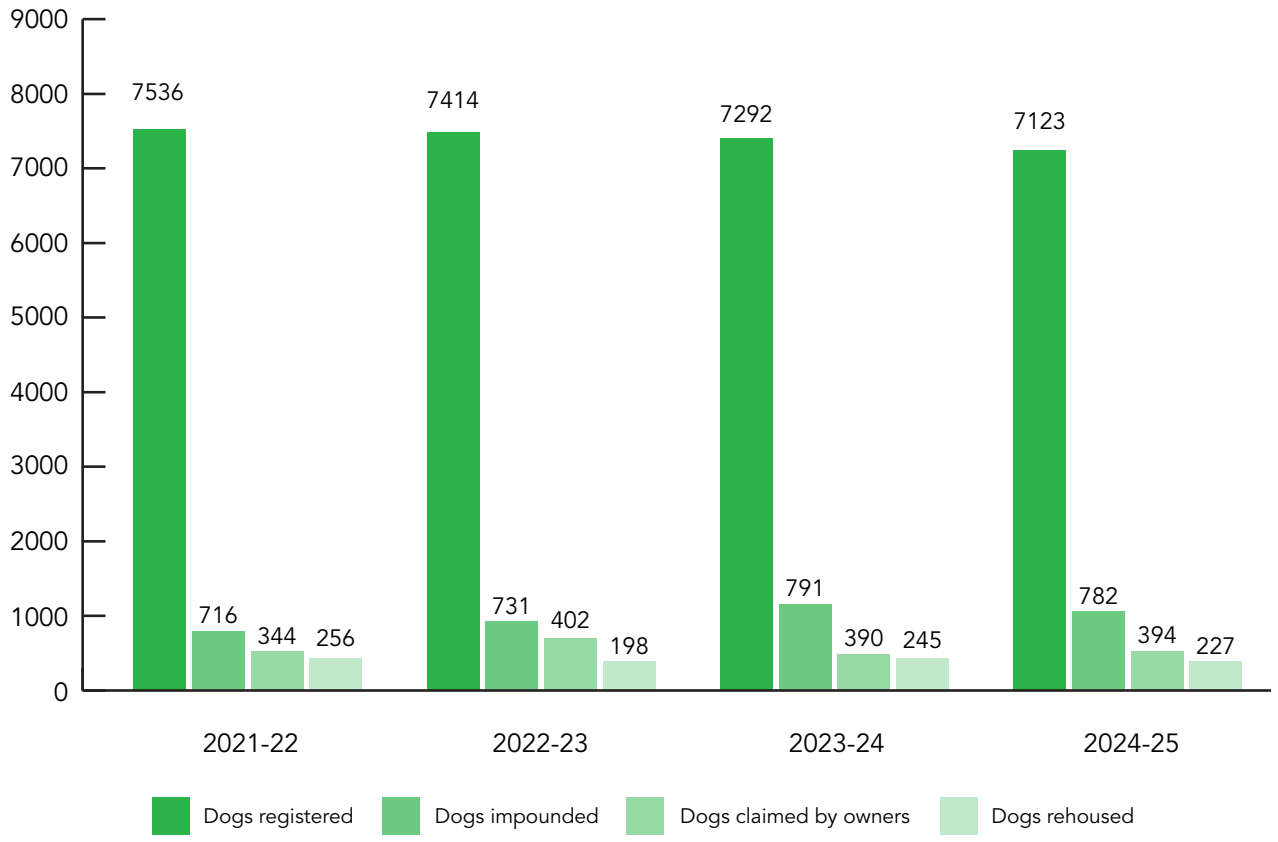
It is compulsory for all cats and dogs over three months of age to be microchipped and registered with Mildura Rural City Council. While this is a legal requirement, it also helps ensure lost animals can be reunited with their owners if found by Council staff.

Animals that are not currently registered with Council along with no current or updated details recorded against the microchip, can make it difficult for Officers to reunite a dog or cat with their owners and can therefore leave Officers with no other option but to impound the animal.

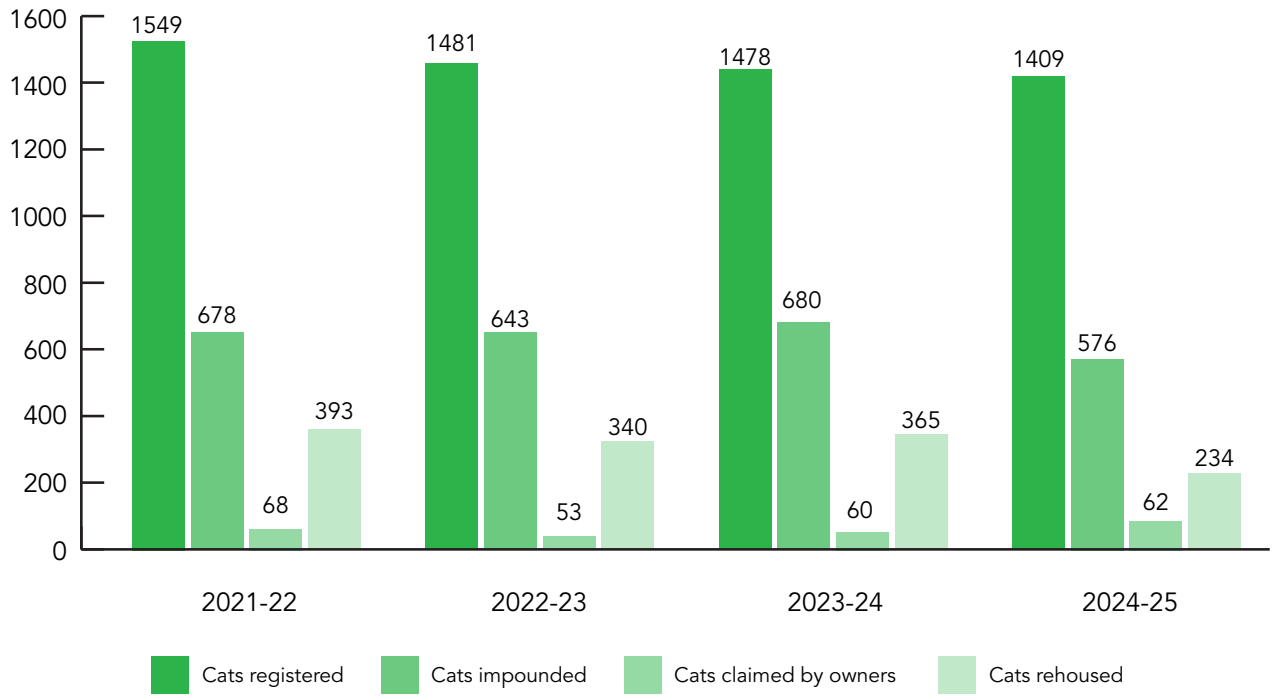
Owners are required to ensure registration details are updated when they move, or circumstances have changed.

