

ATTACHMENT 1



Planning and Environment Committee Meeting 06/12/11

TITLE Operation of Council's Animal Care Facility

Reporting Officer

Manager Compliance Services

Attachments

1. Review of Matters Raised by the Community
2. Correspondence from members of the community to all Councillors (distributed under separate cover)

Purpose

To provide Council with a summary of the matters raised by the community in relation to the operation of the Animal Care Facility (ACF) and to propose a recommended action for each matter identified.

History

Council at its meeting on 27 July 2010 resolved that a report be provided on the investigation of:

- (i) the provision of suitable bedding to keep animals off the concrete floor at the Animal Care Facility
- (ii) the establishment of a volunteer group to provide support services to the Animal Care Facility.

In response to Council's resolution a review of bedding arrangements and kennel cleaning procedures at the ACF was undertaken and cleaning practices have since incorporated a minor amendment including the use of a 'squeegee' to remove surface water from the concrete floor of the kennels. Bedding arrangements have been maintained.

With reference to the second part of the resolution, Council staff have conducted an investigation into the possibility of establishing a volunteer group and in the process have considered matters such as risk management, Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) and disease prevention.

Following Council's resolution, staff became aware of a resident action group known as 'Pals of Unwanted Neglected Dogs Cats Campbelltown' (POUNDCC) when an article appeared in the Macarthur Chronicle on 9 August 2011. This article raised a number of claims associated with the operation of Council's Animal Care Facility (ACF) and advised of a public meeting to be held by the group at the HJ Daley Library on 20 August 2011.

A meeting was subsequently initiated by Council staff with representatives of POUNDCC to discuss the matters raised at the public meeting regarding the operation of the ACF. This meeting was held with two representatives of POUNDCC on Friday 26 August 2011.

At the conclusion of the meeting staff advised the POUNDCC representatives that a number of the matters raised were of a policy nature and would require reporting to Council. It was agreed that further communication between the group and Council would be via a single point of contact. Since the meeting, a number of emails have been exchanged in relation to the matters raised and the progress of the preparation of this report.

Council staff also arranged for the RSPCA to inspect the ACF. The results of the inspection are discussed in Attachment 1.

Since the meeting with POUNDCC representatives, a number of other members of the community (who may or may not be associated with POUNDCC) have contacted Council and raised similar and additional matters regarding the operation of the ACF. All matters raised by POUNDCC and other members of the broader community in relation to the operation of the ACF are reviewed in detail in Attachment 1 of this report.

Councillors were provided with a briefing on the matters contained in Attachment 1 on Tuesday 22 November 2011.

Report

Matters raised by POUNDCC

A meeting was held on Friday 26 August 2011 between Council staff and representatives of POUNDCC to discuss their concerns in relation to the operation of Council's ACF. The following matters were raised by POUNDCC for investigation by Council:

- Use of rescue groups at the ACF
- Mandatory de-sexing of companion animals sold at the ACF
- Use of volunteers at the ACF
- Cleaning of kennels at the ACF
- Provision of suitable bedding materials
- Wish list of items for the ACF
- Use of old administration building at the ACF as a de-sexing clinic
- Sale of dogs and cats from the Boot Hill Markets and surrounds
- Improvement of the 'Dogs for Sale' section of Council's web site
- Provide pet owners with greater assistance in choosing the correct animal
- Improve the standard of cat housing provided
- Ensure purchasers are aware of the ongoing requirements for the care of a pet

- Promote after hours service offered by other facilities
- Consider extending the opening hours of the ACF
- Employment of female staff
- Increase 'Sponsor a Pet' promotions
- Why are some dogs not offered for sale?
- Better communication as to when animals are offered for sale

Additional matters raised by Members of the Community

In addition to the matters raised by POUNDCC, Council has over recent months received a number of letters, emails and phone calls from members of the broader community in relation to the operation of the ACF. Additional matters raised in these submissions included:

- Incentive Scheme to Reward Responsible Pet Owners
- Review of animal allocation process when more than one person wishes to purchase the same animal
- Various issues raised in correspondence sent to all Councillors

Councillors were provided with a briefing on all of the above matters on 22 November 2011 where a number of additional matters (outlined in information sent to Councillors) were discussed. This included a suggestion that Council consider limiting the number of animals that may be kept on residential premises.

Summary of the Review of Matters Raised

Attachment 1 details a comprehensive review and discussion of the range of claims made and matters raised through representations made by POUNDCC and other members of the community, concerning the operation of the ACF.

Council staff have investigated each matter in detail, and generally have concluded that the ACF operates within industry standards, does not breach animal welfare requirements, and seeks to continue to make improvements to the overall operation, including the minimisation of animal euthanasia rates.

Notwithstanding, the review of the ACF and collaboration with staff employed at the ACF and with Council's contracted veterinarian, has facilitated the 'take-up' of some of the suggestions for further improvement.

Further, the review has identified that there may be value in Council's consideration of a change in practice at the ACF relating to the de-sexing of animals. This particular matter has the potential for significant cost implications for Council's budget, and in response, staff have suggested that a trial program involving the de-sexing of male dogs be undertaken for a period of six months, after which a detailed evaluation will take place.

The complete listing of recommended actions arising from the detailed review of each and all matters raised by POUNDCC and other community members, is set out below.

