

11. Managing pets around Dandenong Ranges National Park

Aim

This activity involves designing a community brochure for pet owners as a means of investigating the issues and impacts relating to pet management around Dandenong Ranges National Park.

Materials

- Resource sheet 11: Pet management in the Dandenong Ranges.

Activities

1. Develop a Code of Conduct for a Pet Owner. List 6 - 8 points for a responsible pet owner e.g. choose a cat appropriate to your circumstances; put bells on your cat's collar.
2. Using the information on the Shire of Yarra Ranges Animal Control Local Law of 1996, design a brochure to encourage responsible pet owners. The brochure is for delivery to homes that border the

Dandenong Ranges National Park. It should clearly outline the requirements of pet owners with regard to the local law and describe ways in which cat owners can be responsible in the Dandenong Ranges.

Your brochure should be A4 in size and include relevant graphics, headings and information. Information should be presented concisely and cover as much as possible of the following:

- Purpose of the law.
- Reason for and methods of animal identification.
- The benefits of confining pets to the owner's property.
- Why pets are harmful in national parks.
- Ways for dealing with stray and feral animals around your home.



Superb Lyrebird ©MT

11. Pet management in the Dandenong Ranges

Cats and dogs can frighten or kill wildlife and spread disease to them. Cats and dogs have been creating problems in the Dandenong Ranges National Park for many years. The Superb Lyrebird population decline in the park has been linked to a several factors but predation by feral and domestic cats and dogs, and by foxes, is a major problem.

Management actions to protect wildlife in the park include the removal of predators, animal welfare legislation and habitat restoration programs. These actions help ensure survival of the Superb Lyrebird in the Dandenong Ranges National Park.

Managers of the park and Local Council have been working together to reduce the problems of pets in the national park, and at the same time increase the welfare of pets.

Various agencies, groups and individuals, especially the Dandenong Ranges National Park, raised concerns about the continual loss of wildlife in the Shire. Domestic cats and dogs were seen as the main causes for this loss of wildlife. An Animal Welfare Working Group operated during the early 1990s and consisted of park staff, Councillors and staff of the Shire of Sherbrooke/Yarra Ranges Shire Council*, and representatives from animal welfare agencies, breed organizations, local conservation groups and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

The Working Group was asked to provide advice to Council so they could prepare a Local Animal Welfare Law to protect the welfare of all native, domestic and farm animals in the municipality.

Following a period of public debate and controversy over 'cat control' the Yarra Ranges Shire Council approved a new **Animal Control Local Law**. This law took effect in 1996.

The Yarra Ranges Shire Council's 1996 Animal Control Local Law requires:

- All cats and dogs to be registered with the Council.
- All cats and dogs to be keep confined to the owner' property at night (between specified hours). This means in a building or within another escape-proof structure.
- Permits be obtained by owners who want to have more than two cats or two dogs.
- People not feed or encourage feral or stray animals onto their property. They should make sure that stray or feral animals cannot eat the food they put out for their pet(s).

Fines of \$100 or more can be issued to people who do not abide by this Local Law.

Animal welfare groups such as the RSPCA support pet control laws such as this as they also help protect pets from injury.

Several other Councils, including Manningham, Frankston and Casey Councils have introduced similar requirements on pet owners.

* Sherbrooke Shire Council became the Yarra Ranges Shire Council in 1994 as a result of the amalgamation of many Councils in Victoria.