

ANIMAL WELFARE

INTRODUCTION

Animals are sentient beings with intrinsic moral status, deserving to be free from direct and indirect harm caused by humans

Management of domestic and native animals should always be led by evidence, moral consideration, and an ecological approach to our relationship with nature.

Animals are not provided with the moral consideration they deserve.

Humans are destroying the planet that we share with animals, treating pets as possessions, farm animals as a commodity and destroying habitat for wildlife.

We need a transparent, ecosystems approach to our surrounding environment if we are to counter the decline in the health, diversity, resilience and wellbeing of flora and fauna.

In the Assembly the Greens have:

- ended battery caged hens and sow stall farming
- regulated puppy and kitten farms
- banned greyhound racing
- given people the right to have pets in rental properties
- legislated to have written definitions of cage, barn-laid and free-range eggs displayed in retail outlets
- passed Australia's first laws to recognise animals as sentient

There is more to do to build a better normal for our animals.

THAT'S WHY THE ACT GREENS WILL FIGHT FOR THE ANIMALS WE SHARE THIS COUNTRY WITH, BY:

1. Protecting animal habitats and the ecology that sustains them through:
 - a. Securing long-term funding for wildlife carer groups
 - b. Funding for animal carer counselling
 - c. Protecting habitat by stopping urban sprawl and making Canberra an urban biodiversity sanctuary for native animals
 - d. Funding the ACT Wildlife Wombat Mange Management Program
2. Strengthening animal welfare through:
 - a. Legislative reform
 - i. Strengthening animal welfare legislation protections including banning the sale of shark fin products, fruit tree netting that can trap flying foxes, practices of mulesing, and prong collars
 - ii. Educating the community on the welfare of sow pigs by legislating for point of sale labelling information on the way they are treated in all ACT shops
 - b. Reviewing animal management practices
 - i. Investing \$1.4 million to expand Gonacon dart delivery rollout to enable a more humane approach to kangaroo population management; and prioritising non-lethal alternatives to population management including phasing out 1080 poison
 - ii. Advocating for a federal royal commission into horse racing
 - iii. Continued subsidies for desexing of pets for people with concession cards or low-incomes
 - iv. Ensuring emergency plans encompass the welfare of animals in natural and human-made disasters
 - c. Increased community education and enforcement
 - i. Increased funding for community education, enforcement and sanctioning of offenders
 - ii. Funding an awareness campaign on the impact of cats on wildlife in Canberra and increase cat containment measures to move towards Territory-wide cat containment
 - iii. Continued subsidies for desexing of pets for people with concession cards or low-incomes
 - iv. Making our city pet friendly by making it easier for pet owners to take pets onto buses and light rail, and where appropriate, into shops and other semi-public spaces and providing more bins in off-leash dog walking areas

3. Promoting plant based foods through:
 - a. More education and by ensuring that all ACT Government schools, hospitals and events offer nutritious plant-based meals
 - b. Publicising Australian Dietary guidelines on plant-based food, and education in schools

1. PROTECTING ANIMAL HABITATS

A. LONG-TERM FUNDING FOR WILDLIFE CARER GROUPS

In Canberra we are lucky to live amongst so much beautiful wildlife. However, as our city grows, wild animals come into more contact with humans, and due to climate change we are experiencing more frequent, extreme weather events - wildlife carers are more important than ever. Long-term funding for our wildlife carer groups will provide certainty that our animals are not left behind in our climate change response and mitigation efforts. ACT Wildlife has worked hard to get themselves an office to work from, but they still need ongoing funding for a veterinarian and a surgery to work from.

B. FUNDING FOR ANIMAL CARER COUNSELLING

The climate crisis, 2018/2019 drought and recent east coast megafires have placed incredible pressures on our wildlife carers, who have to deal with the devastation of our local environments and sick and injured animals. Frontline animal carers, just like other frontline and emergency workers, are there to provide support, but they also need support. There are services that provide counselling to help carers process emotional grief that results from seeing our wildlife suffer in the anthropocene. The Greens will provide \$45,000 funding to support wildlife carer counselling services.

C. MAKING CANBERRA AUSTRALIA'S FIRST URBAN BIODIVERSITY SANCTUARY AND PROTECTING HABITAT BY STOPPING URBAN SPRAWL AND CARING FOR OUR PARKS AND WILDLIFE CORRIDORS

By building urban ecosystems, we will make Canberra a refuge for the plants, animals and ecological communities devastated by climate change, habitat loss, bushfires and urban sprawl. Biodiversity is the key to a healthy environment, and the ACT Greens will take a range of measures to protect and improve biodiversity and year-round habitat across the ACT. See our plans for [repairing the land](#) and [repairing waterways](#).

