



Animal Management Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2026

LITCHFIELD
COUNCIL



INTRODUCTION

WHAT

The **Litchfield Council Animal Management Strategy and Action Plan 2023 - 2026** gives guidance to Council and the Litchfield community on the animal management, information and education services provided by Council, with particular emphasis on public safety, public amenity and responsible dog ownership.

The Strategy will provide a framework to:

- 1 Ensure the safety and amenity of the public, domestic animals and wildlife from negative dog behaviours, and provide advice on other animal management issues
- 2 Promote and encourage responsible dog ownership
- 3 Provide effective management of dogs and enforcement of dog By-Laws in the community

WHY

Dogs are an integral part of many people's lives, often considered valued members of the family, contributing to various positive indicators of physical and mental well-being. This Strategy provides for measures to ensure safety and amenity in the community through effective communication, education and regulation of the *Litchfield Council (Dog Management) By-Laws 2017*. The Strategy aims to contribute to Council's vision of being "**the best place to live in the Top End**" for dog owners and non-owners alike. Management of animals other than dogs is limited to advice and referral to relevant agencies.

"Up to one year (to 31 August) of registration is free for dogs obtained from a rehoming organisation.





Just moved to
Litchfield?

We offer reciprocal
registration with a
number of other Top
End Councils.

HOW

Communicate

- Communicate our Ranger Services to the community
- Strengthen our relationships with rehoming organisations, vet clinics and other organisations

Educate

- Deliver age-appropriate education programs and provide advice on dog safety and responsible dog ownership
- Train our Council Rangers in best practice dog behaviour and handling, contemporary investigation and regulation methods, use of technology and providing quality customer service
- Provide advice and information on managing issues relating to other animals such as cats, roosters, peacocks and livestock

Investigate

- Conduct investigations of dog complaints according to Council's By-Laws, policies and procedures, prioritising dog attacks and menacing behaviour
- Conduct regular Ranger Patrols within the Municipality to collect and contain wandering dogs
- Conduct fence inspections to ensure effective containment for repeat or serious offending dogs

Regulate

- Encourage voluntary compliance by members of the Litchfield community with Council's dog management By-Laws
- Escalate consistent and proportionate enforcement for non-compliance or repeat violations of Council's dog management By-Laws according to Council's Compliance and Enforcement Policy
- Maintain a register of declared dangerous dogs
- Provide a range of dog registration options that includes the use of mobile EFTPOS technology in the field to facilitate dog registration compliance
- Manage Council's dog impound facility when registered dogs are unable to be returned to their owners or must be held pending an investigation

OBJECTIVES

Council works with the community to promote responsible dog ownership and when necessary and appropriate, enforces dog management legislation according to community expectations. It provides advice only relating to the management of other animals common to the Municipality, such as cats, roosters, peacocks and livestock.



This Strategy has the following objectives:

- 1 To provide a range of measures for the management of dogs that uphold the health, safety and amenity of the community

- 2 To promote and encourage responsible dog ownership

- 3 To ensure all dogs within the Municipality are microchipped, registered, and securely contained at their property

- 4 To provide a range of advice and education opportunities on dog management suitable for a variety of audiences

- 5 To provide advice to the public on managing issues with other animals and Council’s actions in relation to animals other than dogs

Impounding Statistics

Category	2020	2021	2022
Impounded	297	306	333
Released to Owner	64%	58%	61%
Rehomed	32%	30%	30%
Euthanised	4%	12%	9%
Male	47%	52%	53%
Female	53%	48%	47%
Entire	77%	72%	71%
Desexed	23%	28%	29%



OBJECTIVE 1

To provide a range of measures for the management of dogs that uphold the health, safety and amenity of the community

What we will do

- Administer dog management legislation to promote responsible pet ownership
- Be responsive to investigating all issues of complaint regarding dogs - prioritising attacks, menaces and dogs at large by prompt attendance in the field



Key Actions

Intention	What we will do	Success Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administer dog management legislation to uphold public health, safety and amenity • Ensure dangerous, menacing and declared dogs are identified and kept in compliance with Council’s By-Laws • Encourage reporting of dog issues directly to Council instead of social media • Continue forging relationships with rehoming agencies, vet clinics, other Councils and organisations • Ensure Council’s Rangers have the skills and training to execute their role in compliance with By-Laws and other legislation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure an appropriate and proportionate approach to compliance and regulation • Investigate complaints in a timely and consistent manner • Regulate dangerous dogs and manage the declared dog register • Conduct Ranger patrols for wandering dogs in public places • Manage Council’s impound facility • Provide animal traps for hire to the community • Identify collaborative best practice education opportunities with other Councils to assist dog owners in managing their dogs’ behaviour, including barking noise control measures • Transfer suitable dogs to incorporated rehoming agencies • Ensure Rangers are trained in dog management techniques, complaints handling, investigation processes and customer service • Continue participation in quarterly Animal Management Reference Group meetings with other Councils to ensure consistent best practice activities and share knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased compliance with Council By-Laws in accordance with Council’s Compliance and Enforcement Policy • Increased number of dogs registered • Increased ability for Rangers to investigate and regulate complaints • Increased take-up of trap hire and desexing vouchers • Fewer dog attack and menace complaints • Fewer impounded dogs • Fewer unclaimed dogs

DID YOU KNOW?