Identification and registration of animals is also critical in investigating complaints and ensures proof of pet ownership.

Dogs registered, impounded, claimed and rehoused



Cats registered, impounded, claimed and rehoused



Our current processes and policy

An extensive communication and awareness campaign is undertaken every March to promote and encourage pet registration in the lead up to the April 10 deadline. Key activities include:

- Sending renewal notices to all owners of registered pets
- Television, radio, newspaper and digital advertising
- Media releases
- Stories in community newsletters
- Social media and website promotions
- Signage on community noticeboards and at Council Service Centres
- Door knocking to inform and educate
- Contacting pet owners that have not renewed their animal's registration

Further to this, ongoing promotions and enforcement activities are undertaken throughout the year to encourage pet registration and identification, including:

- Provision of ID tags for all registered animals
- Registration discounts
- Presentations at schools
- Displays at markets and events
- Website content
- Brochures and flyers
- Information provision during routine patrols
- Requiring impounded animals to be microchipped and registered prior to release
- Issuing notices and /or infringements for animals found unregistered
- Seizure of unregistered animals and possible prosecution of owner 30 days after the infringement was issued if the animal remains unregistered
- Monitoring animal sale advertisements to ensure microchip numbers are provided

Relevant Orders, Local Laws, Policies and procedures

Domestic Animals Act 1994, Section 68A (2) (a), (c) (i), (c) (ii), (d), (f)

All dogs and cats are required to be registered annually. Registered pets are also required to wear an identification marker outside their premises. All dogs and cats being registered in Victoria for the first time must be microchipped before they can be registered.

- Mildura Rural City Council Community Local Law No. 2, Section 2.1 Keeping of Animals
- Local Laws Officers are authorised to seize or impound unregistered dogs and cats under the Domestic Animals Act 1994. Council has policies and procedures associated with the seizure and impounding of unregistered and/or unidentified dogs and cats in line with the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*.
- Mildura Rural City Council Processes and Procedural Guidelines:
  - Animal Registration – Renewal Rollover
  - Animal Registration – Change of Ownership
  - Animal Registration – New Owner
  - Animal Registration – New Animal
  - Animal Registration – Tag replacement
  - Animal Found to be Unregistered
  - Capture and Securing Dog and Cats
  - Pound Animal Release
  - Rehousing an Animal
  - Rehousing an Animal to Rehousing Group

2026-2029 Action Plan

Objective 3: Increase animal registrations and enhance opportunities to reunite pets and owners

Action	Frequency	Measure
Implement annual pet registration communications campaign	Annually	Number of registrations and renewals
Administer and evaluate the First Free Animal Registration Initiative	Ongoing	Number of new animals registered
Contact all owners with pets whose registrations have not been renewed	Annually and ongoing	Registration renewal rate Accuracy of registration contact details
Register and microchip all impounded animals prior to release	Ongoing	Number of registrations
Local Laws Officer may, at their discretion, consider returning wandering cats or dogs to owners without charge on first offence, if animal is registered and microchipped	Ongoing	Number of animals impounded Number of animals claimed by owner

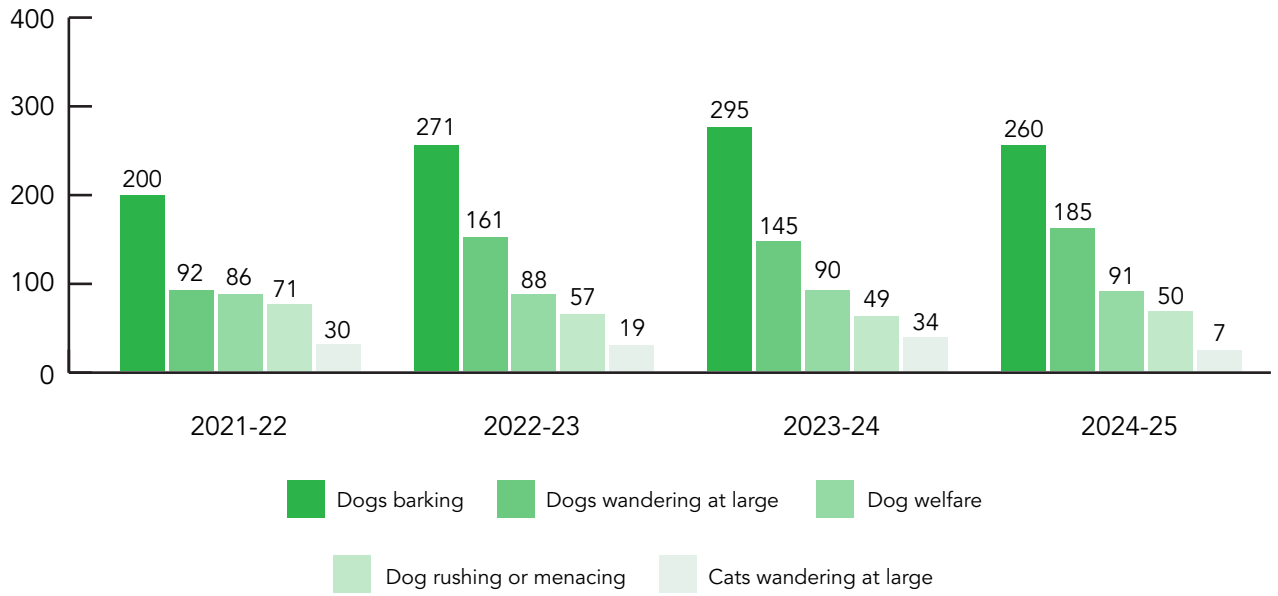
Nuisance cats and dogs

This section of our DAMP addresses Sections 68A(2)(c),(vi) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 by outlining Mildura Rural City Council's services and strategies to minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance. Other applicable sections of the Act include Sections 68A(2)(a),(c),(i),(c),(ii),(d),(f).