Our trees and green spaces are [threatened by urban sprawl, development and human impact](#). We will set out city limits to stop urban sprawl, set an 80% infill/ 20% greenfield development target, and establish an urban wildlife and biodiversity corridors program linking to our nature reserves where possible to expand local habitats, nest sites, food sources, and accessible water for animals and insects across the urban environment.

D. FUNDING FOR THE ACT WILDLIFE WOMBAT MANGE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM TO DEAL WITH WOMBAT MANGE

Sarcoptic mange is a skin infection disease that is affecting wombat populations, including those in the ACT, causing suffering to afflicted animals. It is caused by a burrowing parasitic mite that affects over 100 mammal species worldwide. It particularly affects wombats because their burrows are conducive to the survival and transfer of mites, causing them considerable suffering. While there is no method to eradicate mange in the wild, the Greens will provide **\$200,000 over four years** to the ACT Wildlife Mange Management Program delivered by Wildlife ACT program to research and trial interventions to reduce its spread.

2. STRENGTHENING ANIMAL WELFARE THROUGH:

A. LEGISLATIVE REFORM

The Greens want a continuation of the Government's animal welfare legislative reform program to strengthen animal welfare legislation protections to protect both domestic and native animals. In particular the Greens want:

- i. A **ban on the practice of mulesing of sheep** to prevent flystrike to be phased in over 5 years with immediate bans on mulesing without using pain relief
- ii. A **ban on the sale of oversized fruit tree netting** in which flying foxes and other native animals can get trapped. The Greens will seek an environmental exemption to the Mutual Obligation Act to ban the sale of fruit tree netting with large holes, aligning our legislation with the new Victorian standard to require a smaller mesh size
- iii. A **ban on the sale of shark fins and shark fin products including food** in the ACT
- iv. **Animal training and behaviour programs that focus on positive reinforcement**
- v. **Restrictions on the selective breeding of animals for characteristics that are physically or psychologically harmful to the animal itself** or to others, by restricting breeders licences for certain dog breeds
- vi. **To explore with stakeholders the need for a duty for landholders to report sick or injured mammals on their land**, even if they are not responsible for that sickness or injury or in charge of that mammal, and allow access for relevant agencies to render assistance
- vii. Educating the community on **the welfare of sow pigs by legislating for point of sale information on the way they are treated** in all ACT shops.

The Greens will build on our work on chicken welfare and free range stocking density point of sale signage by legislating for all shops selling pork products to display labelling information about the welfare and treatment of sow pigs.

B. REVIEWING ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

I. TRIAL MORE HUMANE, TRANSPARENT AND EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACHES TO MANAGEMENT OF ECOSYSTEMS BY INVESTING \$1.4 MILLION TO EXPAND GONACON DART DELIVERY ROLLOUT TO ENABLE A MORE HUMANE APPROACH TO KANGAROO POPULATION MANAGEMENT; AND PRIORITISING NON-LETHAL ALTERNATIVES TO POPULATION MANAGEMENT

The Greens believe in holistic and evidence based animal management that minimises suffering and habitat loss for all animals. This means ensuring that the science is clear, looking at the big picture systematic or flow-on effects of all management interventions, and transparently communicating to the community. Where practicable, humane and non-lethal options for population management should be preferred and explored.

The Greens acknowledge that 1080 poison is not a humane way to manage animals. We want humane, transparent and evidence-based approaches to management of ecosystems and the prioritisation of non-lethal alternatives to population management wherever possible, and more humane options where it is not.

The Greens have also ensured significant resources have gone into investigating alternative methods for reducing kangaroo populations in our nature reserves, in particular fertility control.

The ACT Greens achieved additional funding for more research into the best way to implement a [fertility program for kangaroos](#) in the wild, as a far preferable option to culling. GonaCon Immunocontraceptive Vaccine trials for wild kangaroos were commenced in the ACT in 2015, and have been found to be successful in significantly reducing fertility for around 7 years.

At this stage the Gonacon fertility control program requires each individual to be tranquilised by remote dart, captured, injected with Gonacon and nurtured back to consciousness, so this process is currently best suited to small, contained populations. We understand that the ACT Government is also trialling a new method of remotely delivering via a dart to female kangaroos. Preliminary results looked positive, however it is very labour intensive, as it requires very short-range darting. **The Greens are committed to investing \$1.4 million over four years in expansion of Gonacon dart delivery rollout to enable a more humane approach to kangaroo population management.**

We appreciate that culling native animals is never the preferred option. The ACT Greens will continue to work hard to ensure protection of the natural areas that surround the ACT, as well as pressuring the ACT Government to further invest in non-lethal alternatives to reduce the population of kangaroos while further protecting the biodiversity of Canberra's nature reserves.

