

Domestic Animal Management Plan

2026 - 2029



**MORNINGTON
PENINSULA**
Shire

Mornington Peninsula Shire acknowledges the Bunurong people, who have been the custodians of this land for many thousands of years; and pays respect to their Elders past and present. We acknowledge that the land on which we meet is the place of age-old ceremonies, celebrations, initiation and renewal; and that the Bunurong people's living culture continues to have a unique role in the life of this region.

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The Domestic Animal Management Plan

The Shire recognises the importance of the balance between the value of pet ownership and the benefits they bring to our health and wellbeing, and the need for protection of the community and the local environment from nuisance dogs and cats.

Each Victorian Council is required to prepare a Domestic Animal Management Plan every four years under section 68A of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*. The Mornington Peninsula Shire Council's Domestic Animal Management Plan 2026-2029 (the Plan) will evaluate the current animal management services provided by the Shire and review existing domestic animal local laws and orders to ensure they meet the needs of the community.

The Plan also requires the Shire to outline its future programs, services and strategies for 2026-2029 to:

- promote and encourage the responsible ownership of dogs and cats
- ensure compliance with all relevant animal legislation
- minimise the risk of dog attacks on people and animals
- address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats
- encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats
- minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance
- identify all dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs living in the Mornington Peninsula Shire and ensure they are kept in accordance with the legislation.

How we prepared the draft Plan

In conjunction with extensive internal stakeholder engagement and benchmarking activities, research for the 2026-2029 draft Plan has also taken into account the consultation findings of other strategic plans, policies and strategies including:

- Council Plan
- Public Health and Wellbeing Plan
- Biodiversity Conservation Plan
- Municipal Emergency Management Plan
- Sports Capacity Plan
- Compliance and Enforcement Policy
- Dogs in Public Places Policy
- Open Space Strategy

Draft Plan consultation

The Shire sought feedback from the community and key external stakeholders on this draft Plan. The feedback and recommendations received during the consultation period have been incorporated into the final Plan and will be presented to Council for adoption in November 2025.

The Mornington Peninsula Shire - Current Context

Community

The Mornington Peninsula Shire encompasses an area of 723km² and is characterised by 40 townships and villages. The Shire is 70% highly valued green wedge land and has areas of national and international conservation significance. We also occupy approximately 10% of Victoria's total coastline.

The Shire is a popular holiday and retirement destination, with the population swelling by up to 30% in the summer months and other holiday periods. This results in an increased number of animal management requests.

The permanent estimated residential population of the Shire is 170,243, indicating an estimated population increase of 0.30% since 30 June 2022¹. By contrast, the estimated population increase for Greater Melbourne was 3.32%.²

How old are we?

The Mornington Peninsula Shire has a higher percentage (16.6%) of seniors aged 70 to 84 when compared to the Greater Melbourne average of 8.6%. Our median age is 48 years, 10 years older than the Greater Melbourne median age of 38 years.³ 54.3% of Mornington Peninsula Shire residents are aged 45 and above.

Where do we live?

Approximately 67.9% of the population live in townships along Port Phillip Bay, 6.3% in townships along Bass Strait, 11.3% in townships along Western Port Bay, making a total of 85.5% living by the water. The remaining 14.5% live in the hinterland townships.⁴

We have a higher percentage of residents who fully own their dwelling (40.7%), compared to the Greater Melbourne average of 28.7%. Less of our residents (33.2%) are paying off a mortgage, compared to the Greater Melbourne average of 35.6%. Finally, 17.8% of our residents rent, compared to the Greater Melbourne average of 29.2%.⁵

The Community Safety Team

The Community Safety Team and the Community Animal Shelter and Pound form part of the Regulatory Services Unit within the Planning and Liveability Directorate. Thirteen Authorised Officers operate in designated zones, with approximately 60% of their workload allocated to animal management duties. Additional support is provided during the summer period with a particular focus on foreshore areas. Authorised Officers are supported by an administration team.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics Estimated Residential Population, as of 30 June 2023.

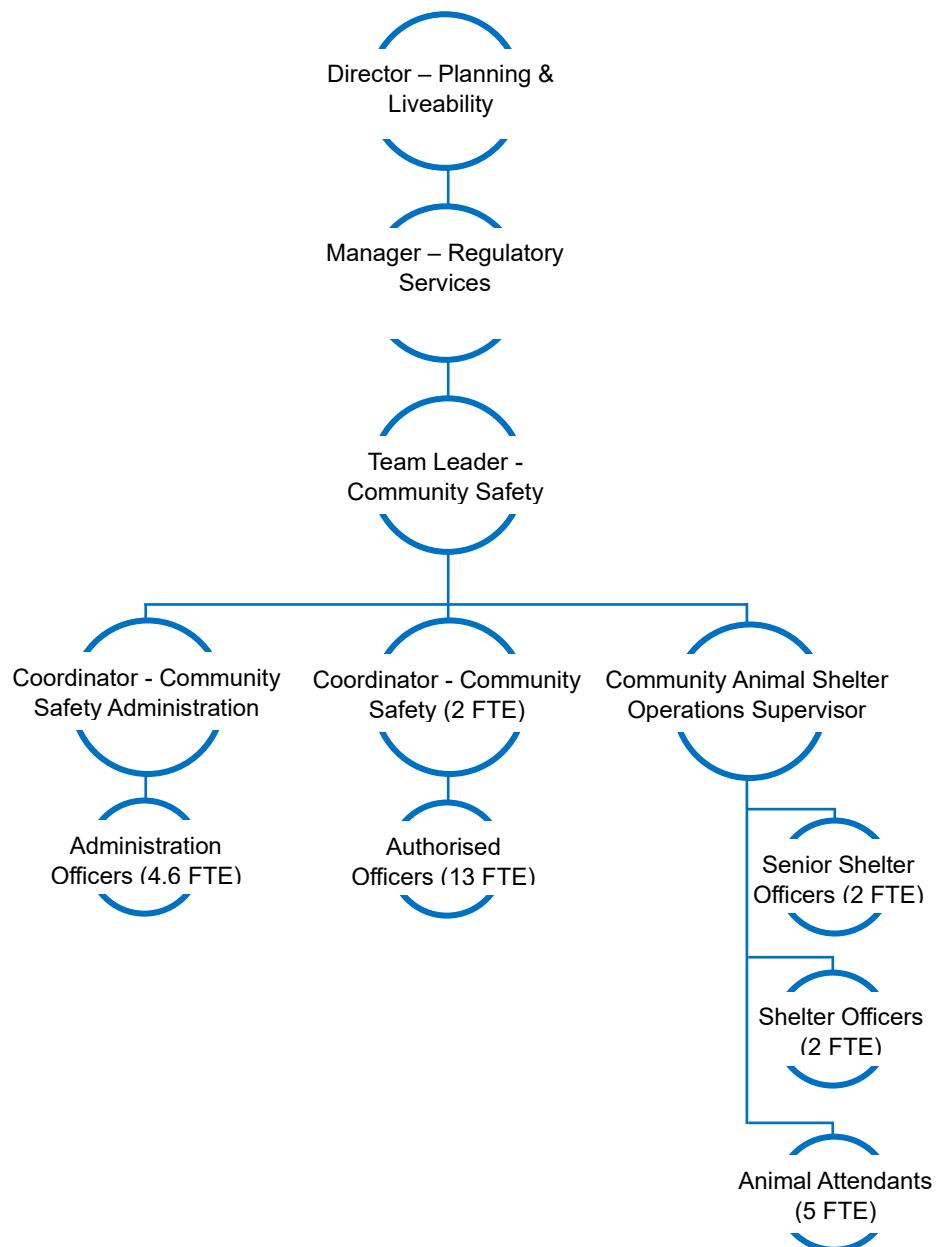
² Australian Bureau of Statistics, Regional Population Growth, Australia (3218.0).

