

WAITAKI DISTRICT COUNCIL
DOG CONTROL – POLICY AND PRACTICES REPORT
1 July 2020 – 30 June 2021

Section 10A of the Dog Control Act 1996 (DCA) requires territorial authorities to publicly report each financial year on:

- The administration of their dog control policy and their dog control practices; and
- A variety of dog control related statistics

PART ONE – ADMINISTRATION OF POLICY AND DOG CONTROL PRACTICES

1) Dog Control in the District

Waitaki District is a predominantly rural area that covers approx. 9000km² from Ohau to Macraes. Oamaru is the most populated town in the district.

In the 2020-21 registration year Waitaki District Council had 5554 dogs registered. The greatest number of those were in the working dog (1822 dogs) and selected owner (1635 dogs) categories.

Dog control services and activities are now carried out on a 24/7 basis by Council employees after a change to the previous operating model where they delivered by an external contractor with support from Council Officers.

2) Administration of Dog Control Practices and Policy

The key outcomes for dog management and control in the Waitaki District are:

- There is responsible ownership of dogs across the District, including compliance with dog owner obligations under the DCA.
- Opportunities are provided for dogs and their owners to exercise and recreate in public places.

- Conflicts between the general public, dogs, stock and animals and dog owners are minimised.
- Potential or actual danger, distress, intimidation and nuisance caused by dogs in the community are minimised.
- Council meets its statutory obligations for dog control and management under the Act.

The change from contracted services to employment of a team of three Regulatory Services Officers – Animal Control, provided an opportunity to improve service delivery, increase capability, and grow Council's capacity to deliver on the key outcomes.

The new operating model has helped to build a more pro-active approach towards dog control in Waitaki, meaning that the community more likely to have interactions with animal control officers where the contact has not been initiated in response to a complaint.

Getting to know dogs and their owners

Face-to-face interactions with dog owners have increased, with value added from Officers who have an improved knowledge base and clearer operating processes than had previously been the case.

From December 2020 to June 2021 Animal Control Officers recorded 332 face-to-face contacts which were pro-active (initiated by the Officer). Although the specific reason for each interaction is not recorded, these contacts are to provide advice, information, or warnings for bylaws breaches. In many cases, contacts resulted from visits being made to key areas to monitor compliance with the Dog Control bylaws. Microchipping compliance was also a focus this year.

Our Approach to Dog Control

An 'education first' approach is taken, depending on the seriousness of the issue or risk of harm. As complaints relating to wandering dogs are in the highest category of issues reported to Council, advice on suitable property fencing is provided to the dog owner but followed-up with a direction to undertake fencing improvements if advice is not followed voluntarily. Any further non-compliance is likely to result in the enforcement pathway being taken. The increase in infringement notices being issued for the reporting year should be viewed in this context, as it does not indicate an increased focus on enforcement. In most cases, an infringement issued reflects a significant amount of work in the background to resolve an ongoing dog control issue.

Community safety a priority

In May 2021 an appeal was made against a Court Order for destruction of a dog held by Council following a serious attack. The dog had previously attacked and posed a risk to

the community. This meant that Council needed to put the case for destruction to the High Court, who ultimately found that destruction was the correct outcome.

The dog had been impounded and cared for over a period of two years whilst the matter progressed through the legal process. This long and drawn-out situation highlights some of the challenges associated with enforcement under the Dog Control Act 1996, but also demonstrates that community safety continues to be a priority for Council.

Community Engagement

This year the Dog Expo, a joint initiative between Council and the North Otago Dog Training Club, ran for the second time. The aim was to promote responsible dog ownership and to enable the public to better understand Council's dog control responsibilities, but also to have some fun in events such as the best dressed dog and owner, and the dog and owner look-a-like competition. The first Waitaki 'Super Dog' was also found after they showed natural talent in the Expo agility course.

Compliance and Enforcement Policy

In cases where dog owners have failed to be responsible and offences against the Dog Control Act have been committed, each case is considered in accordance with Council's *Compliance and Enforcement Policy*. Though not altogether specific to dog control, the Policy aims to promote consistency of decision making and process for compliance and enforcement activities.

Application of the Policy guides Council and animal control officers towards appropriate compliance and enforcement outcomes to ensure that regulatory actions are carried out consistently, but also take the unique circumstances of a case into consideration so that Council's response is not prescriptive. As a result, Council resources and enforcement are targeted at the issues which cause, or have potential to cause the most harm, and also take into account dog owners' response to compliance and complainant's views.

Facilities and equipment

The new dog pound constructed in 2020 continues to provide warm, clean and secure facilities for impounded dogs and animal control officers.

Security has been enhanced after a dog owner managed to enter the building unlawfully.

New equipment recently introduced includes a Ford Transit van fitted with adjustable roof spotlights and two detachable dog transport crates, dog deterrent spray, body worn cameras, flexi pole and snappy snare.

This equipment has improved animal control officers' ability to catch roaming dogs and to ensure aggressive dogs can be handled safely and with increased security and transport options available.

The most unusual capture of a wandering dog this year took place about two kilometres offshore, after the dog was spooked by a well-meaning member of the public and

decided to head for the waves. Animal control officers assisted by a local safety boat rescued the dog before it drowned.

