

4th November 2025

South Gippsland Shire Council,
Email: council@southgippsland.vic.gov.au

Domestic Animal Management Plan 2026-2029

Animal Care Australia (ACA) is a national incorporated association established to lobby for real animal welfare by those who keep, breed and care for animals. Our goal is to promote and encourage high standards in all interactions with the animals in our care.

Animal Care Australia is currently recognised by Animal Welfare Victoria as a key stakeholder in the review of Victoria’s Animal Welfare Act and its associated regulations. Animal Care Australia is directly consulting and advising during that review, including the future revision of Codes of Practice for the keeping of all pets.

Animal Care Australia encourages continued development of animal welfare standards and Codes of Practice for animal husbandry, breeding, training, sale, and sporting exhibitions for a wide range of animal species, including pets, companion animals, animals used for educational or entertainment purposes or kept for conservation.

Animal Care Australia is engaged with state governments to develop more appropriate model Local Laws and model Subordinate Local Laws governing the keeping of animals in each state. Nationally, Animal Care Australia is finding Local Councils placing restrictions and permit requirements on their residents which do nothing to improve animal welfare and tend to lead to greater non-compliance.

Animal Care Australia **DOES NOT SUPPORT the single use of surveys as a means of claiming consultation.**

It is inappropriate for Council to claim you have consulted when organisations are not actually able to lodge a written submission. Surveys are misleading and provide for irresponsible statistical analysis.

It is vital that Councils support the keeping of all pets within their shires/municipalities and that Councils consult with the appropriate stakeholders when looking to address the many myths or phobias that are expressed by uneducated members of the public, in relation to the keeping of some animals.

Some notable statistics:

- Population – 31022
- Registered dogs – 4814
- Registered cats – 1199
- Excess animals permits issued – 36

Key Commendations and Great Initiatives

- ✓ Commend Council on proposed fee incentives.
- ✓ Commend Council on actions planned:
 - pet expo
 - discounted microchipping at markets and other events
 - attendances at markets and other events to promote responsible animal ownership.
- ✓ Commend Council on working with other agencies to transfer adoptable animals out of the pound system.

- ✓ Commend Council on plans to seek funding to deliver discounted desexing of cats – should also extend to dogs.

Training of Authorised Officers:

Animal Care Australia notes there is a lack of detail as to how many officers are in the Community Safety Team. This DAMP indicates that no formal training programs are required by its officers other than local Council policies and procedures as part of induction process. Given most other Victorian Councils require specific training of the Animal Management Officers, Animal Care Australia strongly recommends a comprehensive training program be developed and enacted as soon as possible. Formal qualifications such as Cert IV in Government Investigations as well as Certificates in Animal Care must be included.

Further to this point the Action Plan in the DAMP has no set dates for ‘any’ training to either begin or be complete. Why is that? This currently appears to be an addition to the DAMP in order to appear to be just ticking boxes with little intention to action.

If Council is going to have Officers entering residents’ properties in order to claim they know best by means of the needs of animal care, welfare, and nuisance, then it MUST be a requirement for those officers to actually have the relevant training.

Registration and Identification:

While Animal Care Australia commends Council on proposed fee incentives, these could go further by reducing fees overall – particularly reduced fees for renewals and pension rates to be half of any reduced fees.

Animal Care Australia supports Council’s planned actions however they appear to be missing offering discounted or free desexing options (and possibly free microchipping also) for financially compromised owners – initiatives offered by many other Councils.

Again, the Action Plan does not have specific dates for commencement or conclusion of activities, nor any indicators to gauge any benefit/impact.

Many other councils have a “free ride home” program, whereby animals up to date with microchip and registration get one free return home without incurring fines or impoundment – Council should look at enacting a similar program.

Excess animal permits are a deterrent to some owners registering their pets if they have numbers above the set caps. Animal Care Australia strongly recommends removing the caps and excess animal permits – unless required to enforce compliance when proven amenity disturbance has occurred. In other words, a system that only restricts those who are not doing the right thing by their animals rather than imposed on everyone – 99% of whom are caring for their animals.

Nuisance:

Animal Care Australia notes the Action Table for this section appears to have the wrong instruction. Action 3.7 should say “sunset to sunrise” if a nighttime curfew is planned.

Animal Care Australia supports a full 24-hour containment to the owners’ property; however, this does need to be introduced gradually as both owners and cats need to adjust to the containment. Council should always consider assisting its residents in this change regardless of whether it is a night curfew or a full containment.

Council has not indicated what will happen to cats caught outside during the curfew, nor has Council recognised different classes of cats other than domestic or feral. Animal Care Australia suggests adding community cats, or semi/unowned colony cats’ class, and any of those found to be amenable to human interaction be prioritised for rehoming rather than euthanasia. These are all

elements that are recommended and supported in Victoria's Cat Management Strategy.¹ We suggest Council read the strategy to gain a better understanding of cat management in your Shire.

Barking dogs (by day) are generally bored dogs. Animal Care Australia notes that Council has not allocated any designated off-leash exercise areas since the previous DAMP, nor in response to other Council planning surveys where respondents have asked for them. Considering there are 4814 registered dogs (and likely a much higher number not registered) there are little opportunities for residents requiring off-leash areas to exercise their dogs daily. Council needs to listen to the community and allocate more areas.

