

Companion Animals - Management of Feral and Infant Cats and Dogs

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Directorate:	City Development
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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 2018* (the Regulation).

MANAGEMENT OF FERAL AND INFANT COMPANION ANIMALS

1.1. Definitions

Companion animal means each of the following:

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

1.2. 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 euthanize 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, implement 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 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 will retain sufficient control over infant animals placed into temporary care.

1.3. 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 when it is in the best interest for the welfare of the animal following any advice provided by a veterinarian or the Shoalhaven Animal Shelter Supervisor.

The Manager Certification and Compliance or Lead Ranger Services may authorise such euthanasia.

2. Implementation

This Policy will be implemented by the Ranger Services Unit.

3. Review

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