



Ashfield Council

COMPANION ANIMALS MANAGEMENT PLAN

2009

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PART 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 What is a Companion Animal Management Plan

Ashfield Council's Companion Animal Management Plan outlines how the Ashfield local government area will fulfil its responsibilities under the NSW Companion Animals Act 1998 and sets out a clear program for implementation.

1.2 Need for the plan

The Companion Animals Act 1998 (the Act) makes local government responsible for many issues regarding companion animals. Despite the requirements of the Act, there is a need for individual councils to determine how they intend to exercise their powers and how they might wish to use non-regulatory techniques to influence companion animal related activities.

There is also increasing recognition that enforcement approaches on their own will not result in lasting changes in human or animal behaviour. Both educational and enforcement practices need to be supplemented by a range of other tools that focus on passive and voluntary approaches to achieving responsible pet ownership.

1.4 Scope of the plan

This plan integrates the developing expertise in companion animal management around Australia to produce a program of action to be undertaken by Council.

1.4 Aims and objectives

The aim for the Companion Animal Management Plan is to promote and facilitate responsible pet ownership of dogs and cats; animal welfare and the benefits of owning a companion animal.

The objectives are to ensure Council meets its obligations under the Companion Animals Act 1998; to investigate the best mix of regulatory and non-regulatory approaches to achieving responsible pet ownership in the Ashfield LGA.



1.5 Ashfield Local Government Area

The original residents of the Ashfield area were the Wangal people. European settlement of the area commenced with the first land grant in 1794 and proclamation of the municipality in 1871. The Ashfield local government area is 8.29 square kilometres in size and includes Ashfield; Summer Hill; Haberfield; the eastern part of Croydon; and the fringes of Croydon Park, Hurlstone Park and Ashbury. The population of Ashfield is 40,113 (ABS Census: 2006) and is one of the most culturally diverse municipalities in inner Sydney.

1.6 Council's Charter and Mission

CHARTER

To provide and manage local government within the Ashfield local government area and to meet all the legislative requirements of the Government of New South Wales.

MISSION

To service the people of the Ashfield local government area equitably, effectively and efficiently, to create a better environment and quality of life, as well as satisfy the expressed needs of the community within the limits of the resources available.

VISION

To achieve excellence in service to the community.

1.7 Number of companion animals in the Ashfield LGA

The exact number of companion animals in the Ashfield LGA is not known. Various sources of information allow Council to estimate the number of companion animals which might currently exist in the LGA.

The Companion Animals Register of the Department of Local Government indicates that as at April 2008, there were 1470 cats and 2300 dogs in the Ashfield LGA. The BIS Shrapnel report, "Contribution of the Pet Care Industry to the Australian Economy" 5th edition, 2003, estimates that in NSW, 37% of households own dogs and 23% of households own cats.

It is acknowledged, however, that there are likely to be more companion animals in the Ashfield local government area than is suggested by the Department Local Government information. The number of un-owned (or stray) cats, for example, is unlikely to be fully recognised in these figures and unregistered animals would not have been included.



1.8 Companion Animals Act 1998

The NSW Companion Animals Act 1998 sets the framework for the manner in which local councils deal with issues relating to companion animals. Ashfield Council's response to companion animal management is influenced by Council's obligations under this Act.

The Act, indicates that "companion animal" means the following:

- A dog
- A cat
- Any other animal that is prescribed by the regulations as a companion animal.

The regulations do not list any other type of animal as being a companion animal. The fact that an animal is not strictly a "companion" does not prevent it being a companion animal for the purposes of the Companion Animals Act 1998. All dogs are treated as companion animals, even working dogs on rural properties, guard dogs and police dogs.

The Act sets down controls in relation to the following types of matters:

- The registration and identification requirements for companion animals;
- The need for dogs in a public place to be on a leash and under effective control at all times, except when in a designated off-leash area;
- The fact that if a dog rushes at, attacks, bites, harasses or chases another person or animal, the owner of the dog is guilty of an offence;
- The areas in which dogs and cats are prohibited;
- The requirements that a dog or companion animal owner must dispose of any faeces deposited by their animal in a public place; and
- Procedures for dealing with stray animals.