Nuisances caused by dogs and cats can have a significant impact on the health, safety, amenity and wellbeing of the community. Supporting pet owners to minimise nuisance issues is a key element of Council's responsible pet ownership education and promotional activities.

Our Local Laws team responds to and investigates animal nuisance issues including wandering or trespassing cats and dogs, dog faeces, barking dogs, animal welfare and dogs rushing or menacing. Dog barking complaints are the most common animal nuisance

Animal nuisance complaints



Dog faeces on walking tracks, paths, streets, parks recreation reserves and other public places is an ongoing issue of concern in our community – for both pet owners and those who do not own pets.

Not only is it smelly, unsightly and an inconvenience, animal faeces poses risks to public health, environmental health and the health of other animals.

Council started capturing data about dog faeces complaints in 2018. Reports of the issue remain very low as the issue is often not reported to Council as a formal complaint. Incidental community engagement shows it remains a concern – particularly on popular walking tracks, sporting fields and at community markets.

Council requires dog owners to carry an appropriate receptacle (e.g. bag or scoop) to remove and dispose of their dog's faeces whenever they are with their dog in a public place.

In the past four years a concerted effort has been made to increase education and enforcement on this issue. Local Laws Officers undertake patrols whenever possible. Messaging has also been distributed via signage at sporting fields, installation of bag dispenser caddies in public places, media coverage and information distributed via social media, website and printed material.

Our current processes and policy

When managing matters regarding animal nuisance issues, Council tries to balance the interests and rights of the animal and their owner as well as the complainant. The majority of cases are resolved after the first complaint, especially in regards to barking dogs.

The majority of nuisance animal cases can be resolved through responsible pet ownership and are the direct result of things such as:

- Boredom
- Territorialism
- Provoked intentionally or unintentionally by humans, wildlife, other animals or vehicles
- Hunger or thirst
- Neglect
- Sickness or poor diet
- Attention seeking or communication
- Lack of space or exercise
- Separation anxiety
- Inadequate fencing/enclosures

In the first instance, Council always encourages complainants to speak directly to the pet owner in question. In many cases, the pet owner is often not aware their animal is causing an issue or concern and are happy to address the matter.

Often, complainants do not want to confront the owners of nuisance animals and prefer to remain anonymous. The identity of all complainants to Council are kept confidential and are only for Council's use.

Council has a standard operating procedure for barking dog complaints to ensure that all complaints received are handled in a consistent manner. The procedure outlines the required steps involved to register and investigate the complaint, liaise with the dog owner and surrounding neighbours and provide feedback to the complainant.

Noise, such as barking, will only be considered a nuisance if it is persistent enough to disrupt resident's peace, comfort, convenience or quality of life. Once Council receives a barking dog complaint, Council will send out a Local Laws Officer to visit the owner of the barking dog to inform them of their legal requirements and offer some suggestions on how to stop excessive barking.

Some cases may require the complainant and dog owner to keep a diary of the noise (barking dates and times) to assist in the investigation.

It is against the law for:

- Dogs to wander the streets because they can cause vehicle accidents, damage to property, intimidate the public and knock down young children or the elderly. If a dog is found "at large" and seized by Council, it may be taken to the Mildura Animal Pound and the owners will be liable for Pound release fees and any applicable infringements
- A member of the public to pick up a stray dog and keep it in their custody. The public have a duty of responsibility to return the stray dog to its owner, contact Council or take it to the Mildura Animal Pound. If a member of the public contacts Council to pick up a stray dog, the animal must be kept secured on either a leash or in an enclosed space or else Council officers may not attend the request
- To walk a pet without it being leashed. Local Laws Officers may issue infringements for this offence if detected

In the circumstances of an animal cruelty complaint, a Local Laws Officer will inspect the property where the animal is located and make a decision on whether to seize the animal, seek veterinary assistance (depending on the animals condition or situation) or otherwise. All Local Laws officers are POCTA authorised (Prevention of Cruelty to Animals).

Issues regarding rushing or aggressive dogs should be reported to Council immediately so that a trained and authorised Local Laws Officer can investigate.

Upon request, Council has approved, cage-style dog and cat traps available to assist customers in capturing animals that enter private properties.

A range of proactive and reactive measures are used to address nuisance issues. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Provide suggestions, information and resources to pet owners on managing animal behaviour
- Encouraging animal training
- Providing information about barking prevention devices such as barking dog collars (as required with veterinary advice) and Pet Safe Outdoor Ultrasonic Bark Control and Recording Devices
- Signage about animal faeces in public places
- Dog faeces bag dispensers at recreation reserves, and popular walking tracks
- Regular patrols of popular walking sites
- Information sessions and presentations to local schools
- Promotion and awareness campaigns about responsible pet ownership
- Cat trapping service
- Utilising data received through customer complaints and enquiries to inform patrol areas

Relevant Orders, Local Laws, Policies and procedures

- Mildura Rural City Council Community Local Law No. 2 Section 2.1 Keeping of Animals, Section 2.2 Litter of Animals, Section 2.3 Noise and Smell, Section 2.4 Effective Fencing, Section 2.5 Leashed Areas
- Mildura Rural City Council Processes and Procedural Guidelines:
  - Capture and Securing Dog and Cats
  - Cat Trap Service
  - Dog Trap Service
  - Barking Dog Procedure
  - Animal Welfare Procedure
  - Dog Rushing Procedure