II. ADVOCATE FOR A FEDERAL ROYAL COMMISSION INTO HORSE RACING IN THE ACT.

The Greens want to abolish the cruel and inhumane use of animals for sport, recreation and entertainment. The ban on greyhound racing in the ACT was a big win for animal welfare, and the Greens are committed to maintaining this ban in the ACT. There are legitimate questions over animal welfare in the horse racing industry and the Greens will advocate for a review into animal welfare impacts of horse racing in the ACT. We will also advocate for a national Royal Commission into cruelty and abuse in horse racing.

III. CONTINUED SUBSIDIES FOR DEXSEXING OF PETS FOR PEOPLE WITH CONCESSION CARDS OR LOW-INCOMES

Desexing is an important part of domestic animal management, but can be a sizable one off, upfront cost for many people. The Greens will continue funding for people with financial barriers to cover costs of desexing pets in order to reduce the number of unwanted and neglected domestic animals.

IV. ENSURE EMERGENCY PLANS ENCOMPASS THE WELFARE OF ANIMALS IN NATURAL AND HUMAN-MADE DISASTERS

The staggering scale of the fauna losses in the 2019-2020 Summer bushfires, in which over [one billion animals were killed](#) (3 billion if you include reptiles), and many more displaced, shows that our animals are vulnerable to devastating population losses in a changing climate. There needs to be greater planning to prevent animal losses in natural and human made disasters.

C. INCREASED COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND ENFORCEMENT

I. INCREASED FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY EDUCATION, ENFORCEMENT AND SANCTIONING OF OFFENDERS

The Greens want more funding for education and enforcement of the ACT's animal welfare and domestic animal legislation to effectively prevent animal cruelty, protect our native animals and address unsustainable pet ownership practices.

The Greens believe that there should be **prohibitions on ownership of pets by people who have breached animal welfare laws until such time as they complete animal welfare education programs** to demonstrate that they can provide appropriate care for animals under their control. These programs should be restorative and focused not only on responsible animal management but on broader skills of emotional regulation and anger management so that people have tools to deal with stressful situations rather than taking that out on animals in their care.

The Greens will employ an additional ranger and two inspectors to conduct education and enforcement programs.

D. FUNDING AN AWARENESS CAMPAIGN ON THE IMPACT OF CATS ON WILDLIFE IN CANBERRA AND INCREASE CAT CONTAINMENT MEASURES

The Greens want to continue to reduce the impacts of domestic cats on native wildlife through local consultation, education and enforcement of cat containment areas, as well as gradual implementation of cat containment throughout the whole of the ACT, beginning with suburbs that border on nature reserves. The Greens believe that more community awareness about the impact of cats on our wildlife will increase community support for cat-containment measures. **The Greens have committed \$1.2 million over four years to increase cat containment rollout and community education about the impact of cats.**

E. MAKING OUR CITY PET FRIENDLY BY MAKING IT EASIER FOR PET OWNERS TO TAKE, WHERE APPROPRIATE, PETS ON BUSES AND LIGHT RAIL, INTO SHOPS AND OTHER SEMI-PUBLIC SPACES, AND BY PROVIDING MORE BINS IN OFF-LEASH DOG WALKING AREAS

Restrictions on pets on public transport is a barrier to the uptake of public transport. The Greens want to make our city pet friendly by allowing pets on public transport and into other semi-public spaces (such as shops) where appropriate, taking into consideration public health and workplace safety.

The Greens will spend **\$30,000 on more bins in off leash dog walking areas** to improve amenity for pet owners and the community.

3. PROMOTING PLANT BASED FOODS

A. PROMOTING PLANT BASED FOODS THROUGH BETTER EDUCATION AND BY ENSURING THAT ALL ACT GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS, HOSPITALS AND EVENTS OFFER NUTRITIOUS PLANT-BASED MEALS

The Greens want to [continue to advocate for increased plant based foods promotion](#) in the ACT. We want better education for the community about the benefits and availability of plant based foods in the ACT, as well as nutritious plant based food options to be available in all ACT Government institutions including hospitals and schools. The Greens have committed \$200,000 over four years to support this work.

B. PUBLICISING AUSTRALIAN DIETARY GUIDELINES ON PLANT-BASED FOOD, AND EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

Where there are references to diet and nutrition in the ACT school curriculum the Greens want to see education about the benefits and availability of plant based foods and other dietary needs.