1.9 Additional Companion Animal Resources

Links to additional companion animal management information can be found by going to Council's web site at www.ashfield.nsw.gov.au and then navigating to 'Customer Service' > 'Register your pet'.

PART 2

COUNCIL'S COMPANION ANIMAL PRACTICES

2.1 Registration of animals

Council operates as a registration point for companion animals and provides general written information regarding registration requirements.

The companion animal registration process is administered by the Department of Local Government.

2.2 Off-Leash dog area

The Companion Animals Act 1998 requires each council to have at least one off-leash dog exercise area.

The off-leash dog area in the Ashfield LGA is situated at Cadigal Reserve, 1 Grosvenor Crescent, Summer Hill. This off-leash area is approximately 1800 square metres and is available at all times.

Except in the Cadigal Reserve off-leash area, dogs in a public place in the Ashfield LGA must remain under the effective control of a competent person by means of an adequate chain, cord or leash.

Even when on a leash, dogs are prohibited from particular public places. These places are listed at clause 14 of the Companion Animals Act 1998, and include: within 10m of children's play areas; food preparation areas; school grounds; and child care centres.

2.3 Council Community Enforcement Officers (CEO's) and Seized Animals

Council's CEO's perform the function of collecting stray dogs from public places. Council does not have a purpose built pound. Council CEO's are issued with microchip readers and all reasonable efforts are made to identify and contact the owner of the dog and sometimes a cat, and if the owner is able to be contacted, the animal is returned to that person. If not, the dog (or cat) is taken to council's agent holding facility at the Belmore Veterinary Hospital. Only council CEO's are authorised to take stray animals impounded within the Ashfield local government area to the holding facility.



The benefits of having a local holding facility include the fact that dogs experience less stress (as a result of fewer dogs being transferred a longer distance to a facility outside the local area) and the fact that owners benefit from being able to travel a shorter distance to collect their animal.

The requirements of the Companion Animals Act 1998 are such that council must hold a microchipped/registered animal for fourteen days and an animal which is not microchipped/registered for seven days.

In instances where lost animals are not claimed by their owners, Ashfield council takes the position that, if possible, lost animals will be re-homed.

2.4 Customer Request Management System

The Customer Request Management System (CRMS) is a computerised system (used Council-wide) which tracks the way in which complaints and requests for information or action (in regards to particular issues) are handled by Council officers. If a citizen contacts Council with regards to a companion animal issue, it is likely that the citizen's complaint or request for information/action would be entered into CRMS, given a reference number and then assigned to a particular officer (as a CRMS "request") within Council's CEO section, for further action.

PART 3

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

3.1 Companion Animal Registration & Microchipping

- ***How much will it cost to register my dog/cat?***

Entire (undesexed) cat or dog	\$150
Entire cat or dog owned by a registered breeder	\$40
Desexed cat or dog	\$40
Desexed cat or dog owned by a pensioner	\$15

- ***At what age does my animal need to be microchipped?***

A companion animal must be microchipped from the time the animal is 12 weeks old. A companion animal must not be sold unless it has been microchipped as required by the Companion Animals Act (even if it is less than 12 weeks old when it is sold). The owner of an animal is guilty of an offence if it is not identified in accordance with the Companion Animals Act.

- ***What are the Compulsory identification/microchipping requirements?***

The introduction of compulsory microchipping aims to ensure that all owned animals have a means of permanent identification which cannot be lost or tampered with. Microchips are tiny - about the size of a grain of rice - and can be inserted under the skin between the shoulders of a cat or dog. The process is similar to receiving immunisation injections. Councils and other relevant people such as vets are able to read the microchip by passing a scanner over the animal. Each chip contains a unique number which links the animal to the owners details, kept on a Statewide register. Privacy controls ensure the confidentiality of an owners details and limit access to lawful purposes.

- ***How can I check if my animal is microchipped?***

A companion animal must be microchipped as required by the regulations from the time the animal is 12 weeks old. The microchip can be checked by your local vet, council or animal welfare organisation.