2026-2029 Action Plan

Objective 4: Decrease dog faeces in public places

Action	Frequency	Measure
Proactively patrol public open spaces, Mildura riverfront, parks and reserves to educate dog walkers about their responsibilities	Ongoing	Number of patrols undertaken Number of dog faeces complaints received
Review educational/enforcement signage in public places with view to improve visibility and consistency	Ongoing	Review undertaken Number of signs on display
Work in partnership with Parks and Waste Management Team to review dog litter bag dispenser locations to ensure best utilisation	Ongoing	Review undertaken Number of bag dispensers in operartion

Objective 5: Improve education and awareness around nuisance animal issues

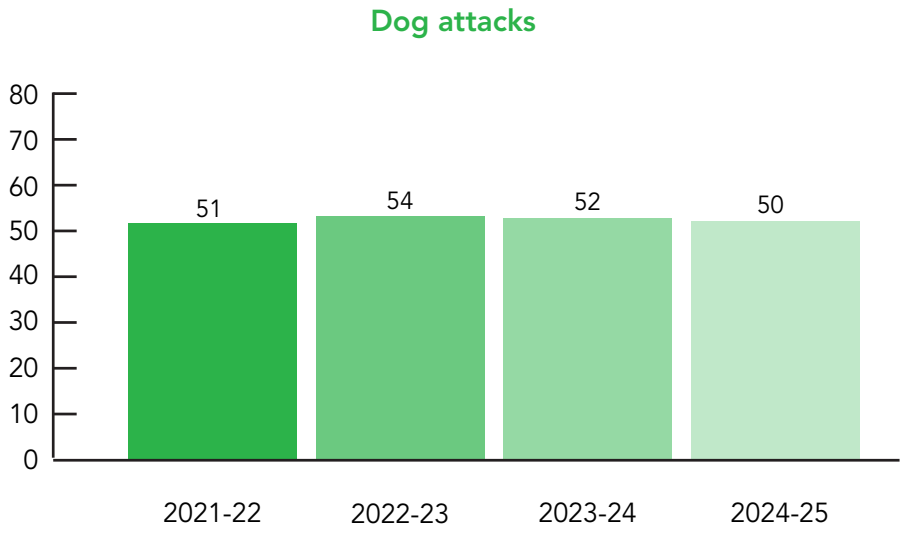
Action	Frequency	Measure
Include messaging around animal nuisance issues in regular communications channels i.e. website, social media, eNews, newsletters and promotional materials	Ongoing	Number of instances messaging is publicised Number of nuisance animal complaints

Dog attacks

This section of our DAMP addresses Sections 68A(2)(c)(iii) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 by outlining Mildura Rural City Council's services and strategies to minimise the risk of injury to people and other animals resulting from dog attacks. Other applicable sections of the Act include Sections 68A(2)(a),(c,(i),(c)(ii),(d),(f).

All dog attacks are serious, and Council is committed to reducing the impact and number of incidents that occur in our community. A dog attack has significant consequences for pet owners, pets and the wider community. Our community has a right to feel safe and to be protected from potential harm when using public spaces.

Data from the past four years shows the number of dog attacks in our community remains steady and it is therefore vital that we continue to address this issue through education, investigation, enforcement and, where appropriate, prosecution.



The majority of dog attacks occur when a dog is wandering at large or not securely confined to its property. Dog attacks on livestock are also an increasing issue in rural areas. Council is committed to implementing education and enforcement programs to effectively reduce the number of dogs wandering and reducing the potential and risk of dogs attacking.

Council is also committed to prosecuting dog owners for serious offences. In the past four years we have successfully prosecuted four serious dog attacks.

Our current processes and policy

Council takes dog attacks very seriously and regards reports of this nature as a high priority. Local Laws Officers provide a 24/7 response service to ensure minimal risk to the community. Authorised Local Laws Officers undertake thorough investigations of all dog attack reports.
This process includes:

- Taking statements from all parties involved
- Obtaining vet reports, medical reports and photographs and
- Providing a report based on the investigation together with recommendations

Possible courses of action Council can choose include:

- Infringements (where non-serious injuries sustained - minor attack)
- Menacing/Dangerous Dog Declaration
- Prosecution in Magistrates' Court
- Seek destruction/compensation orders by a Magistrate
- Seek mediation between parties
- Written warning
- No action

Where serious injuries have occurred to a person or another animal and there is enough evidence to form a prosecution (as defined by the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*), Council may decide to have the matter heard in the Magistrate's Court.

Other compliance activities undertaken by Council include:

- Responding to reports of aggressive dogs and dog attacks immediately. This service includes a 24 hour emergency call out service
- Seizing and holding dogs pending investigation/prosecution into a dog attack
- Increased patrols
- Proactive patrols of parks and streets in an attempt to reduce wandering dogs
- Issuing infringements for minor attacks
- Issuing infringements for wandering dogs
- All reported dog attacks within Council are recorded
- Seizing and impounding dogs in circumstances where the owner's property is believed to be unsecured
- Follow up of seized animals due to being unsecured to ensure that the dog has been secured and issue infringements if required

Relevant Orders, Local Laws, Policies and procedures

- Mildura Rural City council Community Local Law No. 2 Section 2.1 Keeping of Animals, Section 2.3 Noise and Smell, Section 2.4 Effective Fencing, Section 2.5 Leashed Areas
- Mildura Rural City Council Processes and Procedural Guidelines:
  - Capture and Securing Dog and Cats
  - Cat Trap Service
  - Dog Trap Service
  - Dog Rushing Procedure
  - Dog Attack Procedure
  - Prosecutions Procedure

2026-2029 Action Plan

Objective 6: Minimise the incidence of dog attacks in our community.

Action	Frequency	Measure
Proactively patrol public open spaces, parks and reserves to identify and reduce numbers of roaming, off leash or unsecure dogs	Ongoing	Number of patrols undertaken
Where a dog is involved in an attack or rush incident, consider prosecution or declaration of the dog where appropriate, so that restrictions may be enforced.	Ongoing	Number of declarations Number of prosecutions
Provide dog traps to landowners impacted by livestock attacks	Ongoing	Number of traps distributed
Include messaging around on leash rules in regular communications channels i.e. website, social media, eNews, newsletters and promotional materials	Ongoing	Number of instances messaging is publicised Number of dog attacks

Overpopulation and high euthanasia

This section of our DAMP addresses Sections 68A(2)(c)(iv) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 by outlining Mildura Rural City Council's programs, services and strategies address overpopulation and high euthanasia rates for cats and dogs. Other applicable sections of the Act include Sections 68A(2)(a),(c,(i),(c)(ii),(d),(f).

