



DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

2017-2021

Adopted by Council: 18 July 2017

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LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

Domestic Animal Management Plans

Under Section 68A of the Domestic Animals Act 1994, every Council must prepare a domestic animal management plan, as follows:

68A Councils to prepare domestic animal management plans

- (1) Every Council must, in consultation with the Secretary (*of the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources*), prepare at 4 year intervals a domestic animal management plan.
- (2) A domestic animal management plan prepared by a Council must—
 - (a) set out a method for evaluating whether the animal control services provided by the Council in its municipal district are adequate to give effect to the requirements of this Act and the regulations; and
 - (b) outline programs for the training of authorised officers to ensure that they can properly administer and enforce the requirements of this Act in the Council's municipal district; and
 - (c) outline programs, services and strategies which the Council intends to pursue in its municipal district—
 - (i) to promote and encourage the responsible ownership of dogs and cats; and
 - (ii) to ensure that people comply with this Act, the regulations and any related legislation; and
 - (iii) to minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals; and
 - (iv) to address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats; and
 - (v) to encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats; and
 - (vi) to minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance; and
 - (vii) to effectively identify all dangerous dogs, menacing dogs and restricted breed dogs in that district and to ensure that those dogs are kept in compliance with this Act and the regulations; and
 - (d) provide for the review of existing orders made under this Act and local laws that relate to the Council's municipal district with a view to determining whether further orders or local laws dealing with the management of dogs and cats in the municipal district are desirable; and
 - (e) provide for the review of any other matters related to the management of dogs and cats in the Council's municipal district that it thinks necessary; and
 - (f) provide for the periodic evaluation of any program, service, strategy or review outlined under the plan.
- (3) Every Council must—
 - (a) review its domestic animal management plan annually and, if appropriate, amend the plan; and
 - (b) provide the Secretary with a copy of the plan and any amendments to the plan; and
 - (c) publish an evaluation of its implementation of the plan in its annual report.

CONTEXT

Strathbogie Shire

Strathbogie Shire is located in north-central Victoria and incorporates a diverse rural community served by townships including Avenel, Euroa, Nagambie and Violet Town. The shire's population of around 10,274 people includes around 3,191 people in rural areas and smaller towns such as Graytown, Longwood, Ruffy and Strathbogie (2016 ABS Census).



The shire encompasses a total land area of 3,300 square kilometres, with land mainly used for agriculture, particularly wool, grain, cattle, horse studs and vineyards.

Major features and enterprises in the shire include the Strathbogie Ranges, Heathcote-Graytown National Park, Goulburn River, Goulburn Weir, Lake Nagambie, Nagambie Lakes Regatta Centre, Violet Town Community Market, Mangalore Airport, Mitchelton Winery, Fowles Wine, Tahbilk Winery, Lindsay Park Racing and horse studs.

Strathbogie Shire enjoys excellent transport linkages via the Goulburn Valley Freeway, Hume Freeway, Goulburn Valley Highway and the Melbourne-Shepparton and Melbourne-Wodonga railway lines.

Population growth in Strathbogie Shire is generally stronger in the south, with Nagambie's population, for example, having increased by around 22% between the 2011 and 2016 ABS censuses to 1,886 people. Overall, the shire is predicted to grow at a slower rate than Melbourne and neighbouring municipalities, and like most areas in Australia, the population is ageing, with some 28.4% of the total population over 65 years old, compared to 15.6% for Victoria as a whole.

The shire has a rural economic base of wool, grain and cattle production, extensive vineyards at Nagambie and throughout the Strathbogie Ranges and a wide range of intensive cool climate horticultural enterprises. The shire is home to a strong and growing equine industry and markets itself as the 'Horse Capital of Victoria'.

Strategic Planning Context

The purpose of the Domestic Animal Management Plan 2017-2021 is to guide Council's planning and decision-making in relation to regulatory controls and service provision that promote the values of responsible pet ownership and high standards of animal welfare.

