

When driving on rural roads in the Wollondilly Shire, you might see and experience some instances that you certainly wouldn't have driving in an urban environment. Choosing to live in a rural location requires adapting your driving to suit and the many features of the road environment which you will seldom find in a urban setting.

The nature and volume of traffic differs greatly in a rural environment. You can expect to cross paths with livestock, come into contact with heavy vehicles transporting goods from some of the large companies in the Shire and agricultural machinery moving between properties. The nature of the Shire means that many rural roads are unsealed and consist of a gravel surface with no kerb and guttering. As part of the Roads Ahead Program, Council is committed to improving the Shire's roads however this does not mean every unsealed road shall be sealed and provided with kerb and guttering.

### General Roads Information

Wollondilly Shire Council is responsible for the planning, control and maintenance of 843 kilometres of roadway, with 60 kilometres of State roads receiving funding assistance from the RTA including the Hume Highway, the main road transport link between Sydney and Melbourne. Much of the road network is comprised of typical country roads, many of which also serve as major arterial roads. These roads usually have an open road speed restriction of 100km/hr. Rural roads are narrow and undulating with few overtaking opportunities and a limited amount of line marking and delineation. The traffic consists of a mix of heavy vehicles servicing the coal and mixed agriculture industries, and daily commuter and through passenger traffic.

Some of the key issues and what to expect when driving on rural roads within the Shire of Wollondilly are outlined in this information sheet.

### Livestock on Rural Roads

When driving on the Shires rural roads you will encounter circumstances where livestock are being moved along the road between properties, or are grazing on the roadside verge. Livestock are legally allowed to walk along roads and graze on the roadside verge, provided that signage is placed at

either end of the stretch of road affected and they are not unattended.

Therefore, you can expect to share the Shires rural roads with livestock from time to time. Patience needs to be demonstrated when sharing the road with livestock and speed needs to be reduced to minimise the chance of impact. Farmers will work with you and guide livestock away from vehicles and advise you when conditions are safe to pass.



### Wild Animals on Rural Roads

The Wollondilly Shire is fortunate to have a thriving population of native animals along with some introduced species. These animals are usually more active during their feeding times at dusk and in the dawn and can often be spotted near the road side or attempting to cross the carriageway.

Wild animals are unpredictable and do not understand that the approaching lights on a vehicle means danger. They can be scared into erratic behaviour and dart straight out in front of the motorist. Additionally, during times of drought

animals tend to move more in search of water sources.

The best way to avoid a collision with a wild animal is to be aware of the danger periods at dusk and dawn and to anticipate that you will find one around the next corner so that you are able to react appropriately in the situation.



### Farm Vehicles on Rural Roads

When driving on rural roads in the Shire, you may come across instances where farm vehicles are driving along the road between properties. These vehicles include tractors, motorbikes, harvesting equipment and other types which may be slower and wider than conventional vehicles. In this instance, the majority of farmers will move over and allow you to pass when there is sufficient room on the road verge and there is no oncoming traffic coming.

Farm vehicles used for moving livestock, farm produce, farm feed and fertiliser supplies, milk carrier, bulk feed and bulk waste trucks can be expected to be seen on the Shires roads all year round. Expect to encounter additional farm vehicles during harvesting periods for fruit and vegetable crops, and after a good season when farmers take the opportunity to make hay and silage from excess pastures. When encountering farm vehicles on the Shires roads your patience is necessary for your own safety.



### Weather conditions

The weather in the Wollondilly Shire is variable with temperatures ranging between  $-10^{\circ}\text{C}$  in winter and  $43^{\circ}\text{C}$  in summer. Rain is infrequent (mean of 804mm/year) and will bring the oily deposits from the traffic to the surface making the roads slippery. During winter, fog is a regular occurrence at dawn and at dusk which can obscure driver vision and occasionally ice will settle on the road surface.

Motorists in the Shire need to be aware of the impact of the changing weather on the road surface and surrounding environment and drive accordingly through reducing speed and using lights appropriately.

### Road Conditions

Concentration when driving on rural roads is critical to ensure you have enough time to respond to incidences with other cars, livestock, wildlife, sudden corners and fallen vegetation. Keep on the look out for varying road conditions such as a change in road surface from bitumen to gravel, sharp corners not signposted, or crests which reduce visibility ahead and alter your speed accordingly.

A few things to keep in mind include:

- Unsealed gravel roads can be slippery in all weather conditions.
- Passing traffic can throw out stones which can scratch your car and crack windscreens.
- Corrugations and potholes.
- Visibility is often reduced by the presence of encroaching roadside vegetation and sharp corners.

- During winter months frost and/or black ice may be present on road side verges, particularly in shadow lines during the early morning.



### Roadside Vegetation & Native Fauna

There are significant stands of roadside vegetation present within the Shire which act as corridors for native fauna and biodiversity conservation. Care needs to be taken when driving near or adjacent to roadside vegetation as native fauna move out of the reserve to source food, most commonly on the side of the road where water runoff allows grass species to proliferate.

When driving on rural roads at night, early morning and at dusk caution needs to be taken as these times are when animal activity and the chance for vehicles to impact with native fauna are the greatest. If you do have the unfortunate experience of colliding with native fauna whilst driving in the Shire, you can contact WIRES Wollondilly on 4684 1656 whom provide crisis accommodation for injured wildlife.

### Rural Property Entrances

When driving on rural roads you will come across many rural property entrances where vehicles will be exiting and entering the property. Property entrances vary in nature some signposted with the property name and a letterbox, others only noticeable from the presence of a farm gate. Drivers need to be aware of vehicles entering and exiting rural properties and adjust their speed accordingly. Particular care should be taken when approaching a crest by reducing vehicle speed in case there is a property entrance just over the crest.