Stray or unidentified dogs and cats are collected daily within our municipality. Reuniting lost animals with their owners is always our priority. Local Laws Officers always attempt to reunite lost animals with their owner via any identification. If there is no identification, the animal is taken to the Council Pound.

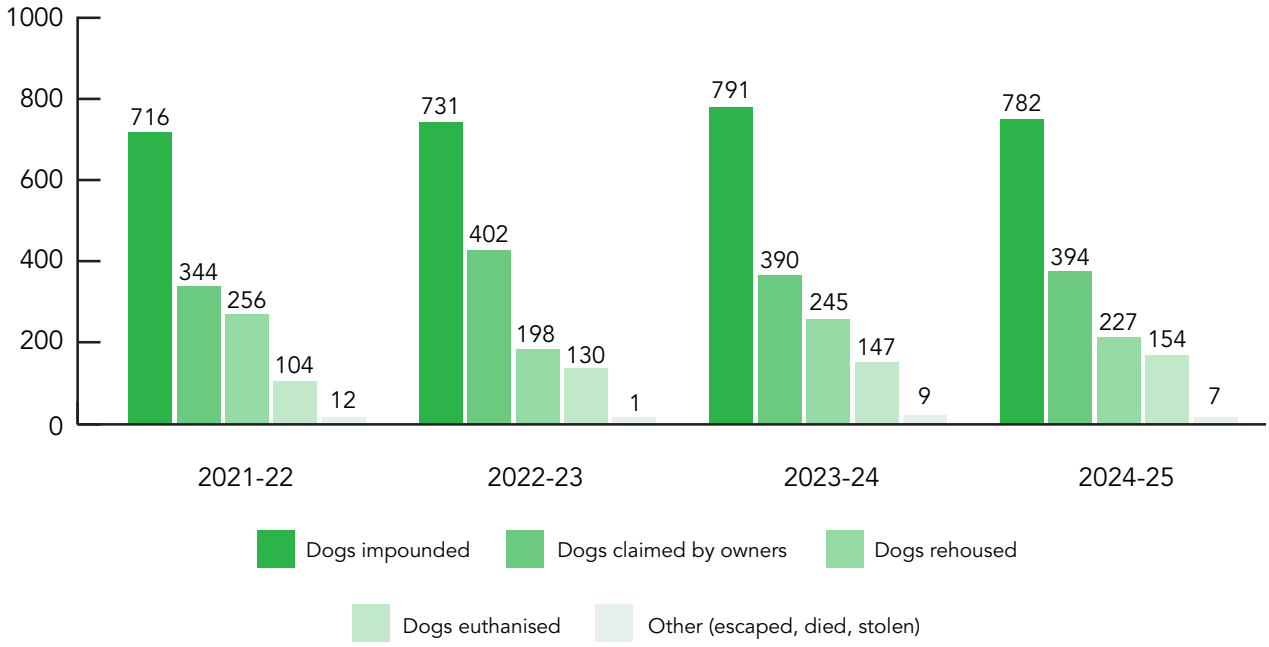
Council has invested significant resources to improve animal rehousing and reduce euthanasia and overpopulation rates in our community. All responsible pet ownership promotion and education has a particular emphasis on desexing, microchipping and registrations. Each of these factors can significantly improve the chances of reuniting a lost or wandering pet with its owner.

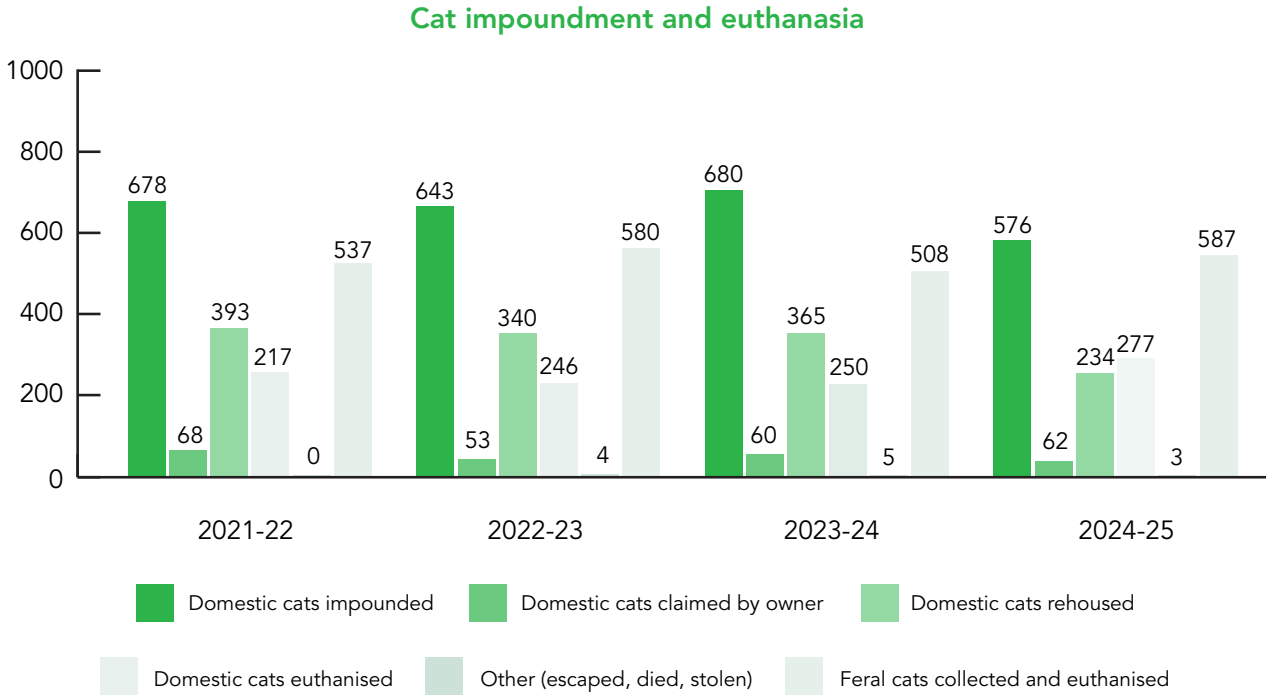
In the 2024-25 Financial Year 782 dogs were impounded. More than 79% of these were claimed by their owner or rehoused.

