



## PUBLIC FEEDBACK

**Rabbit Runway Orphanage**  
**House Rabbit Society (Australian Chapter)**  
19 Stanley St, Olinda 3788  
Ph: (03) 9751 1229  
Email: [info@rabbitrunaway.org.au](mailto:info@rabbitrunaway.org.au)

### Plan for Victoria's new animal care and protection laws

For 20 years, our rabbit rescue has been dealing with the problem of dumped animals and backyard breeding, the result of mis sexing and the lack of accurate information given at point of sale, regarding the species. Lagomorphs are an exotic species regarding veterinary studies, they are a prey animal and like birds and reptiles have unique requirements.

We hope that the new legislative change may come some way to address these problems.

- dumped pet rabbits (there are no deterrents to dumping pets)
- backyard breeding of rabbits (this is usually the result of no information given regarding desexing and the breeding cycle of this species)
- Back yard breeding is usually the result of mis sexing the animals at point of sale and also a lack of information regarding knowledge and the breeding cycle of lagomorphs (rabbit species)

Below are three examples of situations we have faced recently within a few days of each other and illustrate the problems we face weekly with no resolve. In desperation, and with no legislative support to address these issues, I decided to contact the relevant councils. In each case there were obstacles to prevent interventions. I was referred to the other authorities who were also unable to act.

Regards,  
Dr Judi Inglis  
President: Rabbit Runaway Orphanage

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#### EXAMPLE 1: Correspondence TO Yarra Ranges Council 31/8/2022

**From:** [info@rabbitrunaway.org.au](mailto:info@rabbitrunaway.org.au) <[info@rabbitrunaway.org.au](mailto:info@rabbitrunaway.org.au)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 31 August 2022 5:13 PM  
**To:** mail <[mail@yarraranges.vic.gov.au](mailto:mail@yarraranges.vic.gov.au)>  
**Subject:** animal welfare issue  
**Importance:** High

Dear staff,

I run a dedicated pet rabbit rescue and in the last 2 days, we have had 2 calls from people that have found dumped pets. One man found 6 baby rabbits dumped on an oval in Lilydale, they were about 4 weeks old. This suggests that the mother rabbit has had another litter, and the first litter abandoned to foxes and dogs. The man picked them up and took them home, knowing nothing about their care. Another lady found 2 female rabbits dumped in another part of the Yarra Ranges and I have referred both to Animal Aid, due to our capacity limits.

The increase in dumped and surrendered animals has increased 150% since lock down finished last year. Our rescue is inundated and always struggle to stay within capacity limits as we are dealing with many unexpected litters being brought to us. I also had a call a few nights ago from a man watching two pet rabbits being dumped in Berwick Park near the quays as the people "did not want them". A family waited until we could get out to catch them. The female was pregnant.

We managed to catch 4 angora rabbits dumped on Monbulk/ Olinda Rd in 2 different incidents, we were alerted by concerned residents. Another rabbit was dumped in the forest near Olinda, climbing through the bracken we managed to catch it. People sighted the animal whilst on a forest walk. All the female animals have been pregnant.

One of our first incidents was to catch a mother rabbit and 6 babies in Upwey, the other 5 babies were killed by cars in the street. The mother was pregnant again and gave birth to 10 more babies two days after we caught her.

Under our advice and direction, residents in Boronia have recently caught 18 babies (2 consecutive litters) and 2 adult rabbits breeding under a porch of a property. The female adult was pregnant again.

We are asking for our council to please do what you can to address this problem. Rabbits in the wild (domestic or wild) are considered part of the wild population. Although there are fines for dumping an animal, this is NEVER enforced, and people are not even aware that it is against the law to dump pets.

I would think that council would have a duty, on behalf of its residents, as a minimum to address the breeding, sale and information regarding this pet within its council areas.

Many councils are ignoring the underlying problem of backyard breeding, as well as pet shops selling rabbits without any information, or incorrect information regarding breeding cycles, sexing the animals correctly or basic housing and care.

Pet shops are staffed by salespeople, not those experienced with the nature and care of the species. They mis sex the rabbits, do not explain the breeding cycle or desexing the animals, advice people that they are an "easy pet for kids", which is the worst advice. 80% of surrenders are from people that have purchased the animal for a child.

Breeders are also a problem. They are sending out 2 males together (so they will not breed), who end up fighting as they reach puberty (3 to 4 mths) and then get surrendered or dumped. Alternatively, they are often mis sexed and end up with litters to unsuspecting owners. They are not told to desex the animals or check the sex with a vet etc.

