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Companion Animal Management Plan

March 2020 - 2025

Ku-ring-gai Council

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Ku-ring-gai Council's mission and vision for *companion animals*

What is a Companion Animal?

The term Companion Animal means each of the following:

- a) A dog
- b) A cat
- c) Any other animal that is prescribed by the regulation as a companion animal, even working dog on rural properties, guard dogs, Police dogs and Corrective Services dogs.

Mission

To administer the Companion Animals Act in a consistent and informative manner.

Vision

To promote an optimal environment for people and animals to live together harmoniously.

Purpose

- To promote and create awareness of responsible pet ownership within the Ku-ring-gai Council area.
- To provide facilities that recognises the needs of pet owners, protection of the environment and general public.
- To seek voluntary compliance from pet owners through knowledge and education.
- To apply the Companion Animals Act in a fair and reasonable manner and in accordance with Council's Compliance Policy

Introduction

1. Term of plan

This plan is to facilitate the management of companion animals and associated areas within Ku-ring-gai for the period 2020 – 2025.

2. Profile of Ku-ring-gai Council area and its pet community

The Ku-ring-gai local government area (LGA) covers approximately 85 square kilometres or 8,544 hectares. Ku-ring-gai contains nine suburbs and displays a wide variation in landscape and wildlife, with significant areas of urban bushland identified as having high conservation status. The area is bound by Garigal National Park to the East, Lane Cove River Park to the West and Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park to the North. The estimated residential population is 126,046, which is up 3% since the previous plan. Ku-ring-gai Council encourages responsible pet ownership. The majority of households within Ku-ring-gai own, or have owned, pets and the NSW Companion Animals Register shows that there are approximately 26,276 dogs (up 18%) and 10,668 cats (up 28%) in Ku-ring-gai. This is an increase of 21% companion animals since the previous Companion Animals Plan.

Within Ku-ring-gai we currently have:

- 2 community based dog training clubs
- 21 leash free areas for dog socialisation
- 9 veterinary clinics

Ku-ring-gai residents and their companion animals are regarded as one of the most interactive communities in Australia. This claim is consolidated by the following statistics. Ku-ring-gai Council has the 3rd highest number of registered companion animals in New South Wales. Ku-ring-gai Council also has a very low dog attacks per dogs in council area ratio compared to similar councils in NSW.

The NSW Companion Animals Act came into effect in July 1998. The Act introduced major reforms in the keeping and control of companion animals. The Act was developed with the understanding that all sectors of the community would benefit from having more proactive and enforceable laws. The community expectation is that Council will provide quality services relating to companion animal control.

Promotion of responsible pet ownership is the guiding principle behind this plan. Many of the issues commonly faced within companion animal management are related to irresponsible pet ownership. Council strives to encourage animal owners to be more responsible for the behaviour of their pets and, in doing so, many of the plan objectives can be met.

Council's plan identifies three main factors in companion animal management; the animals, the community and the surrounding environment. All areas are contributing factors to our management plan and strategic actions.

The plan aims to:-

- balance the needs of the community, the environment and companion animals;
- identify and fill gaps in previous planning and education;
- provide guidelines for directing and prioritising actions;

- provide measurable indicators for the assessment of plan results and outcomes.

The plan has been developed following consultation and input from Council staff, industry experts and key community members.

3. Policy objective

Our core objective is to provide pet owners with functional facilities, relevant knowledge and a consistent approach in the regulation of companion animals, whilst also considering the needs of the broader community and the environment.

3.1 Service and facilities

To provide quality facilities, customer service & solutions for all matters involving companion animals.

Customer service: Enhance the quality of customer service by improving communication methods, access to information and increasing the knowledge of relevant Council staff in relation to companion animal issues.

Pound facilities: Provide a quality impounding service for stray and surrendered companion animals and the re-homing of surrendered animals. Regularly review the standards of service and facilities to ensure best industry practises are maintained.

Off-leash areas: To provide functional facilities for the enjoyment of pet owners and utilise space provided for these reasons. To continue with planned on-going maintenance of off-leash areas including: seating, signage, biodegradable plastic bags, waste bins and water facilities.

3.2 Education

To disseminate knowledge to all stakeholders about responsible companion management. Our education programs will target the following areas:

Appropriate pet selection: Promote appropriate pet selection based on individual circumstances, needs and potential housing arrangements.

Basic health and welfare principles for pets: All companion animals are appropriately cared for by the provision of adequate shelter, nutrition, exercise and interaction with other pets and people, and are kept in a manner that protects wildlife.