Increased focus and education of registration, microchipping and desexing has helped to reduce the number of dogs impounded each year. Cat impoundment numbers remain steady, which can be attributed to the ongoing issues with stray and feral cat populations breeding.

Unfortunately, euthanasia and overpopulation rates in our region remain steady and present an ongoing animal management challenge for Council and the wider community.

Dog impoundments and euthanasia rates





Council has solid ongoing relationships and excellent support from animal rehousing groups. There are currently 12 Section 84Y Agreements in place, which have helped maintain strong rehousing rates. In the 2024-25 Financial Year, 227 dogs and 234 cats were rehoused from the Mildura Pound.

A Responsible Pet Ownership Voucher program is implemented annually to assist pet owners cover the costs of desexing, vaccination and microchipping in an extra effort to reduce the overpopulation numbers. More than 900 vouchers have been distributed since this program was started in 2018.

Our current processes and policy

A range of education and promotional activities are undertaken annually to help reduce overpopulation and euthanasia rates in the Mildura Rural City Council area. Like so many animal management issues, the focus is on responsible pet ownership and includes:

- Advertising in local newspapers, radio and TV networks prior to animal registration
- School visits regarding responsible pet ownership and general education
- Ongoing Council funding for Responsible Pet Ownership vouchers to encourage microchipping and desexing of dogs and cats within the municipality

Compliance activities are also utilised to help manage overpopulation and euthanasia, including:

- Discounted registration fees for desexed cats and dogs
- Restrictions on numbers of cats and dogs allowed on properties
- Annual registration renewal notices sent to all current registered cat and dog owners
- Implementation of door knock program regarding unregistered animals (May – July) and barking complaints as required
- Patrols are carried out throughout the year
- Cat traps are used throughout our Council to reduce the number of feral cats and domestic cats which contribute to overpopulation issues.

Relevant Orders, Local Laws, Policies and procedures

- *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, Section 82 Seizure of unregistered dogs or cats
- Mildura Rural City council Community Local Law No. 2 Section 2.1 Keeping of Animals, Section 2.2 Litter of Animals, Section 2.3 Noise and Smell, Section 2.4 Effective Fencing, Section 2.5 Leashed Areas
- Mildura Rural City Council Processes and Procedural Guidelines:
  - Apply to keep more than 2 cats or dogs
  - Capture and Securing Dog and Cats
  - Cat Trap Service
  - Dog Trap Service

2026-2029 Action Plan

Objective 7: Encourage pet owners to desex their cats and dogs

Action	Frequency	Measure
Offer a discounted rate on annual pet registration fees for desexed cats and dogs	Ongoing	Number of registered pets that are desexed
Implement annual Responsible Pet Ownership voucher program	Ongoing	Number of vouchers distributed

Objective 8: Decrease stray animals to reduce overpopulation

Action	Frequency	Measure
Make approved, cage-style dog and cat traps available for residents to borrow	Ongoing	Number of trap requests Number of animals collected
Implement annual pet registration communications campaign	Annually	Number of registrations and renewals

Objective 9: Increase annual reclaiming and rehoming rates

Action	Frequency	Measure
Review existing Section 84Y agreements with third party bodies to rehouse animals from Mildura Pound	Every three years	Number of current Section 84Y Agreements
Promote animals available for adoption at Mildura Pound through website, local media and social media channels	Ongoing	Number of animals rehoused

Dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs

This section of our DAMP addresses Sections 68A(2)(c)(vii) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 by outlining Mildura Rural City Council's programs, services and strategies effectively identify all dangerous dogs, menacing dogs and restricted breed dogs. and animals. Other applicable sections of the Act include Sections 68A(2)(a),(c,(i),(c)(ii),(d),(f).

The health and safety of all people, animals and property in our region is of utmost importance to Council. While restricted breed and declared dangerous dog numbers have remained consistently low in our region, Council has a responsibility to manage and monitor these breeds.

The *Domestic Animals Act 1994* defines Restricted Breed Dogs as any one of the following breeds:

- Japanese Tosa
- Fila Brasiliero
- Dogo Argentino
- Perro de Prasa Canario (or Presa Canario)
- American Pit Bull Terrier (or Pit Bull Terrier)
- Any cross breed of the above breeds

Restricted Breed Dogs are required to:

- be desexed
- be kept on a leash and muzzled at all times when in public
- securely confined as per approved housing requirements
- wear a red and yellow striped collar at all times.

Properties containing a Restricted Breed Dog must display a specific turquoise warning sign at the entrance to the property indicating that a Restricted Breed Dog is housed there. Bans on breeding, adopting or transferring the ownership of Restricted Breed Dogs will also remain in place.

There are currently no Restricted Breed Dogs registered in our Council area.

A Declared Dangerous Dog is a dog that has attacked a person or animal or which, in the opinion of Council, has caused serious injury to a person or another animal.

The owner of a Dangerous Dog has to meet stronger control provisions, including erecting an approved housing enclosure.

There are currently two Declared Dangerous Dogs in the Mildura Council area.

Given the very low numbers, Restricted Breeds, menacing and Declared Dangerous Dogs are not a significant problem within the Mildura Council area. Low numbers mean inspections for compliance can be undertaken routinely.

