

Be cowful on the roads!

Wandering livestock can create a serious public safety risk, more so as we come into winter when available feed in paddocks is reduced and the ground is moist and soft.

Stock lean against fences whilst trying to access feed on road reserves and paddocks and this can cause fences to fall and animals to escape, according to Council's Local Laws Coordinator, Bruce Gardiner.

"It's not just one type of livestock getting out and they're not just getting out onto roads. In the last month we've had reports of cattle, sheep and goats out on roads or on their neighbour's property. We also get reports of horses and pigs wandering onto roadways and neighbouring properties," he explained. "Don't be complacent if your fences are not up to scratch. If your animals go onto your neighbour's property and get out from there, that won't reduce your responsibility. If there is an accident on the road you may still be responsible for costs and damages."

People have been seriously injured or killed from collisions with livestock on roads. Wandering livestock may also injure themselves, other animals they encounter and cause damage to property.

The Local Laws team can assist residents in circumstances where wandering livestock are causing them issues'. The *Impounding of Livestock Act 1994* makes it an offence for a person to allow livestock to wander at large, or to fail to adequately confine livestock to a property. Officers can serve 'confinement' notices along with infringement notices. Some South Gippsland property owners have recently been to Court for failing to keep their livestock confined. 'On the spot' fines are currently \$590 if you allow your stock to wander. You might also be required to pay transport and release fees if your stock has been impounded. Our Officers would prefer not to take this approach but we view this as a very serious public safety issue. A motorist died last year after hitting a cow on the road at Dalmore and another was trapped in his car after hitting a cow on the road at Cowwarr.

"We would much rather see land and stock owners spending their money on fencing instead of fines and fees!"

You can contact Council's Local Laws team on 5662 9200 for further information regarding this and other animal management issues. For more information on some of the issues regarding wandering livestock go to <http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/agriculture-and-food/animal-health-and-welfare/animal-welfare/animal-welfare-legislation/livestock-confinement> or www.southgippsland.vic.gov.au.

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