

SUPPORTING FOSTER CARE IN THE COMMUNITY

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SUPPORTING FOSTER CARE IN THE COMMUNITY

- In 2015 DEDJTR took multiple calls from Councils
 - increasing concerns individual foster carers have large numbers of animals without appropriate facilities, staff and procedures.
 - affects the welfare of the animals and can lead to inappropriately or insufficiently rehabilitated animals being made available for rehoming.
- The Domestic Animal Unit reviewed education and community documents
- A significant lack of support and guidance for foster carers identified

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1. Introduction

This best practice guide provides Victorian dog and cat rescue groups and community foster care networks with guidance on meeting minimum legislative requirements and maximising the welfare of domestic animals being cared for and rehomed.

In Victoria, community foster care networks and rescue groups are essential in assisting to reduce the number of animals located in pounds and shelters. The process of rehabilitating and rehoming dogs and cats can be greatly assisted by these groups and helps reduce the number of animals euthanised due to not being able to find new homes.



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3. Administration

3.1. Partnerships

Partnering with a pound or shelter is a great way to build relationships and help solve the animal homelessness problem in the community. Many pounds and shelters depend on rescue partners to help reduce their animal populations.

In Victoria, a pound or shelter is required to have s84Y agreement with any group or individual that offers to rehabilitate or rehouse animals on their behalf. This guarantees that the welfare needs of the animals will be met and the animals will be given the best opportunity to be rehomed.

Many rescue groups also accept surrendered animals direct from owners, which is seen as a positive way to have a pet rehomed to a suitable family.

NOTE: if you are a CFON that takes in surrendered animals directly from owners, ensure you obtain a signed microchip transfer form to allow you to transfer the microchip registration details into your name until the dog or cat is ready for its new home. It is also important to ensure all animals on your property are registered with local your council even if they are only with you for a short period of time. This is explained further in section 3.3.

3.2. Section 84Y agreements

A section 84Y agreement is a document that sets out the requirements of rehoming animals from Victorian pounds. Most pounds are run by Councils and the law gives them the power to enter into an agreement in writing with a Shelter, CFON, Foster Care or individual. These agreements are called s84Y agreements, due to the section of the law that makes allowance for the rehoming and foster care.

Different types of section 84Y agreements exist to accommodate a range of situations where animals can be rehomed.

Animal Shelters

- Animals coming into a shelter from a pound are under a section 84Y(c) agreement, that allows the shelter to retain custody of, sell or desex any dog or cat. Shelters can then either directly sell the animals for rehoming or form s84Y agreements with CFONs and foster carers to rehouse the animals. The shelter **must** ensure that the animals are desexed and microchipped prior to being sold or given to a CFON to be rehomed.
- Example: a large animal shelter will offer animals for sale to new owners but may also enter into agreements with breed specialised CFONs to optimise the chances of rehoming specific animals.

Community Foster Care Networks

- Animals coming into the CFON direct from a pound are under the section 84Y(c) agreement to sell the dog or cat. It may be part of the agreement that the CFON undertake the desexing and microchipping of the animals, and this **must** be done before they can be sold.
- Animals coming into the CFON direct from a shelter are under the section 84Y(c) agreement to sell the dog or cat. It is a legal requirement that the dog or cat is desexed and implanted with a microchip before they leave the shelter.

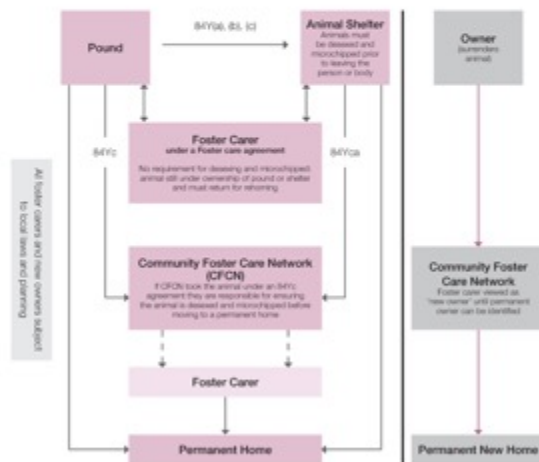
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Foster Carers

- In most cases, the animals come to a foster carer under a foster care agreement and **must** return to the pound, shelter or CFON for rehoming. The foster carer is not responsible for the desexing or microchipping as this **must** be done by group that the carer has the foster care agreement with.

Not all CFONs have section 84Y agreements with pounds and shelters, as they may accept animals to be rehomed from other sources. For instance, animals being rehomed from outside Victoria and animals that may be surrendered directly from owners. Where this is the case, the CFON are considered the new owner of the animal and should ensure that the animals are desexed and microchipped before they are sold.

The following flow chart provides the pathways available for the management and rehoming of dogs and cats.



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3.3. Legal obligations

Every person that works with animals has an obligation to know what laws they must abide by, for both the welfare of the animal and person caring for that animal. The legislation in Victoria is a tiered system that consists of Acts, Regulations, Codes of Practice and Council Local Laws.

The **Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 (POCTA)** seeks to protect animals from neglect and cruelty and sets out offences for failing to properly care and provide for a dog or cat including the provision of proper and sufficient food, water, shelter and vet treatment as well as offences such as deliberate cruelty, ill treatment, causing unnecessary pain or suffering, abandonment of cats and dogs and transport of dogs on moving vehicles.

The **Domestic Animals Act 1994 (DAA)** seeks to protect the community from animals becoming a nuisance or danger and sets out requirements for keeping cats and dogs. The following summary applies to CFCA and foster carers:

- Every dog and cat over 3 months old **must** be registered with the Council in which they are located.
- Every dog and cat **must** be microchipped to be registered with Council.
- Every dog and cat **must** wear their Council registration tag when outside the property in which they are kept.
- Dogs **must** be adequately confined to the house / yard and must not be allowed to stray.
- Dogs and cats **must not** be allowed to cause nuisance (ie excess barking).
- Owners of dogs and cats **must** be over 18 years old.



