

## Companion Animals – Management of Feral and Infant Cats and Dogs

**Policy Number:** POL16/232 • **Adopted:** 22/2/2011 • **Reaffirmed:** 21/06/2013 • **Amended:** 19/07/2016, 24/01/2017 • **Minute Number:** MIN11.149, MIN13.638, MIN16.554, MIN17.24 • **File:** 32667E • **Produced By:** Planning, Environment & Development Group • **Review Date:** 1/12/2020

### 1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to comply with the Guideline on the Exercise of Functions (the Guideline), the *Companion Animals Act 1998* (the Act) and the *Companion Animals Regulation 2008* (the Regulation).

It also supports the contractual arrangements for managing the Shoalhaven Animal Shelter and Pound Facility.

### 2. MANAGEMENT OF FERAL AND INFANT COMPANION ANIMALS

#### 2.1. Definitions

**Companion animal** means each of the following:

- (a) a dog,
- (b) a cat,
- (c) any other animal that is prescribed by the Regulation as a companion animal.

**Infant animal:** Is an animal generally under 800 grams and still totally reliant on its mother to eat, drink and for evacuations.

**Feral animal:** Is an animal in wild state, especially after escape from captivity domestication. It is an unidentified, aggressive animal that has had no demonstrable human, social interaction.

#### 2.2. Context

The Shoalhaven Animal Shelter receives feral and infant animals, mostly cats, from members of the public in person or via Ranger Services officers. The public may trap feral cats or manage to catch unowned litters without their mother or pet owners may leave litters in the overnight kennels without their mother. The Shelter will only take surrendered kittens without their mother if the kittens are old enough and able to survive without their mother.

As feral animals are unowned, multiply readily and are destructive to wildlife, they pose a nuisance to the community and a threat to the environment. Feral cats received at the

shelter suffer from capture stress which is considered by animal welfare organisations to be inhumane. As these animals are not suitable for rehoming, the earlier a decision is made to euthanase the more humane for the animal.

As infant animals are totally reliant on their mother, an educated decision must be made by staff as to the viability of the animal. In relation to eating and drinking, infants may require bottle feeding every two hours. However, these infants do not have the capacity to evacuate unless stimulated by their mother or by a foster carer.

Section 64(5) of the Act requires that, before destroying a seized animal, Council considers whether there is a possible alternative and, if practicable, adopt this alternative. It is Council's policy to comply with Section 64(5) wherever possible, and in the case of healthy infant animals and as resources permit, Council endorses that the animals be placed:

- a) In temporary care with a RSPCA NSW sanctioned foster carer until such time as the animal's legislated holding period is surpassed; or
- b) In the permanent care of an associated organisation. Associated organisations include other animal welfare organisations and like-minded community groups (which are sometimes referred to as 'rescue groups').

Council acknowledges RSPCA NSW will retain sufficient control over infant animals placed into temporary care.

### **2.3. Euthanasia of feral and infant companion animals**

In accordance with Section 64(2) of the Act, feral and infant companion animals seized or surrendered to Council's pound may be destroyed prior to the standard holding period as set out in Section 64(1) of the Act. Any policy adopted by the council for the purposes of subsection (2) must comply with such guidelines as may be issued by the Director-General.

Council authorises the humane euthanasia of feral and infant animals that are unsuitable or unlikely to be rehomed, or it is in the best interest for the welfare of the animal following any advice provided by a veterinarian, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) or the Shoalhaven Animal Shelter Manager.

The Section Manager, Building and Compliance or Unit Manager, Ranger Services or in the absence of the Manager, a Ranger Services Team Supervisor may authorise such euthanasia.

### **3. IMPLEMENTATION**

This Policy will be implemented by the Ranger Services Unit.

### **4. REVIEW**

The policy will be reviewed within twelve (12) months of the election of Councillors, or earlier should circumstances arise to warrant revision.

### **5. APPLICATION OF ESD PRINCIPLES**

This policy supports Council's commitment to ESD principles through social integrity and animal welfare management.