

BACKGROUND

The Vertebrate Pest Animal Management Policy (VPAMP) was developed by Council following advice from the Department of Primary Industries that Council should develop a policy for the management of vertebrate pests as a first step in addressing the problem of feral deer affecting the Wollongong Local Government Area (LGA). The VPAMP was endorsed by Council in April 2010. The VPAMP provided the framework for Council to develop and implement pest management across the City.

The management of vertebrate pests is an element of Council's overall land management responsibility. It is important that Council takes a coordinated approach to managing vertebrate pests as they cannot be managed by Council alone, and an *ad-hoc* approach reduces the chance of successful control and is an inefficient use of Council resources. Council must meet its legislative requirements under the *Local Land Services Act 2013* and the *Local Government Act 1993* and also manage community expectations regarding control of vertebrate pests.

OBJECTIVE

The main objectives of this policy are to –

- 1 Commit Council to working collaboratively with State government agencies and key stakeholders to manage vertebrate pest issues.
- 2 Improve the quality of information and advice provided to residents on vertebrate pest matters.
- 3 Outline a methodology for prioritising pest species and implementing on-ground works to control vertebrate pests affecting the Wollongong Local Government Area.
- 4 Improve the efficiency of Council pest control measures.

POLICY STATEMENT

The Vertebrate Pest Animal Management Policy sets out the approach, clarifies Council's obligations, and outlines what the community should expect from Council in terms of vertebrate pest management. The policy is focussed on the delivery of core services to the community and is the foundation for ongoing process improvements and on-ground works to manage vertebrate pests in the Wollongong LGA.

DEFINITION OF 'VERTEBRATE PEST'

For the purposes of this policy, 'vertebrate pests' are introduced non-human vertebrate animals, currently found to be a health hazard, a general nuisance, or to be destroying food, fibre or natural resources. This definition is for the purposes of this policy and does not supersede laws and regulations regarding the management of animals included in the policy. The species considered in this policy are:

- Deer (deer species)
- European Rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*)
- Dog (*Canis spp.*) – Wild and uncontrolled dogs
- Cat (*Felis catus*) – Wild and uncontrolled cats
- Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)
- Carp (*Cyprinus carpio*)
- Feral Pig (*Sus scrofa*)
- Feral Goat (*Capra hircus*)
- Common Myna Bird (*Acridotheres tristis*)
- Cane Toad (*Bufo marinus*)

ROLE OF COUNCIL

Council must consider its approach to management of pest species for land under its direct control and, more broadly, in accordance with its obligations under the *Local Government Act 1993* and in the context of the many competing priorities of its operations. Council's primary responsibility is to control vertebrate pests affecting land under its control and management, in particular when an animal is declared a pest under the *Local Land Services Act 2013* or is threatening the viability of threatened species, populations or endangered ecological communities. The approach outlined in this policy will guide these actions.

Wollongong City Council has limited resources for controlling vertebrate pest species and therefore must implement a process of prioritisation of actions for pest control that is clear and accountable to the community. By nominating priority pests and making Pest Management Plans for these pests, Council can provide a clear indication of its planned actions and approach. The Pest Management Plans also provide a resource for other land managers addressing vertebrate pest problems.

In addition to Council's responsibilities as a land manager, it has a broader responsibility to the community to minimise risks to public safety and loss of amenity caused by vertebrate pests. For vertebrate pest matters affecting the community and outside of Council's direct control, Council will concentrate on supporting the work of key agencies and landholders addressing these matters. This support includes collecting and mapping information related to pest impacts, chairing the Pest Animal Advisory Group, partnering in joint programs, providing information on pest management to residents through fact sheets, frequently asked questions sheets and written responses.

PRINCIPLES OF VERTEBRATE PEST MANAGEMENT

INTEGRATED APPROACH

Pest management should be targeted, coordinated and integrated, involving all relevant land managers and any relevant regional or national programs. Pest control works should be integrated with other land management activities such as weed, fire and recreational management.

EARLY DETECTION

New emerging pests should be targeted rapidly to ensure the most cost effective treatment. Council will seek feedback from residents and land managers regarding emerging pest species.