In addition to these legislative obligations, there are **local government laws** which regulate the way in which dogs and cats are kept. The following summary applies to CFCA and foster carers:

- limits on numbers of dogs or cats that may be kept on a property without an excess animal permit
- mandatory de-sexing orders for dogs and cats in some local government areas
- cat curfews (keeping cats indoors at night - house, enclosure, shed or garage) to protect native wildlife
- leashing requirements for dogs in public places
- collection of dog faeces in public places.

It is the responsibility of the person keeping a dog or a cat to know what their Council allows.

It is important to remember that in all cases, the foster carer **must** ensure that the dog or cat is registered with the local council for the duration of its stay. Victorian councils can issue a monetary fine to the carer of any unregistered dog or cat and also have the power to seize any unregistered animal.

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3.4. Surrendered animals

When a dog or cat owner surrenders an animal directly to a CFON, that CFON is considered the new owner and is required to take on full ownership responsibilities. This includes making sure the animal is registered with Council, microchipped and vaccinated.

If a CFON accepts a surrendered animal for rehoming, that CFON needs to seriously consider whether the animal is suitable for rehoming based on its health and behaviour, and ensure rehoming is in the best interests of the animal. The CFON may need to seek further veterinary assistance to make these important decisions and ensure that the welfare of the animal is paramount.

When an animal is surrendered to the CFON for rehoming, the CFON should take on the responsibility for:

- an eight day quarantine period to monitor health and behaviour
- establishing health status through a comprehensive health check by a registered veterinary practitioner
- assessing whether there are any behavioural issues that require remedial action.

A quarantine period may not be needed if the animal has been previously fully vaccinated, has a current vaccination certificate and has no infectious diseases.

3.5. Stray animals

It is important to remember that if a lost, abandoned or stray dog or cat is delivered to a CFON or any person, it **must still be taken to a pound to establish if the owner of the animal can be found**. A veterinarian cannot legally do this for you if they do not have an SIV agreement with local council.

Exemptions to the requirement to "offer up a seized dog or cat" (take a stray dog or cat to the pound) are if:

- the person who picked up the animal has a section 84V Agreement in place with Council that allows them to access microchip information
- the animal is injured – this means it **must** be taken directly to a registered veterinary practitioner.

3.6. Declared dogs

Declared dogs in Victoria refer to animals that have been declared by a Council to be a menacing dog, dangerous dog, guard dog or a restricted breed dog. There are a large number of laws and restrictions around keeping a declared dog and further information is available at www.vic.gov.au/pets.

It is important to note that if a CFON think they may have a declared dog surrendered to them, then the microchip can be checked by the local council and advice will be provided on what the rehoming options might be. Declared Restricted Breed dogs cannot be rehomed under any circumstance and it is a legal offence to do so.

3.7. Trap, Neuter, Release (TNR) schemes

TNR schemes are legal in Victoria under the DAA, as releasing an unowned cat back onto the streets is considered to be abandonment. Other TNR issues include failing to register cats with the local council and not complying with requirements to prevent cats causing a nuisance. A lack of preventative and ongoing veterinary care could also lead to offences under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986.

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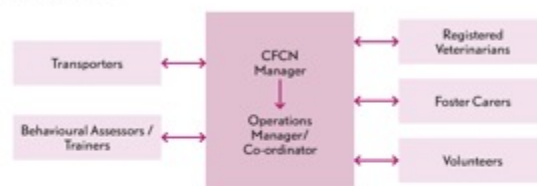
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4. Community Foster Care Network Operations

4.1. Key roles

There are a range of key roles that may feature in a CFCN, depending on the size and structure of the group. While not every group will have individuals identified to undertake specific roles, it is important that the function of each role is covered by the CFCN.



CFCN Manager

The manager is usually the person that oversees the CFCN and how it operates.

The manager of a CFCN is responsible for:

- the overall management and conduct of the CFCN
- ensuring compliance with relevant legislation
- the health and wellbeing of all animals in the CFCN
- promoting and supporting relevant formal and informal training for volunteers
- having a written agreement with sufficient veterinary practitioners to provide prompt treatment, other than first-aid, and, if necessary, euthanasia
- the protection of volunteer health
- the development and maintenance of an emergency management plan
- acting on reports of responsibilities by the operations manager or volunteers
- ensuring the maintenance and retention of records.

The manager should establish a written agreement with one or more veterinary practitioners to undertake the veterinary and health management for the CFCN.

A health management plan for animals cared for by foster carers should be developed in consultation with a veterinary practitioner, and reviewed on an annual basis and/or whenever veterinary practitioners change, whichever is more frequent.

For any given business, the manager may act as operations manager and foster carer. Similarly, the operations manager may act as a foster carer at any time. That is, they may undertake the duties of another type of staff member.

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Operations Manager / Co-ordinator

The operations manager should have significant experience or qualifications in the management of dogs and cats, in order to meet their physical and behavioural needs.

The operations manager is responsible to the CFON manager for the day to day operation of the CFON which includes:

- ensuring the health and wellbeing of all animals in the CFON
- reporting to the manager on matters of compliance and injury/illness within 24 hours
- carrying out and communicating the directions of the veterinary practitioner to foster carers
- identifying and monitoring pregnant animals
- supervising of foster carers and volunteers
- maintaining and collecting records and statistics
- providing advice on the supervision of daily feeding, watering, and inspection of all animals
- providing advice on the maintenance of an overall level of hygiene in the CFON, including the disposal of waste materials
- providing prompt first aid and veterinary attention for animals when required
- responding to emergency situations for both humans and animals including evacuation procedures
- monitoring physical and psychological health of animals
- seeking relevant expert advice for adverse behavioural changes in an animal
- clearly articulating the roles and responsibilities of volunteers and critical stakeholders including registered veterinary practitioners, foster carers and vehicle transporters
- ensuring the CFON is meeting the requirements to sell animals
- contributing to the development of and carrying out of emergency management plans and actions in the event of an emergency
- monthly checking of animals currently placed in the CFON
- ensuring all animals within the network are appropriately microchipped and registered with the local council in which they reside.
- maintaining copies of surrender forms and microchip transfer forms.