- That Council work with rescue organisations approved by the Division of Local Government and subject to a written agreement between Council and the rescue organisation.
- That Council write to the Division of Local Government requesting that it consider the matters of animal hoarding and location of temporary carers at the next review of the "Guidelines for Approval to be an Organisation Exempt from Companion Animal Registration under Clause 16 (D) of the *Companion Animals Regulation 2008*".
- That the price of male dogs sold from the Animal Care Facility include de-sexing as a trial until 30 June 2012.
- That Council's voucher system of de-sexing remains in place for kittens and puppies sold at the Animal Care Facility.
- That Council follow-up new owners of kittens and puppies to ensure they have their new pet de-sexed.
- That adult cats and male dogs sold at the Animal Care Facility be transferred to Council's contracted veterinarian for de-sexing.
- That the tender specification for Veterinary Services include prices for de-sexing all dogs sold from the Animal Care Facility should Council wish to adopt this option in the future.
- That volunteers only be used in off site locations subject to further investigation and where all risk, liability and OHS matters are mitigated.
- That Council endorse the current kennel cleaning practices undertaken at the Animal Care Facility.
- That the floor of each kennel at the Animal Care Facility be treated with an impervious sealant.
- That Council endorse the current use of suitable bedding materials, blankets and dog jackets at the Animal Care Facility.
- That Council work with POUNDCC to source consumable items for use at the Animal Care Facility, from business within the community on an anonymous and obligation free basis.
- That Council continue to use an off-site veterinary surgery (as part of the Contract for Veterinary Services) for the treatment of animals from the Animal Care Facility.
- That Council Rangers continue to conduct random inspections of the Boot Hill Markets and surrounds to deter the unlawful sale of kittens and puppies.
- That Council endorse the proposed upgrades to the "Dogs and Cats For Sale" and "Lost Dogs and Cats" sections of Council's web site.
- That Council endorse the development of a self assessment "Pre-Purchase Checklist" for use by prospective customers at the Animal Care Facility.

- That Council consider a proposal to refurbish the cattery at the Animal Care Facility as part of its 2012/2013 budget.
- That Council note the provision of additional information on Council's web site relating to stray animals and included on Council's after hours call out system.
- That Council note the after sales service offered by the Animal Care Facility and Council's contracted veterinarian.
- That Council monitor the effectiveness of the other recommendations contained in this report prior to considering the extension of weekend operating times at the Animal Care Facility.
- That Council continue to work with the Macarthur Chronicle to promote the "Find a Pet" initiative on a regular basis.
- That Council note that Council's web site and kennel display boards have been refined to advise of the date and time when an animal becomes available for sale
- That Council endorse the recommendations of the RSPCA inspection and that follow up action be undertaken.
- That Council monitor any change implemented by Wollondilly Council, not to charge impounding fees where a stray dog (not restricted or dangerous nor previously impounded) is retrieved within 24 hours of impounding.
- That Council amend its sale process where more than one person wishes to purchase the same animal by introducing an "equal chance" system as outlined in the attachment to the report.
- That the "equal chance" system commence following the introduction of the "pre-purchase checklist".
- That Council's Standard Operating Procedures be amended to reflect the "equal chance" system for the purchase of animals where there is more than one prospective purchaser.
- That a further report be provided to Council within 12 months of the implementation of the recommendations contained in this report.

In addition to the matters raised by POUNDCC and community members, the review has also identified the need for Council's forthcoming Comprehensive Local Environmental Plan (LEP) to address the numbers of companion animals kept on residential premises. This issue has now been programmed into the LEP preparation process.

Conclusion

All of the matters raised by POUNDCC and other community members concerning the operation of Council's ACF have been examined in detail.

Importantly, the review has not identified any breach of animal welfare requirements. An independent inspection of the ACF by the RSPCA made recommendations concerning:

- documentation of the initial health assessment for animals entering the ACF;
- installation of a shade structure over the exercise yard; and

- separation of kittens from adult cats.

The review identified options for Council's consideration that relate to de-sexing of animals received at the ACF, noting potential funding implications. A trial program of de-sexing male dogs only, for a period of six months has been recommended.

A range of additional suggestions have been made in so far as they relate to continuous improvement to the facility, thereby improving customer service and working towards minimising euthanasia rates. Some of these suggestions also involve further collaboration with the community.

Officer's Recommendation

That Council implement the recommended actions relating to the operation of the Animal Care Facility, as contained in the report.

ATTACHMENT 1

MATTERS RAISED BY POUNDCC

A meeting was held on Friday 26 August 2011 between Council staff and representatives of POUNDCC to discuss their concerns in relation to the operation of Councils Animal Care Facility. The following list of matters (discussed below) was raised by POUNDCC for investigation by Council staff. Following the meeting council staff sought clarification over a number of the matters raised.

1. USE OF RESCUE GROUPS AT THE ANIMAL CARE FACILITY

Issue

POUNDCC was concerned that Council does not work with rescue groups to re-home animals, which results in more animals than necessary being euthanased.

Response

The Companion Animals Act allows for approved groups to collect unclaimed companion animals from Council pounds as an alternate means of finding the animal a suitable home. The intent is that rescue groups can either house or 'adopt out' these animals on a temporary basis until a permanent home can be found, thereby extending the time the animals are kept, when compared to pound holding times, and reducing euthanasia rates.

There are approximately 44 organisations approved by the NSW Division of Local Government as rescue organisations, none of which are located within the Campbelltown Local Government Area (LGA). These organisations are granted exemption from the registration requirements for the companion animals that they take into temporary care while seeking to re-home them, subject to:

- Animals remaining in the care of exempt organisations for longer than twelve months will cease to be covered by the registration exemption,
- Organisations granted an exemption under Clause 16(d) of the *Companion Animals Regulation 2008* will need to reapply for their exemption every five years, and
- Organisations granted an exemption will be required to provide an annual report to the Division of Local Government.

Under section 64(5) of the *Companion Animals Act 1998* Councils are obliged to consider whether there is an alternative action to that of destroying an animal. The intent of clause 16(d) of the Regulation is to provide such an alternative action by way of a financial incentive (i.e. not having to pay registration fees which range from \$40 to \$150) to animal rescue organisations.

Organisations that apply for exemption must have a written statement from the General Manager of the council from which animals are to be sourced, endorsing their application.

During 2009 Council was approached by two organisations (Animal Rescue Incorporated and CatRescue NSW Limited) seeking its endorsement to rescue animals from the ACF. At the time Council did not support the requests as these organisations did not provide details of the location where rescued animals would be temporarily homed. This information was considered critical as should the temporary rescue location be outside of the Campbelltown LGA this could cause inconvenience to members of the community should they wish to retrieve/purchase an animal from an exempt organisation. In addition, the applications did not provide details of the number of animals that would be kept at each temporary location

and this was considered critical to prevent the potential for animal hoarding and the associated neighbourhood impacts. It should be noted that neither of these organisations are included on the current Division of Local Government approved list.