This objective is underwritten in the Council Plan 2017-2021 through Council's Mission *"To support our community to grow through effective partnerships, engagement and equitable and efficient delivery of services."*

Relevant Goals and Key Strategies in the Council Plan include:

Goal 1:

- *"To enhance community health and wellbeing"*

Key Strategies:

- *"Plan for improved community health, wellbeing and liveability".*

1. TRAINING OF AUTHORISED OFFICERS

1.1 CURRENT SITUATION

Strathbogie Shire Council outsources the provision of animal management / ranger services to 4SITE Australia Pty Ltd via contract. 4SITE has twelve years of experience in undertaking similar work for other councils and state government departments. The contract is based on Key Performance Indicators set by Council for the supply of the service and these standards are reported against monthly by the contractor.

4SITE provides contract rangers for 48 weeks each year, based at Euroa. After-hours emergency callouts are monitored by 4SITE and are actioned by the appropriate officer. Contract staff and/or Council staff respond to emergencies based on the specific issue and the location of the emergency.

4SITE staff are required to meet the minimum standards set by the *Domestic Animals Act* to be delegated officers of Council. 4SITE provides a Senior Ranger who manages relevant staff and day-to-day operations. A fulltime Ranger is based at Euroa and 4SITE also provides two casual and part-time staff who respond to after-hours callouts and cover for the Ranger when required.

1.2 CURRENT AND PLANNED TRAINING

Who	Current Qualifications	Planned Authorised Officer Training	When
Mark Morey	Certificate 4 - Animal Control & Regulation	First Aid - Level Two	1/10/2017
Lance Carroll		Public Relations Training / Conflict Resolution	1/07/2018
		Certificate 4 - Animal Control & Regulation	1/12/2018
Norm Hussell	Certificate 4 - Animal Control & Regulation	Public Relations Training / Conflict Resolution	1/07/2018

1.3 OUR PLANS

Objective 1: Develop a training policy that clearly identifies minimum training requirements and any additional training needs that should be undertaken by Authorised Officers.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Identify minimum training requirements by consultation with management and staff.	Annually	Documentation to be finalised and incorporated into an approved council training policy.
Assess and redevelop induction program for any new Local Laws Officer .	31 December 2017	Documentation to be finalised and incorporated into an approved council training policy.

Objective 2: Ensure Authorised Officers maintain currency of skills and knowledge.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Ensure all Authorised Officers maintain minimum qualifications as required by legislation and the Ranger and Local Law Services contract.	Upon changes to qualifications or legislative requirements	Copies of certificates and completed training to be provided to Council.

2. REGISTRATION AND IDENTIFICATION

2.1 CURRENT SITUATION AND PRACTICE

The Domestic Animals Act 1994 outlines clear requirements and procedures for the registration of cats and dogs within the municipality. Registration of animals is important to help identification and return to owners of animals that are lost or wandering or causing a nuisance, potentially avoiding impounding of these animals. In recent years, there has been a decrease in registered animals being impounded in Strathbogie Shire.

This section outlines objectives and activities to encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats per the Domestic Animals Act provisions.

❖ No. of registered dogs

2012/13	2,136
2013/14:	2,004
2014/15:	2,036
2015/16:	1,889
2016/17:	1,943

❖ No. of registered cats

2012/13	405
2013/14:	397
2014/15:	405
2015/16:	389
2016/17:	382

Ongoing Council programs and initiatives include:

- Registration of domestic cats and dogs over 3 months of age.
- Renewal notices forwarded to animal owners with reminders to encourage compliance with registration.
- Follow up owners who fail to register animals including face to face follow up and spot audits in areas of low registrations.
- Community education and promotion on the importance of registration of animals using multiple forms of contact eg: rates notices, local radio, newsletters.
- Community education and promotion on the difference between microchipping and registration.
- Ensuring registration and microchipping of animals prior to release from Council pounds.
- Promotion of waiver of registration fee for the year of registration where animals are rehomed through Council's service, the Lost Dogs Home, RSPCA or other service provider.
- Regular audits and updates of the animal registration data base to ensure the correct and current information is available.
- Providing investigation and compliance services for breaches of animal registration.
- Seeking voluntary compliance for breaches through education before progressing to more formal compliance methods depending on the seriousness of the matter.