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Foster Carer

Foster carers are the backbone of many CFONs —without a strong network of foster providers, the CFON simply could not take in as many animals. Having a structured fostering program is essential to an organisation's ability to care for animals.

Foster carers, including volunteers, should be experienced and competent to properly manage the type of animals kept by the CFON.

Foster carers are responsible to the operations manager for carrying out the following:

- daily feeding, watering and inspection of all animals in their care
- prompt reporting of any sick, injured or dead animals
- daily cleaning of animal housing areas; that is removal of faeces and soiled food, hosing out, replacing soiled bedding, cleaning of litter trays and feeding and drinking utensils
- administering medication and treatment as prescribed by a veterinary practitioner
- routine disinfection of animal housing areas and equipment
- exercising, socialisation and handling of animals
- provision of environmental enrichment for the animals
- record keeping and ensuring animals are registered with the local council in which they reside.

The foster carer needs to:

1. Immediately report to the operations manager animals showing any signs of pregnancy, whelping, queening or oestrus, or animals displaying any of the following symptoms:

Injury or illness

- any serious physical or behavioural abnormality
- any change in normal behaviour in an animal indicative of an animal health or welfare concern
- apparent pain
- bleeding or swelling of body parts
- ear inflammation, discharge and/or discomfort
- bloating of abdomen
- difficulty or inability to urinate or defecate
- fits or staggering
- inability to stand or walk
- lack of appetite
- lameness
- patchy hair loss
- matted or cotted coat

Infectious diseases

- weight loss
- mastitis
- scratching of coat or ears
- observation of parasites
- swollen or inflamed third eyelid
- any other signs that health or wellbeing is compromised.
- coughing
- diarrhoea, especially if bloodstained
- red or brown coloured urine
- repeated sneezing
- runny nose
- runny or inflamed eyes
- vomiting.

2. Isolate any animal showing signs of infectious disease and disinfect their housing, bedding material and feeding and drinking utensils. Foster carers must take care not to spread infection from one area to another on their hands, clothing or footwear.

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Transporter

Animal transporters are a critical part of being able to move an animal once identified as being in the care of the CFON. The private transport of individual animals is most common for CFONs, but even this activity requires consideration of the risks and care taken.

Any transporter for a CFON must be experienced or adequately trained to carry out the following tasks:

- assessing, handling, and caring for animals being transported
- ensuring the hygiene and cleanliness of the vehicle and the cages and equipment used in the vehicle, including routine cleaning and disinfection
- cleaning and disinfecting the cargo area according to infectious disease protocol after an animal showing signs of infectious disease has been removed, before the next animal is placed in the cargo area
- inspecting animals at least every 2 hours, or more frequently on veterinary advice, and providing water; cleaning cages where necessary
- ensuring cages are secured within the vehicle and ensuring appropriate paperwork is collected and delivered to the appropriate person with the animal.

Animals must be transported for the minimum time practicable, taking into consideration the most direct route between the location where the animal was collected and the destination.

Registered Veterinarian

A key relationship in a CFON is that with one or a number of registered veterinary practitioners.

A registered veterinarian can assist with:

- assessing all new animals that come into care
- developing a health management plan
- providing quarantine and isolation facilities
- providing treatment and advice for sick, injured, elderly or juvenile animals
- undertaking all veterinary procedures ie desexing, microchipping, vaccination, health checks, euthanasia.

Animal Behavioural Assessors/ Trainers

An important relationship during the rehabilitation and rehoming process is access to expert advice to assess and put in place remedial actions for adverse behaviours that may affect the wellbeing of the animal and its prospect of a successful rehoming.

There are many animal behavioural specialists who can provide professional advice on individual animals but also can provide targeted advice for how to manage animals in the CFON.

Such specialists can assist you to better understand an animal's behavioural and training needs, its limitations and develop an assessment and remediation protocol to suit.

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Volunteers

Volunteers serve in many capacities within CFONs by contributing time, energies or talents that help to fulfil the group's mission. Volunteers fulfil many additional and important roles that may include:

- dog walking
- animal grooming
- fundraising
- record keeping
- advertising & publicity
- managing social media.



4.2. Zoonoses - diseases which can be transmitted to humans from animals.

An important consideration for all individuals working in or visiting a rescue group or CFON location is the need to recognise the potential health risk for humans when working with animals. Some animals may have diseases that can be transmitted to humans (zoonoses). To protect human health a list of common zoonoses associated with animals should be included in the health management plan.

All personnel working with cats, especially women of childbearing age, must be made aware of the risk of contracting toxoplasmosis.

Human health must be protected through the provision of, or access to:

- an induction regarding health and hygiene practices for animals and humans upon commencing foster caring
- tetanus immunisation
- a thorough review of the health management plan for the network
- personal protective clothing and equipment (such as boots, coats, overalls, etc.)
- hot and cold hand washing facilities with soap at every property where foster care is taking place
- emergency planning options and arrangements in the event of a large scale emergency, natural disaster or personal emergency.

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4.3. Animal transport vehicle

Where more than one animal is to be transported, vehicles used for the transport of animals must have provision for non-compatible animals to be physically separated and restrained or individually enclosed by compartment or cage; that is,

- a design that is both escape-proof and prevents the protrusion of head and/or limbs of any animal carried
- weatherproof with adequate ventilation of vehicles, both when stationary and in motion
- constructed of materials and a design that allows for effective cleaning and disinfection
- areas of the vehicle containing animals must be maintained between 10 and 32°C at all times.

Cats must be individually caged within a vehicle. Queens with kittens may be caged together where the cage is sufficiently large enough for all cats to lie comfortably.

Dogs must not be transported in the cabin of animal transport vehicles unless restrained or enclosed in a compartment or cage.

No animal may be transported in the boot of a sedan.



4.4. Quarantine

All animals must be vaccinated and serve an eight day quarantine period prior to being made available for rehoming. The only exception is if the animal was previously vaccinated and presented with a current vaccination certificate and is free from infectious disease.

