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Outback Communities Authority Dog and Cat Management Plan

November 2024 - October 2029

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Contents

Executive Summary	3
Objectives.....	3
Responsibilities	4
Registration	4
Identification using Microchips	5
Benefits and Importance of Registration and Microchipping in Outback SA.....	5
Number of animals	6
Breeders of Dogs and Cats	6
Dog Management	6
Desexing Dogs.....	6
Dogs in Public Places	7
On-Leash and Off-Leash Exercise Areas.....	7
Wandering Dog/s within a Township	8
Dog Attack Involving a Person or Animal	8
Barking Dogs	8
Cat Management	9
Desexing cats	9
The Authority’s Role	10
Administration	10
Dog and Cat Registrar and Authorised Officers	10
Exemptions from the Act Held by the Authority	10
Enforcement	11
Key Contact numbers.....	11
Report a Dog Attack or Aggressive Dog	11
Dog and Cat Nuisance Complaints or for General Enquiries About this Plan.....	11
References	12

Executive Summary

Outback SA spans about 625,000 square kilometres or about 63% of the state. It is home to about 4,500 people living mainly in 24 communities and surrounds. The region includes approximately 312 pastoral leases and attracts tens of thousands of visitors during tourist season.

The Outback Communities Authority (the Authority) provides municipal services across the region, supports Progress Associations and advocates for residents of the outback.

This Dog and Cat Management Plan (**the Plan**) has been prepared by the Authority in accordance with the *Dog and Cat Management Act 1995 (the Act)* and *Dog and Cat Regulations 2017*, considering the Authority's resources and the outback environment. The Authority is defined as a council for the purposes of **the Act**.

The Authority recognises the significant role of domestic dogs and cats in outback communities as they provide vital companionship and contribute positively to residents' mental health. Working dogs play an integral role in the management of stock on pastoral properties.

Through this **Plan** the Authority is promoting responsible animal ownership that prioritizes animal welfare as well as broader community interests such as maintaining safety and reducing nuisance. Owners are supported to undertake their responsibilities, and the Authority's role is made clear.

This **Plan** has been prepared by Authority staff and it will be circulated to communities for consultation. Following any feedback, the Authority will endorse the **Plan's** submission to the Dog and Cat Management Board (DCMB) for their approval, which must be obtained before it takes effect.

The **Plan** is effective from 1 November 2024 and expires 30 October 2029.

It replaces all previous versions of the Authority's Dog and Cat Management Plan.

Objectives

The **Plan** encourages responsible dog and cat ownership in communities and Outback SA by:

1. promoting the effective management of dogs and cats within communities through education and information
2. promoting a broad understanding of animal welfare that includes treating all dogs and cats humanely, responsibly and with respect
3. collaborating with suppliers to develop services for remote communities that increase the likelihood that domestic pets receive the care they need
4. reducing public complaints resulting from cats and dogs causing nuisance
5. reducing the population of unwanted, unidentified, and feral animals caused by intentional and unintentional release of domestic animals
6. developing procedures to search for, capture, rehome, or remove unidentified animals wandering at large in townships
7. applying fair and equitable compliance measures, considering the unique nature of Outback SA

8. developing partnerships with neighbouring councils and establishing Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) so they can assist the Authority in fulfilling its duties
9. increasing public safety through the application of this **Plan**, and by working with owners to address dog and cat issues in their communities.

Responsibilities

Responsible animal ownership is defined as (but not limited to):

- a. dogs and/or cats are microchipped, desexed and registered, unless exemptions apply to the animal and/or owner, allowing for one or more of these requirements not to apply
- b. the effective control of animals always, so as not to create a nuisance for the community, and/or other animals and/or the natural environment
- c. care of dogs and cats at a standard that ensures the welfare of the animal
- d. routine veterinarian care as required to maintain good health of the animal.

Registration

Under **the Act**, all dogs and cats must be registered and identifiable by microchip, with up-to-date details on the [Dogs and Cats Online](#) website.

Registration discs are only issued at the first registration.

The Authority will remind owners of registration renewal each year.