2.2 OUR PLANS

Objective 1: Ensure the accuracy of council registration database by cross-referencing with microchip registry data.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Maintain accuracy of council pet registration database by contact with microchip registries to obtain details of dogs and cats in the municipality that are microchipped. Check all animals are also listed on council's pet registration database, and follow up those that are not.	31 December 2017)	Demonstrate council's pet registration database can be accurately cross referenced with microchip registries Demonstrate increase in numbers of pets registered with council following microchip registry cross referencing exercise

Objective 2: Strive to increase the number of identifiable animals.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Ensure all seized and impounded animals are registered to their owner prior to release.	Prior to every release	Ensure that all seized dogs and cats are registered and/or identifiable at the point of return or rehousing.
Targeted door knocking to check for unregistered and unidentified dogs and cats. Audit to be widely advertised prior to commencement.	As required	Review movement in registration numbers. Review number of dogs and cats being seized and impounded who are not registered to their owner. Records of number of unregistered and unidentified animals picked up during door knocks.
Follow-up on non-renewals of dog and cat registrations.	Annually – May / June	Review movement in registration numbers.

Objective 3: Education regarding awareness of requirement for Council registration

Activity	When	Evaluation
Media coverage on value of registration and timing. <i>(Note: Throughout this Plan, "Media" may include media releases, newspaper articles / advertisements, local radio, social media, Council brochures and Council website.)</i>	Annually –February	Record media used.
Consider media coverage to promote annual 'Registration Blitz'.	Annually –February	Record media used.

3. NUISANCE

3.1 CURRENT SITUATION AND PRACTICE

The Domestic Animals Act 1994 outlines requirements for Council to manage domestic animal nuisance problems. Strathbogie Shire has developed additional requirements in Local Law No 6 to assist with managing potential animal nuisance through requiring dogs to be on leash unless in designated off leash areas and requiring appropriate fencing to be in place to contain animals on private land.

This section outlines objectives and activities to minimise the potential for domestic animals to create a nuisance.

❖ No. of reports of domestic animals at large

2013/14:	162
2014/15:	158
2015/16:	139
2016/17:	155

❖ Animals impounded and returned to owners

2015/16	56
2016/17:	34

Ongoing Council programs and initiatives include:

- Community education on responsible ownership relating to how to keep cats and dogs secure on a property.
- Community education on causes of animal nuisance and how to report nuisance animal complaints.
- Providing information to animal owners on services and programs to assist with animal nuisance issues.
- Promotion to residents of the designated off-leash areas, areas in which dogs are required to be on-leash and areas in which dogs are prohibited.
- Responding to nuisance complaints and following up on compliance within 24 hours.
- Provision of cat cages for trapping nuisance cats.
- Facilitation of mediated outcomes between parties for animal nuisance complaints where practicable.
- Providing the opportunity to return wandering registered animals to owners for first time occurrences and impounding unregistered animals or registered animals when repeat offences occur.

3.2 OUR PLANS

Objective 1: Manage the incidents of wandering or feral cats.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Provide Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (POCTA) compliant cat cages to local residents for trapping cats trespassing on their property.	Ongoing	Number of animals trapped.
Media concerning issues of stray and feral cats.	Twice yearly	Record media. Brochures available customer service centres.

Objective 2: Manage dog nuisance complaints.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Encourage responsible pet ownership by providing information on issues such as socialisation, effective confinement and the appropriate use of anti-bark collars through media and officer contact.	Ongoing	Record number of nuisance complaints.
Provide information on Council's web site on how to report nuisance animal complaints.	June 2018	Clear process on web site for reporting animal nuisances.

Objective 3: Dogs at large complaint resolution.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Provide education on responsible pet ownership to ensure animals are securely contained through web site and media.	Ongoing	Assess trends in animals at large data to evaluate effectiveness of information and controls.
Return stray animals to owners for first time occurrences, subject to compliance with Domestic Animals Act (i.e., animal is registered etc).	Ongoing	Record No. of animals returned.

Objective 4: Provision of dog friendly open space

Activity	When	Evaluation
Investigate access to specific off-leash areas, that are clearly identifiable to all of the community, to meet the 'free-running' and playing needs of dogs.	June 2018	Designated off leash areas confirmed with community input.