At the end of the quarantine period, all animals should again be examined by the operations manager or a veterinary practitioner to assess their suitability for sale.

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4.5. Isolation

All CFCHs need to provide an area for isolation for animals suspected of having an infectious disease, or have a written agreement with a veterinary practitioner to provide isolation facilities off site.

Isolation housing must be physically separated by an impervious barrier or a distance of at least ten metres from other types of animal housing. Animals must be maintained in an area approved in the animal health management plan – with particular reference to the area's airflow, workflow and cage or pen design.

All animals confined in isolation housing must be under the supervision of a veterinary practitioner and the fate of an animal must be decided by a veterinary practitioner.

4.6. Euthanasia

While the purpose of animal rescue is ultimately to ensure animals are rehomed, in some cases dogs and cats cannot be rehomed due a range of reasons. Some of these animals may have to be euthanased based on veterinary advice, due to age or disease related health issues.

When this is the case, euthanasia must be by barbiturate overdose carried out by a veterinary practitioner, except in emergency situations. In emergency situations, a person associated with the CFCH may carry out euthanasia under the direction of a veterinary practitioner only.

The veterinary practitioner providing approval to carry out emergency euthanasia by a CFCH must provide a written certificate or letter stating that permission was given, when the permission was given, why permission was given, and the approved form of euthanasia.

Any method of emergency euthanasia must be humane. Blunt force trauma is not considered a humane form of euthanasia for dogs and cats.

Puppies and kittens 5 weeks and under requiring euthanasia must be euthanised by intraperitoneal injection of barbiturates by a veterinary practitioner as per the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals.

4.7. Public liability insurance

If a CFCH requires any person to visit a home or business for the purpose of rehoming animals, or if any person visits a property associated with the CFCH, then the group must consider taking out public liability insurance. It can cover potential liability to third parties for personal injury or property damage. All persons associated with a CFCH have a responsibility to those visiting or engaging in activities on their premises (known as 'duty of care').

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5. Records

While every group is different, record keeping is vitally important for the smooth and transparent operation of a CFON. Having strong day-to-day operations will help ensure that the animals receive the best care and have the best opportunity to find permanent homes.

The ability to review what the CFON has done in the past is the best way to make adjustments and plan where to concentrate resources in the future. For example:

- if the CFON is not getting enough adopters, perhaps it is time to change the adoption procedure and policies
- if the CFON is not getting enough animals with strong rehoming prospects, perhaps it is time to review the intake processes or rehabilitation processes.

Depending on the size and scale of the CFON, the process of collecting data and maintaining records may be relatively informal, using simple spreadsheets. In other cases where the CFON operates with a large number of animals and foster carers, it may be useful to consider using a software package. There are many packages available such as Shelter Mate or Shelter Buddy.

The CFON manager should ensure that the records detailed below are collected and kept for a period of no less than 5 years after the animal has been sold, given away, or has become deceased.

When the CFON ceases all animal health and sale records must be retained by the manager for 5 years.

5.1. Operation records

Business records should include the following:

- a complete and up to date list of all persons working for the CFON, including the manager, operations manager, foster carers, transport drivers and volunteers
- for each individual: contact details, experience and/or qualifications, training history and tetanus vaccination status
- a list of the experience and / or qualifications of foster carers
- the ability of foster carers to handle animals with specific types of medical or behavioural issues
- emergency management and evacuation plans including site maps
- the current health management plan
- the written agreement/s for the veterinary practitioner and complete contact details
- any other contracts and contact details for external animal service providers
- all records related to the fostering, selling and rehoming of animals
- all records relating to surrendered animals, including previous owner, microchip number, copies of transfer of ownership papers, health record and vaccination status at the time of entry into the business
- a complete copy of any guarantee health statement
- copies of any standard operating procedures
- monthly animal inventory records
- financial expenditure.

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5.2. Animal records

All treatment records of any type must include the: date and time of the treatment administration, person prescribing the treatment, dosage and details of treatment, person administering the treatment, dosage administered, name and signature of person administering the treatment corresponding to the animal being treated, and any relevant observation of the animal during and post treatment.

Animals under 12 weeks of age

Animal record files should be established at birth for each individual animal born, and maintained according to the following requirements until the ownership of the animal changes hands or the animal is deceased.

For each animal under 12 weeks of age in the business, the following records should be kept:

- name (or other identification)
- microchip number (when implanted)
- sex
- breed
- birth date (or where the animal was purchased from another breeder or private person and birthdate is unknown an approximate age based on veterinary assessment)
- distinguishing features
- a complete health care and veterinary history including:
 - vaccination records
 - internal and external parasite control
 - heartworm records (dogs only)
- disposal records including date and method of disposal, and the name and address of new owners
- a copy of the vaccination certificate and breeder health declaration for the animal
- total length of stay at each step in care, rehabilitation and rehoming
- name, address and contact number of the purchaser
- return records, including date, reason for return and copies of supporting documentation, where applicable.



Animals 12 weeks of age or older

For each animal 12 weeks of age or older in the business, the following records should be kept:

- council registration certificate
- name (or other identification)
- microchip number
- sex
- breed

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- birth date (or where unknown an approximate age based on veterinary assessment)
- distinguishing features
- animal acquisition date and details of previous owner (where applicable)
- a complete health care and veterinary history including:
 - vaccination records
 - internal and external parasite control
 - heartworm records (dogs only)
- disposal records including date and mode of disposal, and the name and address of new owners
- total length of stay at each step in care, rehabilitation and rehoming
- return records, including date, reason for return and copies of supporting documentation, where applicable.

5.3. Registered veterinary practitioners agreement

A written agreement between the CFON and a veterinary practitioner, who has relevant experience in small animal health and management, should be established and include arrangements for:

- the use of the veterinary practitioner's facilities for the treatment of animals
- the provision of isolation housing if the CFON does not have a separate isolation area and the supervision of animals in isolation at the CFON
- advice and development of the health management plan for the business
- providing vaccination certificates for dogs and cats being sold from the CFON
- providing a general health check for all CFON animals
- providing veterinary assistance for the CFON at all times and provision of treatment and/or services to the CFON within 6 hours of notification that veterinary attention is required
- 24 hour contact for treatment or provision of services through an alternative 24 hour or emergency practice.