It is acknowledged that rescue organisations could potentially be an important resource as part of an overall strategy to reduce euthanasia rates and it is therefore recommended that Council work with approved rescue organisations subject to a written agreement between Council and the rescue organisation. This written agreement as a minimum, would need to specify;

- when rescue organisations would be used (i.e. when the ACF is at capacity or has an oversupply of kittens or pups);
- the criteria for providing animals (i.e. Council would retain all animals it believes it has the capacity to sell);
- details of the location of temporary carers;
- that temporary carers are to be located within Campbelltown or adjoining LGAs;
- that the animal continues to be listed for sale on Council's web site and
- the maximum number of animals that are permitted by Council to be kept at the rescuer's premises.

The Division of Local Government (DLG) has published "Guidelines for Approval to be an Organisation Exempt from Companion Animal Registration under Clause 16 (D) of the *Companion Animals Regulation 2008*" to assist rescue organisations gain approval. A review of these Guidelines reveals that they do not address the matters raised above in relation to animal hoarding and location of temporary carers, and it is recommended that Council write to the DLG requesting that these items be considered in the next review of the Guidelines.

Recommended Action:

- (i) That Council work with rescue organisations approved by the Division of Local Government and subject to a written agreement between Council and the rescue organisation.
- (ii) That Council write to the Division of Local Government requesting that it consider the matters of animal hoarding and the location of temporary carers at the next review of the "Guidelines for Approval to be an Organisation Exempt from Companion Animal Registration under Clause 16 (D) of the *Companion Animals Regulation 2008*".

2. MANDATORY DE-SEXING OF COMPANION ANIMALS SOLD AT THE ANIMAL CARE FACILITY

Issue

POUNDCC was concerned that not all companion animals sold from the Animal Care Facility are de-sexed prior to sale. POUNDCC believes that all companion animals sold from the ACF should be de-sexed prior to leaving the facility.

Concern was also expressed by POUNDCC about the effectiveness of using the current voucher system, and believes that it would be more effective for animals to be de-sexed prior to leaving the ACF.

Response

- **Cat De-Sexing**

The purchase price of a cat from the ACF includes de-sexing by Council's contracted veterinarian, which the owner redeems after purchase via a voucher. Dogs are sold without mandatory de-sexing which means that the only dogs that are sold de-sexed are those that enter the facility (impounded or surrendered) already de-sexed.

While all cats are sold with de-sexing included in the price, the cat is not de-sexed when it leaves the facility and the current system relies on the new owner redeeming a voucher with Council's contract veterinarian.

POUNDCC claims that this system does not guarantee a 100% desexing rate for cats sold from the ACF and should be changed. The only way to determine the percentage of cats de-sexed via the voucher system would be to compare Council's records of the number of cats sold against the contracted veterinarian's records for the number of cats de-sexed, for a specific period. However, this is further complicated as there is often a delay between the time of purchase and the time of de-sexing which will influence the result, as the voucher is valid for 6 months.

An alternative approach to the voucher system could be either an onsite de-sexing clinic (which is discussed in Issue 7), or Council staff transferring the cat, once sold, to Council's contracted veterinarian for desexing. The new owner would then pick-up the cat from surgery some days after purchase.

While these options would incur additional administrative and transport costs to Council and delays to the owner it would ensure a 100% desexing rate for cats sold from the ACF. However, an issue arises with kittens. While Council can sell a kitten at 8 weeks of age, the kitten may not be of a sufficient size or weight (particularly female kittens) to be de-sexed. This is usually when they are between 12 to 16 weeks of age. While some vets practice early age de-sexing at 8 weeks, Council's contracted veterinarian is concerned that this option may not always be in the best interests of the kitten. A similar situation occurs with puppies and they may not be suitable for de-sexing until they reach 4 months of age.

Therefore as the majority of cats sold from the ACF are kittens, Council would need to either retain the voucher system or keep kittens until they were of a size and weight (somewhere between a further 4 to 8 weeks prior to sale) in order to ensure they were de-sexed prior to leaving the facility.

As it is not practicable to keep kittens at the ACF for an extended period of time, it is recommended that the voucher system for de-sexing of kittens remain in place and that staff at the ACF follow-up new owners to ensure the kitten is de-sexed. However, adult cats will be transported to Council's contracted veterinarian for de-sexing once sold.

- **Dog De-Sexing**

As Council has not previously de-sexed dogs prior to sale, only those dogs which enter the facility already de-sexed, are sold as de-sexed. It could therefore be asserted that Council is not actively attempting to reduce the rate of unwanted dogs within the LGA as it does not sell de-sexed dogs from the ACF.

While there is a strong argument to support selling de-sexed dogs, there would ultimately be a cost implication associated with de-sexing which would need to be either absorbed by Council or passed onto the purchaser of the dog.

- a) **Cost to de-sex a dog**

Based on the current de-sexing price contained within the contract with Council's contracted veterinarian, the cost to de-sex a male dog is \$119, while the average price to de-sex a female dog (depending on weight and if the dog is in season) is \$176.

Over the past four financial years, Council has on average sold 444 dogs each year, 60% being male dogs and 40% being female dogs. Therefore if Council were to de-sex dogs and not pass on the cost to the purchaser it would cost Council \$31,701 to de-sex male dogs only, \$31,258 to de-sex female dogs only or \$62,959 to de-sex all dogs.

If Council were to de-sex dogs prior to sale and pass this cost onto the purchaser this would add an additional \$119 to the cost of a male dog and, on average, \$176 to the cost of a female dog. The current price for a dog that is micro-chipped and registered but not de-sexed is \$77, however this price would increase to between \$196 for a male dog and on average \$253 for a female dog if the dog were sold de-sexed.

The current price for a dog that is neither micro-chipped, registered nor de-sexed is \$271. The increase in price due to de-sexing would, however, be offset by a reduction in the registration cost by \$110. This would result in a new cost for a male de-sexed dog of \$280 and on average for a female de-sexed dog of \$337.

