

Whangarei District Council

***Annual Report on Dog Control
Policy and Practice***

2019 - 2020

Table of contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Purpose.....	1
1.2	Background.....	1
2	The Council's Dog Control Policy and Practices.....	1
2.1	Council adopted the Dog Management Policy in May 2013.....	1
2.2	Fees	1
3	Key Achievements 2019/2020	2
3.1	Responding to complaints (CRM)	2
3.2	Enforcement.....	2
3.3	Impounded dogs	2
3.4	Dog re-homing	3
3.5	Challenges.....	3
3.6	Neutering Menacing Dogs	3
3.7	Planned Activities for 2020/2021	3
4	Summary.....	4
5	Dog Control Statistics	5
5.1	Table one: Registration/Classification related data	5
5.2	Table two: Request for Service data	5
5.3	Table three: Compliance Data	6
5.4	Table four: Shelter data	7

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

Section 10A of the Dog Control Act 1996 requires each territorial authority to report on its dog control policy and practices and provide specific statistical information.

This report acts as a medium for this information and is an update on the progress and processes of the Whangarei District Council Dog Control unit.

1.2 Background

Whangarei District Council has contracted Armourguard to undertake the Council's regulatory duties under the Dog Control Act 1996, Impounding Act 1955 and relevant animal management bylaws and policies.

Armourguard commenced providing dog control services for the Council from 16 September 2016.

The contractor employs four Animal Management Officers, including one senior Animal Management Officer, these are supported by two dedicated administration officers who are warranted under the Dog Control Act 1996 and a pound keeper.

Dog control services operate 24 hours from a council owned Animal Management (dog pound) Shelter based in Kioreroa Road, Whangarei.

This team is responsible for the field services of the department, including but not limited to the reactive response to complaints about animals at large or causing nuisance, ensuring compliance with the Dog Control Act 1996, encouraging responsible dog ownership and registration of dogs as well as community education.

This year the focus on enforcement and compliance continued with a significant increase in prosecutions.

2 The Council's Dog Control Policy and Practices

2.1 Council adopted the Dog Management Policy in May 2013

The policy provides vision and guidance to ensure;

- The prevention of danger, distress and nuisance to the community by uncontrolled dogs in public spaces
- providing for the exercise and recreational needs of dogs and their owners
- the protection of kiwi and other indigenous wildlife
- encouragement of good dog ownership in regards to compliance and welfare

2.2 Fees

Dog registration fees, fines and impound fees aim to contribute 90% of the cost of dog control in Whangarei District. The Council provides a discounted rate for dog owners that de-sex their dog and for those who pay registration prior to 1 August.

Fees are used for:

- Dog Control activities including law enforcement, patrols and complaint investigation.

- Dog incident prevention (including finding unregistered dogs, and the classification and enforcement of menacing and dangerous dogs)
- Education programs for schools and community groups
- Signs for the Council's Dog Management Bylaw and Dog Management Policy
- Shelter (pound) Services, including lost and found, adoption and micro-chipping
- Running the annual dog registration renewal program

3 Key Achievements 2019/2020

3.1 Registered dog numbers

During the preparation for this year's (2019/20) report a discrepancy in dog numbers was identified in the 2018/19 year in that during the 2018/19 year 12,019 were registered, almost 3,000 more dogs than the 2017/18 year. Clearly that figure of 12,019 for the 2018/19 year was incorrect and most likely caused by a calculation error when extracting the data from our system. This is supported by the fact that this year 10,852 were registered which shows an increase of between 1,000 to 1,500 year on year. We now calculate that for the 2018/19 year we would have had approximately 9,800 to 10,000 and not the earlier reported 12,000 dogs. However, that is an historical error and of no consequence to this year's report.

3.2 Responding to complaints (CRM)

There were 4,358 dog control customer requests for service received over the 2019/2020 period.

This represents a decrease of 444 requests compared to the previous year.

Between 2017/18 and 2018/19 there was a small increase of 85 individual requests for service was received.

Barking complaints received over the period decreased by 330. This is likely due to a continued focus on working with and educating the owners of problem barking dogs.