5.4. Foster care agreement

A written agreement between the CFON and a foster carer, who has relevant experience in managing dogs and/or cats should include:

- the expectations of the CFON in relation to the foster carer
- record keeping requirements
- reporting requirements
- financial arrangements for covering costs (feed, veterinary, grooming)
- how long the animal may be placed in care
- arrangements for the return of the animal for rehoming
- any specific physical, behavioural and environmental needs of the animal
- any scheduled veterinary appointments for procedures
- the provision of any ongoing veterinary treatment including administration of drugs

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- specific housing requirements is not with other dogs/ cats
- an assessment of the suitability of the dog for the foster carer's environment is house with children
- expected progress and outcomes while the animal is in care
- a specific emergency and evacuation plan for the CFON
- an ability to meet all relevant council requirements for the keeping of animals.

5.5. Health management plan

Every CFON should have a health management plan which is reviewed annually. Health management plans should be formulated in consultation with a veterinary practitioner and an animal behaviour specialist.

The health management plan might include protocols for:

- assessment for admission of new animals
- quarantine and movement of animals
- provision of appropriate diet for all animals
- hygiene, disinfection and disease prevention
- vaccination programs
- external parasite prevention and treatment programs including screening for ear mites, dermatophytes, ticks, and ringworm
- internal parasite prevention and treatment programs
- investigation and treatment of animals showing signs of disease
- response to a general outbreak of disease
- grooming requirements
- approved methods of euthanasia for emergency situations
- birthing of animals
- management of isolation facilities
- exercise, environmental enrichment and socialisation programs
- assessment programs for the health and welfare of animals being offered for sale
- behavioural and welfare assessment of animals on a daily basis
- risk assessments of housing and exercise areas and risk management plans
- pest management
- development of emergency response plans for both humans and animals.

A copy of the health management plan should be made available to every person associated with the CFON.

Further information on developing a health management plan and emergency response plan is available at www.vc.gov.au/pets/

SUPPORTING FOSTER CARE IN THE COMMUNITY

6. Management of dogs

6.1. Nutrition

Dogs must be provided with food that has sufficient nutritional value to meet their daily requirements and maintain their body condition at a level that is appropriate for their age, size and condition. This amount may also vary with climate, medical requirements and activity level.

Adult dogs should be fed a minimum of once daily or where they are fed more frequently it is important to ensure their daily requirements are not exceeded.

Dogs should also be fed raw bones regularly as these contribute to good dental health (there are also alternative products available). Cooked bones should not be fed as they can splinter and cause serious internal injuries. Offal should not be fed to dogs because of the risk of hydatid tapeworms.

Food available for dogs must be stored in a sealed container that is vermin proof and preparation of food must be conducted in hygienic areas which must be cleaned and disinfected after food is prepared. The carer must hold a minimum of five days' worth of food.

All food must be provided in suitable receptacles, with uneaten food also removed daily and replaced with fresh food.

Provision of a plentiful supply of clean, cool water is critical— even consider putting ice cubes in each water bowl and provide multiple bowls that are fixed so they can't overturn.

Dogs must have:

- access to clean drinking water at all times with water containers checked daily and maintained in a clean condition
- containers that are not easily tipped over and large enough or refilled often enough to provide access to water 24 hours a day
- containers that – if there are puppies – are safe and can't cause injury or drowning.

As a general guide the amount of water daily for an adult dog or cat is 50 ml per kg and depends on factors such as diet, weather, amount of exercise as well as the status of the animal (e.g. lactating).



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6.2. Health care

Consistent with the health management plan, a registered veterinary practitioner should be consulted to help develop a program of disease management for each animal with regular veterinary checks built into the plan for that particular animal. This should include regular health and disease management activities including:

- treatment for internal and external parasites and worms
- vaccination
- dental check-ups
- grooming
- nail clipping

Each animal's health and welfare should be checked daily including examining an animal's physical condition, signs of ill health - such as lumps and other skin disorders - and that the animal is eating, drinking, toileting and behaving normally. Veterinary advice should be promptly sought when animals show signs of injury or ill health - following immediate isolation - to provide the best opportunity to return to good health. Puppies should be checked at least twice a day.

Further signs of ill health that might be observed include:

- bleeding or swelling of body parts
- ear inflammation, discharge and/or discomfort
- bloating of abdomen
- difficulty or inability to urinate or defecate
- coughing or vomiting
- diarrhoea
- red or brown coloured urine
- repeated sneezing or runny nose
- runny or inflamed eyes
- fits or staggering
- inability to stand or walk
- lack of appetite
- lameness
- weight loss
- mastitis
- scratching of coat or ears
- observation of parasites
- swollen or inflamed third eyelid
- whelping or queening

6.3. Vaccination

In any good foster care program, vaccination of new animals coming into the CFON should be a priority. It reduces disease risks for existing animals and protects the new animals.

Where vaccination status is unknown, dogs should receive the C5 vaccine. All unvaccinated dogs, should spend at least 14 days quarantined (completely separated) from other dogs to ensure they are not carrying an infectious disease. Dogs of unknown vaccination and health status should not be fostered out until their disease status is established.

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6.4. Housing

Backyard housing

Most OFCN dogs that are waiting to be rehomed will be kept in the home of a foster carer. The housing requirements in a domestic situation are likely to be far different from a dog that is contained to a pen at a pound or shelter.

A domestic backyard should be maintained in a safe, clean and hygienic condition at all times. The backyard must have:

- enough space for dogs to move freely, urinate and defecate away from sleeping and eating areas and be cleaned daily so that yard is free of faeces
- good fencing to prevent escape
- a design that prevents children accessing the area in which the dog is located
- kennels that are large enough for the dog to stand, turn around and lie comfortably
- kennels that are waterproof and off the ground to prevent flooding, and openings that are away from the direction of wind and rain and are in shade, particularly during periods of hot weather
- beds that are raised off the floor and not made of concrete or metal as these can cause welfare issues in extremes of weather
- soft warm bedding in cold weather, taking into account any additional requirements for dogs particularly susceptible to cold, e.g. short haired dogs, puppies or older dogs may require dog coats
- protection from weather, with natural elements such as trees providing good measures of protection.