4. DOG ATTACKS

4.1 CURRENT SITUATION AND PRACTICE

The Domestic Animals Act 1994 provides Council with the power to minimise, respond to and manage issues related to dog attacks. The experience at Strathbogie Shire has been that most dog attacks to people and other animals occur from dogs at large or dogs not being effectively controlled in public places.

This section outlines objectives and activities to minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals.

❖ No. of reported dog attacks

2013/14:	24
2014/15:	24
2015/16:	16
2016/17:	18

Ongoing Council programs and initiatives include:

- Community education on responsible ownership relating to how to keep cats and dogs secure on a property.
- Community education about the risk of dog attacks through active promotion of Bureau of Animal Welfare (BAW) Responsible Pet Ownership programs.
- Promotion of information concerning responsible pet ownership to children and families via health centres, pre schools and primary schools.
- Encouraging de-sexing of animals at registration to lower the likelihood of wandering animals.
- Auditing properties of declared, dangerous and menacing dogs for compliance with standards.
- Responding to notification of dog attack immediately.
- Providing access to an after-hours service for reporting dog attacks.

4.2 OUR PLANS

Objective 1: Raise community awareness of the implications of dog attacks.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Use media to raise awareness of the risk of dog attacks in the home and in public places, with information on how to reduce these risks and how to report dog attacks.	School Holiday periods	Record media events. Evaluate level of reporting of dog attacks pre and post media with possible higher levels of reporting based on awareness.
Assist in the promotion of awareness of Bureau of Animal Welfare (BAW) programs via Council's website to help manage animal behaviour.	School Holidays periods	Monitor and compare number of reported dog attack incidents.

Objective 2: Education of dog attacks on stock.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Educate landowners as to DPI guidelines on trespassing dog attacks on stock.	Twice yearly	Assess number of reported dog attack on stock annually.
Promote and make available the BAW booklet on: "Responsible ownership of working dogs".	Ongoing	Assess number of reported dog attack on stock incidents annually.

Objective 3: Effective responses to prevent and respond to dog attacks.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Conduct regular patrols to encourage dogs to be confined to premises.	Ongoing	Record levels of patrols.
Update dog attack investigation and enforcement policy and procedures.	December 2017	Updated procedures.

5. DANGEROUS, MENACING AND RESTRICTED BREED DOGS

5.1 CURRENT SITUATION AND PRACTICE

Dangerous, menacing and restricted breeds of dogs are all controlled by the Domestic Animals Act 1994.

This section outlines objectives and activities to identify, record and manage dangerous dogs, menacing dogs and restricted breed dogs.

❖ No. of declared menacing dogs

2013/14:	0
2014/15:	0
2015/16:	2
2016/17:	3

Ongoing Council programs and initiatives include:

- Providing information to residents on the types of declared dogs and how they are to be identified and kept in compliance with the Act and Regulations.
- Ensuring all owners of declared dogs are aware of their obligations under the Act regarding identification and the keeping of these dogs by providing them with relevant information.
- Ensuring all declared dogs are accurately registered on the Victorian Declared Dog Registry and that any changes to details are updated as soon as possible.
- Annual audits of all properties housing declared dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs.
- Monitoring of registrations and animal complaints for potential restricted breed dogs.
- Not accepting new registrations of a restricted breed dogs in the municipality and seizing dogs suspected of being restricted breeds.

5.2 OUR PLANS

Objective 1: **Develop clear policy and procedures for Declared Dogs in the municipality by June 2018**

Activity	When	Evaluation
Ensure that Council's declaration policies and procedures are sound and robust to support any appeals before VCAT. Ensure Council has specific declaration procedures for each of type of declaration (i.e., Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed dogs).	June 2018	Completed procedures and successful defence of declaration upon review.

Objective 2 **Community awareness of dangerous and menacing dogs.**

Activity	When	Evaluation
Educate the community about what constitutes a declared dog via web site	Ongoing	Monitor website activity.

