

**REPORT ON
WAITOMO DISTRICT COUNCIL DOG CONTROL POLICY AND PRACTICES
2016/2017**

TO: The Secretary for Local Government
FROM: Terrena Kelly, Group Manager Compliance
SUBJECT: Report on Waitomo District Council Dog Control Policy and Practices
2016/2017
DATE: 1 August 2017

1 INTRODUCTION

This is Waitomo District Council's annual report on Council's Dog Control Policy and Practices for the period 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017, as required by section 10A of the Dog Control Act 1996.

The format of the report follows that previously prescribed by the Secretary for Local Government, Department of Internal Affairs.

2 DOG CONTROL POLICY AND PRACTICES

2.1 Dog Control in the District

The total number of active dogs on Council's register at the end of the 2016/17 registration year was 3590, up from 3330 in 2015/16, an increase of 260 dogs.

Council provides a twenty-four hour animal control service, with Council's Animal Control Officers ("ACO") covering this function during normal business hours. Any urgent animal control service requests received after-hours (including weekends and public holidays) are responded to by Council's after-hour's contractor. Training is provided by staff to the contractors, with both organisations work closely together on animal control matters.

Council also maintains good working relationships with the local Police, veterinarians and the Waikato SPCA.

Council employs one full time ACO, and a Regulatory Administrator. The Team Leader Compliance and Monitoring supervises the team, and performs the ACO role when required for operational reasons.

The Animal Control Officer works predominantly in the field, whilst the regulatory administrator oversees the administration of the Council database, the National Dog Database (NDD), and the registration process.

Council operates a dog pound in William Street Te Kuiti. The pound has received improvements over the past year, including the addition of security cameras, and exercise area improvements, including the construction of a new perimeter security/exercise fence.

This year the statistics show an increase in impoundings from the previous year. There have been 204 dogs impounded (190 last year), with 76 dogs returned to their owner, 74 dogs euthanized, and 51 re-homed.

Dog owners claiming impounded dogs are required to pay an impounding fee, as well as registration fees if the dog is unregistered, plus micro-chipping fees if applicable. In addition, sustenance fees are charged for each day the dog is in the pound.

The associated fleet vehicle dedicated for use by animal control staff was replaced during the 2016/17 year. The Team Leader Compliance and Monitoring also has a dedicated vehicle that can be used for animal control if required.

Microchipping continues to be a key focus, with weekly microchipping clinics generally being held on a Friday, however microchipping also occurs at other times as required. It is noted that the Act requires dogs being registered for the first time to be chipped within two months of registration (with herding dogs exempt from the requirement), and classified dangerous and menacing dogs are also required to be microchipped.

Microchipping is carried out by the ACO who has the appropriate training to perform the task. Owners are charged a nominal fee of \$25 to cover costs.

The Waitomo District Council Dog Control Policy and Bylaw was formally adopted in 2015.

2.2 Dog Control Enforcement Practices

For this period, Council received 518 dog control related complaints that required action.

Council take a pragmatic approach to enforcement, and generally attempts to educate dog owners in the first instance. For example, if a registered dog is picked up for a first wandering offence, the dog is usually returned to the owner with a verbal warning, rather than impounding.

Complaints relating to wandering dogs numbered 314 this year, and 93 complaints were received in relation to barking dogs. ACO staff work with complainants to track and capture dogs, sometimes using Council-owned cage traps if required.

In respect of barking complaints, most are resolved quickly once the owner is advised of the issue and has been provided advice by the ACO on methods to resolve the issue. Where the issue is not resolved within a timely manner, an Abatement Notice is issued

(as provided by the Act) and this has proven to be a useful tool in these circumstances. Council has issued two Abatement Notices in this period.

Council received 35 complaints related to attacks, rushing or aggressive dog incidents. Each incident is investigated by an ACO, who produces a report (including an attack rating assessment). Upon completion of the investigation and reporting, a decision is made (and recorded) by the Manager as to what action is appropriate as per the requirements of the Act. Each incident is assessed on its merits on a case by case basis.

For this period, 103 infringement notices had been issued and have since either been paid by the owner, or sent to the District Court. A further 29 infringements were issued, but were subsequently cancelled.

The infringement notices were issued as follows:

- 1 for breach of section 33EC(1) (failure to comply with menacing dog classification)
- 90 for breach of Section 42 (non-registration)
- 12 breach of Section 52(a) (failure to confine), and breach of Section 53(1) (failure to control)

There were no prosecutions by Council in this period.