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2021 (Usual residence data).

⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Suburbs and Localities Data 2021.

⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2016 and 2021.

The Community Animal Shelter and Pound is a Shire-run animal facility which operates with ten Authorised Officers and is staffed 365 days a year. The facility takes in all stray, seized and surrendered animals for the Mornington Peninsula and facilitates the adoption of dogs, cats, livestock and pocket pets.



The Mornington Peninsula Shire - Future Context

Population growth

As an area near to, but with a role distinct from, the growing Melbourne metropolitan area, there are ever increasing pressures and demands placed on the Mornington Peninsula. It is estimated that the population of the Shire will grow to 175,153 by 2025 and 192,617 by 2046, representing a 9.97% increase in the next 21 years. The highest growth areas are expected to be Tyabb (32.08%), Mornington (19%) and Dromana/Safety Beach (18.9%).⁶

A growing resident population and increased visitor numbers increases the demand for use of the Shire's open spaces by dog and non-dog owners. Recognising the imperative to balance competing user groups and community needs, in 2022 Council adopted the Dogs in Public Places Policy to provide a strategic and consistent approach to leash-free and dog prohibited areas across the Shire.

Partnerships

The Shire will continue to strengthen its partnership with Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) and other community and industry stakeholders to provide a consistent approach to domestic animal management.

Shire Officers are not authorised under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986* to investigate reports of animal cruelty and neglect, and therefore work closely with RSPCA Victoria to address animal welfare concerns.

To optimise opportunities to rehome or foster animals who come into our care, the Community Animal Shelter and Pound collaborate with 76 rescue groups across the Mornington Peninsula and surrounding communities. We also work closely with Pet Rescue to create comprehensive adoption profiles for animals and respond to public enquiries. These partnerships ensure the best possible outcomes for animals.

⁶ ID (Informed Decisions), Population and household forecasts, 2021 to 2046 (October 2024).

Theme 1: Training of Authorised Officers

Objective

To provide training opportunities for Shire Officers to continue to develop their skills and knowledge to ensure they are able to carry out their roles and enforce the required domestic animal legislation.

Summary

Our staff are our biggest asset, so we need to ensure they have the knowledge and skills necessary to deliver the Shire's animal management services in a manner which ensures not only their safety, but the safety of the community and the animals in their care.

Current Activities

Within three days of commencement of employment for all Authorised Officers:

- Code of Conduct
 - Child Safe Standards
 - Bullying and Harassment
 - Occupational Health and Safety
 - IT Induction
-

Within one month of commencement of employment for all Authorised Officers:

- Equal Employment Opportunity
 - Fraud and Corruption
 - Information Privacy
 - Conflict of Interest
 - Record Keeping Essentials
-

Annually for all Authorised Officers:

- OHS
 - Situational awareness
 - Conflict management
 - First aid and CPR
 - Domestic and family violence identification training
 - Animal management
 - Aggressive dog handling
 - Livestock handling
 - Safe animal handling
 - Performance reviews to identify further training opportunities
-

Biennially for all Authorised Officers:

- Bullying and Harassment
 - Child Safe Standards
 - Code of Conduct
 - Conflict of Interest
 - Employee Equal Opportunity
 - Fraud and Corruption
 - Information Privacy
 - Occupational Health and Safety
-

As needed for all Authorised Officers:

- Investigation and evidence gathering
 - Brief preparation
 - Domestic Animal Business auditing
-

Attend animal management training, information sessions and conferences offered by the Bureau of Animal Welfare, RSPCA Victoria and other relevant organisations when offered

Future Activities

In addition to continuing the above activities, Shire Officers will also undertake the following activities.

Activity 1.1: To formalise training requirements

1.1.1 Develop a formal training schedule for all new Authorised Officers

1.1.2 Develop a formal training register specific to Authorised Officers to assist in identifying any opportunities to increase Officer knowledge

Theme 2: Encouraging Responsible Pet Ownership

Objective

To employ programs, services and strategies to promote and encourage responsible pet ownership and compliance with legislation.