Enclosure or pen housing

Where a dog may be housed in enclosed or restricted areas, these should meet minimum size requirements as detailed in the following table:

Minimum Enclosed Area Sizes

Height of Dog (cm)	Min Area (sq. m)	Min Width (cm)	Min Height (cm)	Increased Floor Area For Each Puppy (8-16 wks) (sq. m)
70 cm +	15	240	180	0.5
40 cm - 70 cm	10	180	180	1.0
< 40 cm	7	120	180	1.5

As a general rule, approximately one third of the area should be weatherproof, with the remainder being maintained in a safe, clean and hygienic condition at all times. The enclosure must have:

- access to natural lighting
- good fencing to prevent escape
- a design that prevents children accessing the area in which the dog is located
- enough space to allow dogs to move freely, urinate and defecate away from sleeping and eating areas and be cleaned daily so that areas are free of faeces
- adequate ventilation if housing is in an enclosed area or building
- kennels that are large enough for the dog to stand, turn around and lie comfortably

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- kennels that are waterproof and off the ground to prevent flooding, and openings that are away from the direction of wind and rain and are in shade, particularly during periods of hot weather
- beds that are raised off the floor and not made of concrete or metal as these can cause welfare issues in extremes of weather
- soft warm bedding in cold weather, taking into account any additional requirements for dogs particularly susceptible to cold, e.g. short haired dogs, puppies or older dogs may require dog coats.
- protection from weather, with natural elements such as trees providing good measures of protection.

Multiple housing of animals

Dogs generally should be housed separately unless surrendered together or if compatible and having been assessed as suitable for rehoming together. If dogs are housed together, it is important that each animal still has a separate sleeping area and food container.

Where there is more than one dog housed together, dogs must be socially compatible to avoid fights. While female or de-sexed dogs can usually be safely housed together, care should be taken if housing entire males with other entire males or entire females. For multiple housed dogs, each dog must have its own sleeping mat.

6.5. Exercise, enrichment, socialisation and handling

It is important that all dogs have a minimum level of exercise. An area must be securely fenced and designed to prevent escape with direct supervision by a person, particularly when more than one animal is placed in area, to ensure animals are not in danger of attack or injury.

Where exercise occurs within the backyard, at least half of the exercise period must include interaction with a human such as walking on a lead or throwing a ball and dogs should be removed from their backyards a minimum of two sessions weekly for the purpose of handling, socialisation, enrichment or exercise.

Where dogs are housed continuously indoors, at least one full exercise session per day must be outside (weather permitting).

It is recommended that lactating female dogs be offered exercise outside their housing area, allowing them a break from their puppies.

Puppies less than 8 weeks should be moved outside of their housing area for exercise each day, this might be to another area of the house or yard.

Dogs of all ages must be provided with a minimum amount of daily exercise, socialization, handling and enrichment. Further details are provided in the following tables.



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Exercise and Enrichment for Dogs

Category	Exercise Requirements	Environmental Enrichment
Puppies 0 to 4 weeks	Normal movement within whelping box and mother's pen	Provide a variety of different surfaces within enclosure that expose puppies to different textures (e.g. hard floor, soft bedding, newspaper, artificial grass, turf)
Puppies 4-8 weeks	Normal movement and play within the mother's pen Can include playing with toys and interaction with humans	Provide a variety of different surfaces and textures within the enclosure Provide a variety of toys within the enclosure to develop motor skills and play behaviour Must rotate toys on a weekly basis
Puppies 8-16 weeks	Provide a minimum of 20 minutes run/play time daily within a secure area outside of primary housing enclosure Exercise may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • introduction of daily walks on lead • basic obedience training • training working dogs for farm work • training hunting or retrieving dogs for such activities 	Provide a variety of different surfaces within the enclosure that expose puppies to different textures Provide a variety of toys within the enclosure to develop motor skills and play behaviour Rotate toys on a weekly basis May wish to provide noise simulation (CD's)
Dogs 16 plus weeks	Minimum 30 minutes exercise twice daily with at least 2 hours between each exercise session Exercise may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • on lead walking or off leash run/play time within a secure area • competition training • training working dogs for farm work • training and participation in retrieval activities 	Provide toys such as rope and squeaky toys, rubber toys and rotate weekly. May also provide food dispensing toys that encourage foraging – treat balls, stuffed kongs, frozen food, bones May utilise competition training, crate training and training hunting / retrieving activities as alternative forms enrichment. When using these, they must occur at least 3 x weekly and must be interchanged with other forms of enrichment

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Category	Exercise Requirements	Environmental Enrichment
Senior dogs 7 years plus	Same as adult dog unless modified under health management plan	Same as adult dog unless modified under health management plan
Pregnant bitches (1-7 weeks)	Same as adult dog unless modified under health management plan	Same as adult dog unless modified under health management plan
Pregnant bitches (7+ weeks gestation and lactating)	Provide gentle exercise for a minimum 20 minutes 2x daily in an area containing natural daylight Exercise may include on-leash exercise or off-leash in a secure fenced area being directly monitored/ supervised Exercise modifications must be under the direction of a vet practitioner	Same as adult dog unless modified under health management plan
Dogs/puppies injured, ill or recovering	Under guidance of a registered veterinary practitioner	Under guidance of a registered veterinary practitioner



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Socialisation and Handling for Dogs