DEFINED OBJECTIVES

Most vertebrate pest species affecting Wollongong LGA are established in such numbers that eradication is impossible. For these species, it is important that control programs have clearly defined objectives so that resources can be allocated appropriately. It is also important that Council defines the objectives of its pest control activities and monitors their effectiveness in order that it is fully accountable for its expenditure. Objectives will relate to the management of pest impacts and will have monitoring to ensure programs are meeting stated objectives.

BEST PRACTICE METHODS

All vertebrate pest control activities conducted by Council or on behalf of Council will be conducted in accordance with the Vertebrate Pest Control Manual published by the Department of Primary Industries and guided by the principles outlined in the NSW Invasive Species Plan. Risk assessments will be conducted to ensure the occupational health and safety of staff and residents. All methods will minimise suffering of animals and comply with relevant animal welfare legislation. The use of pesticides will be in accordance with the relevant legislation and cause minimal harm to the environment.

STATEMENT OF PROCEDURES

1 WORK COLLABORATIVELY TO MANAGE VERTEBRATE PEST ISSUES

Council will chair the Pest Animal Advisory Group (PAAG) which currently comprises members of the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, Water NSW, NSW Police Service, Local Land Services, Animal Welfare League, RSPCA NSW and Council staff.

The role of this group is to:

- 1.1 assist Council to improve its approach to pest management;
- 1.2 collaborate with Council on implementing pest management plans and pest control programs;
- 1.3 discuss emerging pest issues; and
- 1.4 ensure Council activities are meeting animal welfare standards.

2 PROVIDE INFORMATION AND ADVICE TO RESIDENTS ON VERTEBRATE PEST MATTERS

Fact sheets on vertebrate pests identified in this policy will be developed by Council in consultation with the PAAG and made available to the public. Responses to Frequently Asked Questions are also provided to residents through the Customer Service function of Council. These resources are reviewed and updated at a minimum annually.

3 OUTLINE A METHODOLOGY FOR PRIORITISING ACTIONS ON VERTEBRATE PESTS

Priority Pests

Council uses a rational decision-making framework for ranking priority pests and determining priority actions for pest management. This approach is informed by the principles of the NSW Invasive Species Plan and is based on the Pestplan methodology successfully implemented by other councils.

Pest species are ranked according to a combination of pest significance and the feasibility of control measures as defined by the pest priority matrix (Table 1). Pest significance refers to the level of social, economic and environmental impact of a pest. Pest control feasibility refers to the cost of control, current population levels, risks involved in control and the likelihood that control could eliminate the pest problem. Council allocates a score for each of these factors based on information from residents, scientific literature, field data and information from Council staff. Council conducts this assessment in consultation with the PAAG. The latest priority assessment is available on Council's website.

Table 1 Pest Priority Matrix

	Pest Significance			
Control Feasibility	Low	Moderate	High	Very High
Very High (Prevent)	High	High	High	High
High (Eradicate)	Medium	Medium	Medium	High
Moderate (Reduce)	Low	Low	Medium	High
Low (Contain)	Low	Low	Low	High

4 PEST MANAGEMENT PLANS

Where a pest species is identified as a high priority, Pest Management Plans guide the implementation of pest management actions. Pest Management Plans specify objectives, control measures, consultation approach, standard operating procedures and measures of success for subject species. In preparing a Pest Management Plan, Council considers information from residents, government agencies, scientific literature, field data and information from Council staff. Pest Management Plans are updated and reviewed in consultation with the Pest Animal Advisory Group.

5 IMPROVE THE EFFICIENCY OF COUNCIL PEST CONTROL MEASURES.

Pest Management Plans will include measures of success that will be reviewed annually by Council and the Pest Animal Advisory Group. Reviews aim to evaluate the effectiveness of the pest management approach and identify improvements in efficiency and opportunities for cooperation.

SUMMARY SHEET	
Responsible Division	Environmental Strategy and Planning
Date adopted by Council	3 August 2015
Date of previous adoptions	27 April 2010
Date of next review	31 August 2019
Prepared by	Environment Strategy Officer
Authorised by	Manager Environmental Strategy and Planning