Summary

The responsible ownership of dogs and cats encompasses a broad range of measures to ensure the welfare needs of animals are met, and to ensure they do not pose a safety or nuisance concern to the community and visitors. Shire Officers provide many services to encourage responsible pet ownership centred around communication, community education, initiatives and enforcement activities.

Dogs

The promotion of dog prohibited and leash-free areas is important in increasing dog owner awareness of where and when you can walk your dog. The Shire has a dedicated webpage and interactive map to assist in choosing the best place to walk.

Cats

Cats that are allowed to roam may fight with other cats and create a nuisance by spraying and defecating on other people's property. To combat roaming owned cats and promote responsible cat ownership, the Shire implemented a 24/7 cat curfew in April 1997. To help reduce unwanted litters which contribute to the semi-owned and feral cat population, all cats must be desexed before registration with the Mornington Peninsula Shire.

Keeping cats contained is important to safeguard their health and wellbeing. Cats that are allowed to roam are vulnerable to injury or death from traffic, attacks by other animals or even humans. They are also more likely to become lost. By keeping cats contained, it can significantly extend their lifespan and reduce the negative impact they can have on the environment.

Legislation

Planning and Environment Act 1987

The Peninsula Sands Estate, Rosebud is a declared cat prohibited area under Section 173 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.

Domestic Animals Act 1994

In exercising its powers prescribed under Section 10A of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, Council published an Order which requires all registered cats within the municipality to be desexed, unless the cat is exempted under the Act.

In exercising its powers prescribed under Section 25 of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, in April 1997 Council published an Order making it an offence for a cat to be outside the owner's premises at any time.

In exercising its powers prescribed under Section 26 of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, in December 2007 Council published Orders defining dog prohibited and leash-free areas.

These orders have been updated numerous times since 2007, with the most recent Order published on 12 December 2024.

Community Amenity Local Law 2022

Clause 21 of the *Community Amenity Local Law 2022* states that, without a permit, properties under 499m² can keep one dog and two cats, properties between 500m² and 2,499m² can keep two dogs and two cats, and properties over 2,500m² can keep three dogs and two cats.

Current Activities

Conduct proactive patrols of parks, reserves and foreshore areas to ensure compliance with the relevant dog control signage, including early patrols in identified hotspots and areas with emerging issues

Conduct extended patrols during peak summer periods with a particular focus on foreshore areas

Maintain dog control signage in parks, reserves and foreshore areas

Assess community submissions for new leash-free areas

Promote responsible pet ownership and animal welfare on open days at the Community Animal Shelter and Pound

Participate in community events and education programs such as Bunnings adoption events and various festivals and community awareness days to promote responsible pet ownership

Conduct tours and educational programs for primary and secondary students and special needs groups at the Community Animal Shelter and Pound focussing on basic animal care and responsible pet ownership

Host student work placements for Years 10-12 and university students at the Community Animal Shelter and Pound to enhance student's animal handling and promote responsible pet ownership

Administer the Positive Ageing Program which offers free desexing and microchipping for dogs and cats for senior card holders through the Community Animal Shelter and Pound

Maintain an interactive website map showing dog leash-free and prohibited areas

Provide adoption packs with information on responsible pet ownership to new owners

Provide animal ownership educational materials and adoption advertisements in Customer Service Centres and Libraries

Manage an annual communications plan including social media posts, website information, media releases, Shire publications and telephone on-hold messages promoting responsible pet ownership

Future Activities

In addition to continuing the above activities, Shire Officers will also undertake the following activities.

Activity 2.1: To promote community compliance with dog controls in public places

- 2.1.1 In conjunction with the Shire's Infrastructure Team, complete the rollout of updated dog control signage in Council-managed foreshores, parks and reserves
 - 2.1.2 Review existing dog controls in public places in conjunction with community consultation as required
 - 2.1.3 Consider undertaking a trial of providing dog poo bins and bags in leash-free reserves and foreshore areas
 - 2.1.4 Investigate opportunities to apply for government grants for new/upgrades to leash-free areas
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Activity 2.2: To provide a greater presence in the community to improve compliance and enhance education

- 2.2.1 Investigate additional opportunities to participate in community outreach activities
 - 2.2.2 Consider subscribing to the RSPCA's Happy Pets Portal to enhance educational opportunities for pet owners
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Activity 2.3: Increase the number of leash-free areas

- 2.3.1 Investigate opportunities to utilise open space contributions as leash-free areas
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Theme 3: Addressing Over-Population and High Euthanasia Rates

Objective

To minimise the number of stray, semi-owned and feral animals, and address over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats.

Summary

The Shire-run Community Animal Shelter and Pound places a high priority on the welfare and care of all animals. The Team works closely with rescue groups to rehome domestic pets and livestock which may not be suitable for direct adoption.

Whilst we strive to rehome as many animals as possible, the Community Animal Shelter and Pound must adhere to the requirements in the State Government's Code of Practice for the Management of Dogs and Cats in Shelters and Pounds (the Code). Shire Officers conduct an in-depth suitability assessment for every animal being considered for adoption in accordance with the Code. The Code prohibits the rehoming of any animals displaying aggressive or anti-social traits (such as feral cats) or animals that are known to be habitual escapees.

In 2024, Shire Officers impounded 486 dogs and 417 cats. From these impounded dogs and cats, 16 dogs (3.2%) and 52 cats (12.4%) were euthanised as a result of disease or anti-social traits. These figures are well under the metropolitan council average euthanasia rate which is approximately 7.2% for dogs and 29.1% for cats. The Shire's low euthanasia rates demonstrate the Community Animal Shelter and Pound's commitment to animal welfare and dedication to achieving the best outcomes for all animals in their care.

Legislation

Domestic Animals Act 1994

In exercising its powers prescribed under Section 10A of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, Council published an Order which requires all registered cats within the municipality to be desexed, unless the cat is exempted under the Act.