Our current processes and policy

Council undertakes the following activities:

- Restricted Breed and Declared Dangerous Dog renewals are sent out annually and recorded with the Victorian Declared Dog Registry
- Arrange annual Dangerous Dog inspections
- Communications activities relating to legislation/changes/updates
- Provide information to the public on request regarding declared/dangerous dogs

Current compliance activities include:

- Restricted Breed and Dangerous Dog renewals are sent out annually and recorded with the Victorian Declared Dog Registry
- Council Animal Register (Dangerous Dogs)
- Seizing dogs suspected of being Restricted Breed Dogs
- Prosecution / Infringements issued for any determined breach
- Performing annual inspections of all properties with declared dogs to ensure compliance with the Act and regulations.
- Following-up any non-compliance issues until the dog owner complies

Relevant Orders, Local Laws, Policies and procedures

- Mildura Rural City Council Community Local Law No. 2 Section 2.1 Keeping of Animals, Section 2.2 Litter of Animals, Section 2.3 Noise and Smell, Section 2.4 Effective Fencing, Section

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Objective 10: Ensure accuracy of registration database for Restricted Breed Dogs

Action	Frequency	Measure
Cross reference microchip database with Council's registration database of potential Restricted Breed Dogs	Ongoing	Monitor and review of database for microchipping and registration Proactive follow up of complaints and related investigations

Objective 11: Ensure all Restricted Breed and Declared Dangerous Dog owners abide by legal obligations.

Action	Frequency	Measure
Undertake random annual inspection of all properties housing Restricted Breed or Declared Dangerous Dogs	Ongoing	Number of inspections undertaken
Check properties for dogs being used as guard dogs in response to customer or community complaints	As required, Ongoing	Number of inspections undertaken Number of guard dogs identified

Domestic Animal Businesses

This section of our DAMP addresses Sections 68A(2)(c)(ii) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 by outlining how Mildura Rural City Council will ensure Domestic Animal Businesses comply with the Act, regulations and any relevant legislation. Other applicable sections of the Act include Sections 68A(2)(a),(c,(i),(c)(i),(d),(f).

Domestic Animal Businesses such as pet shops, animal pounds and shelters, breeding and rearing businesses, pet boarding and dog training establishments must comply with specific rules and regulations under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*.

There are currently seven registered Domestic Animal Businesses in the Mildura Rural City Council area.

This includes three pet shops, four boarding establishments and the Mildura Animal Pound.

Local Laws Officers work in partnership with all proprietors to ensure their establishments comply with relevant regulations.

Each registered facility is inspected annually to ensure compliance with the relevant codes of practiser and legislation. This involves and educational approach, where Officers provide information and support to assist proprietors to operate their businesses safely.

Registered Domestic Animal Businesses are also documented on a register for auditing purposes. Officers provide advice, information and support to all new businesses seeking to open.

Historically, compliance with Domestic Animal Business legislation and requirements has been high, and there have been limited issues or concerns with the few registered establishments in our region.

Our current processes and policy

Council plays both an education and enforcement role in managing Domestic Animal Businesses. Under current legislation, Council has the authority to:

- Refuse registration of a business if they fail to comply with the legislation and relevant code of practice
- Set special conditions on the registration of any Domestic Animal Business.

All Domestic Animal Businesses are registered with Council in accordance with The Act.

Council actively seeks to identify, investigate and prosecute any illegal Domestic Animal Businesses operating in the municipality. Other current activities include:

- Inspect and process new Domestic Animal Business applications
- Annual inspections undertaken in accordance with the Act; and issue annual registration certificates
- Actively seek and identify illegal domestic animal businesses and prosecute where appropriate
- Provide information on registering a new domestic animal business in digital and hard copy formats
- Provide information on reporting a concern about a domestic animal business in digital and hard copy formats
- Respond to and investigate breaches / complaints
- Inspect suspected unregistered Domestic Animal Businesses
- Liaise with Council's Statutory Planning Department to ensure planning conditions are adhered to
- Monitor advertising outlets (online and print) for illegal breeding or other Domestic Animal Business operations
- Enforcement activities including official warnings, infringements, notices to comply and court prosecution

Relevant Orders, Local Laws, Policies and procedures

There are currently no Orders or Local Laws relating specifically to Domestic Animal Businesses.

2026-2029 Action Plan

Objective 12: Identify and register all operating Domestic Animal Businesses to ensure compliance.

Action	Frequency	Measure
Audit, inspect and register all Domestic Animal Businesses by 10 April each year	Annually	Number of inspections, registrations and audits completed Number of compliance issues identified

Objective 13: Zero tolerance for non-complying Domestic Animal Businesses in our region.

Action	Frequency	Measure
Check local newspapers and online platforms to ensure Domestic Animal Business registration	Ongoing	Non-compliance detected and investigated
Investigate complaints relating to the operation of a Domestic Animal Businesses	Ongoing	Records of and resolution of complaints to achieve compliance
Continue annual property inspections for compliance as per the Act	Annually	Number of inspections, registrations and audits completed Number of compliance issues identified

Other animal matters

This section of our DAMP addresses Sections 68A(2)(e) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 by reviewing any other matters related to the management of dogs and cats in the Council's municipal district that it thinks necessary.

Mildura Animal Pound

The Mildura Animal Pound is a safe and secure environment for lost, stray and abandoned animals in our community. Council has made significant improvements to enhance the quality, safety and amenity of the facility and its operations in the past four years. Most notable is the completion of the new purpose-built Isolation Building. The new area ensures compliance with the Code of Practice for Shelters and Pounds and provides a high quality environment to care for the dogs and cats requiring isolation.
Other recent key improvements and changes at the Mildura Animal Pound include:

- Improvements to the office area to accommodate staff and customers
- Ongoing floor repair and maintenance
- Increased security including improved cameras and lighting
- All animal management vehicles now fitted with K9–Kubes for improved Officer and animal safety during handling and transport
- Pound Supervisor now qualified and able to microchip dogs and cats prior to release. Other Local Laws Officers are also now undertaking this training
- Ongoing improvements to animal health management including vaccinations of unidentifiable dogs and cats upon entry to the Pound, and equipment such as F-10 Chemical Fogging machine to assist in reducing risk of diseases such as cat flu.

Off Leash Dog Parks

Our regions first designated site for dogs to exercise off leash was established at Rio Vista Park on the Mildura riverfront in September 2017. Strong demand and use of the site during an eight month trial cemented its viability.