Fees are set by the Authority at the beginning of each financial year with concession card holders able to receive a fee reduction.

The Authority prefers that dog and cat registration and fee payment be done online using the [Dogs and Cats Online](#) website.

If dog and cat owners are not able to access this online service, assistance can be sought from the Office for the Outback Communities Authority, 26 Mildred Street, Port Augusta West SA 5700.

Registration fees can also be paid at these agents:

- Andamooka Post Office, Lot 1, Opal Creek Boulevard, Andamooka SA 5722
- Leigh Creek LPO, Shop 1 Black Oak Drive, Leigh Creek SA 5731
- Yunta Post Office located in the Yunta Telecentre, Lot 1515 Railway Terrace, Yunta SA 5440.

By law, all funds from registration and fines must be returned to communities to support Dog and Cat programs. These funds are significantly less than the Authority's operational costs, therefore general revenue is used to cover the shortfall.

Identification using Microchips

All dogs and cats must be microchipped by 12 weeks old including those born before 1 July 2018 or within 28 days of taking possession of a dog or cat unless a veterinarian has granted an extension of time.

Dogs and cats must be microchipped before they are sold.

Microchip details are to be stored on the [Dogs and Cats Online](#) website and should be updated when:

- there is a change in the owner's contact details,
- there is a change in the animal's status, such as animals that are lost or animals that die
- there is a change in ownership of the animal
- the animal's primary location changes within the state or permanently interstate.

The Authority recognises the challenges of remoteness and lack of microchip implanting services in Outback SA. To address this, the Authority will develop partnerships with suppliers to provide veterinarian clinics in communities at regular intervals.

The Authority may:

- collaborate with community members without enforcing penalties if they are making efforts to comply,
- consider in some cases subsidising microchipping costs to remove financial barriers
- equip and train its Authorised Officers to implant microchips.

Benefits and Importance of Registration and Microchipping in Outback SA

Registering dogs and cats offers numerous benefits for pet owners and their animals and such as:

- recovery and return of lost animals, using the details in the microchip online records
- the identification of injured animals brought to an Authorised Officer or veterinarian
- the recovery of stolen or falsely removed pets.

To address issues with unidentified cats raised by communities the Authority may undertake controlled reduction programs with partner agencies and/or suitable contractors. The control of unidentified cats within townships will reduce nuisance, possible feral cat increase and native animals' destruction.

Having domestic (pet) cats microchipped is critical in Outback SA. During unidentified cat reduction programs a pet cat could be destroyed if it is not microchipped. Cats will be trapped within a one kilometre radius of a township and be scanned for a microchip. If a microchip is found, the cat will be returned to its owner and not included in the control program.

Number of animals

If owners keep more than two (2) dogs and/or cats per household, unless they are registered breeders or have working dogs, the Authority may engage with the owner to reduce the number of animals per household if there is concern for the animals' welfare or if they present a nuisance to the community.

Breeders of Dogs and Cats

South Australian law regulates the breeding, sale and welfare of dogs and cats. Owners must abide by the welfare standards set out in the [South Australian Standards and Guidelines for Breeding and Trading Companion Animals](#).

Anyone selling a dog or a cat they have bred must follow the six basic rules below. This includes animal rescue groups and owners of animals who have 'accidental' litters.

Breeders must:

- apply to register as a breeder on [Dogs and Cats Online](#)
- adhere to advertising rules by including their names, phone numbers and their registered breeder number
- microchip dogs and cats before sale
- at the point of sale, providing information to the new owner that includes the breeder name/s, phone number and registered breeder number, microchip number and vaccination details
- understand the desexing laws.

More information is available online at www.dogandcatboard.com.au

Dog Management

Desexing Dogs

It is a requirement of **the Act** that all dogs born after 1 July 2018, male or female, over 6 months of age or within 28 days of the owner taking possession, be desexed unless granted an exemption.