2.3 Dogs Prohibited, Leash Only and Dog Exercise Areas

Council's policy requires all dogs to be on a leash in public places.

The policy also identifies dog prohibited areas (i.e. sports grounds, children's playgrounds and schools), and dog exercise areas. Signs are installed as appropriate to advise the public.

2.4 Dog Registration and Other Fees

The fees for 2016/17 were increased marginally, however there are discounts available to urban owners for fencing and neutering. These discounts aim to incentivise dog owners to fence their property and de-sex their dog(s).

Where dog owners have not registered their dogs within the required timeframe, these are followed up by ACO staff and administrators. The process involves an initial reminder letter and phone call to the owner, followed by the issuing of an infringement notice for non-registration, which is cancelled if the dog is subsequently registered within the required timeframe. If this approach is unsuccessful, dogs are seized and held until registered.

The levy share for Waitomo District in the operation of the National Dog Database for the 2015/16 was \$2193.21. The levy for the current year was communicated as \$2102.06.

2.5 Education

Council proactively engages in education for dog owners on a monthly basis by a range of mediums including the local newspaper, Waitomo Way (a council newsletter) and council's two facebook pages (one dedicated to animal control).

2.6 Disqualified and Probationary Dog Owners

Waitomo District has 1 disqualified dog owner in the District which was classified by the SPCA, and no probationary owners.

2.7 Menacing and Dangerous Dogs

For this period, there was 1 dangerous dog and 26 menacing dogs classified in the District out of a population of 3590 dogs. Any new dog of a menacing breed/type is identified following registration, classified and referred to Animal Control Officers for a compliance check.

In April 2017, Council received funding from the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) to run a menacing dog campaign for the neutering of menacing dogs. As at 30 June 2017, 12 dogs have been neutered under this campaign, with 1 classified due to behaviour, and 11 classified due to breed type. The campaign is ongoing while funding is available.

2.8 Other Information

Council requires owners of more than two dogs on any urban property to apply for a permit from Council. Upon application, the ACO inspects the dog owner's property in accordance with the requirements of the Dog Control Bylaw. If the requirements are met, the permit is issued subject to any necessary conditions. A permit may be reviewed by Council at any time, and may be modified or revoked if any non-compliances with the permit are detected.

3 STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Category	For period 1 July 2014 – 30 June 2015	For period 1 July 2015 – 30 June 2016	For period 1 July 2016 – 30 June 2017
1) Total # Registered Dogs	3,698	3,330	3,590
2) Total # Probationary Owners	0	0	0
3) Total # Disqualified Owners	0	0	0
4) Total # Dangerous Dogs (current at end of period)	0	0	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dangerous by Owner Conviction Under s31(1)(a) ▪ Dangerous by Sworn Evidence s31(1)(b) ▪ Dangerous by Owner Admittance in Writing s31(1)(c) 	0	0	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dangerous by Sworn Evidence s31(1)(b) 	0	0	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dangerous by Owner Admittance in Writing s31(1)(c) 	0	0	0
5) Total # Menacing Dogs (end of period)	16	20	26
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Menacing under s33A(1)(b)(i) - i.e. by Behaviour ▪ Menacing under s33A(1)(b)(ii)- by Breed Characteristics ▪ Menacing under s33C(1) by Schedule 4 Breed 	2	2	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Menacing under s33A(1)(b)(ii)- by Breed Characteristics 	5	5	6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Menacing under s33C(1) by Schedule 4 Breed 	9	13	17
6) Total # Infringement Notices (excluding cancelled)	20	24	74
7) Total # Complaints Received (needing action)	670	524	518
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Aggressive ▪ Bins/Signs ▪ Bite/attack ▪ Barking ▪ Breach of Council Bylaw or permits ▪ Lost Dog/other ▪ Rushing in public place ▪ Unregistered ▪ Wandering ▪ Worrying animals ▪ No water, shelter, food or exercise 	-	-	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bins/Signs 	12	0	-
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bite/attack 	44	6	33
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Barking 	50	50	93
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Breach of Council Bylaw or permits 	-	-	4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lost Dog/other 	-	-	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rushing in public place 	35	26	17
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unregistered 	-	-	-
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wandering 	348	241	314
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Worrying animals 	-	-	19
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No water, shelter, food or exercise 	32	25	35
8) Total # Prosecutions taken	0	0	0