Identification and lifetime registration of companion animals: Ensuring pets are permanently identified by microchip and lifetime registered at the appropriate age.

De-sexing: Having pets de-sexed to reduce unwanted animals

Secure confinement : Confining pets to their property and preventing escape.

Environmental enrichment and exercise : Promote environmental enrichment and exercise programs to reduce the likelihood of nuisance behaviour such as barking, damage to property and personal affects.

Socialisation: Promote social interaction with other companion animals and people to reduce the risk of anti-social behaviour.

Training: Encourage and promote early training of dogs to ensure pets are properly conditioned when encountering the wider community.

Public place restrictions: (When not on private land) Keeping pets under effective control by means of chain, cord or leash (except in leash-free areas).

Environmental awareness: Increase awareness of environmental issues associated with companion animals in relation to the native flora and fauna so as to minimise impact on wildlife and the environment.

Safety around companion animals: Increase awareness of safety issues when dealing with companion animals to reduce the likeliness of serious injury resulting from attack.

3.3 Compliance

To achieve optimum compliance in accordance with legislation and local policy, our actions will focus on:

Legislative responsibility: Actively enforce the Companion Animals Act and Companion Animals Regulation to ensure a safe community and minimise instances of non-compliance.

Dangerous/aggressive dogs: To ensure dogs subject to a Dangerous Dog Order, Menacing Dog Order, Court appointed Control Order or a Nuisance Order are monitored and controlled to maintain a safe environment for the community.

Environment: To minimise negative impacts by companion animals on the community, wildlife and the environment.

Vermin pest programs: Provide compliance support for in-house pest control programs.

4. Current companion animal figures

To establish a benchmark, current and historical statistics have been gathered to enable periodic evaluation of the plan's progress towards its goals.

The sources that figures will be collected from include:

- NSW Local Government Companion Animal Register (CAR), statistics available are:
 - Number of animals with Permanent Identification
 - Number of animals having Lifetime Registration
 - Number of animals with Nuisance Orders
 - Number of Menacing Dog Orders
 - Number of animals with Dangerous Dog Orders
 - Number of animals with court imposed Control/Consent Orders
- Ku-ring-gai Customer Request Management System (CRM)
 - Number of dog attacks reported
 - Number of dogs roaming reported
 - Number of dog pick-up
 - Taken to pound

- Returned home
 - Number of dogs barking reported
 - Number of nuisance cats reported
 - Number of cat pick-ups
 - Number of companion animal enquiries
 - Number of deceased animals
- Ku-ring-gai's Nominated Impounding Facility
 - Number of animals impounded
 - Number of animals released to owner
 - Number of animals re-homed
 - Number of animals euthanized

4.1 Permanent Identification and Lifetime Registration

Lifetime Registration figures have improved dramatically since the introduction of the first Companion Animals Management Plan in 2006. This rate has continued to increase through the recent Management Plan period. The overall registration rate of companion animals within the Ku-ring-gai LGA has been maintained at a consistently high rate of 90% or above, currently at 95% which is the 3rd highest in NSW.

4.2 Customer Request Management System (CRM) – animal control

Council's Customer Request Management System is utilised to record all concerns or enquiries regarding companion animals. This system will continue to be utilised as our primary record and case management system.

4.3 Pound activity

Under the NSW Companion Animals Act 1998, an authorised officer has the option to either return a seized animal to its owner at the address where the animal is ordinarily kept or to impound the animal at our service provider. Currently, Ku-ring-gai Council uses Thornleigh Animal Hospital to provide our impounding service.

5. Action plan for core areas

5.1 Service and facilities			
Activity area	Strategic actions	Proposed outcome & benefits	Performance indicator
Customer service	Continually update Council's Customer Service unit with relevant information and on legislative changes relating to frequently asked questions in relation to companion animal issues. Increase level of response to customer enquiries and increase knowledge of specific areas. Maintain a current and informative website and social media	Provide a high level of service to public/residents. The community is provided with correct and current information. Facilitates efficient communication between Council & the community on all matters regarding companion animals.	Frequently asked questions' (FAQ) webpage is utilised by Customer Service staff on a regular basis. Social media website enquiries. Customer attendance at companion animal talks and events with companion animal staff presence.

