

COUNCIL POLICY

**Policy name**

Management of Feral and/or Infant Animals

Abstract

The objective of this Policy is to provide a mechanism to manage seized and impound feral animals that are a danger for staff to handle, and infant animals that need intensive care to survive.

Dates	Policy or amendment approved	20 Jul 2022
	Policy or amendment takes effect	18 Aug 2022
	Policy is due for review (up to 4 years)	20 Jul 2026
Endorsed by	Executive Leadership Team 25/5/22	
Approved by	Gunnedah Shire Council, at its [Meeting type] Meeting of Council held 20 Jul 2022 Resolution number: 19.07/22	
Policy Custodian	Regulatory Services Coordinator	
Relevant to	Regulatory Services staff	
Superseded Policies	None	
Related documents		
Related legislation	Companion Animals Act 1998 (NSW) Companion Animals Regulation 2018 (NSW) Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979 (NSW)	

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1. Purpose

- 1.1 This Policy is required under *Section 64(2)* of the *Companion Animals Act* as a consistent and transparent framework for Council to euthanise feral and infant companion animals, as a humane and lawful alternative to sustaining those animals in Council's impound facility for any period of time set out in the Act.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This Policy applies to Gunnedah Shire Council, its Councillors, staff, and contracted service providers.

3. Definitions

- 3.1 **Council pound facility:** includes any pound facility operated by Council or Council's contracted service provider.

Feral companion animal: means a dog or cat whose owner is unknown or unidentified and has been living as a wild animal in undomesticated circumstances and, demonstrates such wild behaviour that handling the animal would pose a risk to staff and be seen as cruel to keeping the animal caged for any length of time longer than deemed necessary.

Infant companion animal: Means a dog or cat in the early stage of existence that is not able to feed and fend for itself, or is of such an age that keeping it within a pound facility would place the animal's welfare at risk.

Unidentified companion animal: Means a dog or cat that has no form of identification contained on its' being such as a microchip or collar and tag containing owner details.

4. Policy principles

- 4.1 Feral companion animals and particularly cats are difficult and dangerous to handle, and are rarely if ever rescued from pounds by rehoming organisations. Feral cats pose an extreme risk of injuring any person attempting to handle them and can pass on potentially fatal disease. Feral cats also pose an unacceptable risk to the environment and threaten the survival of over 100 native species. Impounded feral cats are unable to be exercised and need to be sustained in cat enclosures for the impound period of a minimum of 7 days. This would be cruel and inhumane.

Infant animals that are incapable of feeding and fending for themselves require intensive care and feeding specific formulas several times daily. The current animal impound facility is not of a design or standard that is suitable to sustain infant life. The existing animal impound facility is not climate controlled and infant animals may be distressed by noise generated by dogs that are unable to be isolated from cats. It may be considered cruel or inhumane to attempt to sustain infant animals in that environment. Council's Animal Control budget and existing physical and human resources are also not able to meet the demands of sustaining infant animals.

5. Policy statement

5.1 Introduction

The *Companion Animals Act 1998* (the Act) requires a person whom seizes a companion animals under the provisions of the Act must cause the seized animal to be returned to its' owner, delivered to the Council pound, or surrendered to an Authorised Council Officer within a reasonable time. The Act then provides for procedures in dealing with the animals including statutory holding periods.

In some cases the animals seized by or surrendered to Council's Authorised Officers may be feral. Some may be infant animals of such a young age that it cannot support its own life. In these cases *Section 64(2)* of the Act requires Council to have a policy which provides a clear direction on how these animals are to be dealt with, including alternatives to euthanasia, and euthanasia where alternatives are not available or where it is considered cruel to keep the animal caged from any nominated statutory period as defined in *Section 64(1)* of the Act.

The current holding period stand at seven (7) days for unidentified animals and fourteen (14) days for identified animals. *Section 64B* of the Act further provides that a Council must publicly advertise and offer to approved rehoming organisations a seized or surrendered animal before taking action under *Section 64* or *Section 64A*.

5.2 Feral companion animals

Animals accepted into Council's pound facility suspected of being feral must be assessed by an experienced staff member of that facility and a veterinarian. If the animal is deemed feral and reasonable investigations have been conducted to identify an owner, and/or it is considered that the animal is so severely injured, diseased, or in such a physical condition that it is cruel to keep the animal alive, the animal may be humanely euthanised by a veterinarian.

5.3 Infant Companion Animals

Animals accepted into Council's pound facility suspected of being infant must be assessed by an experienced staff member of that facility and a veterinarian. If it is deemed that the infant animal is of such an age and size that survival in the long term would be remote, then Council authorises the euthanasia under this Policy.

Should the infant animal be of such a size and age that survival is possible through intensive care external of the pound facility, or it is in the best interest of the of the infant animal to justify early release, Council then authorises the release of the infant as an alternative to euthanasia subject to conditions within this Policy. If suitable alternatives to euthanasia are not available at the time then Council authorises the euthanasia of the infant animal.

5.3.1 Early release as an alternative

Companion animals identified as infant may be released on a permanent basis to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals NSW (RSPCA), or an approved foster carer with a current Memorandum of Understanding in partnership with RSPCA NSW.

5.4 Conclusion

This Policy authorises the euthanasia of feral and/or infant animals provided that the framework and processes described are complied with. Euthanasia must only be considered after reasonable alternatives have been considered, and must be carried out by a licensed veterinarian in accordance with the relevant standards and principles.

6. Accountability, roles and responsibilities

6.1 Policy Custodian - Regulatory Services Coordinator

Council's Regulatory Services Coordinator is the officer accountable for managing policy compliance and initiating the policy review process. They will also have the responsibility for all aspects of policy implementation, unless appropriately delegated to another officer. These responsibilities include being the primary contact point for advice on the policy or its implementation; establishing and maintaining Council's records in relation to the policy; proposing amendments; and managing the consultation process when the policy is due for review.

6.2 Authorisation of euthanasia

Council authorises the euthanasia of feral and infant animals that are unsuitable or unlikely to be rehomed, or when it is in the best interest for the welfare of the animals following any advice provided by a veterinarian or authorised officer. The Regulatory Services Coordinator may authorise such euthanasia.

6.3 Responsible officers

Council's authorised officers under the *Companion Animals Act 1998*.

7. Acknowledgements

- 7.1 Maitland City Council, Management of Feral and/or Infant Animals Policy
Shoalhaven City Council, Companion Animals – Management of Feral and Infant cats and Dogs
Armidale Regional Council, Treatment of Feral and Infant Animals Policy

8. Version control and change history

Date	Version	Approved by & resolution no.	Amendment
20 Jul 2022	1	Council Resolution 19.07/22	