

1. BACKGROUND

It is a requirement of the Companion Animals Act 1998 ('the Act'), that a person who seizes a Companion Animal under the provisions of the Act, must cause the seized animal to be returned to its owner, delivered to the Council pound, or surrender the animal to an Authorised Officer within a reasonable timeframe. The Act then provides for procedures in dealing with animals including statutory holding periods.

In some cases the animals which have been seized are feral, and in other cases an infant animal is of such a young age that it cannot support its own life. In these cases, Section 64(2) requires Council to have a policy which provides 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 for any nominated statutory period as defined in Section 64(1) of the Act. The standard holding period currently stands at seven (7) days for unidentified animals and 14 days for identified animals.

2. PURPOSE

The policy outlines the management of feral or infant companion animals, which have been lawfully seized or surrendered.

3. POLICY OBJECTIVE

The objective of the policy is to establish guidelines for dealing with infant or feral animals and aim to safeguard staff from the risk associated with dealing with feral animals.

4. LEGISLATION

Companion Animals Act 1998

Companion Animals Regulation 2018

5. APPLICATION/SCOPE

This policy applies to the assessment and management of any feral or infant companion animal which has been lawfully seized or surrendered within the local government area of Coonamble Shire Council that is not suitable for re-homing, or able to be housed at Council's Impounding Facility.

6. POLICY

6.1 Infant Animals

Animals accepted into Council's pound facility identified as being infant animals will be assessed by a Regulatory Officer and the results documented and signed off by the Manager Planning, Regulatory and Compliance.

Should the infant animal be of such a size and age that survival in the long term would be remote, then Council will authorise the euthanasia of the animal 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, or it is in the best interest of the infant animal to warrant early release, the Council will authorise the release of the infant animal as an alternative to euthanasia, subject to the early release conditions as outlined within this policy. If suitable alternatives to euthanasia are not available at the time then Council authorises the euthanasia of the infant companion animal.

6.1.1 Early Release as an Alternative to Euthanasia

Companion animals identified as being an infant may be released on a permanent basis prior to the expiration of the statutory holding period as an alternative to euthanasia, or on the basis that such action is in the best interest of the infant companion animal's welfare.

6.2 Feral Animals

Animals accepted into Council's pound facility that are suspected of being feral will be assessed by a Regulatory Officer and the results documented and signed off by the Manager Planning, Regulatory and Compliance to validate that the animal is 'feral'.

A companion animal that is wearing a collar, identification tag or is microchipped will not be deemed feral.

Should the animal be deemed as feral and reasonable investigations into its identification have been made, and it considered cruel to keep the animal caged for the statutory holding period, the Council authorises that the animal may be euthanised prior to the standard statutory holding period.

7. DEFINITIONS

Authorised Officer – an employee of Coonamble Shire Council with delegated authority under the *Companion Animals Act 1998*.

Companion animal – a dog or cat.

Council – Coonamble Shire Council

Feral Animal – means a dog or cat whose owner is 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 keep the animal caged for any length of time than deemed necessary.

Infant Animal – means a dog or cat in the first stage of existence and refers to an animal that is not able to feed and fend for itself or is of such age that keeping it within a pound facility would place the animal's welfare at risk.

Statutory Holding Period – a period seven days (7) days for unidentified animals and period of 14 days for identified animals.

Unidentified 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's details.

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