Community Amenity Local Law 2022

Clause 22 of the *Community Amenity Local Law 2022* states a person must not sell or give away a dog or cat that has not been desexed except where the animal is ten years or older, or if the person is the proprietor of a Domestic Animal Business or member of an Applicable Organisation.

Current Activities

Conduct investigations in response to reports of animal hoarding

Enforce Clause 22 of the *Community Amenity Local Law 2022* governing the responsible breeding of dogs and cats

Enforce Council Orders governing mandatory desexing of cats and 24/7 confinement to owners' premises

Undertake activities to identify and enforce against illegal dog and cat breeders who sell animals prior to desexing

Administer a cat trapping program to contain stray, semi-owned and feral cats to reduce unwanted litters over population

Promote responsible pet ownership and desexing initiatives on open days at the Community Animal Shelter and Pound

Participate in community events and education programs such as Bunnings adoption events and various festivals and community awareness days to promote pet adoptions and responsible pet ownership

Administer the Positive Ageing Program which offers free desexing and microchipping for dogs and cats for senior card holders through the Community Animal Shelter and Pound

Maintain strong partnerships with rescue groups for animal rehoming where animals are not suitable for immediate adoption

Future Activities

In addition to continuing the above activities, Shire Officers will also undertake the following activities.

Activity 3.1: To continue to improve animal welfare outcomes

- 3.1.1 Support the Community Animal Shelter and Pound site redevelopment which will provide increased capacity and better-quality facilities for all animals.
 - 3.1.2 Review Community Animal Shelter operations including: opening hours, euthanasia rates, reunification rates and volunteer program.
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Activity 3.2: To seek opportunities for affordable pet desexing

- 3.2.1 Apply for State Government funding for desexing schemes when available to support members of the community who cannot afford to desex their pets
 - 3.2.2 Consider a Council-administered desexing program for dogs and cats
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Activity 3.3: To promote community compliance

- 3.3.1 Consider holding an annual free microchipping and registration day at the Community Animal Shelter and Pound
 - 3.3.2 Consider subscribing to the RSPCA's Happy Pets Portal to enhance educational opportunities and increase compliance for pet owners
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Theme 4: Registration and Identification

Objective

To employ programs, services and strategies to encourage registration and identification of dogs and cats.

Summary

In Victoria, all dogs and cats aged three months and over must be microchipped and registered with their local council and renewed by 10 April each year. The Mornington Peninsula Shire also requires cats to be desexed prior to registration.

Registration and renewal fees

Animal registration and renewal fees assist in funding the delivery of animal management services across the municipality, including:

- animal management staffing and after-hours services
- investigation of animal reports including unregistered animals, wandering cats and dogs, and barking dogs
- investigation and prosecution of owners involved in dog attacks
- declaration and management of all dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs
- lifetime registration tags for registered dogs and cats
- provision and maintenance of leash-free areas
- payment of the compulsory State Government levy for each registered dog and cat.

Year*	Dogs	Cats	Total
2020-21	25,295	6,455	31,750
2021-22	24,930	5,872	30,802
2022-23	24,057	5,730	29,787
2023-24	22,390	5,243	27,633

*active/paid registrations reported as of 30 June

Legislation

Domestic Animals Act 1994

Section 10 of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* states that all dogs and cats over three months of age must be microchipped and registered with the local council.

In exercising its powers prescribed under Section 10A of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, Council published an Order which requires all registered cats within the municipality to be desexed, unless the cat is exempted under the Act.

Community Amenity Local Law 2022

Clause 21 of the *Community Amenity Local Law 2022* states that, without a permit, properties under 499m² can keep one dog and two cats, properties between 500m² and 2,499m² can keep two dogs and two cats, and properties over 2,500m² can keep three dogs and two cats.

Current Activities

Offer first year free registration for new residents who register their dog or cat within eight weeks of moving into the Shire

Offer first year free registration for residents who register their dog or cat within eight weeks of the adoption

Offer first year free registration for pets adopted from the Community Animal Shelter and Pound

Offer free registration for assistance dogs

Offer pro-rata fees for new registrations between October and February each year (does not apply to menacing, dangerous or restricted breed registrations)

Issue lifetime registration tags

Provide online animal registration, renewal and change of details forms

Provide annual registration renewal notices posted or emailed to owner

Provide a follow up renewal notice and SMS for lapsed registrations

Conduct an annual registration follow up doorknock of lapsed registrations

Follow up registration and desexing for animal adoption/sale notifications from other municipalities and Domestic Animal Businesses

Conduct registration checks as part of investigating all animal nuisance reports

Undertake enforcement activities including infringements, notices to comply and court prosecution for non-compliant owners

Participate in community events and education programs such as Bunnings adoption events and various festivals and community awareness days to promote animal registration

Manage the Community Animal Shelter and Pound website which lists all lost pets and how to visit

Promote animal registration on open days at the Community Animal Shelter and Pound

Conduct tours and educational programs for primary and secondary students and special needs groups at the Community Animal Shelter and Pound highlighting the benefits of animal registration

Manage an annual communications plan including social media posts, website information, media releases, Shire publications and telephone on-hold messages promoting the renewal of animal registrations in March and April of each year

Future Activities

In addition to continuing the above activities, Shire Officers will also undertake the following activities.

Activity 4.1: To increase the number of new animal registrations and renewals

4.1.1 Increase participation in community events to promote registration requirements

4.1.2 Develop a comprehensive annual registration plan with a timeline to ensure all registration activities are conducted within appropriate timeframes

4.1.3 Promote registration requirements through social media and other digital means

4.1.4 Consider holding an annual free microchipping and registration day at the Community Animal Shelter and Pound

Activity 4.2: To identify and target hotspot areas for registration non-compliance

4.2.1 Use previous year's lapsed registration and infringement data to identify and target hotspot areas for registration non-compliance

Theme 5: Addressing Nuisance Animals

Objective

To employ programs, services and strategies to promote and encourage responsible pet ownership to minimise the potential for animal nuisance reports.