If our council could please follow up on backyard breeding and perhaps put something out that it is illegal to breed without a permit. Additionally, it would help if you could please follow up on pet shops in your area to ensure that they are not selling baby rabbits, and if they are check if they are giving the correct information to the new owner regarding the breeding cycle and importance of desexing, housing and care. I have never found a pet shop that gives the correct information regarding pet rabbits, they all seem to think they are an "ideal pet for children" a walking soft toy! They are a prey species, and their sale and breeding has now become an animal welfare issue.

Rabbits will breed from 4 months of age and will have consecutive litters every 4 weeks. They get pregnant the day they have babies. This issue is now out of control, and private rescues like ours is

left to pick up the pieces of these ill-informed new owners and irresponsible and naive breeders, many of which are children doing this for pocket money, with the approval of ill-informed parents. Many breeders and pet shops are telling people they have 2 male or 2 females. The first time the owners know different is when the 1<sup>st</sup> litter arrives, and the rabbit is already carrying a second litter.

It is out of control, and we need something done to address this growing problem.

Regards,

Dr Judi Inglis (PhD. MTBM)  
**Rabbit Runway Orphanage**  
**House Rabbit Society (Australian Chapter)**  
19 Stanley St, Olinda 3788  
Ph: (03) 9751 1229  
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*"The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated." Mahatma Gandhi*

#### **REPLY FROM YARRA RANGES COUNCIL**

Good Morning Dr Judi,

Thank you for raising your concerns regarding the dumping of rabbits within the Shire of Yarra Ranges. The issues that you have identified fall under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986, specifically section 9(1)(h) of the act. Council does not enforce the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 so your concerns are best addressed to RSPCA for this kind of offence.

Unfortunately, there are no permits required under the Domestic Animals Act 1994 for the breeding or sale of rabbits for backyard breeders. Pet shops that fall under the definition under the Domestic Animals Act must have a Domestic Animal Business License and are inspected a minimum of once per year to ensure they are complying with the Code of Practice for Operation of Pet Shops.

In terms of the Neighbourhood Amenity Local Law 2020 there are no provisions for the control of rabbit breeding for us to enforce. I would direct you to contact your local Councillor if you would like to raise this as an issue that needs to be addressed. Due to having no supporting legislation that is enforced by Council, we are not in a position to provide any education or enforcement in this matter.

Given that Council is not the best agency to deal with these issues, the best agencies to contact that may be able to help are Animal Welfare Victoria, RSPCA, or your local Councillor or MP to introduce legislation.

If you have any other concerns please feel to contact council on 1300 368 333.

Kind Regards



Mitch Devisser  
Acting Regional Lead  
Community Safety  
PH: 9294 6740 / 0476 780 509  
E: [m.devisser@yarraranges.vic.gov.au](mailto:m.devisser@yarraranges.vic.gov.au)

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## **EXAMPLE 2: CORRESPONDENCE TO FRANSTON COUNCIL 30/8/2022**

Dear staff,

I run a dedicated pet rabbit rescue and on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> August, we were contacted by a lady who had purchased a 7-week-old baby rabbit for \$100 two days previously. They tried to take the rabbit back to this breeder, who refused to take it back. The rabbit was then surrendered to our rescue, by a distraught person who feared the animal.

The rabbit was brought from “a nice family” on Gumtree for their child. The address of the “nice family”, who are breeding rabbits is 31 Elster Dve, Carrum Downs.

Many councils are ignoring an underlying problem of backyard breeding, as well as pet shops selling rabbits without any information, or incorrect information regarding breeding cycles, sexing the animals correctly or basic housing and care.

Our rescue is inundated and always over capacity as we are dealing with unexpected litters being brought to us. Tonight, I also had a call from a man watching two pet rabbits being dumped in Berwick Park near the quays as the people “did not want them”.

If your council could please follow up on backyard breeding and perhaps put something out that it is illegal to breed without a permit. Additionally, it would help if you could please follow up on pet shops in your area to ensure that they are not selling baby rabbits, and if they are check if they are giving the correct information to the new owner regarding the breeding cycle and importance of desexing, housing and care.

Rabbits will breed from 4 months of age and will have consecutive litters every 4 weeks. They get pregnant the day they have babies. This issue is now out of control, and private rescues like ours is left to pick up the pieces of these ill-informed new owners and irresponsible and naive breeders, many of which are children doing this for pocket money. Many breeders and pet shops are telling people they have 2 male or 2 females. The first time the owners know different is when the 1<sup>st</sup> litter arrives, and the rabbit is already carrying a second litter.