In considering the above options Council needs to be mindful that any increase in the purchase price of a dog may 'price that the dog out of the market' for many residents and therefore reduce the number of dogs sold from the ACF. A web site review of what similar Councils charge for dogs is provided in the table below:

Council	Purchase Price	Inclusions
Wollondilly Council	\$300 \$275 Pensioner	Registration, micro-chipping, de-sexing, vaccination and heart worm test
Renbury Farm Shelter - Bankstown City Council, Camden Council, Fairfield City Council and Liverpool City Council	\$350 Adult \$300 pup	Vet examination, vaccination, heartworm test, worming, de-sexing prior to leaving (young puppies will go to their new home with a desexing voucher), micro-chipping and registration
Hawkesbury Animal Shelter - Hawkesbury City Council, Penrith City Council & The Hills Shire Council	\$36.50 Micro-chipped & registered \$229 not Micro-chipped & unregistered	Nil Note - no compulsory de- sexing
Blacktown Animal Holding Facility - Blacktown City Council, Auburn Council, City of Canada Bay Council, Holroyd City Council, The Municipality of Hunters Hill, Lane Cove Council, Parramatta City Council, The City of Ryde	\$90 Micro-chipped & registered \$276 not Micro-chipped & unregistered	Nil Note - no compulsory de- sexing

The current price of a dog from the ACF (ranging from \$77 to \$271) is currently less than the price charged at Wollondilly and Renbury Farm, as the price of dogs from these facilities includes de-sexing. The price of a dog from the ACF is more than the price of a dog from Hawkesbury and slightly less than a dog from Blacktown, noting that the price of a dog from these facilities does not include de-sexing.

However, should Council resolve to include de-sexing into the price of dogs sold from the ACF the cost of a male dog would increase to between \$200 and \$280 while the price of a female dog would increase to between \$257 to \$337. These prices would still be less than those charged by Renbury Farm, however female dogs would be more expensive than those sold at Wollondilly while both male and female dogs would be more expensive than those sold at Hawkesbury and Blacktown.

If Council were to resolve to de-sex all dogs it would be simpler to choose a flat price fee for all dogs eg. \$300, noting that the cost to de-sex some dogs would be below this figure while others would be above this figure.

b) Loss of registration income

While Council may choose to pass on the cost of de-sexing to a new dog owner, it would suffer a loss of registration income if it decides to de-sex dogs. Council currently receives 85% of all companion animal registration fees for dogs and cats registered within the LGA. There will be an income reduction from registration fees should dogs be de-sexed prior to sale, as Council would receive 85% of \$40 (\$34) rather than 85% of \$150 (\$127.50) or a net loss of \$93.50 per de-sexed dog sold from the ACF.

Over the past four financial years, Council has on average sold 444 dogs each year, 60% being male dogs and 40% being female dogs. Therefore, if Council were to resolve that all male dogs sold from the ACF be de-sexed then the subsequent loss of registration income would be \$24,908. The loss of registration income would be \$16,605 if female dogs were de-sexed.

This loss in income may be offset over a number of years by the potential savings to Council that could result from the reduced number of animals that may be impounded.

c) Conclusion

Having considered all of the above it is considered both reasonable and prudent to trial the option of de-sexing male dogs only as the increase in price between a de-sexed and non-de-sexed dog (\$9) is not perceived significant enough to reduce sales. A trial until the end of the financial year would allow Council time to assess the results of this decision and allow time to identify cheaper de-sexing alternatives. By de-sexing male dogs Council is attempting to reduce the potential rate of unwanted dogs and is acting responsibly as a community leader. In recommending this, it is acknowledged that Council will forfeit approximately \$24,908 annually in animal registration income. However, the current ACF budget is tracking at +30% compared to a year completed budgeted (estimate) rate of 42% and would be likely to be able to absorb this figure.

While it is acknowledged that the loss of registration income would be less if female dogs were to be de-sexed, the potential reduction on unwanted litters of pups may be greater if male dogs are de-sexed as more male dogs are impounded than female dogs. Further, the increase in the purchase price for a female dog due to de-sexing is more significant than for a male dog, which may lead to less female dogs being purchased from the ACF, increasing the euthanasia rate.

The prices for de-sexing used in the above examples reflect the rates contained in the current contract with Council's contracted veterinarian and as dog de-sexing is not mandatory, the rate is based on a limited number of dog owners taking up this option. However, Council's current contract is due to expire on 30 June 2012 and it would be reasonable to anticipate that should Council resolve to de-sex some or all of its dogs prior to sale, then this rate (due to economies of scale) would be likely to reduce.

As previously reported, Council has recently partnered with the RSPCA and University of Sydney (Camden) in the CAWS Program which will commence in 2012 and will offer reduced rate de-sexing to eligible pet owners within the LGA. As an extension to this program Council staff will liaise with the University of Sydney to determine if animals sold from Council's Animal Care Facility can be de-sexed at a reduced rate at the University.

Given the current contractual arrangements, the total cost implications of any decision to de-sex animals sold at the ACF will change when the current veterinary contract expires on 30 June 2012. Council could request, as part of the tender specification for the new vet contract, cost estimates to de-sex all dogs sold from the ACF. Council would then be in a position to have an exact cost associated with de-sexing of all dogs should it decide to proceed with this option, and could then amend its fees and charges accordingly.

Should Council wish to change the sale price for dogs within the current financial year, the amended fees would have to be publicly advertised in accordance with the *Local Government Act, 1993*. However, as the majority of male dogs sold at the ACF are not micro-chipped and are unregistered, the increase in sale price for de-sexing this type of male dog is only \$9 above the existing cost. Therefore, it is recommended that Council not pass this additional cost onto the purchaser.

Recommended Actions:

- (i) That Council's voucher system of de-sexing remains in place for kittens and puppies sold at the ACF.
- (ii) That Council follow-up new owners of kittens and puppies to ensure they have their new pet de-sexed.
- (iii) That the price of male dogs sold from the pound include de-sexing, as a trial until 30 June 2012.
- (iv) That adult cats and male dogs sold at the ACF be transferred to Council's contracted veterinarian for de-sexing.
- (v) That the tender specification for Veterinary Services include prices for de-sexing all dogs sold from the ACF should Council wish to adopt this option in the future.