TOP 5 DOG BREEDS IN LITCHFIELD

1. Cross Breed
2. Australian Cattle Dog
3. Kelpie
4. Staffordshire Bull Terrier
5. Border Collie

OBJECTIVE 2

To promote and encourage responsible dog ownership

What we will do

- Facilitate and promote responsible dog ownership across the Litchfield area
- Provide timely advice and information on topical dog management issues through regular social media updates and on Council’s website



Key Actions

Intention	What we will do	Success Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage dog owners to manage their dogs responsibly so that neighbours and the broader community are not adversely impacted • Promote the benefits of microchipping and registration • Encourage dog owners to ensure all contact details are current with Council • Provide a variety of information on dog issues on Council’s website and social media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage desexing of dogs by providing financial assistance for registered dogs • Provide microchipping and registration options at Council and in the field • Provide registration incentives e.g. lifetime registration for desexed dogs, free registration for the remainder of the first registration period for puppies aged under 6 months, discount options for Dogs NT members and working/assistance dogs, 1 free home delivery of registered dogs • Provide advice to the public on appropriate containment and barking noise control management options for their dogs • Provide information sheets on a range of dog management topics on our website • Identify options on restricting the number of dogs kept on urban properties to enhance community amenity • Explore options for additional categories of declared dogs eg nuisance and menacing dogs • Advocate to NTG for overarching legislation and universal registration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased new and renewed registrations • Increased registrations conducted in the field • Increased desexed dogs registered with Council • Increased take up of animal traps for hire • Fewer dog attacks and menaces • Fewer dogs at large • Fewer nuisance complaints • Fewer impounded dogs • Fewer unwanted litters • Fewer dogs being surrendered • Fewer dogs requiring rehoming • Fewer euthanasias

DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know? Dog and cat traps are available for hire from Council, just ask us!

OBJECTIVE 3

To ensure all dogs within the Municipality are microchipped, registered, and securely contained at their property

What we will do

- Aim to have all dogs within the Municipality microchipped and registered
- Strongly encourage voluntary microchipping and registration and through enforcement as required to assist in better management of dogs in the community
- Provide advice to the public and dog owners on the benefits of dog registration
- Undertake regular proactive Ranger patrols within the Municipality



Key Actions

Intention	What we will do	Success Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote registration and identification requirements in education material, social media and on Council’s website • Ensure dog registration with Council to identify ownership and owner accountability for their dog’s behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide registration renewal letters to dog owners, with optional email notification via EzyBill and SMS reminders • Offer free microchipping as part of initial registration • Conduct proactive registration audits to ensure community compliance • Ensure conditions of registration are followed up and enforced • Ensure all impounded dogs are registered and microchipped prior to release back to their owners • Encourage desexing of dogs by providing financial assistance for desexing of registered dogs • Conduct containment inspections and provide advice on effective containment options • Regulate declared dangerous dogs through monitoring and compliance checks • Conduct proportionate enforcement action according to Council’s Compliance and Enforcement Policy • Encourage registration of puppies aged under 6 months by offering free registration for the remainder of the first registration period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All dogs in the Municipality are microchipped and registered • Increased number of dogs returned home instead of being impounded • Increased number of registered dogs that are desexed • Fewer reports of dogs at large • Reduction in the number of unwanted litters • A reduction in dogs surrendered to Council • A reduction of dogs euthanised • Reduced pressure on rehoming agencies

DID YOU KNOW?

Council has agreements with RSPCA Darwin, PAWS Darwin and DACS NT to rehome suitable unclaimed dogs

OBJECTIVE 4

To provide a range of advice and education opportunities on dog management suitable for a variety of audiences

What we will do

- Conduct education programs in conjunction with local schools delivering age-appropriate information on dog safety and responsible dog ownership
- Deliver information and advice on dog management through social media, Council’s website and face-to-face interactions with the community



Key Actions

Intention	What we will do	Success Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase public awareness of responsible dog ownership • Promote events and information opportunities that support responsible dog ownership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide age-appropriate dog safety programs and responsible ownership • Provide information sessions to seniors on Council’s regulatory functions in relation to dog management • Develop fact sheets on a variety of dog issues to assist the community • Attendance at identified community events • Advertise and promote lost dogs on Council’s website and social media • Provide responsible dog ownership information to the community via Council’s website and social media • Further promote the role of Rangers in the community via Council’s website and social media • Provide information and advice to dog owners that is relevant to their circumstances that will assist with compliance of Council’s By-Laws • Provide financial assistance and information that supports the desexing of dogs • Collaborate with other Councils on best practice educational opportunities for consistency and continuity across the Top End region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of students and members of the public attending education sessions or events with Rangers • Increased public safety • Reduced number of dog incidents, particularly those in their own home • Fewer reports to Council of dog issues affecting community amenity • Fewer unwanted litters and abandonment

DID YOU KNOW?

TOP 5 DOG NAMES IN LITCHFIELD

1. Bella 2. Buddy 3. Max 4. Molly 5. Charlie

OBJECTIVE 5

To provide advice to the public on managing issues with other animals and Council’s actions in relation to animals other than dogs

What we will do

- Provide information on managing other animals in a variety of formats



Key Actions

Intention	What we will do	Success Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase dog owners’ knowledge of effective methods to manage their domestic animals • Provide information on other community and government agencies for which management of other animals are their responsibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop fact sheets on managing other domestic animals such as cats, peacocks, roosters and livestock on Council’s website and social media • Record complaints regarding other animals and refer the community to the relevant authorities, such as Animal Welfare, EPA etc • Act on request of NT Police when required • Provide an animal trap hire service to members of the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased awareness in the community of relevant agencies

DID YOU KNOW?

Benefits of Desexing

- Prevents unwanted litters
- Reduces the likelihood of your dog wanting to roam
- Prevents testicular cancer in males and uterine infections and cancers in females
- Desexed dogs generally live longer
- Registration is cheaper

Council offers \$100 desexing vouchers for registered dogs

Lifetime registration is available for all desexed dogs - no renewal notifications!



www.litchfield.nt.gov.au
litchfield.council



council@litchfield.nt.gov.au
08 8983 0600



7 Bees Creek Road,
Fred's Pass