



# POLICY REGISTER

## COMPANION AND FERAL ANIMAL POLICY

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Reviewed: 24th April 2025 Minute No. 119.4.25

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## DOCUMENT CONTROL

Issue	Prepared/Revised By and Date	Action/Amendment Description	Approved By and Date
1.0	Maryanne Stephens Manager Health and Development Services	Minor amendments	Council Minute No. 274.12.18 (6th December 2018)
1.1	Maryanne Stephens Manager Health and Development Services  April 2025	Minor amendments	Council Minute No. 119.4.25 (24th April 2025)

## **POLICY AIMS**

- To minimise the euthanasia of companion animals impounded at the Warren Shire Council Animal Shelter by considering all possible alternatives to euthanasia and where practicable, to adopt these alternatives on every occasion.
- Recognises that euthanasia of feral and infant companion animals within the minimum holding period may be necessary when advised by a veterinarian.
- Complies with Sections 64 and 64A of the *Companion Animals Act 1998* (the 'Act')

## **DEFINITIONS**

**Companion Animal** – dog or cat, that are wearing a collar, identification tag or are microchipped **MUST NOT** be deemed Feral.

**Feral** – wild, or existing in a state of nature and showing no signs of domestication.

**Infant** – the animal is in the first period of existence and refers to an animal that is not able to feed and fend for itself.

**The 'Act'** - refers to the *Companion Animals Act 1998*

### **Warren Shire Council Pound**

Warren Shire Council Animal Pound is established under the provisions of the *Act*. While it is a shelter dedicated to responsible re-homing and minimal euthanasia, it is not a shelter in the sense of being a safe haven where an animal may live out the remainder of its life.

### **Minimal euthanasia and maximum re-homing**

Notwithstanding, section 64(5) of the *Act* requires that before destroying a seized animal, Council consider whether there is a possible alternative and, if practicable, adopt this alternative.

Alternatives to the Warren Shire Council Pound euthanasia are to include, but not be limited to the following:

- Working with identified owners of impounded companion animals to encourage them to reclaim their pets.
- Pro-active marketing to encourage and maximise opportunities for the responsible rehoming of a range of impounded animals, including puppies, kittens, adult and mature pets.
- Actively networking and engaging with individuals, community groups and animal rescue organisations exempt from companion animal registration under the *Act* to transfer the animal and maximise re-homing opportunities.

### **Feral & infant animals**

Section 64(2) of the *Act* outlines that feral and infant companion animals may be destroyed prior to the standard holding period in accordance with any adopted Council Policy.

Feral companion animals are generally received at the Warren Shire Council Pound in a poor condition, are difficult to handle and accommodate and are not suitable to be re-homed. Caging feral companion animals causes stress on the animal.

Infant companion animals require vast amounts of resources and time to raise, have a low resistance to diseases and are generally unlikely to survive being impounded.

This Policy authorises the humane euthanasia of feral or infant companion animals prior to the standard holding period if it is based on advice provided by a veterinarian

### **Euthanasia guidelines**

Council believes that fit and healthy companion animals that are suitable for re-homing should not be subject to euthanasia. Council nevertheless reluctantly accepts that in certain circumstance such euthanasia is necessary, in particular where there is a long-term shortage of appropriate homes for companion animals.

Circumstances where minimal euthanasia may be considered acceptable include, but are not limited to the following:

- At the request of the identified owner of a companion animal that has been surrendered due to attacking a person or animal (other than vermin) and / or a dangerous or aggressive temperament.
- Where all other veterinary treatments have failed or where pain, injury, illness or suffering cannot be ameliorated or exceed manageable levels.
- Where companion animals are vicious, dangerous or unmanageable due to their behaviour or temperament.
- Where the companion animal is a restricted breed type dog or has been declared to be a menacing or dangerous dog under the Act.

In the unfortunate event of companion animals being subject to euthanasia, in all cases it will be performed by way of lethal injection, in a humane manner and by suitably licensed veterinarian, in that it:

- Is painless;
- Is performed out of public view to avoid distress;
- Produces rapid loss of consciousness and death;
- Interrupts consciousness and reflexes simultaneously;
- Requires minimum restraint;
- Avoids excitement and causes minimal psychological stress to the animals;
- Is appropriate for the age of the animal;
- Exhibits consistent and predictable action;
- Is easily and safely administered by properly trained personnel; and
- Causes minimal emotional effects to operator and observers.

### **Review**

This Policy should be reviewed every 4 years or within 12 months following an election of Council. The Policy may be reviewed and amended at any time at Council's discretion (or if legislative changes occur).