- ***My animal is microchipped - is that the same as registration?***

Although microchipping provides an excellent form of identification, it is only the first step to registering your animal. Next the identification certificate needs to be presented at council and the registration fee paid. The fees are now one single payment for the lifetime of your pet. A companion animal must be registered under this Act from the time the animal is 6 months old. This allows time for the owner to have their pet desexed. The owner of the animal is guilty of an offence if it is not registered.

3.2 Pet Responsibilities

- ***Do I have to walk my dog on a leash?***

When your dog is out in public, it must be under effective control of a competent person at all times, by means of an adequate chain, cord or leash that is attached to the dog and that is being held by the person. This means that it must be on a lead and under the control of someone who is capable of restraining the dog. Small children, for instance, may not be able to control large dogs and under these circumstances an adult should walk the dog. In Ashfield LGA, dogs may be exercised off leash within the off leash area of Cadigal Reserve which is situated at 1 Grosvenor Crescent Summer Hill. Owning a dog encourages people to exercise and visit their local off leash areas. Some behavioural problems in dogs such as owner dependence and barking can be traced back to lack of socialisation and a barren home environment. Dogs need to learn acceptable behaviour in public and need to be socialised.

- ***Does my Dog need to wear a Collar & Tag?***

A dog must have a collar around its neck and there must be attached to the collar: a name tag that shows the name of the dog and the address or telephone number of the owner of the dog. Note: This section does not apply to a dog while it is on property of which the owner of the dog is the occupier.

- ***Do I really have to pick up my dog poo?***

If a dog defecates in a public place: the owner of the dog or another person who is in charge of the dog at that time must immediately remove the dogs faeces and properly dispose of them. The most common complaint about unremoved faecal deposits is the effect on aesthetics and the unpleasant experience of dodging droppings on footpaths and in parks. The most serious concerns are health related. Faeces may be infested with microscopic parasitic organisms that can pollute our waterways or possibly cause disease in humans. A penalty infringement may be issued, for failure to remove dog faeces. Penalty amount \$275.00



- ***What do I do if my dog or cat is lost?***

If your dog or cat is missing, contact council on ph 97161800 so that council's CEO's can be advised. Also quote the microchip number, if known, so that council's Companion Animal Register can be updated.

Many dogs and cats are lost, injured or stolen every year. Most of the impounded animals do not have microchips. If you want to be reunited with your missing animal then ensure your animal has a microchip implanted; register your animal with council; ensure your contact details are up to date; ensure your animal wears a collar with a name tag advising of your contact number.

- ***Do I have to keep my cat inside?***

No. - the Companion Animals Act does not contain any requirement for a cat curfew or for cats to be kept inside. However, cat owners are encouraged to keep their cats inside at night as this can provide many benefits to the cat itself and the general community. Fighting and 'yowling' are also more of a problem at night.

- ***Should I desex my animal?***

The desexing of dogs and cats is not compulsory in New South Wales although it is promoted. It is much cheaper to register a desexed dog or cat. The benefits of desexing include reducing the likelihood that your dog or cat will stray; reduce fighting and aggression and reducing anti social behaviour such as spraying to mark territory. Desexing before 6 months of age is encouraged and it is recommended that you talk to your vet about the options.

If you are unable to have your animal de sexed because of financial concerns, it is suggested that you talk to your veterinarian or an animal welfare association as they may be able to assist you.

- ***How many dogs or cats can I have?***

Council's local orders policy states that not more than 2 cats and/or 2 dogs be kept on any premises, unless that premises is registered and approved for breeding purposes. Commercial uses and animal breeding purposes will require council development consent. Contact council for further information.

- ***Can my animal suffer heat stress?***

All animals suffer heat stress.



Ashfield Council

- ***Animals in hot cars.***

Never leave an animal in a hot car, even with the windows down as they may die.

- ***Animals & Fireworks.***

Christmas; New Year and the Queens Birthday celebrations bring fireworks, which pose many risks to animal safety. Animals will do anything to get away from the sights and sounds of fireworks and sometimes they injure themselves in the process. If you plan to be away from home, if its possible, put your animal indoors, in a laundry or in your garage with some soothing music, favourite toys, familiar bedding, and food and fresh water. Never use a slip collar or choker chain to restrain your dog - it may choke itself.