Overpopulation and high euthanasia:

Animal Care Australia reminds Council that cat containment/curfew plans will increase the number of cats entering the pound system, and this needs to be considered before any policy is introduced in 'year 3' of this DAMP.

Animal Care Australia does not support mandatory desexing in order to have a cat registered. This leads to many residents opting not to register or desex their cat through fear of reprimand by Council. As part of Council's plan to seek further funding for discounted desexing, Council should look at incentives such as assisted costs for desexing your cat when registering. This will effectively assist in reducing the numbers of both unregistered and non-desexed cats. The current attitude of having higher fees or fines for non-desexed cats is the problem.

Again, we note this section requires to recognise not all unowned cats are "feral" and adjustments are needed to include 'community cats' and their management.

Animal Care Australia does not support introduction of surrender fees – more animals will simply be dumped to avoid the cost, creating a larger problem than the potential 'cost covering' of a surrender fee.

In closing:

It is necessary to call your attention to guinea pig and rabbit number restrictions within the website Table – How many animals can I keep?²

In the hope that while Council is reviewing the Domestic Animal Management Plan you will consider approving amendments to Local Laws taking into consideration our feedback and provide the opportunity for residents to keep their pets without the need for permits.

Small Mammals:

Rabbits, ferrets, guinea pigs, rats, and mice are considered as house pets and have been for some time now.

Now that housing cost forces people into smaller unit dwellings, indoor pets such as rabbits, ferrets, rats, mice, and guinea pigs are becoming the norm.

Owners of these smaller pet's work to improve the quality of the animal in health, temperament, and animal related clubs and societies have policies for registered breeders who are bound by their published Code Of Ethics and Code Of Practice along with provisions provided with the current Animal Welfare Acts.

There are many Societies for rabbits, guinea pigs, rats, and mice.

Guinea Pigs

The limit of just two (2) animals on residential premises is **NOT SUPPORTED by Animal Care Australia.**

¹ [Victoria Cat Management Strategy](#)

² [How many animals can I keep?](#)

These animals are colony animals, and it is important for their health and well-being to be kept in larger numbers than what Council's policy imposes. As companion animals allowing more appropriate colony sizes poses no threat to community, health, or animal welfare.³

Guinea pigs are primarily indoor pets and invariably kept in small enclosures. These animals do not exhibit extreme noise, are not intrusive and are free of the diseases and pathogens that often plague their wild counterparts. In fact, they pose no health problem for their owners and are renowned for keeping themselves well groomed.

For the Club registered breeding community, the proposed limitations are also unrealistic, especially given the average litter size for some of these species is larger than the proposed limit suggesting that these proposals have not considered the biology and needs of these species. Additionally, due to their short lifespans it is vital that several adult pairs be kept at any given time to ensure that the quality of the gene pool is maintained – without allowing owners to keep 'breeders' the health of the species will invariably suffer.

Rabbits

Many people that keep rabbits in any residential situation keep them as pets and the majority of pet rabbits are kept as indoor pets for their health and safety. Vaccines do not provide protection against all of the government released rabbit haemorrhagic viruses that are designed to eradicate feral rabbits.

Responsible pet owners will have their rabbits desexed should THEY NOT wish to breed.

Small mammals are extremely popular, particularly in circumstances of higher residential density areas, make no noise, and despite common misconception produce little to no odour. Small mammals are colony animals, and a limit of just two animals is simply poor animal welfare. This is especially applicable if different species are kept as, it further limits the ability of the pet owner to keep suitable colonies of each species if limited to just two!

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Animal Care Australia would like to request a meeting to discuss further collaboration to ensure a policy that aligns with the needs of your pet keeping residents.

Animal Care Australia's primary objective is 'education over regulation' and always commend Councils wherever they seek to further the education of their residents. We recommend viewing our online document: [Council Animal Management Plans](#)

Should you require further details please do not hesitate to reach out as we would be happy to meet with you and further discuss this matter.

Kind regards,



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³ [Short Communication: Rats Demand for Group Size - Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science 7 \(4\) 267-272 – 2004\)](#)

About Animal Care Australia

As a nationally recognised animal welfare organisation, Animal Care Australia encourages continued development of animal welfare standards and Codes of Practice for animal husbandry, breeding, training, sale, and sporting exhibitions for a wide range of animal species, including pets, animals used for educational or entertainment purposes or kept for conservation, and in particular native birds, reptiles, and mammals.

Animal Care Australia was founded in early 2018 to establish an organisation run solely by volunteers to lobby for real animal welfare. With extreme animal rights and animal liberationist ideologies influencing government legislation, regulation, and policy at our expense and to the detriment of our animals and pets, it has become necessary to provide government with a balancing voice.

By uniting the broad spectrum of animal groups, collectively we offer an experienced, sensible approach to animal welfare.

By educating our members and the public about the importance of treating animals with kindness and respect for their needs and promoting the humane treatment of animals to improve animal welfare outcomes, Animal Care Australia is in the unique position of lobbying and advocating for all animals within our care.

Animal Care Australia provides priority to the following:

- advocating for stronger welfare outcomes
- advocating to increase education of the public in animal welfare and best care techniques
- educate the public on handling their animals with kindness & respect and the importance of their needs
- educate the public in the differences between animal welfare and animal rights