3. USE OF VOLUNTEERS AT THE ANIMAL CARE FACILITY

Issue

POUNDCC was concerned that Council does not use volunteers at the Animal Care Facility.

POUNDCC proposes that volunteers could be used at the ACF to care for the animals, clean kennels, change bedding, feed animals, exercise animals and groom animals allowing Council staff to focus on other animal management functions. Volunteers could also be used off-site to promote community education on responsible pet ownership to schools and

community groups, educate dog owners and assist in transporting animals for de-sexing as part of the Community Animal Welfare Scheme (CAWS) program.

Response

The Regional Risk Manager of Council's Risk Insurer Statewide Mutual, inspected the ACF on 31 August 2011 and was provided details of the types of functions that POUNDCC suggested could be undertaken by volunteers at the ACF. A summary of that advice from their insurer is provided below:

- Concerns were raised in relation to Volunteer safety (particularly under the new OHS Harmonisation Act), given that ACF staff are under constant vigilance against attacks when handling the dogs, and these staff are trained.
- Council owes a duty of care to dog owners to protect and return their dog and this should not be handed over to volunteers.
- In addition, should a dog, under the control of a "walker" attack another dog or pedestrian, the repercussions would be not well received.
- Matters relating to OH&S, Volunteer insurance and PL insurance are also to be considered.
- Council should encourage volunteers to provide assistance in other areas.

Further, and as Council has a detailed OH&S management system in place that assists Council in managing risks associated with these activities, any volunteers used on-site at the ACF would need to be inducted into the organisation in an identical way to staff. This would be an administrative and financial consideration for Council.

In addition to this advice, Council sought comment from its contracted veterinarian in relation to the possibility for the spread of disease from the introduction of volunteers into the facility. The advice received stated:

"We are constantly battling very serious infectious diseases such as Parvo virus and cat flu that requires strict quarantine controlled procedures to prevent cross contamination. Volunteers would require an extensive induction training and ongoing supervision to maintain bio-security. This training would also need to cover safe animal handling procedures and OHS matters. Community education (see AVA PETPEP), improving vaccination and micro-chip rates and targeted de-sexing programs to reduce the dog population can and should have more of an impact long term in reducing the numbers of animals being euthanased and the percentage of animals re-homed."

Based on the above advice it is recommended that volunteers only be used in off site locations subject to further investigation, and where all risk, liability and OHS matters are mitigated to Council's satisfaction.

Recommended Action:

- (i) That volunteers only be used in off site locations subject to further investigation and where all risk, liability and OHS matters are mitigated.

4. CLEANING OF KENNELS AT THE ANIMAL CARE FACILITY

Issue

POUNDCC was concerned that kennels are cleaned while the animal is still in occupation, resulting in the animal becoming wet. The kennel remains wet during the day allowing the animal and its bedding to continue to be cold and wet.

Response

Council's recently amended kennel cleaning practice requires the dog to be temporarily relocated to the kennel block service-way attached to the rear of the kennel; the bedding is lifted and is attached to the wall; the kennel is hosed, a squeegee is used to remove surface water; the bedding is put back into place and then the animal re-enters the kennel. Council has purchased a paint sealant to apply to all kennel floors to allow water to 'bead' making cleaning easier while preventing the floor from becoming saturated, and therefore decreasing drying time. The sealer will be applied to all kennel floors prior to next winter.

Recommended Actions:

- (i) That Council endorse the kennel cleaning practices undertaken at the Animal Care Facility.
- (ii) That the floor of each kennel at the Animal Care Facility be treated with an impervious sealant.

5. PROVISION OF SUITABLE BEDDING MATERIALS

Issue

POUNDCC was concerned that Council may not have and/or may not use bedding materials in addition to the Hessian bag trampoline beds.

Response

Council has a ready supply of blankets and dog jackets provided through donations by individuals or corporations for use in the kennels. The bedding material is used and replaced as necessary. Unfortunately many of the dogs are not accustomed to wearing jackets or having bedding materials and these are often either removed or destroyed by the dogs.

Recommended Action:

- (i) That Council endorse the use of suitable bedding materials, blankets and dog jackets at the Animal Care Facility.

6. WISH LIST OF ITEMS FOR ANIMAL CARE FACILITY

Issue

POUNDCC offered to assist the ACF by sourcing items required such as blankets, water and food bowls or litter trays either by way of donation or subsidised cost if Council provided a 'wish list' of items needed. POUNDCC also offered to fundraise for any specific project or item or approach trades persons or service providers to volunteer or provide subsidised services where the need arises.

Response

The ACF currently receives donations of blankets, dog jackets, food and supplies from members of the public and local businesses wishing to provide assistance to animals at the ACF and the 'wish list' concept could be an extension of these donations.

Council would be pleased to work with POUNDCC to source consumable items from business within the community on an anonymous and obligation free basis. Council has previously received an anonymous and obligation free donation of dog jackets which was organised by a member of the public and this approach could be used via a "wish list" concept as the need arose.

Unfortunately there are a number of legislative and risk management matters associated with trades people providing subsidised services to the ACF. All work conducted at the ACF must be approved in accordance with a number of Council policies including Procurement, Tendering, Risk Management and Occupational Health & Safety. Any trade person would need to be subject to a competitive tendering process in order to meet legislative and probity requirements.

Recommended Action:

- (i) That Council work with POUNDCC to source consumable items for use at the Animal Care Facility, from business within the community on an anonymous and obligation free basis.

7. USE OF OLD ADMINISTRATION BUILDING AT THE ANIMAL CARE FACILITY AS A DE-SEXING CLINIC

Issue

POUNDCC suggested that the old administration building at the ACF could be converted into a de-sexing clinic allowing all de-sexing of animals for sale to take place on-site prior to them leaving the facility.

Response

While there is merit in this suggestion it would require an extensive capital investment by Council to amend the internal layout of the building to satisfy animal welfare needs and to operate as a vet clinic.