- ***Walking dogs***

Obviously, jog or walk in the cooler times of the day, either early morning or late evening, and stop if your dog is struggling to keep up.

- ***Backyards.***

Many animals in backyards suffer heat stress. Any animal tethered is also at risk. Animal bedding and water bowls need to be placed in a shady position.

- ***What do I need to do when I move?***

Any change that occurs in the registration or identification information for the animal must be notified to your local council within 14 days. Should your pet go missing, it is vital that your contact information is up to date. This service is free of charge.

- ***My dog/cat has passed away?***

Council must be notified within 28 days. The NSW Companion Animal Register will be updated to reflect your animal as deceased. This service is free of charge.

3.3 Breeding of Companion Animals

- ***What do I need to do to sell my litter of puppies?***

A companion animal must be microchipped from the time the animal is 12 weeks old. A companion animal must not be sold unless it has been microchipped (even if it is less than 12 weeks old when it is sold). Once your animal is sold, a change of owner form must be completed and sent to council. Council will update the Companion Animals register to reflect the new owner's details.



3.4 Dealing with Dogs.

- ***What do I do when a dog approaches me?***

A dog walking or running towards you can be scary. Running and making noise can make a dog feel threatened. If you run, there is a good chance that the dog will chase you.

- Do not wave your arms around or try to hit out at the dog.
- Stay as quiet as you can
- Do not stare at the dog. By avoiding eye contact you are taking a submissive role, hopefully avoiding the need for the dog to challenge you
- Wait until the dog loses interest then, slowly and carefully, back away in most instances, once the dog feels that it is no longer being challenged, it will allow you to quietly walk away. (this information has been sourced from: www.pets.info.vic.gov.au)

3.5 Dangerous and Restricted Breed Dogs.

- ***What is a dangerous dog?***

A dog is dangerous if it has, without provocation:

- attacked or killed a person or animal (other than vermin), or
- repeatedly threatened to attack or repeatedly chased a person or animal (other than vermin)

- ***Which breeds are classed as Restricted?***

It is now an offence in New South Wales to sell, acquire or breed dogs on the restricted dog list;

- American pitbull terrier or Pitbull terrier
- Japanese tosa
- Dogo Argentine (Argentinean fighting dog)
- Fila brasileiro (Brazilian fighting dog)
- Any dog declared by a council under division 6 of the Act to be a restricted dog
- Any other dog of a breed kind, or description prescribed by the regulation

- ***Can I give away my Restricted breed dog?***

A person who sells, or advertises the sale of, a restricted dog or proposed restricted dog is guilty of an offence. Note. The term "sell" extends to the transfer of owner by any means, including by gift. A person who accepts ownership of a restricted dog or proposed restricted dog is guilty of an offence.

A restricted dog may be surrendered to a council pound or an approved animal welfare organisation.



- **Responsibilities of owners of Dangerous Dogs.**

The responsibilities of owners of dangerous dogs is outlined in Division 4 of the Companion Animals act 1998 (including child proof enclosures; distinctive collars etc)

Further information can be found at www.legislation.nsw.gov.au

3.6 Nuisance Animals

- **What is a nuisance animal?**

A dog/cat is a nuisance when the animal:

- Makes a noise, by barking or otherwise, that persistently occurs or continues to such a degree or extent that it unreasonably interferes with the peace, comfort or convenience of any person in any other premises

A dog may be considered a nuisance if it:

- Is habitually at large
- Repeatedly defecates on property (other than a public place) outside the property on which it is ordinarily kept, or
- Repeatedly runs at or chases any person, animal or
- Endangers the health of any person or animal
- **My neighbour said my dog barks, what can I do?**

Barking is normal behaviour for dogs but how much a dog barks is mostly due to the training the dog has received, although some breeds are more vocal than others. Barking is one of the ways dogs communicate. It can signify anything from playfulness to danger. The first step should be to identify the cause of the barking. Dogs sometimes bark when they are:

- Chained to a fixed point, or kept in a space which is too small
- Provoked, deliberately or unintentionally, by people or roaming dogs
- Under exercised
- Untrained
- Lonely
- Sick
- Hungry, thirsty, on the wrong diet or generally neglected.

Your local vet, animal shelter or dog training institute can provide further assistance.