

Tough new animal laws for pet owners

Pet owners are now responsible for registering their pets under the new Animal Management (cats and dogs) Act 2008.

The intention of the Act is to encourage responsible animal ownership to reduce the number of unwanted cats and dogs and reduce the number of animals put down each year.

Under the new legislation regulated dogs include declared dangerous dogs, declared restricted dogs and declared menacing dogs.

Cassowary Coast Regional Council Manager of Environmental Services Geoff Wilson said the current animal management is implemented under local laws of the former Johnstone and Cardwell Shire Councils in their respective geographic areas.

"The new laws will sit on top of those established laws, some parts of local laws will continue to go forward," Mr Wilson said.

"The main component is man-

datory registration of all cats and dogs, mandatory tattooing of de-sexed animals, introduction of a menacing dog category, code of practice for pet shops and mandatory micro chipping at point of sale, transfer of ownership or once the pet turns 12 weeks old.

"It is not all bad news because the new laws don't come into play straight away. South East Queensland, Central Highlands Regional Council and the Gladstone Regional Council introduced the full range of the Act on July 1; we have nominated December 1, 2010 for the installation of the full act.

"The cut-off date is December next year and we are taking advantage of the full time frame to implement these changes.

"The changes in place now are for regulated dogs, those dogs that are menacing, dangerous and restricted (banned breeds).

"The declared dangerous dog is one that seriously attacks or caus-

es fear in a person or another animal, but the provision is there that it causes fear so you don't have to wait for something to happen.

"The introduction of the declared menacing dogs is a preemptive measure and is based on similar grounds, but there doesn't need to be a serious attack.

"A declared menacing dog, I would classify as one that chases the cassowaries.

"The new Act focuses on dog behaviour and once a dog is declared a regulated dog the provisions are in place.

"Once a dog has been declared a regulated dog, conditions are in place for owning that animal

"They must be micro chipped, housed in a suitable child-proof 1.8 metre high enclosure (for dogs more than 80 kilograms) with the prescribed sign and safe access available to the front door.

"Because the conditions are tough, decisions are open to a review and appeal process.

"The beauty of it is that the conditions apply state-wide.

"There will be a state-wide data base with micro chipped information on it which is especially helpful when people move.

"Other provisions relating to registering all cats and dogs will be in place by December next year and the government has given us \$16,000 to do this.

"In terms of helping us in animal management, the community can call council and provide helpful information on the location, time, description of dogs, suspicion of address, knowledge of owner, and behaviour of dog.

"Mandatory micro chipping will come into our area in December next year for all animals that turn 12 weeks of age or that come into the area."

All existing dogs, except regulated dogs, are exempt from micro chipping.

Regulated dogs must have been micro chipped by July 1, 2010.