Regards,

Dr Judi Inglis (PhD. MTBM)  
**Rabbit Runway Orphanage**

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**REPLY FROM FRANKSTON CITY COUNCIL**

Dear Dr Inglis,





Thank you for your email and information regarding alleged rabbit breeding in Carrum Downs Victoria. I have created a request for our area officer to follow up on the allegations, and any potential breaches of our local law relating to the same. I understand the Animal Sale permits are through Animal Welfare Victoria, not specifically through local council, as such I cannot access information relating to which properties have a permit to operate and sell animals.

Under the Domestic Animals Act 1994 there is no requirement for residents to register rabbits with their local council, however, I understand your concerns regarding the sale, breeding, and issues with large numbers of rabbits in the community more broadly.

I thank you again for taking the time to report the matter to us, and we will commence investigation into the matter immediately.

Warm regards,



|   |   |  |   |
|---|---|--|---|
| <b>Claire</b>   | <b>Loughnan &gt;&gt;</b>  | <b>Compliance</b>  | <b>Officer</b>  |
| Compliance >>   |   | Safer  | Communities   |
| Civic Centre >>   | 30 Davey Street Frankston >>  | PO Box 490 Frankston VIC 3199  |   |
| Telephone: 1300   |   | 322  | 322   |
| <a href="http://frankston.vic.gov.au">frankston.vic.gov.au</a>                      | >>  | <a href="mailto:Claire.Loughnan@frankston.vic.gov.au">Claire.Loughnan@frankston.vic.gov.au</a> |   |
|  |  |             |  |

*Frankston City Council acknowledges and pays respect to the Bunurong People, the Traditional Custodians of these lands and waters.*

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**EXAMPLE 3: CORRESPONDENCE TO CASEY CITY COUNCIL 27/8/2022**

Dear staff,

I run a dedicated pet rabbit rescue and on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> August I had a call from a man watching two pet rabbits being dumped in Berwick Park near the quays as the people “did not want them”. I put a call out on FB and a volunteer managed to catch the rabbits and they will come to our rescue today.

We were also contacted by a lady who had purchased a 7-week-old baby rabbit for \$100 two days previously from Gumtree. The breeder lived in the Casey Shire. They tried to take the rabbit back to this breeder, who refused to take it back. The rabbit was then surrendered to our rescue, by a distraught person who had minimal English and feared the animal.

Many councils are ignoring an underlying problem of backyard breeding, as well as pet shops selling rabbits without any information, or incorrect information regarding breeding cycles, sexing the animals correctly or basic housing and care.

Our rescue is inundated and always over capacity as we are dealing with unexpected litters being brought to us. All pounds and rescues are overflowing and there is no room, hence people are just dumping the animals.

If your council could please follow up on backyard breeding and perhaps put something out that it is illegal to breed without a permit. Additionally, it would help if you could please follow up on pet shops in your area to ensure that they are not selling baby rabbits, and if they are, please check if they are giving the correct information to the new owner regarding the breeding cycle and importance of desexing, housing and care.

Rabbits will breed from 4 months of age and will have consecutive litters every 4 weeks. They get pregnant the day they have babies. This issue is now out of control, and private rescues like ours is left to pick up the pieces of these ill-informed new owners and irresponsible and naive breeders, many of which are children doing this for pocket money. Many breeders and pet shops are telling people they have 2 male or 2 females. The first time the owners know different is when the 1<sup>st</sup> litter arrives, and the rabbit is already carrying a second litter. We are getting 20 calls a day to surrender pet rabbits, and most are under 1 year old, and most have had litters.

Regards,

Dr Judi Inglis (PhD. MTBM)

**Rabbit Runway Orphanage**

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#### **REPLY FROM CASEY CITY COUNCIL**

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Please refer to the correspondence below.

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Claire



Hello Judi,

Thank you for contacting The City of Casey.

The matter described in your email is not something Council is able to assist with, and you will need to direct your concern to either The RSPCA or Victoria Police.

You can report this matter with the RSPCA by calling Ph: 9224 2222, or online on the link below.

<https://www.rspca.org.au/contact-us>

The Police Assistance Line and Online Reporting Service allows you to report non-urgent crimes or events 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You can report this matter by calling them on Ph: 131 444 or online on the link below.

<https://www.police.vic.gov.au/police-assistance-line-and-online-reporting>

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you need clarification on this matter.

Kind Regards



**Claire**  
Customer Service Officer

+61397055200  
caseycc@casey.vic.gov.au  
www.casey.vic.gov.au



Bunjil Place | 2 Patrick Northeast Drive | Narre Warren VIC 3805  
TIS: 131 450

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