Objective 3 **Effectively inspect and audit all declared dog premises annually to ensure they are compliant.**

Activity	When	Evaluation
Inspect and audit all declared dog premises annually to ensure compliance.	Annually	Review and monitor number of breaches annually.
Encourage and assist all owners of declared dogs to be aware of their obligations under the Act regarding identification and keeping these dogs by providing them with relevant sections of the Act, brochures, fact sheets/develop information kit.	Annually	Reduction in breaches.

Objective 4 **Ensure guard dogs are appropriately registered and housed.**

Activity	When	Evaluation
Inspect industrial areas in the municipality for dogs housed or kept for guarding purposes.	Annually	Monitor compliance.

6. OVERPOPULATION AND HIGH EUTHANASIA

6.1 CURRENT SITUATION AND PRACTICE

The Domestic Animals Act 1994 provides guidance and procedures related to euthanasia of domestic animals. Strathbogie Shire aims to return lost animals to owners wherever possible, however this relies on animals being identifiable through micro-chipping or tags, and euthanasia is a last resort.

This section outlines objectives and activities to address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for domestic animals.

❖ No. of animals rehomed

2013/14:	12
2014/15:	18
2015/16:	15
2016/17:	12

Ongoing Council programs and initiatives include:

- Promotion of registration and microchipping of domestic cats and dogs over 3 months of age to increase likelihood of return to owners.
- Community education on responsible ownership relating to how to keep cats and dogs secure on a property.
- Community education on detrimental impacts from over population of domestic animals and euthanasia outcomes particularly related to stray animals.
- Establishing Section 84Y agreements with appropriate animal agencies/shelters to facilitate rehousing programs. Council has Section 84Y agreements with Strathbogie Veterinary Clinic, Euroa Veterinary Clinic and Victorian Dog Rescue and Resource Group Inc.
- Promotion of rehousing/adoption programs, including waiver of registration fee for the year of registration where animals are rehomed through Council's service, the Lost Dogs Home, RSPCA or other service provider.
- Providing information to the community concerning lost and found animals to promote return and/or rehousing.
- Investigation of reports of unregistered breeders.

6.2 OUR PLANS

Objective 1: Reduce the number of unwanted animals.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Use media to encourage de-sexing of pets.	Twice yearly	Changes in the longer term in regard to the proportion of de-sexed animals on pet registration database, proportion of impounded pets that are de-sexed etc.
Investigate discount de-sexing days or ongoing subsidised de-sexing for pets of low income earners via agreements with local vet clinics.	June 2018	Increased de-sexing rates.
Proactively seek to enter S84Y agreements with other agencies to provide opportunities for re-housing and returns and promote via relevant media.	Monthly	Review of data recording number of animals rehoused.
Provide and promote first registration free of charge (i.e. registration fee refunded) if animal adopted from pound or shelter.	Ongoing	Increased re-housing and possibly de-sexing.

Objective 2: Identify and close down all illegally operating Domestic Animal Breeding establishments in the municipality

Activity	When	Evaluation
Undertake education campaign to promote awareness about definition of Domestic Animal Breeding establishments and Code Of Practice requirements for businesses. Follow up people advertising pets for sale (eg in local papers or on local noticeboards), to determine if they are a DAB and are registered with council.	June 2018	Compare number of council registered breeding establishments before and after campaign.
Audit every Domestic Animal Breeding business annually for compliance. Enforce compliance with minimum requirements.	Annually	Number of audits conducted, and summary of outcomes (including any Domestic Animal Breeding business closed due to non-compliance).

Objective 3: Encourage the reduction of the number of unwanted litters of cats.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Provide a link to "Who's for Cats?" website and promote other educational programs on Council's website and offices.	Ongoing	Monitor website activity Record number of semi owned cats handed in to the pound

7. DOMESTIC ANIMAL BUSINESSES

7.1 CURRENT SITUATION AND PRACTICE

Pursuant to the Domestic Animals Act 1994, Domestic Animal Businesses include a Council pound, a dog and/or cat breeding business, a dog training establishment, a pet shop, an animal shelter, an establishment boarding dogs or cats, or an establishment that is rearing dogs or cats.

This section outlines objectives and activities to ensure domestic animal businesses operate consistent with the provisions of the Domestic Animal Act.