Summary

Animal nuisance can occur in many ways, however the most common complaints relate to wandering dogs and cats, and barking dogs.

In 2024, Shire Officers investigated 3,472 animal-related reports.

Cats

Animal Welfare Victoria identifies cats as either domestic or feral. Domestic cats have some form of dependence on humans, either directly or indirectly and can be classified into three subcategories:

- **Owned:** cats are identified with and cared for by a specific person and are directly dependent on humans. They are usually sociable, although sociability varies.
- **Semi-owned:** cats are fed, or provided with other care, by people who do not consider themselves owners. They are of varying sociability, with many socialised to humans, and may be associated with one or more households.
- **Unowned:** cats are indirectly dependent on humans, with some having casual and temporary human interaction. They are of varying sociability, including some being unsocialised, and may live in groups around rubbish tips, shopping centres and other urban environments where they can scavenge for food.

Feral cats are unowned, unsocialised, have no relationship with or dependence on humans, and reproduce in the wild.

Both domestic and feral cats pose a significant threat to Victoria's biodiversity. Cats are highly effective predators that can kill native wildlife and spread diseases and parasites. It is estimated that the Australian feral cat population kills approximately two billion reptiles, birds, frogs and mammals each year, and over a billion invertebrates. Domestic cats are estimated to kill an additional 390 million mammals, birds and reptiles annually⁷. Effective cat management is important to help protect and conserve Victoria's diverse ecosystems and threatened wildlife.

Animal Requests Received

	2016	2020	2024
Dog at large	2705	1192	893
Dogs off-leash	46	324	257
Barking dogs	556	200	486

⁷ Centre for Invasive Species Solutions. "Impact of feral cats in Australia" PestSmart, www.pestsmart.org.au/toolkit-resource/impact-of-feral-cats-in-australia/.

Dog attack/rush	373	259	285
Cat at large	1139	603	191
Other animal concern	2731	1522	484
DAB concern	29	6	71
Registration concern	-	592	360
Excess animal permit request	89	43	79

*A direct comparative analysis of request categories between 2016 and 2024 is difficult due to a reporting realignment in 2018, and a software upgrade in 2022 which changed the way requests are captured.

Impounded animals

	2016	2020	2024
Dogs	1019	802	486
Cats	638	468	417

Adopted animals

	2016	2020	2024
Dogs	27	18	74
Cats	74	112	186

Reclaimed animals

	2016	2020	2024
Dogs	870	745	326
Cats	101	114	55

Animals sent to foster/rescue

	2016	2020	2024
Dogs	94	12	24
Cats	291	119	108

Wandering dogs

Wandering or unsecured dogs are the most common type of animal nuisance report received by the Shire. The most common causes of wandering dogs are either human error (eg, leaving a gate open) or human negligence (eg, inadequate fencing). Some wandering dogs may become protective and display aggression towards people and other animals walking near their property.

Off-leash dogs

The Shire has large number of parks, reserves and foreshores where dogs can be walked off-leash whilst under effective control of their owner. Despite these dedicated areas, in 2024 the Shire received 257 reports of dogs being walked off-leash in areas where they must be on leash, or within areas which have been declared dog prohibited.

Barking dogs

The most common reasons for barking dogs include boredom or loneliness, feeling threatened (eg, postie delivering mail, another dog walking by) or ill health. These reports often require considerable time to resolve as the report needs to be substantiated with a 14-day 'barking dog diary' which can often lead to frustration by the complainant. Many barking

dog reports can be resolved quickly by notifying the dog owner of the issue as they may be unaware their dog is barking and causing a nuisance.

Wandering owned, semi-owned and feral cats

Cats that are allowed to roam may fight with other cats and create a nuisance by spraying and defecating on other people's property. To combat roaming owned cats, the Shire implemented a 24/7 cat curfew in 1997.

To manage the issue of semi-owned or feral cats and the associated environmental impacts, the Shire runs a cat trapping program. The program aims to both educate non-compliant cat owners on the curfew and containment requirements and help reduce the semi-owned and feral cat population by removing cats from the environment. Many cats trapped through this program are rehabilitated at the Community Animal Shelter and Pound and subsequently find loving forever homes. In a small number of cases, trapped cats may need to be euthanised due to significant aggression or severe health issues such as Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV).

Dog faeces

The management of dog faecal matter in public places is governed by Clause 24 of the *Community Amenities Local Law 2022*. Failing to pick up after your dog poses significant health risks to humans and other animals as the faecal matter contains bacteria and parasites that can cause illnesses.

Reports regarding dog faecal matter are especially prevalent on sports ovals where both children and adults play. A large number of reports are also received for foreshores areas where faecal matter can also cause significant environmental concerns by entering nearby waterways.

Legislation

Domestic Animals Act 1994

Section 24 of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* states that dogs must be securely confined to the owner's property at all times.

In exercising its powers prescribed under Section 25 of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, in April 1997 Council published an Order making it an offence for a cat to be outside the owner's premises at any time.

In exercising its powers prescribed under Section 26 of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, in December 2007 Council published Orders defining dog prohibited and leash-free areas. These orders have been updated numerous times since 2007, with the most recent Order published on 12 December 2024.

Section 32 of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* states that the occupier of a premises where a dog or cat is kept must not allow the animal to create a nuisance by barking or other noise which persistently occurs or continues to such an extent that it unreasonably interferes with the peace, comfort or convenience of any person in any other premises.

Planning and Environment Act 1987

The Peninsula Sands Estate, Rosebud is a declared cat prohibited area under Section 173 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.

Community Amenity Local Law 2022

Clause 21 of the *Community Amenity Local Law 2022* states that, without a permit, properties under 499m² can keep one dog and two cats, properties between 500m² and 2,499m² can keep two dogs and two cats, and properties over 2,500m² can keep three dogs and two cats.

Clause 23 of the *Community Amenity Local Law 2022* states that an occupier of land where an animal is kept must maintain the land in a clean and inoffensive manner, and ensure the property is adequately fenced so the animal cannot escape.