In addition staff would need to work extended hours to ensure that animals recovering from surgery are provided with any necessary post-operative care. While this option has not been costed it is considered that it would be more cost efficient for Council to continue using its contract veterinarian to undertake all necessary treatment and surgery at their existing approved and certified facility.

The old administration building is currently intended to be used for storage and additional office space for meetings and interviews.

Recommended Action:

- (i) That Council continue to use an off-site veterinary surgery (as part of the Contract for Veterinary Services) for the treatment of animals from the Animal Care Facility.

8. SALE OF DOGS AND CATS FROM BOOT HILL MARKETS AND SURROUNDS

Issue

POUNDCC indicated concern that puppies and kittens are being sold from car boots at the Boot Hill Markets and on the footpath areas adjacent to the markets, prior to being 8 weeks of age and without being micro-chipped.

Response

Council has referred this matter to the RSPCA to investigate and an inspection of the markets by RSPCA officers on 1 September 2011 found no animals for sale. Council staff have suggested to the RSPCA that the Society write to the owner of the Market advising of the legal requirements and associated penalties to deter this alleged practice, should it be occurring. Council Rangers have, and will continue to conduct random inspections of the markets and the adjacent footpath areas to determine if this practice is taking place. Recent inspections have not identified any animals being offered for sale.

Recommendation

- (i) That Council Rangers continue to conduct random inspections of the Boot Hill Markets and surrounds to deter the unlawful sale of kittens and puppies.

9. IMPROVEMENT OF THE DOGS FOR SALE SECTION OF COUNCIL'S WEB SITE

Issue

POUNDCC indicated that Council's current web site is not regularly updated, contains outdated information about dogs at the ACF, does not contain information relating to all animals at the ACF, does not contain detailed information about dogs, does not contain individual photos of cats and does not provide the date when dogs will be available for sale. It is claimed that Council's web page information should be updated on a daily basis similar to other facilities.

Response

The "Dogs For Sale" and "Lost Dogs" sections of Council's web site are intended to be updated to include more capacity for additional information, as requested by POUNDCC in conjunction with the upgrade of Council's overall web site, which is scheduled to 'go live' on 3 May 2012.

Council staff have reviewed other recommended websites as part of the web site update including the Renbury Farm web site which was mentioned by POUNDCC as being a good example.

The Renbury Farm web site includes one additional field that is not used by Campbelltown, ("date available for sale") and also provides a more detailed description of the animal. While Council's current site limits the amount of detail that can be provided in the description of each animal (which will be addressed with the upgrade) the other additional field has been added to the existing site.

In addition, individual photos of kittens available for sale have been included as part of the existing web site. The site is updated daily where workloads permit but as a minimum, it is updated 3 times per week. Recently, and due to a reduced number of animals being impounded the site has been updated daily.

With regard to the claim that the web site does not contain information relating to all animals at the ACF, the web site contains all lost dogs that are not micro-chipped and all dogs offered

for sale. The web site does not provide details of micro-chipped dogs as the owner of these dogs are contacted on the same day that the animal is impounded using the phone number provided in the Companion Animals Register. Hence it is not appropriate to provide these details on the web page.

Recommended Action:

- (i) That Council endorse the proposed upgrades to the "Dogs and Cats For Sale" and "Lost Dogs and Cats" sections of Council's web site.

10. PROVIDE PET OWNERS WITH GREATER ASSISTANCE IN CHOOSING THE CORRECT ANIMAL

Issue

POUNDCC suggested that staff at the ACF were not always available to assist customers in selecting the correct animal to suit their particular needs. It is claimed that customers were often left to themselves with little advice provided in relation to animal types and care requirements.

Response

ACF staff provide advice and assistance to prospective customers as required, however at times when the facility is busy, they may need to assist a number of customers at any one time.

It is anticipated that with the development of a pre-purchase checklist as detailed in Issue 12 of this report, prospective customers would be able to conduct a self assessment, thereby reducing the demands on staff, allowing staff to focus on the critical aspects of pet purchasing with the customer.

Recommended Action:

- (i) That Council endorse the development of a self assessment "Pre-Purchase Checklist" for use by prospective customers at the Animal Care Facility.

11. IMPROVE THE STANDARD OF CAT HOUSING PROVIDED

Issue

POUNDCC has expressed concern that all cats regardless of age, size, health status and compatibility are housed in the one cattery, unlike dogs which are segregated.

Response

The current cattery is approximately 30 years old and would benefit from an upgrade. The matters raised by POUNDCC are acknowledged and a proposal to refurbish the cattery is intended to be included for consideration as part of Council's draft 2012/2013 budget. The anticipated cost of refurbishing the cattery and building a dedicated kitten enclosure is in the order of \$10,000 to \$15,000. Detailed quotations are currently being sought to assist in budget preparations.

The RSPCA (further detail in Issue 19 of this report) identified the separation of kittens from cats as an issue and listed this as a corrective action noting that Council had recently

modified two dog kennels to house kittens separately from adult cats as a temporary measure. However, a more formalised and isolated facility is required in the long term

Recommendation

- (i) That Council consider a proposal to refurbish the cattery at the Animal Care Facility as part of its 2012/2013 budget.

12. ENSURE PURCHASERS ARE AWARE OF THE ONGOING REQUIREMENTS FOR THE CARE OF A PET

Issue

POUNDCC suggested that purchasers are not fully advised of the ongoing care and maintenance requirements for animals purchased from the ACF.

Response

It was intended that Council staff develop a "Pre-purchase Checklist" of relevant questions that potential animal purchasers can complete to determine if they have the necessary resources/home/life style/environment to support a particular pet. However POUNDCC have volunteered to develop a draft document that would include matters associated with Issue 10 for Council's consideration. Once completed the form would be reviewed by Council staff prior to being used at the facility.

It should also be noted that each dog/cat sold from the ACF has undergone a check-up by Council's contracted veterinarian. At this time, each new dog/cat owner is provided with a "new owners" package which contains detailed information on the ongoing care of their new pet. Staff at the ACF are also available for post sales advice from new pet owners on an as needed basis.