❖ No. of domestic animal business

2016/17: 2

Ongoing Council programs and initiatives include:

- Registration and renewal of all Domestic Animal Businesses situated within the municipal district.
- Distribution and provision of information related to Domestic Animal Businesses and the relevant codes of practice to operators and owners.
- Regular audits of all registered Domestic Animal Businesses to ensure compliance.
- Investigation of complaints concerning Domestic Animal Business or unregistered businesses and undertaking appropriate enforcement proceedings where relevant.

7.2 OUR PLANS

Objective 1: Identify and register all Domestic Animal Businesses in the municipality.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Identify all businesses that should be registered Domestic Animal Businesses (DABs) in the municipality using Yellow Pages and similar tools. Follow up to determine whether they are and should be registered with Council.	June 2018	Compare number of registered DABs before and after activity (likely increase)

Objective 2: Identify and manage all potential excess animal/DABs in the municipality.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Proactively identify excess animals/unregistered DABs using animal register and door knocking.	Ongoing	Compare number of registered DABs before and after each activity.
Investigate the ability for applicable organisations to provide Council with Statement of Compliance for members operating within the municipality.	Ongoing	Report on findings of investigation.

Objective 3: Annual audit of registered domestic animal businesses.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Conduct inspections, set fees and audit DABs.	Annually	Report on action taken.
Develop a policy to deal with DABs audit outcomes.	June 2018	Policy developed and provides clear, consistent steps to deal with breaches.
Ensure compliance with all relevant sections of the Act.	Annually or as required	Report on action taken.

Objective 4: Effectively resource door knocking activity.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Resource post animal registration process to include annual door knocking to audit potential owners of excess animals.	Annually	Compliance with local laws and relevant legislation.

Objective 5: Effectively ensure compliance of applicable organisation members operating within municipality.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Forward welfare complaints received about members' operations to the relevant applicable organisation.	As required	Monitor currency of membership at animal registration renewal and follow up if required.

8. OTHER MATTERS

Emergency Management and Animal Welfare

8.1 CURRENT SITUATION

The Domestic Animals Act 1994 allows for the Domestic Animal Management Plan to consider any other matters that may be relevant to domestic animals in the Council's municipal district.

This section focusses specifically on domestic animals in relation to emergency management planning .

Ongoing Council programs and initiatives include:

- Inclusion of domestic animals as a consideration in the Municipal Emergency Response Plan.
- Community education on what to think about in terms of domestic animals in the case of an emergency or evacuation.
- Promotion of registration and micro-chipping of domestic cats and dogs over 3 months of age to increase likelihood of return to owners in case of an emergency.
- Working with other relevant animal welfare agencies to manage domestic animal issues during emergency events.

8.2 OUR PLANS

Objective 1: Inclusion of Animal & Stock Emergency Welfare Plan in Municipal Emergency Response Planning

Activity	When	Evaluation
Include an Animal and Stock Emergency Welfare Plan as part of the Municipal Emergency Response Plan.	Ongoing	Animal and Stock Emergency Welfare Plan included in Municipal Emergency Response Plan.
Use media to educate pet owners on what to consider in an emergency. (This include food, water, bowls, bedding, cage, medication, registration, micro-chipping and external identification – e.g. collar with registration tag.)	Annually	Record media events.

ANNUAL REVIEW OF PLAN AND ANNUAL REPORTING

Under Section 68A(3) of the Act;

Every Council must—

- a) review its domestic animal management plan annually and, if appropriate, amend the plan*
- b) provide the Department of Primary Industries' Secretary with a copy of the plan and any amendments to the plan*
- c) publish an evaluation of its implementation of the plan in its annual report.*

As per this legislative requirement, Council will review its Domestic Animal Management Plan annually to assess whether any amendments are necessary in order to ensure the Plan is relevant and can be completed within the required timeframes.

The annual assessment will focus on:

- **Activities** – the extent to which the Activities were completed and successful
- **Objectives** – the extent to which the Objectives were met by carrying out the Activities

In the final year of the Plan, Council will undertake a major review and commence drafting of the Domestic Animal Management Plan for 2020 - 2024.