Clause 24 of the *Community Amenity Local Law 2022* states that a person in charge of an animal must carry sufficient litter devices to collect and immediately dispose of animal excrement.

Clause 25 of the *Community Amenity Local Law 2022* states that an occupier of land must not allow an animal kept on that land to emit unreasonable noise.

Current Activities

Provision of animal collection services for contained and uncontained animals

Provision of a 24/7 response to reports of wandering livestock or dog attacks where an incident is in progress

Conduct proactive patrols of parks, reserves and foreshore areas to ensure compliance with the relevant dog control signage, including early patrols in identified hotspots and areas with emerging issues

Conduct extended patrols during peak summer periods with a particular focus on foreshore areas

Enforce dog and cat prohibitions to protect environmentally sensitive areas

Enforce the 24/7 cat curfew to ensure protection for both cats and wildlife

Administer a cat trapping program to contain stray, semi-owned and feral cats to reduce nuisance reports

Conduct tours and educational programs for primary and secondary students and special needs groups at the Community Animal Shelter and Pound focussing on responsible pet ownership to prevent animals causing a nuisance to the community

Deploy a sound meter with professional monitoring to substantiate barking dog reports

Provide online complaint lodgement and monitoring

Provide comprehensive online information covering barking dogs, wandering cats, and dog prohibited and leash-free areas

Future Activities

In addition to continuing the above activities, Shire Officers will also undertake the following activities.

Activity 5.1: To bring animal-related procedures and information in line with community expectations

5.1.1 Review and improve barking dog procedure

5.1.2 Review and improve cat trapping and wandering cat procedure

5.1.3 Review all animal-related Shire webpages to ensure the provision of current and relevant information

5.1.4 Provide educational material specific to cat nuisance issues with cat registrations

5.1.5 Provide educational material specific to dog nuisance issues with dog registrations

Activity 5.2: To continue to seek opportunities for affordable pet desexing

5.2.1 Apply for State Government funding for desexing schemes when available to reduce nuisance, semi-owned and feral cat reports

Activity 5.3: To promote community compliance

5.3.1 In conjunction with the Shire's Infrastructure Team, complete the rollout of updated dog control signage in Council-managed foreshores, parks and reserves

5.3.2 Consider subscribing to the RSPCA's Happy Pets Portal to enhance educational opportunities and increase compliance for pet owners

Theme 6: Dog Attacks

Objective

To employ programs, services and strategies to promote and encourage the responsible ownership of dogs to minimise the risk of dog attacks on people and animals in the community.

Summary

The Shire is committed to reducing the occurrence and impacts associated with dog attacks in our community by implementing a range of investigative and enforcement actions against offending dog owners.

Enforcement actions are guided by a range of factors, including the severity of the incident, the history of the attacking dog and owner, and the overall risk to the community. Outcomes may include infringements, prosecution in the Magistrates' Court, and subsequent orders to declare the dog menacing or dangerous.

In 2024 Shire Officers responded to 213 reports of dog attacks and 72 reports of dog rushes. As a result, we successfully prosecuted 10 serious dog attacks and 5 non-serious dog attacks. A total of 26 infringements were also issued for non-serious dog attacks and 5 infringements for rush incidents.

Legislation

Domestic Animals Act 1994

In exercising its powers prescribed under Section 26 of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, in December 2007 Council published Orders defining dog prohibited and leash-free areas. These orders require dog owners to ensure their dog does not threaten or attack any person or animal whilst in a leash-free area.

Section 29 of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* defines a number of offences relating to dog attacks and rushes.

Sections 34 and 41A of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* give Council the power to declare a dog dangerous or menacing respectively.

Current Activities

Provision of an immediate 24/7 response to reports of dog attacks where an incident is in progress, and a response within 24 hours where the threat is not imminent, or the incident has already occurred

Conduct proactive patrols of parks, reserves and foreshore areas to ensure dogs are under effective control by their owners to help prevent potential dog attacks

Conduct extended patrols during peak summer periods with a particular focus on foreshore areas

Maintain dog control signage in parks, reserves and foreshore areas to ensure owners are complying with the controls

Escalate the level enforcement required where dogs or owners are repeatedly involved in non-compliance

Convene a Case Review Committee meeting to consider declaring a dog menacing or dangerous following the investigation and outcome of a dog attack

Prosecute serious dog attacks or recidivist offenders in the Magistrates Court

Future Activities

In addition to continuing the above activities, Shire Officers will also undertake the following activities.

Activity 6.1: To increase awareness of dog attacks on children

6.1.1 Include information for school tours and presentations at the Community Animal Shelter and Pound on how to interact with dogs and prevent dog bites

6.1.2 Collaborate with the Maternal and Child Health Team to provide information and education for parents with dogs

Activity 6.2: To increase transparency in dog attack investigations

6.2.1 Create an information pack for owners of attacking dogs involved in dog attacks outlining the investigative process including the potential for dog seizure, attending a record of interview, possible case outcomes and dog declarations

6.2.2 Create an information pack for victims of dog attacks outlining the investigative process including providing a formal statement, potential requirement to give evidence in court, possible case outcomes and victim support services

Theme 7: Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs

Objective

To effectively identify all dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs in the municipality and ensure those dogs are kept in accordance with the legislation.

Summary

The *Domestic Animals Act 1994* defines three categories of declared dogs:

Dangerous dogs

A dog may be declared dangerous following an attack where the dog has caused serious injury to a person or another animal. A dangerous dog must be kept in very specific conditions outlined in the *Domestic Animal Regulations 2015*. The dog must also wear a prescribed dangerous dog collar at all times outside the owner's property, and cannot be walked off-leash, even in a designated off-leash area.

Menacing dog

A dog may be declared menacing following an attack where the dog has caused non-serious injury or has rushed at a person. A rush is defined as an approach by a dog to within three metres of a person whilst displaying aggressive tendencies such as snarling, growling or raised hackles. Conditions on a menacing dog outside an owner's property may include a muzzle and on-leash requirement.