5.1 Service and facilities

Activity area	Strategic actions	Proposed outcome & benefits	Performance indicator
	platforms relating to companion animals.		.
Ranger services	<p>Provide a professional and well equipped ranger unit that plans and responds to all concerns & complaints regarding companion animals.</p> <p>Increase knowledge of regulatory officers regarding the management of dangerous, menacing and nuisance animals.</p>	<p>A professional experienced team that can address all companion animal matters in a consistent manner.</p> <p>Promote positive initiatives towards improving service levels for residents.</p> <p>Safety of ranger unit when dealing with companion animal matters.</p>	<p>Community satisfaction feedback and surveys</p> <p>Reduced number of complaints from public/residents.</p> <p>All matters are responded to in a timely manner.</p>
Off leash areas	<p>Improve facilities at dog off-leash areas in accordance with the prioritised capital works program.</p> <p>Identify and target enforcement in areas having higher complaint profiles.</p> <p>Education in relation to dog park etiquette, behaviour and cleaning up after defecation.</p>	<p>The provision of suitable areas and promotion of their use provides a range of options for the community and assists Council in the control of non-compliance.</p> <p>Natural habitat & wildlife afforded greater protection.</p> <p>All users are comfortable with park use and comply with mandatory requirements to control dogs and clean up after defecation.</p>	<p>Facilities that meet the needs of dog owners and non-dog owners.</p> <p>Reduced numbers of dogs straying into bushland interface areas.</p> <p>Number of reports of dog attacks at off leash areas decreases. Off leash areas are clean, with minimal fouling by defecation.</p>
Pound facilities	<p>Maintain a quality pound facility for impounded or surrendered animals</p> <p>Ensure guidelines for impounded or surrendered animals are of national standards and or industry best practices.</p>	<p>Maintenance of current high standards.</p> <p>Review current pound agreement and amend accordingly.</p>	<p>Continuation of low euthanasia rates and high levels of re-homing without releasing antisocial dogs or feral cats back into the community.</p>

5.2 Education

Activity area	Strategic actions	Proposed outcome & benefits	Performance indicator
Companion animals & the bushland	<p>Promote responsible behaviour of owners of dogs and cats in bushland – living together with wildlife.</p> <p>Regular patrols of bushland interface areas by regulatory officers.</p> <p>Consult regularly with Council's Strategy and Environment team and Infrastructure Services team.</p> <p>Educational activities for dog and cat owners in relation to bushland and wildlife.</p>	<p>Increased awareness & self-regulation so to protect natural flora and fauna.</p> <p>Communication between departments on matters relating to sensitive natural environmental areas.</p>	<p>Reduction in damage caused by companion animals in natural bushland.</p> <p>Decrease in number of companion animals found in bushland areas.</p> <p>Reduction in complaints.</p> <p>Implementation of educational material relating to sensitive natural environmental areas.</p>
Publications & website	<p>Develop and update pamphlets to address and manage topical companion animal issues.</p> <p>Create a pet owner's handbook in PDF format on Council's website.</p> <p>Distribute all written material via key pick-up points.</p> <p>Make electronic copies of all publications available on Council's website.</p>	<p>Increased community awareness regarding responsible pet ownership.</p> <p>Residents provided with current information on companion animal issues.</p> <p>Ensure website is current & has relevant links established.</p>	<p>Increased level of compliance and awareness of responsibilities by pet owners.</p> <p>All contacts and information within the Pet Owners Handbook and pet pamphlets are current, correct, and available on Council's website.</p> <p>Website and social media platforms are well utilised.</p>
Companion animal Council and community events	<p>Annually participate in a Dogs Day Out event or similar community events promoting responsible pet ownership and involving the community and their dogs.</p> <p>Promote and host Dog Talks at off-leash park areas.</p> <p>Annually promote and host 2-4 pet talks with external speakers.</p> <p>Biannually promote and host movie night or specialty events.</p> <p>Biannually promote and host responsible Cat owner Expo.</p>	<p>Increase interrelations between Council and the greater community, whilst promoting registration and correct owner's details.</p> <p>Increase opportunities for dog socialisation and educational involvement.</p> <p>Increased awareness and self-regulation.</p>	<p>Community participation & support of the events.</p> <p>Increased level of compliance and awareness of responsibilities by pet owners.</p>
Anti-nuisance companion animal education programs	<p>Implement specific programs and talks targeting responsible ownership issues such as; nuisance/ anti-social behaviours, legal obligations, training and attack prevention.</p>	<p>Problem and topical areas identified and managed through education programs.</p>	<p>Reduction in the instances of nuisance/ anti-social behaviour. Decrease in the number of serious dog attacks and nuisance cat reports.</p>