3.3 Enforcement

There were 459 infringement notices issued for offences under the Dog Control Act in 2019/20. This is down by 256 from 2018/2019. This partly reflects a decrease in complaints and infringements for failure to register. The decrease in infringement notices for failure to register is as a result of staff resignations (shortages) during the critical August to October period when previously registered dogs are followed up, to chase up outstanding registrations for the current year, which this year did not happen to the extent it did during previous years. Again, this is reflected under section 3.5 below.

2019/20 has been a challenging year for dog control and a focus on registration at times has given way to higher risk areas of non-compliance. This is evidenced by the rise in infringement notices issued for a failure to keep a dog controlled or confined, and the enhanced focus on prosecution.

During the current year 10 dog owners were disqualified to the one from the year prior, again a good outcome showing a focus on better compliance with the legislation.

3.4 Impounded dogs

During the year, there were 368 dogs impounded at the council shelter, which is 189 less than the previous period and a positive outcome.

The business case for the scope for the new Animal Management Shelter was completed in 2017/18 year. In 2018/2019 Council investigated and selected a preferred site for the construction of its purpose-built new animal shelter.

Council is currently finalising the acquisition of the new site and the detailed plans for the construction of the new shelter.

Following on from that, Council is currently considering future (2021/31) Long Term Plan funding for the construction costs of the new shelter. This building project will be a catalyst to increase the levels of service available at the shelter and an opportunity to change the perception of the community towards council run shelters.

These levels of service will focus on and benefit animal welfare, health and safety and community education and service.

3.5 Dog re-homing

Armourguard is achieving positive outcomes for dogs that enter the shelter that can be rehomed. During 2019/20 the SPCA were able to assist with rehoming, de-sexing and vet care. Regrettably the SPCA has recently advised (July 2020) that they are no longer able to assist, which will put a greater burden on council.

For proposed adoptions, applicants have a property inspection and if successful, the dogs will go to their new family once de-sexed and microchipped.

54 dogs were rehomed from the shelter in 2019/2020 compared to 33 dogs rehomed in the previous year.

In June 2019 an agreement was entered into with 'Saving Hope' a charitable trust which rescues, rehabilitates and rehomes dogs in order to also assist with dog re-homing which was expected to increase the number of dogs that could be rehomed. In addition, a 'Pound Pooch' feature in the Council News section of a local community newspaper, the 'Whangarei Leader', has been implemented, which has directly and indirectly led to the rehoming of several dogs.

3.6 Challenges

Staffing changes and subsequent recruiting challenges in 2019/20 meant that from October 2019 to the commencement of the COVID-19 lockdown in March 2020 resources were stretched and the focus for officers was necessarily on core functions.

During the Level 3 and Level 4 lockdown, officer response was further limited to critical functions only.

Within the constraints of the current contract, the dog control team is however now fully staffed. The ongoing focus has thus been on developing newer staff to grow into their roles.

3.7 Neutering Menacing Dogs

214 dogs were classified in the district as menacing dogs under section 33C of the Dog Control Act 1996. These dogs were of the American Pitbull Terrier type.

Under the Dog Control Act 1996 (the Act) all dogs must be classified as menacing that belong to a breed or type currently listed in schedule 4 of the Act, or if the local authority considers the dog poses a threat to people or other animals and wildlife due to its behavior. De-sexing menacing dogs is a key component of reducing dog-related harm.

3.8 Planned Activities for 2020/2021

- Enhancing dog control service delivery by increasing staff numbers to ensure greater focus on proactive work; locating unregistered dogs and hopefully through this reduce dog attack numbers.
- Continue to review the standard operating procedures where possible to provide efficient and consistent customer centric processes for the delivery of Animal Management services.
- Explore further opportunities to increase adoption rates.

- Further engagement with community groups and schools to provide dog safety education to high risk and hard to reach communities.
- Continue the successful proactive registration to increase registration rates and identify unknown dogs as well as ensuring compliance with classifications.
- Continued focus on the issue of infringements particularly in the area of wandering as a proactive measure targeted at reducing further escalating non-compliance.
- Dog related pages on the council's website reviewed to enable a more customer friendly interaction.

4 Summary

The Council's regulatory enforcement contractor, Armourguard, has now completed four years as the Animal Management unit for the Whangarei District with a final year under the current contract approved. There has been a focus on business improvement, initially starting with a review and documentation of processes to deliver the Animal management services.