Restricted breed dog

There are currently five breeds that meet the approved standard of restricted breed dogs in Victoria: the American Pit Bull, the Perro de Presa Canario, the Dogo Argentino, the Japanese Tosa and the Fila Brasileiro. A restricted breed dog must be kept in very specific conditions outlined in the *Domestic Animal Regulations 2015*. The dog must also wear a prescribed restricted breed dog collar at all times outside the owner's property, and cannot be walked off-leash, even in a designated off-leash area.

Shire Officers enforce provisions of the Act and Regulations to identify and control dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs to ensure the safety of the community and visitors.

There are currently two dangerous and 12 menacing dogs in the Mornington Peninsula Shire. Shire Officers conduct annual property inspections of all declared dangerous and restricted breed dogs in accordance with the Act and Regulations. In 2024, all inspected properties were compliant.

Legislation

Domestic Animals Act 1994

Sections 34 and 41A of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* give Shire Officers the power to declare a dog dangerous or menacing respectively.

Domestic Animals Regulations 2015

Sections 6 to 10 of the *Domestic Animals Regulations 2015* prescribe the requirements to keep a dangerous or restricted breed dog.

Current Activities

Assess and declare dogs as dangerous, menacing or restricted breeds

Provide comprehensive information to owners of declared dogs outlining their responsibilities and the penalties for non-compliance

Conduct annual property inspections of all declared dangerous and restricted breed dogs in accordance with the Act and Regulations

Conduct investigations in response to reports of non-compliant menacing, dangerous and restricted breed dogs

Undertake enforcement activities including infringements, notices to comply and court prosecution of non-complaint declared dog owners

Undertake regular reviews of the Victorian Declared Dog Register and cross-reference with Shire records to ensure accuracy

Future Activities

In addition to continuing the above activities, Shire Officers will also undertake the following activities.

Activity 7.1: To increase responsible ownership of declared menacing dogs

- 7.1.1 Consider offering a discounted desexing initiative for declared menacing dogs to help promote responsible pet ownership
-

Theme 8: Domestic Animal Businesses

Objective

To ensure legislative compliance of all Domestic Animal Businesses within the municipality.

Summary

Shire Officers annually audit all Domestic Animal Businesses within the municipality to ensure compliance with the Act and the relevant Codes of Practice. Where breaches are identified, Shire Officers work with businesses to gain compliance where possible, and to ensure animal welfare standards are maintained. Shire Officers also actively seek to identify, investigate and prosecute illegal Domestic Animal Businesses operating in the municipality.

The Mornington Peninsula Shire currently has 28 registered Domestic Animal Businesses.

	2016	2020	2024
Dog training establishments	1	7	8
Overnight boarding	10	11	11
Daytime boarding (doggy daycare)	0	0	2
Shelters and pounds	1	1	1
Pet shops	8	2	6
Breeding establishments	1	0	0

Legislation

Domestic Animals Act 1994

Section 13 of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* prescribes the requirements for Domestic Animal Businesses involved in the sale of animals.

Sections 44A to 63AB of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* prescribes the requirements, Council powers and offences relating to Domestic Animal Businesses.

Domestic Animals Regulations 2015

Sections 48A to 48F of the *Domestic Animals Regulations 2015* prescribe the requirements for approved commercial dog breeding establishments.

Codes of Practice

There are a number of Codes of Practice that apply to Domestic Animal Businesses, depending on the type of business:

- Code of Practice for the Management of Dogs and Cats in Shelters and Pounds
- Code of Practice for the Operation of Boarding Establishments

- Code of Practice for the Operation of Breeding and Rearing Businesses
- Code of Practice for the Operation of Dog Training Establishments
- Code of Practice for the Operation of Pet Shops

Current Activities

Provide online registrations for new Domestic Animal Businesses

Inspect and approve (where appropriate) new Domestic Animal Business applications

Refer applications to other Teams within the Shire where additional permits or licences may be required

Ensure all Domestic Animal Businesses have a valid source number to legally sell animals (where required)

Conduct annual and spot inspections of all registered Domestic Animal Businesses

Provide online complaint lodgement and monitoring for Domestic Animal Business concerns

Investigate Domestic Animal Business concerns where the relevant powers exist

Provide annual reports and statistics of Domestic Animal Businesses to Pet Exchange Register (State Government)

Undertake various activities to identify illegal Domestic Animal Businesses within the municipality

Undertake audits of microchipped animals to identify possible litters at properties within the municipality

Undertake enforcement activities including infringements, notices to comply and court prosecution for non-compliant Domestic Animal Businesses

Future Activities

In addition to continuing the above activities, Shire Officers will also undertake the following activities.

Activity 8.1: To provide comprehensive online information on Domestic Animal Businesses

8.1.1 Provide comprehensive online information for businesses wanting to apply for registration

8.1.2 Provide comprehensive online information for members of the community wanting to report a concern

Activity 8.2: To provide a streamlined approach to Domestic Animal Business activities

8.2.1 Review and improve the Domestic Animal Business application and audit process

Theme 9: Other Matters

Community Animal Shelter and Pound redevelopment

Shire Officers at the Community Animal Shelter and Pound are cognisant of the negative perception of animal pounds in the community, especially how the animals are looked after and their fate.

To provide the best possible care for the animals staying with us now and in the future, the Mornington Peninsula Shire has made a significant investment in the wellbeing of the community's animals with the upgrade and expansion of the Community Animal Shelter and Pound. The significant redevelopment began in late 2024, with the first of three stages expected to be completed in late 2025.

During the planning phase of the project, Shire Officers ensured the proposed facilities and services aligned with industry best practice, current needs and future expansion options. The upgraded facility will include a new community-focused adoption space, 40 new kennels, cattery facility upgrades, a new cat isolation room, speciality areas for pocket pets, on-site vet facilities and additional public parking.

The upgraded facility will prioritise the reunification and rehoming of animals, offering them the care and support they need to thrive in their forever homes.