5.2 Education

Activity area	Strategic actions	Proposed outcome & benefits	Performance indicator
	Promotion of the Ku-ring-gai K9 Awards.	Better socialised pets in the community.	Greater community awareness. Increased number of programs developed and delivered.
Professional development of regulatory officers	Attend Councils' Unite for Pets meetings. Attend other relevant companion animal seminars. Network with other council officers for best practise. Participation in joint events where deemed appropriate.	Keep abreast of legislation, obtain new ideas and network with other councils.	Council employs best industry practise.
Registration & identification	Actively promote the identification and registration of companion animals. Actively promote the up-dating of registration details.	Increased community awareness of the benefits of lifetime registration. OLG provides commission based funding to Council from Lifetime Registration fees to support companion animal programs. Lost animals are able to be returned to their owners in a timely manner.	Animals clearly identified by council officers when conducting investigations or locating owners of lost animals. A steady flow of registration commissions are received by Council. A continued high rate of companion animal registrations.
Dangerous/ aggressive animals	Provide regular refresher training for regulatory officers in dealing with potentially aggressive animals. Keep ranger vehicles up to date with relevant and sufficient equipment for dealing with aggressive animals.	Reduce WH & S risk to the officer in the field when dealing with difficult animals.	Low rate of workplace injuries resultant from animal attack.

5.3 Compliance Action Plan

Activity area	Strategic actions	Proposed outcome & benefits	Performance indicator
Identification and registration	<p>Continue to proactively monitor registrations to ensure companion animals are lifetime registered as prescribed by the Companion Animals Act.</p> <p>Execute appropriate regulatory action for non-compliance.</p>	<p>Council complies with its responsibilities of enforcing the Companion Animals Act.</p>	<p>At least 90% of companion animals kept within Ku-ring-gai are registered on the NSW Companion Animal Register.</p>
Standard Operating Procedures for complaint investigation & resolution	<p>Maintain and annually up-date standard procedures for investigation of companion animal issues.</p> <p>Develop and implement new Standard Operation Procedures within the companion animal area.</p> <p>All investigations are carried out in accordance with Council's adopted Compliance Policy.</p>	<p>Parity across the ranger team towards companion animal issues.</p>	<p>Complaints investigated in a timely and uniformed manner.</p>
Dangerous/ Menacing/ aggressive dogs	<p>Undertake dog attack investigation in a timely and professional manner in accordance with the Companion Animals Act and Standard Operating Procedures. Execute appropriate resultant actions.</p> <p>Conduct annual on-site inspections of premises where dangerous, menacing and restricted dogs are kept.</p>	<p>Council complies with its responsibilities of enforcing the Companion Animals Act.</p> <p>Dangerous /menacing dogs and restricted breeds are kept in accordance with the prescribed conditions of the NSW Companion Animals Act.</p>	<p>Dangerous/menacing dogs and restricted breeds are kept and handled in accordance with the law.</p> <p>Customer satisfaction that investigations have been conducted professionally and in accordance with the law.</p>
Prohibited areas, bushland & environmental protection areas	<p>Proactively patrol prohibited areas (playgrounds etc.), together with bush interface and environmental protection areas.</p> <p>Execute appropriate regulatory action for non-compliance.</p>	<p>Lower instances of non-compliance.</p>	<p>Reduction in complaints received.</p>

6. Monitor and review

On-going monitoring and review of our performance regarding companion animal management is a responsibility of this plan so as to check targets on performance indicators.

Monthly monitoring of key areas: Statistics will be collected monthly so as to monitor progress and provide the basis of the annual report. The particular areas that will be monitored on a monthly basis include:-

- **Animal registration** – used to monitor registration rate in the area and monitor the number of unregistered animals.
- **Total requests received for animal control** – this will allow comparisons over each financial year period to allow education and resources to be allocated effectively.
- **Individual figures for monitoring key areas** – the specific categories that are of major interest include; all nuisance complaints, dog attacks and dog pick-ups. This will allow for programs to target problem areas.
- **Animal seizure and pound activity** – this information will provide the number of animals seized and the impounding rate and return rate for the Council area.

Key area monitoring: There are seven other key areas that are an essential component of companion animal management, these are:

1. Animals registered
2. Animals seized
3. Dog attacks
4. Barking dog complaints
5. Dog roaming
6. Nuisance cat
7. Compliance for pest programs

Annual monitoring: An annual report reviewing progress against the adopted plan will be provided to Council each year for information purposes, with appropriate recommendation for amendment or inclusions contained within.