

## Domestic Cats & Dogs



### Impacts

All domestic dogs and cats can kill, harass and cause relocation (due to scents) of native animals and kill or cause misthinking and miscarriage in domestic stock. Dogs will chase livestock or natives such as Kangaroos for the fun – the stress of being chased often results in the death of the animal. They are a disease vector for both native animals and domestic livestock.

Domestic animals causing a nuisance can be legally shot in the paddock, the owners fined and their animals removed and put down. It is important for your own pets' safety that they be confined to your yard. There is a significant cost to local Councils to police domestic animals and follow-up complaints.

### Distribution

Domestic dog and cat activity aligns with human settlement and is common within the Molonglo catchment especially peri-urban and the more dense rural settlements.

### Case Studies

#### Dog attacks

It is a commonly held belief by many dog owners that their dog is harmless and would never even hurt a fly! However a local resident of the Molonglo catchment, near Burra creek had a harrowing experience when two domestic dogs came on to her property. The dogs brutally killed seven of her alpacas and injured several others, before the dogs in question had to be shot. The attack caused great emotional pain, and resulted in the loss of life of the seven alpacas and the two dogs. Although this was an extreme case, sadly attacks from domesticated dogs are all too frequent.

"I am pleading with everyone who comes into this valley or any other urban or peri-urban area to lock your dogs up. This was a needless massacre and the dogs are not to blame - it is the irresponsible owners who don't think their animals are capable of this sort of attack. Think again!"

#### Cats and Wildcare

Most people are aware of how destructive cats can be to native birds, reptiles and small mammals, but few are aware of how destructive cats can be to the wildlife rescue effort.

Bill runs Wildcare, an animal rescue organisation based in Queanbeyan, and is all too aware of how damaging cats are to native animals. They see many animals brought in which have sustained attacks from cats, but it's the ones which never get a chance that really upset him. Often, when a native animal such as a wombat, possum or kangaroo gets hit by a car, there may be a live joey inside its pouch. If this is discovered by a cat before the joey can be rescued, they have been known to chew through the wall of the pouch and eat the baby before it even has a chance. "It's a race against time with cats" says Bill from Wildcare, "Often we find the baby missing before the mother's body has even gone cold".

### Description

You know them and you may have them! They all instinctively hunt and chase. Do you know exactly where yours are now?

Even well cared for domestic dogs and cats are known to harass native animals, thus it is essential to know where your pets are at all times. Cats and dogs will pursue most small mammals, with dogs able to attack and harass kangaroos, wallabies, lambs, sheep, foals and calves, while cats commonly attack birds and reptiles and will hunt and harass possums. Both dogs and cats often pursue these animals purely for the fun of it, so even if your pet is well fed and has a good temperament it can cause damage when it is just trying to play.

Unlike native and introduced predators, domestic cats and dogs will often leave the carcass uneaten. Dogs will commonly attack or break the neck of the animal killed. If a bird is killed the head is often the only part eaten. In contrast birds of prey will pluck a bird killed, leaving a mass of feathers and down.

Dog activity is more common during the day but can also occur at night. Both cats and dogs are able to travel many kilometres in one day! Cat activity is mostly at dawn, dusk and through the night. It is essential that domestic dogs and cats be kept indoors or securely confined to a yard during these times. If you live a small distance from bushland your pets should never be allowed to wander freely.



Invasive Animals CRC

Dog roaming bushland

### What YOU can do

Domestic animals are the responsibility of their owners. It is important that pet dogs and cats are confined to yards and leashed when out walking, particularly near bushland. Keep your pet under control (inside or in a run) at all times, especially during their peak hunting time, for dogs that's anytime, for cats it's mostly at dawn, dusk and through the night.

De-sexing your pet dog or cat is also an important step as it reduces the likelihood of them wandering. If you see a domestic dog or cat roaming freely contact your local council to arrange for it to be collected.

Some steps you can take are:

- report neglected or straying animals;
- don't abandon pets, if you can no longer care for the animal take it to your local RSPCA who will attempt to find it a home;
- keep your dog under control at all times; and
- keep your cat in doors at night, particularly at dawn and dusk

These simple steps will reduce the potential of your pet being involved in an incident and potentially save their life as well as that of a potential victim.



Native animal remains after cat attack



Wounds to the neck and legs of an alpaca after a domestic dog attack



Wendy Henderson, Invasive Animals CRC

Cat with a bird



Nerida Hart

Alpacas killed by domestic dogs



LHPA

Livestock killed by dog attack

M Evans, DEH Cat flyer 2001

#### Molonglo Catchment Group

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Web: [www.molonglocatchment.org.au](http://www.molonglocatchment.org.au)

#### Parks Conservation and Lands

Phone: 13 22 81

#### Livestock Health and Pest Authority

(formerly Rural Lands Protection Board)

Cooma Office: (02) 6452 1122

Braidwood Office: (02) 4842 2536

Web: [www.LHPA.org.au/pest-control](http://www.LHPA.org.au/pest-control)

#### Councils

Queanbeyan City Council: (02) 6298 0269

Palerang Council: 1300 739 025

Cooma-Monaro Shire Council: (02) 6455 1777

#### Territory and Municipal Services

Phone: 13 22 81