Recommended Action:

- (i) That Council endorse the development of a self assessment "Pre-Purchase Checklist" for use by prospective customers at the Animal Care Facility.
- (ii) That Council note the after sales service offered by the Animal Care Facility and Council's contracted veterinarian.

13. PROMOTE AFTER HOURS SERVICE OFFERED BY OTHER FACILITIES

Issue

POUNDCC suggested that members of the community who find a stray dog after hours are often not aware that the RSPCA and Bradbury vet are open beyond the hours of operation of the ACF and that the stray can be delivered to those facilities.

Response

Council does not offer an after hours stray dog pick up service unless requested by the Police, where the animal is causing an ongoing nuisance to traffic, has attacked an animal or person or is dangerous. Police have after hours access to the ACF and can deliver dogs to the overnight holding kennels for processing by ACF staff the following day. Where possible, residents are encouraged to keep the stray animal over night, however where this is not possible they can deliver the dog to the RSPCA or Bradbury vet. In response to the

suggestion made by POUNDCC, this information has recently been added to Council's web site and Council's after hours call out system.

Recommendation

- (i) That Council note the provision of additional information in relation to stray animals on Council's web site and included on Council's after hours call out system.

14. CONSIDER EXTENDING OPENING HOURS OF THE ANIMAL CARE FACILITY

Issue

POUNDCC suggested that the current opening times of the ACF on a Saturday (9am to 12 noon) may not be sufficient time for prospective purchasers of a companion animal to assess the animal's suitability and compatibility with the purchaser and their family members. Therefore, it was suggested by POUNDCC that the ACF extend its opening hours on a Saturday.

Response

Council's ACF is open to the public between 9.00am to 3.30pm Monday, 9.00am to 3.00pm Tuesday to Friday and 9.00am to 12 noon Saturday.

Staff at the ACF work from 7.30am to 4.00pm Monday; 7.30am to 3.30pm Tuesday to Friday and 7.30am to 12.30 Saturday. The hours worked by staff during the weekdays are part of their normal 38 hour week whilst hours worked on Saturday are paid as overtime.

A web site review of opening times for a sample of other Animal Facilities is provided in the table below.

Council Facility	Public Opening Times
Wollondilly Council	Monday to Friday: 3.00pm to 4.30pm Saturday: 10.00am to 1.00pm Sunday: 10.00am to 1.00pm
Renbury Farm Shelter - Bankstown City Council, Camden Council, Fairfield City Council and Liverpool City Council	Monday to Friday: 9.00am to 4.30pm Saturday: 9.00am to 4.00pm Sunday: 9.00am to 4.00pm
Hawkesbury Animal Shelter - Hawkesbury City Council, Penrith City Council & The Hills Shire Council	Monday to Friday: 9.00am to 12.30pm and 2.00pm to 4.30pm Saturday: 9.30am to 11.30am Sunday: 7.00am to 9.00am
Blacktown Animal Holding Facility - Auburn Council, Blacktown City Council, City of Canada Bay Council, Holroyd City Council, The Municipality of Hunters Hill, Lane Cove Council, Parramatta City Council, The City of Ryde	Monday to Friday: 8:30am to 4:30pm Saturday: 9:00am to 1:00pm Sunday: 9:00am to 11:00am Closed Public Holidays.

In comparison to the ACF, all other facilities offer either an extended range of days and/or opening times compared to Campbelltown. The facilities with the most extensive range of days and or opening times service more than one LGA, however the practicality and cost efficiency of opening for 2 hours on a Sunday as occurs at Hawkesbury and Blacktown is questioned.

Renbury Farm Shelter is an exception as it has the greatest range of days and opening times. However, it is a privately run facility which caters for a variety of LGAs.

For Council to consider extending the opening hours at the ACF on a Saturday or Sunday, either an investigation into the feasibility of modifying work conditions of staff at the ACF by varying or splitting shifts or by agreement through overtime, would be necessary. This option has not been discussed with staff or the respective Union. However this would need to occur if Council was of a mind to grant further consideration to a proposal for an extension to the opening hours of the ACF.

This is a more complex issue than can be discussed in this report and would need to be the subject of further review if considered appropriate by Council. The modification of working hours may also require additional staff to be employed to cover any extended hours of opening.

Recommended Action:

- (i) That Council monitor the effectiveness of the other recommendations contained in this report prior to considering the extension of weekend operating times at the ACF.

15. EMPLOYMENT OF FEMALE STAFF

Issue

POUNDCC has made comment that the majority of staff at the ACF were male and that this may be a barrier for some customers.

Response

Council employs staff following EEO principles and merit based selection.

Recommended Action:

- (i) That the information be noted.

16. INCREASE SPONSOR A PET PROMOTIONS

Issue

POUNDCC suggested that Council could do more to promote the sale of companion animals from the ACF through the local media. POUNDCC also expressed concern that existing promotions do not include cats.

Response

Council currently places the 'Dog of the Week' advertisement in the local media and has, when approached by local media, (typically prior to Christmas) run a full page of sponsored advertisements from local businesses known as 'Sponsor a Pet'. The constraint on the 'Sponsor a Pet' program has historically been the ability of the newspaper to attract sufficient sponsorship to pay for the advertisement.

POUNDCC have volunteered to assist by sourcing sponsorship from local businesses to run the 'Sponsor a Pet' program on a more frequent basis, depending on sponsorship. Initially it has been suggested by Council staff that the program could possibly operate on a quarterly

basis (subject to sponsorship), and that the program could be extended to include cats. The frequency of promotions could be enhanced where sponsorship can be obtained.

Council in conjunction with the Macarthur Chronicle placed a "Find a Pet" advertisement for 10 animals (6 dogs & 4 cats) in the Macarthur Chronicle on 22 November 2011. Although, due to advertising deadlines, the majority of the animals were sold prior to the paper's release. The advertisement was successful as it generated interest in animals for sale at the ACF. The Macarthur Chronicle has indicated that they are prepared to continue the "Find a Pet" advertisement (at no cost to Council) on a regular basis subject to the availability of animals for sale.

Recommended Action:

- (i) That Council continue to work with the Macarthur Chronicle to promote the "Find a Pet" initiative on a regular basis.