After extensive community consultation, Mildura Rural City Council has now commenced construction a second Off Leash Dog Park at Kenny Park Merbein, which will be operational be the end of 2025. Further locations will be investigated during the period of this DAMP.
Both sites include:

- Full perimeter fencing
- Dividing fence to create separate areas for large and small dogs
- Upgraded gates and transition area
- Improved ground conditions to reduce prickles
- Tree planting to provide more shade
- Sand area for dog play
- Public seating and tables
- Improved access and connections from nearby walking tracks
- New signage including dog behaviour information

Managing animals in emergencies

Emergency events such as floods, fire, drought or evacuation, not only impact people. Animals, especially domestic pets, can be significantly affected and must be considered when planning for, responding to and recovering from an emergency. In the event of an emergency Mildura Rural City Council's Pound can be used to accommodate resident's pets (dogs and cats) as a temporary housing solution.

Council's Municipal Emergency Management Plan provides for this service.

2026-2029 Action Plan

Objective 14: Provide safe off leash dog exercise facilities

Action	Frequency	Measure
Continue to work with Advisory Committee, relevant Council Departments and external agencies regarding Off Leash Dog Park matters	Ongoing	Meetings and advice provided
Regular patrols at Rio Vista Off Leash Dog Park	Ongoing	Number of patrols undertaken
Promote compliance and use of Rio Vista Off Leash Dog Park through digital and traditional channels	Ongoing	Number of instances messaging is publicised

Objective 15: Provide a safe and compliant pound service for lost and found, surrendered and seized animals operating to best practice standards

Action	Frequency	Measure
Review Pound operations against DDA legislation and the Code of Practice for the Operation of Shelters and Pounds	Annually	Review undertaken and non-compliance issues recorded with a plan in place to rectify
Complete and implement Mildura Animal Pound Masterplan	Ongoing	Plan endorsed Number of Actions implemented

Objective 16: Ensure domestic animals are safe during emergencies

Action	Frequency	Measure
Provide temporary care for cats and dogs at Mildura Pound in event of an emergency	As required	Emergency animal care provided
Regular reviews of Municipal Emergency Management Plan	Annually	MEMP reviewed

Appendices

Domestic Animals Act 1994
Part 5A- Domestic animal management plans

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.

Mildura Rural City Council Community Local Law No. 2 Part 2 – Animals

2.1 Keeping of Animals

A person must not, without a Permit, keep any Animals other than in accordance with the types and numbers in the following table:-

TYPE OF ANIMALS	MAXIMUM NUMBERS	
	URBAN AREA	NON URBAN AREA
Dogs	2	2
Cats	2	2
Poultry	10	100
Domestic Birds (Includes Pigeons)	30	100
Domestic Mice	10	10
Guinea Pigs	2	10
Ferrets	4	10
Domestic Rabbits	2	2
Pigs	Not Permitted	6
Horses / Donkeys / Mules	Not Permitted	No Maximum Limit
Camel	Not Permitted	No Maximum Limit
Cattle	Not Permitted	No Maximum Limit
Sheep	Not Permitted	No Maximum Limit
Goats / Alpacas	Not Permitted	No Maximum Limit
Ostriches	Not Permitted	No Maximum Limit
Emus	Not Permitted	No Maximum Limit
Roosters	Not Permitted	No Maximum Limit
Peacocks	Not Permitted	No Maximum Limit
Any other agricultural animal	Not Permitted	No Maximum Limit

In determining whether to grant a Permit for the keeping of Animals where the number exceeds that set out in the Table, the Council must take into account:-

(1) the zoning of the property;
(2) the size of the property;
(3) the proximity to adjoining properties;
(4) the amenity of the area;
(5) the type and additional numbers of Animals to be kept;
(6) the likely effects on the owners or occupiers of adjoining properties;
(7) the adequacy of Animal shelters;
(8) the effect on the property's drainage; and
(9) any other matter relevant to the circumstances associated with the application.

Clause 2.1 does not apply where a planning permit has been obtained for a property used for the purposes of Animal boarding, breeding or any other commercial activity involving animals, or where the occupier is licensed in accordance with the *Wildlife Act 1975*, or where the occupier is a member of a breeding or racing organisation which is approved by the Council.

Dogs kept for working stock on land exceeding 20 hectares are not counted in the numbers prescribed by clause 2.1.

Penalty: 5 penalty units

2.2 Litter of Animals

For the purpose of calculating the maximum limit of the number of Animals kept on a single property, the progeny of any Animal lawfully kept will be exempt for a period of 12 weeks after birth.

2.3 Noise and smell

For the purposes of this clause, "owner", includes a person who keeps or harbours the Animal or has the Animal in his or her care for the time being whether the Animal is at large or in confinement.

(1) The owner of a dog that defecates in a Park, in or on a Road that contains a constructed Footpath or maintained nature-strip, or any walking path or shared Footpath or any other Public Place that has constructed surfaces or equipment or fixtures provided for the enjoyment of the public, must remove the faeces and deposit it as litter in a lawful manner.

(2) A Person in charge of any dog on any Road or other Council Land must carry a Litter Device suitable to clean up any excrement left by his or her Animal and must produce such Litter Device upon request of any Authorised Officer.

Penalty: 2 penalty units

2.4 Effective Fencing

Each owner and each occupier of land must ensure that livestock kept or grazed on the land under his or her control does not cause a threat to public safety.

(a) Each owner and each occupier of land must not use the land for the grazing or keeping of livestock unless it is adequately fenced for the purpose of preventing the livestock from straying onto any Road or Council Land.

Penalty: 10 penalty units
Infringement notice: 2 penalty units

(b) If an Authorised Officer is of the opinion that land used for the grazing or keeping of livestock is not adequately fenced then in addition to any penalty that may be imposed he or she may issue a Notice to Comply directing the owner or occupier of the land to do any or all of the following

(i) install, repair, replace or modify fences and gates;

(ii) remove any livestock from the land; and

(iii) not to permit the grazing and keeping of livestock until required works have been completed.

Mildura Rural City Council

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76 Deakin Avenue, Mildura

Madden Avenue Service Centre
108 Madden Avenue, Mildura

Ouyen Service Centre
79 Oke Street, Ouyen

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