Future work will be focused on encouraging responsible dog ownership, concentrating on the registration and compliance of dogs along with ongoing enforcement.

Going forward, the animal management team aims to achieve a continued improvement in all these areas as well as focusing their resources on consistency in operations and improving value for the customer in the 2020/2021 year.

5 Dog Control Statistics

5.1 Table one: Registration/Classification related data

	Total 2019/20	Total 2018/2019	Total 2017/2018	Total 2016/2017
Dogs Registered	10,852	12,019	9,081	7,423
Dog Owner Classification				
Probationary	1	1	0	0
Disqualified	10	1	1	0
Menacing Classification				
By Breed	178	67	132	0
By Deed	36	5	2	0
Combined	214	72	134	0
Dangerous Classification				
Section 31(1) a	0	0	0	0
Section 31(1) b	2	2	2	0
Section 31(1) c	0	0	0	0
Total Dangerous	2	2	2	0

5.2 Table two: Request for Service data

	Customer request breakdown by job type			
Job Type	2019/2020	2018/2019	2017/2018	2016/2017
Wandering	2213	1883	1653	1623
Barking	1174	1504	1541	1142
Attacks	281	293	272	209
Rushing	176	242	154	167
Unregistered dog check	158	812	996	119
Miscellaneous	356	68	101	57
Grand Total	4358	4,802	4,717	3,317

5.3 Table three: Compliance Data

	2019/2020	2018/2019	2017/2018	2016/2017
Prosecutions				
Number of people prosecuted (note there may be more than one charge)	Concluded (Successful) 9 Concluded Total 12 Commenced but not concluded in the period 4	5	1	0
Infringement offence				
18 Willful Obstruction of dog control officer or ranger	6	1	2	0
19(2) Failure or refusal to supply information or willfully providing false particulars	3	0	2	0
19A (2) Failure to supply information or willfully provide false about dog	0	0	0	0
20(5) Failure to comply with any bylaw authorised by the section	0	0	0	0
23A (2) Failure to undertake dog owner education program of dog obedience course (or both)	0	0	0	0
24 Failure to comply with the obligations of a probationary owner	0	0	0	0
28(5) Failure to comply with the effects of disqualification	0	0	0	0
32(2) failure to comply with the effects of classification of dog as dangerous	0	0	0	0
32(4) Fraudulent sale or transfer of dangerous dog	0	0	0	0
33EC (1) Failure to comply with the effects of classification of dog as menacing	6	2	0	0

	2019/2020	2018/2019	2017/2018	2016/2017
33F (3) Failure to advise person of muzzle and leashing requirements	0	0	0	
36A (6) Failure to implant microchip transponder in dog	66	174	259	245
41 False statement in relation to dog registration	0	0	0	0
41A Falsely notifying death of dog	0	0	0	0
42 Failure to register dog	165	321	557	404
46(4) Fraudulent procurement or attempt to procure replacement dog registration label or disc	0	1	0	0
48(3) Failure to advise change of dog ownership	0	1	0	0
49(4) Failure to advise change of address	0	3	0	0
51(1) Removal, swapping or counterfeiting of registration label or disc	0	0	0	0
52A Failure to keep dog controlled or confined	208	203	146	149
53(1) Failure to keep dog under control	3	9	8	10
54(2) Failure to provide proper care and attention, to supply proper and sufficient food, and to provide adequate exercise	1	0	0	0
54A Failure to carry leash in public	0	0	0	0
55(7) Failure to comply with barking dog abatement notice	1	0	2	0
62(4) Allowing dog known to be dangerous to be at large unmuzzled or unleashed	0	0	0	0
62(5) Failure to advise of muzzle and leashing requirements	0	0	0	0
72(2) Releasing dog from custody	0	0	0	0
Total	459	715	976	808

5.4 Table four: Shelter data

	2019/2020	2018/2019	2017/2018	2016/2017
--	-----------	-----------	-----------	-----------

Impounded Total	368	557	388	275
Total number of returned to owner	140	231	164	68
% dogs returned to owners	38%	42%	42%	25%
Total number of adopted dogs	54	33	40	29
% dogs adopted	15%	6%	10%	11%
Total number of euthanised dogs	174	293	184	178
% dogs euthanised	47%	52%	47%	65%