

Dog Control Annual Report for the 12 months ending 30 June 2019

Introduction

In accordance with s10A of the Dog Control Act 1996, the Kaipara District Council (KDC) is required to publicly report each financial year on the administration of its Dog Control Policy and its dog control practices [s10A(1)] and on a variety of dog control related statistics [s10A(2)]. The relevant section of the Act is inserted below:

“10A Territorial authority must report on dog control policy and practices”

- 1 A territorial authority must, in respect of each financial year, report on the administration of:
 - (a) its dog control policy adopted under section 10; and
 - (b) its dog control practices.

- 2 The report must include, in respect of each financial year, information relating to:
 - (a) the number of registered dogs in the territorial authority district;
 - (b) the number of probationary owners and disqualified owners in the territorial authority district;
 - (c) the number of dogs in the territorial authority district classified as dangerous under section 31 and the relevant provision under which the classification is made;
 - (d) the number of dogs in the territorial authority district classified as menacing under section 33A or section 33C and the relevant provision under which the classification is made;
 - (e) the number of infringement notices issued by the territorial authority;
 - (f) the number of dog related complaints received by the territorial authority in the previous year and the nature of those complaints; and
 - (g) the number of prosecutions taken by the territorial authority under this Act.

- 3 The territorial authority must give public notice of the report:
 - (a) by means of a notice published in:
 - (i) 1 or more daily newspapers circulating in the territorial authority district; or
 - (ii) 1 or more other newspapers that have at least an equivalent circulation in that district to the daily newspapers circulating in that district; and
 - (b) by any means that the territorial authority thinks desirable in the circumstances.

- 4 The territorial authority must also, within one month after adopting the report, send a copy of it to the Secretary for Local Government.”

The primary purpose of this report is to allow the community to see how Council is managing its dog control responsibilities. This report is for the period 01 July 2018 to 30 June 2019.

Discussion – Dog Control Policy and Practices

What we do - This activity is about providing controls for dogs to reduce any risks to public safety. The activity involves registering dogs, investigating complaints about dogs, formulating policy on issues relating to nuisance dogs and legal responsibilities, as well as promoting responsible dog ownership.

Why we do it - Dog control contributes to creating safe places (homes, public places and roads) through education, registration of dogs and Dog Control Officer/Ranger activities. The activity also contributes to a treasured environment where control activities also help to protect wildlife. In the activity, Council must comply with the legal requirements of the Dog Control Act 1996 and associated amendments, and the Impounding Act 1955.

Dog control in the Kaipara district - The Kaipara District Council covers a large geographical area, which includes both urban and rural dog owners. As at 30 June 2019, there were 5,101 registrations for dogs, of which approximately 62% were non-working dogs. In order to deliver an animal management service, Council has contracted the animal management team service to provide fully trained enforcement officers who are rostered on call as Dog Control Officers. The Dog Control Officers have received specialised training on dog attack response procedures. The animal management team has a close working relationship with key stakeholders in the community such as the Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA), local veterinarians, Police, dog clubs and other local authorities, in particular, Whangarei District Council.

Dog control enforcement practices

The animal management team operates a seven day, 24-hour service. Over the last 12 months, the team responded to 1,584 complaints in 2018/2019, including responses with regard to aggressive, attacking, barking, wandering dogs, and dogs that were “contained” by members of the public.

Complaints received:

- Dog attacks 63;
- Barking dogs 298;
- Found/wandering dogs 390;
- Dog rush/threaten (nil bite) 41; and
- Other (worrying stock, fouling, conditions etcetera) 792

In addition, 99 dogs were impounded over the review period and during the course of enforcing the dog control legislation and policies, 249 infringement notices were issued to dog owners.

Upgrading and replacement signage with regard to Dogs Prohibited, Leash Only and Dog Exercise Areas is to be upgraded throughout Kaipara district to assist compliance by dog owners to Council's recently reviewed Policy on Dogs and Dog Management Bylaw adopted by Council on 27 June 2019.

Fees history:

- 2008 to 2010, \$40.00;
- 2011 to 2012, \$42.00;
- 2012 to 2013, \$45.00;
- 2013 to 2015, \$52.00;
- 2015 to 2017, \$50.00 for working dogs and \$60.00 for non-working/pet dogs.
- 2017 to 2018, \$52.00 for working dogs and \$62.00 for non-working dogs.

An adjustment in the dog registration fees adopted by Council for the 2018/2019 financial year is as follows:

- 2018 to 2019, \$44.00 for working dogs and \$66.00 for non-working/pet dogs.

Any adult unregistered working dog as at 01 September 2018 will be charged at \$66.00 per dog.

Any adult unregistered non-working/pet dog as at 01 September 2018 will be charged at \$99.00 per dog.

A further adjustment in dog registration fees adopted by Council for the 2019-2020 financial year is as follows:

- Non-working dog registration per dog – if paid by 31 August 2019, \$68.00
- Non-working dog registration per dog – if paid after 31 August 2019, \$99.00
- Working dog registration per dog – if paid by 31 August 2019, \$44.00
- Working dog registration per dog – if paid after 31 August 2019, \$66.00
- Working dog registration per dog where there are 4 or more dogs registered to the same owner:
 - - if paid by 31 August 2019, \$33.00
 - - if paid after 31 August 2019, \$44.00
- Dog registration per dog for 20 or more dogs registered to the same owner:
 - - if paid by 31 August 2019, \$44.00
 - - if paid after 31 August 2019, \$66.00
- Dangerous dogs, \$93.00

To ensure there is ongoing compliance of owners registering their dog(s), the animal management team undertakes scheduled visits to all addresses where a dog had been registered for the previous year, but is not currently registered. A reasonable number of non-registrations were identified in this exercise, resulting in more dogs being registered together with the identification and registration of dogs that were previously not known to Council and subsequently also registered. The door-to-door visits also undertake checks for compliance with microchipping requirements for non-working dogs.

