

FRIENDS OF HODDLES CREEK NEWSLETTER

Dogs, cats and wildlife Golden rules for pets in Hoddles Creek

For many people, a pet dog or cat is a member of the family, whether it's providing company, joining in the family fun, or curling up with you in front of the fire. Dogs can also be valuable workmates.

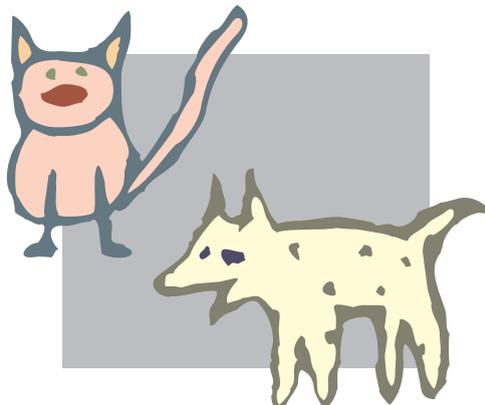
Killer moggies

Unfortunately, there can be a dark side to some of our four-footed friends as well. For example, did you know that the average pet cat kills 16 mammals, 8 birds and 8 reptiles in a year. As there are around 900,000 pet cats in Victoria, that means more than 29 million wildlife killed per year. And keeping your pet moggy well fed doesn't help – hunting is an instinctive cat behaviour.

Feral cats are an even greater problem as they hunt to live. Each of the estimated 200,000 feral cats in Victoria kills an average of 7 native bush rats and 10 native birds per week. That adds up to a staggering 104 million native animals killed each year!

Good cat habits

How can you reduce the chances of your cat being a killer? First, make sure that it can't wander. This is good for your cat, as wandering cats are vulnerable to disease and attack from other cats or dogs. Motor vehicles are also a major cat hazard.



Second, if you allow your cat outside, make sure it wears a bell to warn wildlife. Better still, consider keeping it in an enclosed run (you can find information on cat enclosures at cat-world.com.au or type in 'outdoor cat enclosures' into Google). And always keep cats in at night.

Doggy do's and don'ts

Roaming dogs have been responsible

for fatal attacks on goats and sheep and injuries to ponies in recent months in the Shire. Native animals are also at risk. Your most important task, as a dog owner, is to make sure that your dog is confined to an area on your property and not able to roam into the streets or on to neighboring properties (it is an offence if your dog is not properly confined).

Dog training is also important. Dogs should not attack other animals or people and consistent barking is not normal dog behaviour. In fact, constant barking most likely indicates that your dog is being neglected, or is lonely or bored. Obedience training is important and it's best to start young.

Both cats and dogs should be desexed, preferably before they are six months old. And remember, all dogs and cats need to be registered with the Shire.

Keep these simple points in mind and your dog or cat will not only be your best friend, but can be a friend to the environment as well.

Wonderful wattles

We've seen an amazing amount of green and gold in Athens over the last couple of weeks and locally the green and gold is on show as well, in the form of wattles or acacias.

This marvellous family of more than 650 plants ranges from bushy prostrate forms, such as 'Austraflora Cascade' and 'Golden Carpet', through to large, long-lived trees, such as the blackwood (*Acacia melanoxylon*). In between is the Sticky wattle (*Acacia howittii*), a large dense shrub (to 6 metres) with attractive scented flowers that is great as a hedge planting.

Wattles are a natural choice for new plantings – they are fast-growing, bird attracting, supply nitrogen to the soil and many (such as the sticky wattle) are fire resistant.

If you would like to see how various wattles look as mature specimens, consider a visit to Dot and Bob O'Neill's Katandra Gardens, situated at 49 Hunter Road Wandin. With a superb display of acacias and other native plants, the gardens are open Thursday to Monday from 10 am to 4.30 pm.



Why pick on the poor agapanthus?

After our weeds issue, several people expressed support for the agapanthus. Are these plants really so bad? Unfortunately, the answer is yes.

Agapanthus is a very vigorous grower that can be propagated by seed or by fragments of the plant. These can be carried in soil on car and truck tires, washed into stormwater drains, carried by the wind, transferred by birds or can find their way into the bush by dumping of garden rubbish. Together, these methods mean that the potential for spread of the plant is high. Once introduced, agapanthus takes over, displacing indigenous grasses and groundcover plants.