Emergency Management

The Mornington Peninsula Shire maintains a Municipal Emergency Management Plan to ensure a coordinated response and recovery to natural disasters and emergencies. Shire Officers acknowledge that pet owners can often have unique needs during emergencies. To ensure owners and their pets are cared for, the Shire also maintains an Emergency Animal Welfare Plan, which is a complementary plan to the Municipal Emergency Management Plan.

Regular emergency management training and exercises are conducted across the municipality and are attended by Shire Officers (including animal management staff), State Government Officers and community support agencies.

Theme 10: Annual Review of Plan and Reporting

To ensure Shire Officers meet the legislative requirements for the Domestic Animal Management Plan prescribed in Section 68A of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, a copy of this Plan will be provided to the Secretary of the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action no later than 4 December 2025.

The Plan will be reviewed annually, and a report provided to the Secretary no later than 4 December each year until its expiry.

If the Plan requires an amendment, a copy of the amended document will be provided to the Secretary as soon as practicable.

A copy of the annual evaluation of the implementation plan will be published in the Shire's Annual Report.

Consolidated Action Plan

Theme 1: Training of Authorised Officers

Activity 1.1: To formalise training requirements

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- 1.1.1 Develop a formal training schedule for all new Authorised Officers
 - 1.1.2 Develop a formal training register specific to Authorised Officers to assist in identifying any opportunities to increase Officer knowledge
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Theme 2: Encouraging Responsible Pet Ownership

Activity 2.1: To promote community compliance with dog controls in public places

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- 2.1.1 In conjunction with the Shire's Infrastructure Team, complete the rollout of updated dog control signage in Council-managed foreshores, parks and reserves
 - 2.1.2 Review existing dog controls in public places in conjunction with community consultation as required
 - 2.1.3 Consider undertaking a trial of providing dog poo bins and bags in leash-free reserves and foreshore areas
 - 2.1.4 Investigate opportunities to apply for government grants for new/upgrades to leash-free areas
-

Activity 2.2: To provide a greater presence in the community to improve compliance and enhance education

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- 2.2.1 Investigate additional opportunities to participate in community outreach activities
 - 2.2.2 Consider subscribing to the RSPCA's Happy Pets Portal to enhance educational opportunities for pet owners
-

Activity 2.3: Increase the number of leash-free areas

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- 2.3.1 Investigate opportunities to utilise open space contributions as leash-free areas
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Theme 3: Addressing Over-Population and High Euthanasia Rates

Activity 3.1: To continue to improve animal welfare outcomes

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- 3.1.1 Support the Community Animal Shelter and Pound site redevelopment which will provide increased capacity and better-quality facilities for all animals
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- 3.1.2 Review Community Animal Shelter operations including: opening hours, euthanasia rates, reunification rates and volunteer program.
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Activity 3.2: To seek opportunities for affordable pet desexing

- 3.2.1 Apply for State Government funding for desexing schemes when available to support members of the community who cannot afford to desex their pets
-
- 3.2.2 Consider a Council-administered desexing program for dogs and cats
-

Activity 3.3: To promote community compliance

- 3.3.1 Consider holding an annual free microchipping and registration day at the Community Animal Shelter and Pound
-
- 3.3.2 Consider subscribing to the RSPCA's Happy Pets Portal to enhance educational opportunities and increase compliance for pet owners
-

Theme 4: Registration and Identification

Activity 4.1: To increase the number of new animal registrations and renewals

- 4.1.1 Increase participation in community events to promote registration requirements
-
- 4.1.2 Develop a comprehensive annual registration plan with a timeline to ensure all registration activities are conducted within appropriate timeframes
-
- 4.1.3 Promote registration requirements through social media and other digital means
-
- 4.1.4 Consider holding an annual free microchipping and registration day at the Community Animal Shelter and Pound
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Activity 4.2: To identify and target hotspot areas for registration non-compliance

- 4.2.1 Use previous year's lapsed registration and infringement data to identify and target hotspot areas for registration non-compliance
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Theme 5: Addressing Nuisance Animals

Activity 5.1: To bring animal-related procedures and information in line with community expectations

- 5.1.1 Review and improve barking dog procedure
-

5.1.2 Review and improve cat trapping and wandering cat procedure

5.1.3 Review all animal-related Shire webpages to ensure the provision of current and relevant information

5.1.4 Provide educational material specific to cat nuisance issues with cat registrations

5.1.5 Provide educational material specific to dog nuisance issues with dog registrations

Activity 5.2: To continue to seek opportunities for affordable pet desexing

5.2.1 Apply for State Government funding for desexing schemes when available to reduce nuisance, semi-owned and feral cat reports

Activity 5.3: To promote community compliance

5.3.1 In conjunction with the Shire's Infrastructure Team, complete the rollout of updated dog control signage in Council-managed foreshores, parks and reserves

5.3.2 Consider subscribing to the RSPCA's Happy Pets Portal to enhance educational opportunities and increase compliance for pet owners

Theme 6: Dog Attacks

Activity 6.1: To increase awareness of dog attacks on children

6.1.1 Include information for school tours and presentations at the Community Animal Shelter and Pound on how to interact with dogs and prevent dog bites

6.1.2 Collaborate with the Maternal and Child Health Team to provide information and education for parents with dogs

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Theme 7: Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs

Activity 7.1: To increase responsible ownership of declared menacing dogs

- 7.1.1 Consider offering a discounted desexing initiative for declared menacing dogs to help promote responsible pet ownership
-

Theme 8: Domestic Animal Businesses

Activity 8.1: To provide comprehensive online information on Domestic Animal Businesses

- 8.1.1 Provide comprehensive online information for businesses wanting to apply for registration
 - 8.1.2 Provide comprehensive online information for members of the community wanting to report a concern
-

Activity 8.2: To provide a streamlined approach to Domestic Animal Business activities

- 8.2.1 Review and improve the Domestic Animal Business application and audit process
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Contact Us

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