Dog education

Opportunities for education include attendance to the Northland Agricultural Field Days held in Dargaville annually, attendance at the Whangarei Summer Show, website information, patrols, site visits, promotional pamphlets and similar informative material available is at front desks and via the registration process. Reminder registration forms are sent annually to all known current dog owners.

The currently contracted service to Council also provides for a competitive microchipping service for non-compliant non-working dogs. These occasions also provide an ideal forum for dog ownership education on a one-to-one basis.

Disqualified/probationary dog owners and dogs generally

Over the last 12 months, there were no dog owners disqualified from owning dogs. Dogs that attack persons or animals, or rush at vehicles may be classified as dangerous or menacing dogs. The owner of the dog may be liable for any damage caused by the attack. Between 01 July 2018 and 30 June 2019 there were five incidents which required prosecution as follow up action to dog attacks. All incidents resulted in the voluntary surrender and subsequent destruction of the offending dogs.

Barking dogs may create stress for other people. Dogs usually bark excessively because they are bored, lonely or hungry. The Dog Control Act requires dog owners to ensure that their dog is currently registered, under control at all times and that the dog receives proper care, attention and adequate exercise.

In comparison with previous years there have been a similar number of dogs impounded, released, re-homed or euthanised.

Menacing Dogs and Dangerous Dogs

There were 5 dogs during the 2018/2019 year that necessitated Council to apply a dangerous dog classification, all of these dogs were voluntarily surrendered by the dog owners and subsequently put to sleep. 20 dogs were classified as menacing by breed (as per Schedule 4 of the Dog Control Act 1996). 5 dogs were classified as menacing by behaviour.

Council's contracted service provides for professional enforcement officers to respond to complaints received about dogs across the district. A harder line is being taken with regard to an increased number of dogs reported as "wandering" within the district and also with regard to dog attacks. The stance to take firmer action with irresponsible dog owners and dog owners that fail to microchip their dogs has resulted in enforcement proceedings by way of infringement notices being issued for non-compliance.

During the 2018/2019 year no formal prosecutions were necessary to be taken with regard to dog attacks. The five incidents involving evidence based dog attacks were resolved by way of surrender of the subject dogs prior to prosecution.

Infringements issued (2018/2019):

- Obstructed a Dog Control Officer (AMO) - nil
- Fail to supply or wilfully provided false information - nil
- Failed to comply with bylaw - nil
- Fail to comply Dangerous Dog classification - nil
- Failure to comply Menacing Dog classification - nil
- Failed to implant microchip in dog - 61
- Kept an unregistered dog - 120
- Failed to keep dog controlled or confined - 67
- Failed to keep dog under control - nil
- Failure to provide proper care - nil
- Releasing a dog from custody - 1

Council is required to implement the microchip requirements for dogs when they become three months old, and also for dogs classified as dangerous and menacing either by breed or action. Working dogs as defined under the Act are not required to be microchipped.

The Department of Internal Affairs requires details of all registered dogs to be entered in a national dog database (NDDDB). The details are also to include the date of birth of the owner and colour and breed of all dogs.

Council's service provider for animal management continues to use a combined dog facility established and owned by Kaipara's adjoining Territorial Authority, Whangarei District Council. A positive working relationship for both authorities has been operating successfully for approximately nine years. The facility continues to be

successfully utilised by both councils and provides an adequate animal shelter including provisional space for veterinary purposes, together with a separate administration office area.

Kaipara District Policy on Dogs and Dog Management Bylaw 2009 was reviewed during the past year with the changes being adopted by Council on 27 June 2019.

Council continues to seek ways to encourage and promote responsible dog ownership, to reduce dog attacks, dog wandering and any anti-social behaviour that may be remedied by education rather than enforcement.

Dog control statistical information for the review period 01 July 2018 to 30 June 2019

- a) Total: Registered Dogs at 30 June 2019 – 5,127
- b) Total: Probationary Owners - (nil) and Disqualified Owners - (nil) in the district;
- c) Total: Dangerous Dogs - still active - nil
 - Dangerous by Owner Conviction under s31(1)(a) - nil
 - Dangerous by Sworn Evidence s31(1)(b) - nil
 - Dangerous by Owner Admittance in writing s31(1)(c) - nil
- (d) Total: Menacing Dogs - active - 25
 - Menacing under s33A(1)(b)(i) - i.e. by behaviour - 5
 - Menacing under s33A(1)(b)(ii) - by breed characteristics - 0
 - Menacing under s33C(1)(ii) by Schedule 4 breed - 20
- (e) Total: Infringement Notices Issued - 249
- (f) Total: Complaints received during 2018/2019 – 1,584

Conclusion

During 2018/2019, Council received approximately 300 more dog related complainants compared with the previous year. Most of these related to wandering dogs in the Dargaville area. In response to community appeals it was recognised that Council needed to address and provide a better way to provide for a more efficient dog control service to the Kaipara community. Subsequently, on 30 May 2019, a review of changes to current procedures was approved by Council which will result in dog control to be managed “in-house” rather than relying on a remotely based contracted service. It is expected that the transition will be completed no later than December 2019.

Rachel Sheppard, Team Leader Licensing