Exemptions to the desexing requirements are:

- dogs born before 1 July 2018
- dogs owned by a registered [Dogs and Cats Online](#) breeder
- dogs owned by a member of [Dogs SA](#)
- dogs defined as a 'working livestock dog' as per **the Act**

- greyhounds currently registered as racing greyhounds with Greyhound Racing SA (retired greyhounds are not exempt).

Veterinarians may grant an exemption from the requirement to desex a dog if the procedure poses an undue risk to the health of the dog, or it will adversely affect the dog's growth, development, or wellbeing.

Desexing prevents unplanned breeding. It also assists with:

- reducing aggressive behaviour
- unnecessary barking
- inclination to wander at large in communities
- decreased veterinarian visits.

Dogs in Public Places

A dog can be in a public place if it is under the effective control of a person. Effective control is defined as a dog on a leash of not more than two metres in length.

A 'public place' includes public areas within a township except when in a 'public park' where the dog can be off leash provided that:

- it is under a person's effective control by command
- the dog is near the person
- the person can always see the dog.

A 'park' is a park, garden, reserve or similar public open space, or foreshore area, within the Authority's region.

A registered Working Dog can be in a public place off leash provided:

- it is under a person's effective control by command
- the dog is near the person
- the person can always see the dog.

Greyhounds may be able to walk in a public place without a muzzle if they have passed assessment and are wearing a 'GAP green collar' from [Greyhounds As Pets South Australia](#).

On-Leash and Off-Leash Exercise Areas

There are currently no formal areas set aside within Outback SA as dog exercise areas.

Wandering Dog/s within a Township

Complaints about dogs wandering in townships can be reported to the Authority's Port Augusta Office.

When the Authority receives a complaint it will treat the complaint in accordance with **the Plan**. The urgency of action will depend on the nature of the complaint; i.e. whether the dog is reported as being dangerous or aggressive.

If during Authorised Officer duties, a dog is found wandering at large the Officer may decide to detain the dog. Every attempt will be made to identify the dog and its owner.

Any unidentified detained dog will be held for 72 hours in a partnered council animal control facility. After that, the dog may be rehomed or euthanised in accordance with **the Plan, the Act**, or any other relevant acts.

Dog owners may be issued an expiation, charged for costs and/or prosecuted for any offences, as determined by the Officer and/or Registrar.

Dog Attack Involving a Person or Animal

If a dog attacks a person or animal, or is behaving aggressively a report should be made to SA Police.

Reports can also be made to the Office for the Outback Communities Authority by calling 1800 640 542 during office hours (or by leaving a message outside of office hours if the report is not considered urgent).

The Authority takes these incidents very seriously and will investigate and/or support other investigations. The dog may be seized and detained during the investigation and could face control or destruction orders based on the investigation's findings.

Criminal actions will be reported to SA Police.

Costs may be charged to the dog's owner, and expiation notices and/or orders may be issued against an owner if necessary to resolve a dangerous dog situation.

Barking Dogs

Dogs bark for various reasons such as:

- alerting of an unusual occurrence or potential danger
- defending their territory from perceived intruders
- seeking attention from their owners
- frustration from boredom or under-stimulation
- separation or general anxiety
- responding to the barking other dogs

- out of fear, such as during thunderstorms or fireworks, pain, discomfort, health issues, or in older dogs, cognitive dysfunction.

Understanding the cause of a dog's barking can help owners address the issue more effectively as barking complaints are often complex and very difficult to deal with.

Owner education is recognised as a key approach in the reduction of this nuisance in the long term.

The Authority will:

- respond, where appropriate, to complaints from the public about barking dogs
- provide advice to the complainant such as requesting they keep a Barking Dog Diary to record the incidents and encourage the complainant to submit the diary/s when completed, so an investigation may commence
- improve awareness of owner responsibilities to prevent the dog repeating the behaviour
- encourage the dog owner to seek advice from their veterinary provider and or animal behaviourist for possible medical interventions.

Cat Management

The Authority assists cat owners to comply with legal requirements and responsible ownership. It will implement strategies to inform cat owners about best practice in caring for cats and in minimising any negative impacts they may have on the community.