As a result, agapanthus are now a significant problem in the Dandenong

Ranges National Park and the Kinglake National Park, where their control is made more difficult as a result of the drastic cutbacks that have occurred in the numbers of park rangers.

Have your agapanthus plants caused problems? Possibly not yet, but plantings adjacent to bush areas pose a constant threat of invasion. While removing flower heads before seed development may help, the ability of the plants to grow from fragments means that their very presence poses a risk.

Sophie Akers, from the Shire of Yarra Ranges, suggests several attractive indigenous alternatives, including Tasman Flax Lily (*Dianella tasmanica*), Butterfly Flag (*Diplarrena moraea*), Kangaroo Paws (*Anigozanthus* spp.) and Spiny Mat Rush (*Lomandra longifolia*). You can contact Sophie for more information on weeds and weed control on 1300 368 333.

Wouldn't it be great if . . .

Over the past few months, we've heard many people talking about issues that impact on life in Hoddles Creek and how they could be improved. Here are just a few:

Why is hail netting white? Able to be seen from kilometres away, it's hard to think of a more effective way to spoil the beauty of an area, turn off tourist dollars and, most likely, have a negative impact on the value of adjoining properties than the erection of white hail netting. While farmers look for new ways to maximise yield and deliver top quality fruit to consumers, we have yet to hear good reasons not to use black or dark green hail netting. This is available and has a much smaller visual impact. Let us know what you think.

Broadband internet connection. Fast internet connections are now essential for life on-line. While things are looking positive for townships such as Yarra Junction, Yarra Glen and Healesville, there is still some work to do to encourage Telstra to bring ADSL to Hoddles Creek. **The key factor is interest of the residents in receiving broadband.** The numbers of households/businesses who have registered interest so far is encouraging, more is needed. Please register your interest in ADSL broadband by phoning Telstra Countrywide on 1800 687 829

(you speak to a real person), or by logging on to www.bigpond.com and following the prompts. Remember, there is no obligation to connect when ADSL does become available. If you would like more information on broadband, you can ring Ray Turner on 5967 4594.

Shiprock Falls picnic area. Do you know this site (on Gembrook Road)? It's a pretty area, but it has been left half developed as responsibility appears to languish between the Shire and Parks Victoria. Completing the boundaries to the parking areas and cleaning up site debris would improve the area greatly at relatively little cost.

Rubbish dumping. We hope that locals are not responsible, but why do people think it's OK to dump garden waste, plastic bags full of rubbish, mattresses and other junk along our roadsides and in the bush? If it can't be included in the weekly garbage collection, the Recovery and Waste Transfer Centre at Old Warburton Road, Wesburn is open Friday to Tuesday from 8.30 am to 4.00 pm as a low cost option for larger items.

If you have a view on any of these issues or would like to raise other issues of concern to you, then email us at fohc@provender.com.au or write to us at FOHC, PO Box 298 Yarra Junction, Vic 3797.

New resident's kit

If you are a new resident, or you have a new neighbor, you may be interested in the Shire's information kit. With a wealth of helpful advice on topics including environmental issues and Shire services, you can obtain a copy simply by phoning the Shire's Customer Service Department on 1300 368 333.

Catch us on the net

Friends of Hoddles Creek is now on-line at www.provender.com.au/fohc. The website tells you a bit about the group, provides access to all past issues of the FOHC Newsletters and will contain an expanding set of links to other sites on the environment and educational resources, including a link to Melbourne Water's Streamfront Management Plan for Hoddles Creek.

Why not take a look and give us your comments and suggestions? You can email us at fohc@provender.com.au.

WANTED: new members

Friends of Hoddles Creek is looking for new members. If you're interested in keeping a watching brief on environmental and planning issues, writing letters, having great lunches and dinners and meeting an interesting bunch of people, we'd like to hear from you. Simply complete the form below and mail to us at FOHC, PO Box 298 Yarra Junction, Vic 3797, or email us at fohc@provender.com.au. Membership is free – all you need is an interest in your local area.

Name:.....
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Address:
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Phone:
Email:
<input type="checkbox"/> I'd like to join Friends of Hoddles Creek.
<input type="checkbox"/> I'd like more information. Please ring me.

Thanks again to Jill the postie for delivering the FOHC Newsletter.