17. WHY SOME DOGS ARE NOT OFFERED FOR SALE?

Issue

POUNDCC indicated that there is confusion amongst prospective purchasers as to why kennel display boards indicate that some dogs are 'not for sale'. It was also alleged that dogs are also not offered for sale as they are timid, frightened or quiet and that the proportion of dogs available for sale is very small.

Response

Typically dogs offered for sale are housed separately (Blocks B & C at the ACF) to dogs that are either not for sale or have not been held for the required statutory time before being offered for sale (Blocks A, D, E & F). Sometimes due to holding capacity constraints, dogs that are not for sale are housed in the same block of kennels with dogs that are for sale. Where this occurs a note is placed on the kennel to advise prospective purchasers that the dog is 'not for sale'.

Dogs are not offered for sale either due to the dog being surrendered by their owner to be euthanased or due to the dog being involved in an attack on another dog or human, or following assessment by Council's contracted veterinarian that the dog is not suitable for re-homing. Dogs are not excluded from sale because they are timid, frightened or quiet.

Recommended Action:

- (i) That the information be noted.

18. BETTER COMMUNICATION AS TO WHEN ANIMALS ARE OFFERED FOR SALE

Issue

POUNDCC notes that information is not displayed on the web site or at the facility, to advise of the date and time when animals become available for sale and the process to be followed for purchasing an animal, when it does become available for sale.

Response

In response to POUNDCC's concerns Council's web site and kennel display boards have been refined to advise of the date and time when an animal becomes available for sale. It is

also intended that Council's web site and procedures be updated to include details of how to purchase an animal that has become available for sale including the process to be followed where more than one person is interested in purchasing a particular animal. This matter is to be considered in conjunction with issue 9 and 21.

Recommended Action:

- (i) That Council note that Council's web site and kennel display boards have been refined to advise of the date and time when an animal becomes available for sale

INDEPENDENT INSPECTION OF THE ANIMAL CARE FACILITY

In response to the matters raised by POUNDCC Council staff contacted the RSPCA and requested that an inspection of the ACF be conducted to determine the facilities status in relation to compliance with animal welfare requirements.

19. RSPCA INSPECTION OF THE ANIMAL CARE FACILITY

An RSPCA Inspector conducted two unannounced Pound Inspections of the ACF on 19 October and 9 November 2011 and has provided Council with a copy of a 19 page Pound Inspection Report. The Inspector audited the facility, interviewed staff, observed work practices and inspected Council's documentation in relation to the ACF. The Report did not identify any welfare matters.

The Pound Inspection Report suggested the following actions:

- **Documentation of Initial Health Assessment for each Animal that Enters the Facility**

While a visual health assessment of all animals entering the ACF is conducted to identify sick and injured animals that need to be taken directly to Council's contracted veterinarian, a standard form to record the results of this assessment was not used. A standard visual health assessment form has now been developed and is used by staff for all incoming animals. The completed form is then attached to the Animal Seizure/Surrender Form. Council's standard operating procedures for "Impounding Animals" and "Care and Medical Treatment of Impounded Animals" are also currently being updated to include this new form.

- **Shade Structure to be provided to Exercise Yard**

Council staff are currently obtaining quotations for a shade sail to be provided over the exercise yard.

- **Separation of kittens from adult cats**

While the Report acknowledged that Council had recently modified two dog kennels to house kittens separately from adult cats as a temporary measure, a more formalised and isolated facility is required in the long term. As detailed earlier in this report (Issue 11) the cattery is over 30 years old and in need of an upgrade which will be recommended for inclusion as an item for consideration in the 2012-2013 budget.

Recommended Action:

- (i) That Council endorse the recommendations of the RSPCA inspection and that follow up action be undertaken.

ADDITIONAL MATTERS RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY

In addition to the matters raised by POUNDCC, Council has over recent months received a number of letters, emails and phone calls from members of the broader community in relation to matters associated with the operation of the ACF. A response to each of the matters raised is provided below".

20. INCENTIVE SCHEME TO REWARD RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERS

Issue

Concern has been raised by a member of the community that responsible dog owners who micro-chip and register their animal don't receive any benefit when compared to irresponsible dog owners when their dog is impounded. It was suggested that some form of reward scheme should be established for responsible pet owners such as a "get out of jail fee card" which could be used in the event that their dog is impounded by Council (first time only).

It has also been stated that the cost of being a responsible pet owner was prohibitive for some members of the community and consequently more discretion should be provided when it came to applying fees and charges associated with impounding and releasing dogs. This was particularly relevant where dogs escaped a yard through no fault of the owner (eg during events such as fireworks, storms, robbery or where a trade's person has left the gate open).

An extension of the above concept may include the provision of more clarity and discretion concerning fines that are issued for roaming dog offences, so not to punish those who regularly do the right thing.

Response

Currently impounding and release fees are charged where a dog is impounded as these fees reflect the cost associated with Council undertaking this statutory function. Discretion is applied at the time of release where information is provided in relation to the circumstances of how the dog became impounded. A review of other Council Pound Facilities confirmed that this approach is an industry standard.

Council is empowered to issue a fine to the owner of each impounded dog for the offence "Own dog uncontrolled in public place". Council staff currently use discretion when issuing fines for this offence and will not issue fines for impounded dogs following thunder storm events, fireworks or where the dog owner can provide an event number from Police to confirm a reported robbery. A sign advising that a fine will be issued is placed on the ACF counter and staff advise dog owners at the time of release that a fine will be issued.

Contact with other Council Pound Facilities confirms that this is an industry standard, however it should be noted that Wollongong Council has a zero tolerance approach and fines are issued to the owner of all impounded animals, irrespective of circumstance.

Where a fine is issued to a dog owner, the person has (as anyone who receives a fine), the ability to seek a review of that decision by writing to the State Debt Recovery Office outlining the reasons for the review. The State Debt Recovery Office will independently review the submission and may as part of this process contact Council requesting further information. Favourable consideration may be given where there is a justifiable reason, supported by evidence that the dog escape was beyond the control of the owner.