Free-roaming cats can harm native wildlife. They can cause nuisances from scat, urine, and harassment of people and other pets.

Desexing cats

All cats born after 1 July 2018 are required to be desexed before 6 months old, or within 28 days of taking ownership of a cat.

Cats who meet the following criteria do not need to be desexed:

- cats born before 1 July 2018,
- cats belonging to members of the [Feline Association of South Australia](#) or [Cat Fancy of SA members](#)
- cats belonging to breeders who are registered in [Dogs and Cats Online](#).

Veterinarians may grant an exemption from the requirement to desex a cat if the procedure poses an undue risk to the health of the cat, and/or it will adversely affect the cat's growth, development, or wellbeing.

The Authority will pursue partnerships that will make desexing services more readily available in remote communities.

The Authority's Role

Administration

The Authority is required to administer and enforce the provisions relating to dogs and cats within its jurisdiction under **the Act**.

These include:

- maintaining a register of dogs and cats
- appointment of a Registrar
- appointment of at least one full-time dog and cat management officer or make other satisfactory arrangements. (The Authority currently has an exemption from this requirement. See below.)
- make satisfactory arrangements for the detention of dogs and cats seized and other obligations under **the Act**. (The Authority currently has an exemption from this requirement. See below.).

All dog and cat management programs/operations will comply with policies, Acts, Regulations and to obtain positive outcomes for owners and communities.

This **Plan** will be reviewed according to timeframes identified in the Authority's Policy Review Register.

Dog and Cat Registrar and Authorised Officers

The Director, Outback Communities Authority has been appointed by the Authority as the Dog and Cat Registrar for the unincorporated areas of South Australia. The Authority will appoint Authorised Officer/s under **the Act** on a needs basis. While the Authority currently has an exemption from this requirement, (see below) its preference is to have two Authorised Officers whenever possible. The Director will make recommendations to the Authority about staff and/or contractors most suited to this role and authorisations will be updated when any changes are required.

To cover the vast area of the Authority's responsibility, it will develop arrangements with neighbouring councils to provide Authorised Officer services if and as required, through Memorandum of Understandings.

South Australian Police officers are authorised under **the Act**.

Exemptions from the Act Held by the Authority

The Authority currently holds three exemptions (2021-2026) from certain sections of **the Act**:

1. the appointment of at least one full time authorised person or make other satisfactory arrangements for the exercise of the functions and powers of authorised persons

2. make satisfactory arrangements for the detention of dogs seized under **the Act** (and may, but need not, make such arrangements for cats)
3. provisions for parks where dogs may be exercised on-lead and off-lead.

The Authority may apply for an extension of these exemptions in the future in recognition of the unique circumstances of the Authority and Outback SA.

Enforcement

The Act requires the Authority to enforce the provisions of **the Act** within Outback SA, and it will respond to complaints from the public regarding non-compliance with provisions of the **Act**.

The Authority's approach in the first instance will be to encourage the owner/responsible person to accept their responsibilities of pet ownership and comply with the provisions of **the Act** voluntarily.

Fines may be issued or enforcement action taken by Authorised Officers after efforts to encourage compliance have failed.

Immediate action will be taken against a pet owner if an incident with an animal results in the serious injury or death of a person.

Key Contact numbers

Report a Dog Attack or Aggressive Dog

- SA Police on 131 444
- The Office for the Outback Communities Authority on 1800 640 542

Dog and Cat Nuisance Complaints or for General Enquiries About this Plan

- The Office for the Outback Communities Authority on 1800 640 542
(Monday to Friday office hours)

References

Dog and Cat Management Act 1995

Dog and Cat Management Regulations 2017

Outback Communities (Administration and Management) Act 2009

Outback Communities (Administration and Management) Regulations 2017

Local Government Act 1999

Local Government (General) Regulations 2013

Animal Welfare Act 1985

[Green Collar Assessments | Greyhounds As Pets \(gapsa.org.au\)](https://www.gapsa.org.au)

[Dog and Cat Management Board \(dogandcatboard.com.au\)](https://www.dogandcatboard.com.au)