

8th December 2025

Mildura Rural City Council,
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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:

- Est population 2025 = 57,544
- Registered dogs = 7123
- Registered cats = 1409
- 782 dogs impounded, 394 reclaimed by owner, 227 rehomed, 154 euthanised
- 576 (domestic) cats impounded, 62 reclaimed by owner, 234 rehomed, 277 euthanised
- Mildura Pound has had some good upgrades to improve animal welfare for impounded animals – still ongoing

- 1 designated off-leash exercise park in Mildura, and 1 nearly completed park in Merbein – commitment to exploring installation of more parks/areas during 2026-2029 period covered by this DAMP.
- 84Y agreements with 12 rehoming groups to increase live exits from pound

Notable questions from the above:

Why do these statistics for impounded cats only specify “domestic” cats? Does Council recognise its responsibility to recognise ALL cats under what is 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 local government area. 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.

Equally, what is Council’s current criteria to be classified as a “domestic” cat?

Noting Council has agreements with 12 rehoming organisations this raises serious questions as to why the euthanasia rate is so high? Many other Councils have far fewer rehoming agreements with less ‘kill-rates.’ Maybe explore more 84Y partnerships to correct this.

Key Commendations and Great Initiatives:

- ✓ “Responsible Pet Ownership Voucher Program”
- ✓ “Free First Pet Registration Initiative”
- ✓ Commend officers going to schools, events, etc to educate about pet ownership obligations.
- ✓ Commend Council for allowing officer discretion to return stray identified animals for free the first time they are caught straying.
- ✓

Training of Authorised Officers:

Animal Care Australia notes there are 6 Local Laws officers, presumably they are responsible for all Local Laws matters, and not specifically allocated to animal management? There is no notation as to whether all officers are full-time, or some only part-time. This is important in order to ascertain whether there are significant officers and resources being allocated to animal management.

This leads to the Training section of the DAMP which lists “options” for training of authorised officers. Are these not mandatory? Of the “options” listed, Animal Care Australia recommends that ALL on the list are undertaken by all officers that perform animal management duties.

Further to our opening paragraph for this section, the Training “action plan” is quite vague and thus will be hard to measure for improvement. Again, this needs to be more specific, including which course/qualifications will be completed by what dates and by whom? How many officers already have certain qualifications/training? This vital information is all absent from the DAMP.

Responsible pet ownership:

Council’s website has good information on this topic. It lists animal currently impounded (with photos) and can be translated into other languages easily via software built into the site. Pet section is easy to find from the main page.

Animal Care Australia notes the Action plan for this section is also fairly vague and with no truly measurable outcomes to indicate success or need for further actions.

Registration and identification:

Registration fees could be lower, which would assist to increase uptake.

¹ [Victoria Cat Management Strategy](#)

Another deterrent to registration uptake is the need to obtain an excess animal permit due to restrictions imposed in Local Laws. Pet owners who may have more than the nominated numbers of cats/dogs may choose to not register (or even microchip) those pets because of the costs involved. An excess animal permit costs \$225 and annual registration is also high – especially during a cost-of-living crisis. Council should consider only enforcing animal number caps AFTER an amenity issue has been identified, rather than MANDATING all pet owners with the added costs of permits and unnecessary restrictions

Nuisance cats and dogs:

The statistics on animal related complaints indicate that Mildura LGA residents are not too happy with dogs overall. Generally, complaints about cats are much higher than dogs in similar LGA's. Does Council have any plans to investigate why dog complaints are so prevalent in Mildura LGA?

Animal Care Australia has major concerns with the following:

“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”

Why should members of the public contain a wandering unknown dog before officers will attend? This poses significant risk to those residents if the dog in question is not amenable to being contained by them?

This is a disaster waiting to happen – if it has not already occurred! Council should be ashamed of purposely placing its residents at risk.

Animal Care Australia draws your attention to the fact that bored dogs may bark or cause other nuisances. With only 1 designated off-leash exercise area (soon to be 2), if all owners of the 7123 registered dogs wished to exercise their dogs there daily, it would be extremely crowded. Council needs to investigate allocating more off-leash exercise areas for dogs to run off excess energy.

Dog attacks:

Animal Care Australia notes complaint numbers only are displayed here. There is no breakdown of whether the “attack” was a rush on a human or an animal, or whether they occasioned actual injury to a human or animal. Is this lack of data also in order to avoid backlash from the previous point of concern?

That said, Animal Care Australia commend Council's proactive patrols dispensing advice/ education rather than issuing infringements. Infringements should be a last resort, as education is more often far more successful when given after a first (non-serious) incident, such as an overly friendly dog running up to someone who might not appreciate it.

Overpopulation and high euthanasia:

Animal Care Australia notes a number of contributing factors to overpopulation. Pound release fees, any infringements issued, and the requirement that all impounded animals to be microchipped and registered before release will be contributing considerably to deter pet owners from reclaiming lost pets due to costs involved. Council should look into payment plans or other assistance to economically challenged pet owners to reclaim their lost pets.

Animal Care Australia also notes Pound dog euthanasia rates are quite high at around 20% and have been at that level for at least the past 3 reporting periods. This is not a statistic to be proud of. Greater investigation is required to ensure the animals being assessed are done so by a qualified animal behaviourist/training professional – as this rate highlights an issue that is not being addressed and yet is far too common in Council pounds/shelters.

Cat euthanasia rates are generally higher than dog rates in most pounds, but when you add the “feral” cat numbers to the “domestic” cat numbers in Mildura LGA, the stats are actually horrific for any fractious cat without a microchip that ends up in the pound. Not all antisocial tempered cats

are “feral,” nor are “most urban stray cat populations actually “feral” either. Again, Animal Care Australia refers Council to the State Cat Management Strategy in order to rethink the current assessments of cat. Condemning unchipped and unclaimed cats to euthanasia is not supported by community expectations and must be addressed properly.

In closing:

It is necessary to call your attention to guinea pig and rabbit number restrictions within the website Table – ‘Keeping Animals on your property’ 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 is **NOT SUPPORTED by Animal Care Australia.**

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.

² [How many animals can I keep?](#)

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

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’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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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