Category	Socialisation	Handling
Puppies 0 to 4 weeks	Include exposure to humans through daily handling Remain with mother and other litter mates unless under veterinary advice	Include 5 minutes human handling per puppy daily from 7 days of age
Orphaned puppies 0-4 weeks	Include exposure to humans through daily handling Remain with other littermates where possible, unless under vet advice	Handling of orphaned puppies outside of normal feeding and cleaning must be conducted under the direction of a vet practitioner
Puppies 4-8 weeks	Include exposure to humans through daily handling and interactive play using toys Remain with mother and other littermates until 6 weeks of age unless under vet advice May include exposure to vaccinated puppies from other litters from 6 weeks of age in a separate pen, for 10 minutes per day where practical	Minimum of 30 minutes human handling per litter daily
Puppies 8-16 weeks	Include exposure to humans through daily handling and interactive play using toys Include exposure to a variety of other vaccinated dogs that are socially compatible where practical	Minimum of 30 minutes human handling per puppy daily
Dogs 16 plus weeks	Include exposure to humans through daily handling and positive interactions such as play time outside of daily cleaning and feeding routine Include play and exercise time with a variety of other vaccinated dogs that are socially compatible	Minimum of 30 minutes human handling per dog daily
Senior dogs 7 years plus	Same as adult dog	Same as adult dog unless modified under health management plan
Pregnant bitches (1-7 weeks)	Same as adult dog	Same as adult dog unless modified under health management plan
Pregnant bitches (7 + weeks gestation and lactating)	Same as adult dog – although reduced exposure to other dogs	Same as adult dog unless modified under health management plan
Dogs puppies injured, ill or recovering	Under guidance of a registered veterinary practitioner	Under guidance of a registered veterinary practitioner

SUPPORTING FOSTER CARE IN THE COMMUNITY

The type of exercise, socialisation and enrichment activity can vary depending on the stage of life the animal is in, the point in the care, rehabilitation and rehoming process it is in, its current housing, and the period of time for which it is in care.

It is important to remember that during a **quarantine** period:

- exercise can occur by encouraging activity such as hiding food
- environmental enrichment should be provided using equipment that can be disposed of, sterilised or decontaminated
- human interaction should be encouraged but human safety and health must be taken into account
- in the case of dogs, they must be singularly exercised except puppies or kittens from the same litter or where surrendered together.

If there is an exercise area suitable for quarantined animals, the area and route to the area must be disinfected after use. Any equipment used such as grooming equipment should be allocated to that animal and be able to be sterilised, disposed of or decontaminated.

During the **post-quarantine** period:

- dogs can be exercised (no more than two per person) outside the home (subject to a risk assessment) provided they are restrained by a chain, cord or leash held by a trained or experienced person
- human interaction is strongly encouraged including activities such as grooming.

Toys and washable enrichment items should always be washed with hot soapy water when soiled, and disinfected. Dishwashers are suitable for disinfection at 65 plus degrees celsius using appropriate dishwashing detergent.

6.6. Whelping and lactating

It is important the body condition of pregnant or lactating bitches is maintained within an ideal body weight to avoid development of metabolic disease. Bitches usually have increased nutritional requirements to enable maintenance of body weight while feeding.

Pregnant and lactating bitches and puppies of 6-12 months must be fed a minimum of twice a day, with puppies of 6 weeks to 6 months being fed a minimum of three times a day.

At weaning, puppies should be provided with 3-4 meals spread through the day, which can be reduced to 2-3 meals per day at around 16 weeks and then a single meal of adult dog food at around 6-8 months. Feeding schedules may be different for large breed pups as they take longer to mature.

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7. Management of cats

7.1. Nutrition

Food available for cats must be stored in a sealed container that is vermin proof and preparation of food must be conducted in hygienic areas which must be cleaned and disinfected after food is prepared. The carer must hold a minimum of five days' worth of food.

Cats must be provided with food that has sufficient nutritional value to meet their daily requirements and maintain their body condition at a level that is appropriate for their age, size and condition.

Cats also need to be fed at least once a day but it is recommended that this amount be split into two meals. A moderately active cat generally requires around 70 kcal x body weight kg of food a day.

A cat diet should never be solely vegetables nor fresh meat.

Cats and kittens can be lactose intolerant so feeding cow's milk is not recommended – there are lactose free milk products specifically designed for cats.

All food must be provided in suitable receptacles, with uneaten food also removed daily and replaced with fresh food.

Cats must have:

- access to clean drinking water at all times with water containers checked daily and maintained in a clean condition
- containers that are not easily tipped over and large enough or refilled often enough to provide access to water 24 hours a day
- containers that – if there are kittens – are safe and can't cause injury or drowning.

All water and feeding utensils should be cleaned daily using chemicals in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.

All food and water bowls must be cleaned at least twice weekly.



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8. Caring for Animals in Special Circumstances

8.1. Pregnant and lactating bitches and queens

A pregnant bitch or queen has increased health requirements and requires additional veterinary checks.

In the last 10 days of pregnancy an animal due to whelp should be moved to individual housing – if not there already – and provided with privacy from other animals on the property (or moved to another location where they can be appropriately cared for).

Whelping animals (those beginning and in the process of giving birth) should be carefully monitored and must be provided with warm, soft bedding. After whelping, bedding should be replaced and the housing area cleaned. The animal should continue to be provided with warm, weatherproof sleeping quarters and soft bedding. The bed must be raised off the floor, but not at a height that would cause injury to a puppy or kitten should it fall out. Bedding must be changed regularly and housing areas cleaned of faeces, wasted food, and dirty water at least daily and disinfected weekly.

Puppies and kittens must not be weaned before seven weeks.

Once an animal is lactating, it should have access to a separate area that can allow them temporary respite from their kittens or puppies.

8.2. Juvenile animals

The purpose of juvenile foster care is to allow a healthy kitten or puppy to be cared for in preparation for sale and to ensure the kitten or puppy is healthy, and the age and weight required for vaccination and desexing prior to being rehomed.

8.3. Emaciated animals

Animals that have come into care in emaciated or very skinny body condition will need to be checked thoroughly by a veterinarian as soon as possible. The cause of the emaciation will need to be determined to establish the necessary treatment, whether it be a specific diet and/or medication.

Severely emaciated animals need a great deal of specialised care, in some cases it may be inappropriate or even an act of cruelty to transport the animal long distances to foster care. A FCN must assess each animal on their own merits as to their suitability to undergo transport and seek veterinary advice if unsure.

