



You, your pet and us

Draft Animal Management Plan



I am pleased to present Darwin City Council's Draft Animal Management Plan.

Pets are an important part of Darwin's lifestyle and are more often than not loved members of our family. They bring many benefits to us as owners and can dramatically improve our quality of life. However owning a pet is also a large responsibility that should not be taken lightly. Managing pets within Darwin is complex. In approaching this task, Council has to consider many aspects:

- the rights and welfare of pets;
- the rights of the owner to enjoy their pet;
- the owner's responsibilities; and
- the rights of other members of our community.

With such a high rate of pet ownership in Darwin, particularly of dogs and cats, Council has a complex challenge to balance the rights of pet owners with the need to provide a safe, amenable environment for the community.

Unfortunately complaints involving dogs and cats have been consistently high for some years and to address this issue, Council has reviewed its By-Laws. To back that up, we have developed a comprehensive Animal Management Plan to act as a practical guide outlining how Council manages our pets, principally our dogs and cats, within Darwin.

It is designed not only to help animal owners to clearly understand their responsibilities but for members of the public to understand Council's role and the processes it must follow.

Council is seeking your views in respect to its draft Animal Management Plan to ensure that we are responding to the needs of both pet owners and members of the community.

Please email your views on the plan to dcc@darwin.nt.gov.au or by post to Darwin City Council, GPO Box 84, Darwin NT 0801.

The Animal Management Plan is in draft format and is subject to relevant legislation and policies being passed and approved. Therefore our process will involve the ongoing consultation of community members and associated stakeholders.

We look forward to listening to you and working with you to refine our Animal Management Plan, one where we continue to combine the best lifestyle in Australia with all the benefits and enrichment that our animals and pets bring to us.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Allan McGill".

Allan McGill
Chief Executive Officer

You, your pet and us



Household pets, usually dogs and cats, are part of the family in many Darwin homes. They are wonderful companions and loved members of the family.

The health and social benefits of having pets are widely recognised. Most pet owners are usually healthy, happy and independent, more active, enjoy affection and unconditional love, feel more secure, do not feel lonely and suffer less from depression and stress.

Children who grow up with pets have higher self esteem and improved social skills with a good understanding of discipline and responsibility. Children learn how to share their time and companionship with a pet that is reliant on them and are more likely to be responsible pet owners of the future.

In Darwin there are a large number of households with pets, particularly dogs and cats. In fact, in 2007 there were approximately 8,695 registered dogs. The number of cats is unknown as registration has not been a requirement.

With such a high rate of pet ownership, we need to treat our pets with respect and take responsibility for them. They depend on us for food and shelter and they are family, not property.

You are responsible for a pet for its entire life span. You need time every day to devote to their care and well being. Pets cost money for a variety of reasons such as their food, health care, supplies, registration, training and in the case of dogs, obedience lessons.

Darwin City Council wants residents to enjoy their pets and be responsible pet owners who are considerate to others in our community who do not have pets.

Managing pets is a complex issue. We want to balance your right to own a pet with the community's need for safety, amenity, peace and quiet.

Please read the following information which is our comprehensive Animal Management Plan, a guide to the Darwin City Council By-Laws. If you require more information about the plan or the By-Laws, please contact us.

Introduction



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You, your pet and us



Council's role

Council administers the Animal Management By-Laws and works to encourage responsible pet ownership via education, services and facilities.

This Animal Management Plan has been produced to help explain the By-Laws and help pet owners in Darwin understand their legal and social obligations.

Council is not responsible for the administration of the Animal Welfare Act. The Northern Territory Government and the RSPCA carry out this function.

Council has a well-trained team that is dedicated to animal management and education, and regulatory services officers have basic training in animal management and handling. They also undertake training in other related matters including complaint investigation, evidence gathering, conflict management and training in Council procedures and policies.

Why we need an Animal Management Plan

This Animal Management Plan is a practical guide to managing dogs and cats, your pets, in Darwin.

It provides guidelines and directions for Council employees and Darwin residents in respect to dog and cat management. It considers the amenity, safety, health and legal obligations of responsible pet ownership in Darwin and offers support to pet owners and those with complaints by clearly outlining Council's procedures and the education programs that are available.

What are the benefits of good animal management?

As a pet owner:

- You know exactly what your responsibilities are.
- You are offered support by Council.
- You understand what will happen if your pet is involved in an incident or you do not meet your legal obligations.

As a member of the community:

- You are supported by Council agencies.
- The guidelines and processes are clearly explained.
- You know exactly what you have to do if you wish to complain or comment.
- You know who to contact in case of an incident or accident.

As a Council:

- We know clearly what our responsibilities are and can respond with help and advice.
- Animal and pet issues are consolidated and integrated into several Council strategies.
- We can target our community education programs to make them more effective for pet owners who lack awareness and information.
- We can learn from the experiences of other Councils across Australia.



Objective

To provide animal management services that meet the needs of the community and encourage responsible pet ownership.



How to use this Animal Management Plan

The plan is a practical guide.

It is designed to help dog and cat owners understand their responsibilities in accordance with the By-Laws. It addresses the most common issues associated with pet ownership and the most common areas of complaint.

It is important to remember that the Animal Management Plan is ONLY a guide. Its application is subject to relevant legislation and Council policy and it will from time to time be amended accordingly. The relevant legislation is described later in this document.

Contact numbers

- Pet Care Help Line (08) 8930 0606
- Animal Supervisor (08) 8930 0605
- Animal Education Officer (08) 8930 0606
- Manager, Regulatory Services (08) 8930 0421
- After hours assistance (08) 8930 0600

* Council will respond to after hours emergency calls when a dog that is at large has attacked/menaced someone or is being aggressive.



Enquiries 08 8930 0606

www.darwin.nt.gov.au