Partnerships

The working partnerships that our dog control officers have with organisations such as the SPCA, Police, local vets, neighbouring Councils, not for profit groups and charitable organisations, help Council's dog control operations and rehoming to be more successful. Options for the rehoming of bull-breed dogs have increased, meaning that the number of dogs euthanised has remained low this year, which is consistent with previous years.

If the presence of a dog in Council's pound is likely to result in burglary or property damage, these partnerships have also provided us with alternative locations to impound dogs.

Trends

During the reporting year, 758 complaints were recorded in comparison to the previous reporting year where 566 complaints were recorded. In 2019/20 it was considered highly likely that Covid-19 lockdown restrictions resulted in far fewer complaints being received. Data from 2018/19 when 709 complaints were recorded, is more representative of the volume of complaints that might be anticipated in a 'normal' year.

The increase in 2020/21 is presumed to reflect the fact that Council's operational capacity and capability has also grown, resulting in more pro-active work being undertaken and non-compliances being identified and recorded. The recording parameters do not differentiate between complaints that are reported to Council and 'occurrences' recorded by dog control officers who have identified breaches of the Act or bylaws.

It should also be noted that 'general enquiries' are recorded in the total, of which 85 were recorded this year, being more than double the average number of general enquiries over the past three years. Again, this is believed to reflect the change in service delivery described above and not an increase in the number of customers who are contacting the Council to report a problem.

Although the number of dog attacks (5) on stock is the same as the previous year, dog control officers responded to some horrific attacks on sheep with many animals being mauled, injured or killed, sometimes over several nights.

Nine people reported being attacked by dogs during the year and there were 12 recorded attacks on other animals (not being livestock). This is the greatest number of attacks on animals recorded in comparison to previous years.

The number of infringement notices issued more than doubled this year to a total of 151 (Note: this figure includes 23 infringement warnings), with the number of impounded dogs also increasing significantly from 90 in 2019/20 to 149 this year. This corresponds with a 106% increase in the number of complaints relating to wandering dogs and is also reflected in the number of infringement notices issued for failing to keep a dog controlled or confined, increasing from 28 in last year to 43 this year.

The number of dogs euthanised (4) was the same as last year. This shows that our partnerships to increase re-homing options are working effectively.

4) Dog Registration Fees

Council fees (inclusive of GST) for the year were unchanged from the previous year:

Dog registration - Base fee		70.00
Dog registration - category		
	Working dogs, per dog fees	21.00
	Non-working dogs, per dog	70.00
	Neutered non-working dog	56.00
	Selected owner dogs, per	
	dog	28.00
	Farm pet dogs, per dog	21.00
	Probationary owner dogs	Base fee plus 50%
	Dangerous dogs	Base fee plus 50%
Late registration penalty		Base fee plus 50%
Note: Full dog registration fee (base fee) - plus the category fee		
Selected Owner/Multiple	Application and assessment	35.00
Dog Permit	Reassessment	20.00
Adoption Fee	Application and assessment	165.00
Replacement tag		10.00
New tag	Dog from another district/Change of owner (For a dog that is currently registered)	No Fee
Dog Impounding	First offence - registered dog	50.00
	First offence - unregistered dog	120.00
	Second offence	100.00
	Third offence	135.00
	Seizure and custody	65.00
	Sustenance per day	15.00
	Destruction fee	60.00

PART TWO – STATISTICAL INFORMATION 2020-2021

Dog Related Complaints

Complaint Type	
Barking Dog	132
Bylaw	14
Dog Attack on Animal	12
Dog Attack on Dog	8
Dog Attack on Person	9
Dog Attack on Stock	5
Dog Found	122
Dog Lost	97
Dog Nuisance	1
Dog Rushing	17
Dog Welfare	13
General Enquiry	85
Wandering Dog	243
Total	758

Prosecutions

No prosecutions.

Infringements and Warnings

☒ Allowed dog known to be dangerous to be at large unmuzzled or unleashed	1
☒ Failed to advise of change of address	1
☒ Failed to comply with any bylaw authorised by section 20 Dog Control Act	9
☒ Failed to comply with barking dog abatement notice	1
☒ Failed to comply with effects of classification of dog as dangerous dog	3
☒ Failed to comply with effects of classification of dog as menacing dog	2
☒ Failed to implant microchip transponder in dog	40
☒ Failed to keep dog controlled or confined	43
☒ Failed to keep dog under control	2
☒ Failed to register a dog	47
☒ Failed to supply information or wilfully provided false particulars about dog	2
Total	151

Hearings

The council had no hearings in relation to dogs classified as Menacing or Dangerous during the year.

Dangerous and Menacing Dogs 2020-21

Dangerous Dogs under section 31 A & B	5
Menacing Dogs under section 33 A	14
Menacing Dogs under section 33 C	6

Probationary/Disqualified owners 2020-21

Probationary owner	0
Disqualified owner	5

Impounding & Euthanised Dogs 2020-21

Returned to Owner	139
Re-homed	6
Euthanised	4
Total Impounded	149