8.4. Elderly animals

Animals that are identified as being of a mature age, will have specific health and welfare needs that should be met. The animal should be checked by a veterinarian as soon as possible and any specific needs should be met by the carer. Considerations for the comfort of elderly animals may include:

- having minimal stairs and steps in the care home
- keeping the environment clear from objects that may injure an animal with poor sight
- keeping the animal warm with a jacket or coat
- moderating the level of exercise relative to the animal
- seeking advice on the nutritional needs of the animal.

SUPPORTING FOSTER CARE IN THE COMMUNITY

9. Sale of animals

All animals being sold or rehomed from a CFON should be accompanied with a health declaration, including details of any known physical abnormality at the time of sale and how that abnormality may affect the short- and long-term health and welfare of the animal, and a vaccination certificate stating the date of the last vaccination and due date of the next vaccination.

All animals being sold **must** have current vaccinations in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations and their vaccination, heartworm (dogs only) and parasite control records **must** be provided to the new owner.

All animals being sold or given away from the CFON **must** be implanted with a microchip by an authorised implanter and **must** be accompanied by a signed transfer of ownership form which is provided to the new owner upon collection of the animal. It is recommended that the CFON obtain a signature on the microchip transfer form from the purchaser and submit the form on behalf of themselves and the purchaser. This will ensure that microchips are transferred into the new owner's name promptly. A photocopy of the signed form should be provided to the purchaser.

Purchasers of deceased animals **must** be provided with a copy of the desexing certificate.

Animals may be sold with specific agreement to provide ongoing training or behavioural assessment, this should be clearly documented as to who will provide this and under what conditions.

Animals may be sold at any time but **must not** permanently leave the CFON or foster carer before 8 weeks of age.

The CFON has responsibility for the health and welfare of the animal and it is important that any new situation is assessed for what might suit the animal, the prospective new owner and their suitability for ownership.

When deciding whether a prospective adopter is suitable, some of the aspects that should be considered are:

- how the people in the house feel about having a pet
- the history of the person who is taking responsibility for the animal – including previous pets
- their readiness to take an animal to the vet if necessary
- where the pet would live
- why the person wants the pet
- whether there are existing pets in the home
- what breed is the person thinking about and will it fit in with their current lifestyle
- the makeup of the people residing at the residence
- future plans such as whether they are moving house or perhaps about to have a baby
- how social life or work obligations might impact on the ability of the person to care for the pet
- what are their backup plans if they go on holiday for example
- any health issues in the family that may be affected by the pet
- if nothing, does the landlord agree to an animal being housed at the property – consider seeking this agreement in writing.

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New owners should be provided with literature about:

- appropriate feeding
- parasite control
- health, including procedures for emergency treatment during the guarantee period
- housing
- responsible pet ownership, including current legislation covering the registration of pet animals and training opportunities available
- importance of training dogs and socialisation for cats and dogs
- vaccination.

9.1. Guarantee

A CFON may consider putting in place a sale guarantee to protect both the CFON and new owners.

For example:

- Where an animal is returned to the CFON within 3 days of sale, for any reason not supported by a statement from a veterinary practitioner, the CFON must take back the animal and refund 75% of the purchase price.
- Where an animal is returned to the CFON within 21 days of sale accompanied by a statement from a veterinary practitioner that the animal is unacceptable for health reasons, the business must take back the animal and refund 100% of the purchase price.
- If an animal is diagnosed with, suffering from, dies of, or is euthanased from a physical defect or disease that is traceable to the point of sale within 3 years of purchase, the CFON must refund 100% of the purchase price where the owner of the animal provides supporting statements from a veterinary practitioner, including test results where a suitable test is available. Owners of the animal must make veterinary reports and test results available to the CFON for the CFON to obtain their own veterinary advice (second opinion).

Test results and death certificates must be linked with the animal's microchip number.

The payment of refunds should be made upon presentation of:

- the animal for the 3-day return clause
- the animal and a signed veterinary certificate for the 21-day return clause.

For refunds being sought under the 3-year clause, the CFON should be given sufficient time to have an independent veterinary assessment of any test results, veterinary statements, etc. It would be reasonable to assume this independent veterinary assessment could be accomplished within 6 weeks of the owner of the animal supplying the necessary documentation. Therefore, the refund should be made within a period of 6 weeks of initial presentation of veterinary statements and test results or as soon as practicable after that.

Under the 3-day and 21-day clauses, the owner cannot keep the animals and request a refund. Under the 3-year clause the owner may choose to keep the animals, but request a refund to help cover veterinary/care costs.

The guarantee for refund does not apply to animals that have had full disclosure of health issues that may result in death or dismemberment, whereby the owner has signed a purchase declaration.

SUPPORTING FOSTER CARE IN THE COMMUNITY

- On 11 October the Victorian government introduced the Domestic Animals Amendment (Puppy Farm and Pet Shop) Bill to parliament

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Registration Category	Example Council Registration Fee	Foster Carer Registration Fee
Dog over 10 years of age	\$28.45	\$7
Working dog	\$28.45	\$7
Dog breeder	\$28.45	\$7
Obedience trained dog	\$28.45	\$7
Microchipped dog	\$85.35	\$7
Desexed and microchipped dog	\$19.50	\$7

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Registration Category	Example Council Registration Fee	Foster Carer Registration Fee
Cat over 10 years of age	\$21.80	\$4
Cat breeder	\$21.80	\$4
Microchipped cat	\$24.85	\$4
Desexed and microchipped cat	\$13.85	\$4
Entire Cat (unable to be desexed. Vet note required)	\$65.35	\$4

SUPPORTING FOSTER CARE IN THE COMMUNITY

- The government recognises that some foster carers do take on too many animals
- Most Councils have limits on animal numbers allowed on residential and rural properties
- Usually 2 dogs and 2 cats maximum on residential
- 5 dogs and 5 cats maximum on rural
- Some rural properties have no limit on animal numbers in some Councils.
- Animal numbers prescribed under each Councils Local Laws



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