

MANAGEMENT OF FERAL AND/OR INFANT ANIMALS



Responsible Department: Development and Economic Growth
Responsible Section: Strategy and Land Use
Responsible Officer: Ranger/Compliance Officer

Objective

The objective of this Policy is to provide a mechanism to deal with animals which are feral and a danger for staff to handle and infant animals which need constant intensive care.

Introduction

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 Council Officer within a reasonable time. The Act then provides for procedures in dealing with the animals including statutory holding periods.

In some case 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, the Act requires Council to have a Policy which provides a 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 the Act. The standard holding period currently stands at seven (7) days for unidentified animals and 14 days for identified animals.

Feral Companion Animals

Animals accepted into Council’s pound facility suspected of being feral must be assessed by the Ranger or a Veterinarian and the results of the assessment documented and signed off by the Ranger or Veterinarian to validate that the animal is assessed as ‘feral’.

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

Infant Companion Animals

Animals accepted into Council's pound facility identified as being infant animals must be assessed by either the Ranger or a veterinarian and the results of the assessment documented and signed off by the Ranger or Veterinarian to validate that the animal is assessed as 'infant'. Should the infant animal be of such a size and age that survival in the long term would be remote, then Council authorises the euthanasia 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, then Council authorises the release of the infant 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.

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 interests of the animal's welfare.

Early release is subject to the animal only being released to the following organisations:

- Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals NSW (RSPCA)
- Animal Welfare League

Conclusion

This Policy authorises the euthanasia of feral and/or infant companion animals provided that the framework and processes described are followed. Euthanasia must only be considered after reasonable consideration has been given to alternatives and must be carried out in accordance with industry standards.

Prior to euthanasia Ranger or a Veterinarian must undertake an assessment, document and sign-off on the recommended course of action.

Policy

This Policy provides the framework for consistent decision making on the management of feral and/or infant animals. The Policy applies to Narrabri Shire Council, and all its Councilors, staff and contracted service providers.

Definitions

Council pound facility: Includes any pound facility operated by Council or Council's contracted service provider.

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 behavior that handling the animal would pose a risk to staff and be seen as cruel to keep the animal caged for a longer 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.

Unidentified animal: Means a dog or cat that has no form of identification contained on or in its body being a microchip or collar and tag containing owner's details.

References

- *Companion Animals Act 1998*

History

MINUTE NUMBER	MEETING DATE	DESCRIPTION OF CHANGE
17/2017	21 February 2017	Adoption
164/2017	15 August 2017	Reviewed