

ANNUAL REPORT

DOG CONTROL POLICY AND PRACTICE

2021/22

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	3
SUMMARY	3
PART 1 – DOG CONTROL POLICY AND PRACTICES.....	3
1. Dog control in district	3
2. Dog control enforcement practices	4
3. Dogs prohibited, leash only and dog exercise areas.....	5
4. Dog registration and other fees.....	6
5. Dog education and dog obedience courses.....	6
6. Disqualified and probationary dog owners	7
7. Menacing and dangerous dogs.....	7
8. Other information.....	8
PART 2 – STATISTICAL INFORMATION	9

INTRODUCTION

This is Waipa District Council's report on Council's Dog Control Policy and Practices for the period 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022, as required by section 10A Dog Control Act 1996.

SUMMARY

The Dog Control Act 1996 ("the Act") requires all territorial authorities to report annually to central government on their Dog Control Policy and Practices.

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

PART 1 – DOG CONTROL POLICY AND PRACTICES

1. Dog control in Waipā District

- 1.1. The total number of active dogs on Council's register at the end of the 2021/22 registration year peaked at 9292, up from 8983 in 2020/21 an increase of 309. There has been a consistent level of growth over the past five years which is in keeping with levels of population growth across the district. Only 115 dogs were recorded as unregistered at the end of the year.
- 1.2. Council provides a twenty-four hour animal control service, with Council's Animal Control Officers covering business hours, and contractors covering after hours. The after-hours contract combines after-hours animal control activities with noise control and general property security. The contract was initially awarded to Allied Security in September 2019, and has since been renewed.
- 1.3. An active Institute of Animal Management has been valuable, with Waipā District Council hosting a number of the meetings for the Waikato/BOP branch of the Institute. Good relationships have also been maintained with the Police and other agencies.
- 1.4. Council restructured the Animal Control Team in 2020 to form a dedicated Team Leader, plus 3 full-time animal control officers and one part-time. An additional fixed term Administrator was employed in 2018/19 (total of 1.75) due to the growth in dog numbers and internal organisational demands. The Manager Compliance is responsible for the overall group (Animal Control, Health and Licensing, Enforcement and Building Compliance).
- 1.5. Council continues to operate two animal control pounds, one in Cambridge and one in Kihikihi with facilities for impounding dogs and stock. Council has approved a project in its Long Term Plan to replace one pound and upgrade the other.
- 1.6. Overall the number of complaints received and subsequent enforcement action has fallen compared to the previous year. Impounding rates have increased a little though. There have been 245 dogs impounded (224 last year), with 182 dogs claimed, 19 dogs euthanased, and 36 re-homed with 8 still in care at the end of June.

- 1.7. 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 (i.e. if unregistered and not already chipped). In addition, sustenance fees are charged for each additional day the dog is in the pound. However a dog impounded for the first time will often be released for free if already currently registered at the time of impounding. Council simplified its impounding fees in 2019 to a two-tier rate rather than an increasing scale per impounding, which has made administration easier.
- 1.8. The associated fleet consists of four dedicated vehicles. Two were upgraded in the 20/21 financial year. All are now GPS fitted. Specialist cages have been provided in two vehicles with the same to be provided for the remainder.
- 1.9. Microchipping services continue to be offered to dog owners at weekly clinics held at our pounds, by appointment. Letters are sent to all owners that are legally required to chip their dogs, and who have not already produced a microchip certificate to Council. Legislation 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 micro-chipped.
- 1.10. This process is followed by the issue of infringements to owners of all non-complying dogs, with a 28-day waiver opportunity. Owners were charged \$27 to cover microchip costs (increased to \$28 for the 22-23 year) and Animal Control Officers carried out the micro-chipping. Currently 92% of all dogs on the register are microchipped.
- 1.11. The continued focus on unregistered dogs has resulted in a re-registration rate exceeding 98%. 115 dogs were known to be unregistered as at 30 June, and most received infringement notices for that offence where it was confirmed that the dog was still in the district. Council has continued to start the annual renewal process early with notices posted out to dog owners in May, and has offered the chance to win free registration for the life of the dog and other prizes as an incentive for early registration.

2. Dog control enforcement practices

- 2.1. For the period to the end of June 2022 Council received 1477 dog-related complaints that required action and a further 1702 general enquiries. This does not include complaints about stock or other animals.
- 2.2. The first approach by animal control staff when following up complaints is generally one of using education. If a currently registered dog is picked up for a first wandering offence, the dog is usually returned to the owner free of charge with a verbal warning rather than charging an impound.
- 2.3. Complaints relating to wandering dogs numbered 621 this year (695 last year), and 333 complaints were received in relation to barking dogs (369 last year). These seem to be the most common complaints in other districts also. In the case of wandering dogs, we generally ask the caller to contain the dog if at all possible until it can be collected. When this isn't possible animal control staff work with complainants to track and capture dogs, sometimes using Council-owned cage traps.
- 2.4. Most barking complaints are resolved swiftly once the owner is aware of the problem. In more persistent cases, the Animal Control Officer will ask the complainant(s) to keep a log of the barking and will survey other neighbours to establish if the barking is a problem. An Abatement Notice can

then be served under the Act, with any objections heard by Council's Regulatory Committee. One formal notice to abate nuisance barking was issued this year, and was not appealed.

- 2.5. General aggression complaints also fell slightly compared to last year, as did reported attacks. Council received 152 complaints related to attacks, rushing or aggressive dog incidents (166 last year). When attack incidents are investigated, a rating sheet is completed by staff to help ensure a consistent approach to enforcement as there is discretion in the Act as to what action can be taken, ranging from a verbal warning to prosecution. Cases are assessed on an individual basis.
- 2.6. Council submitted feedback to the Associate Minister for Local Government during 2016 that infringement notices could be made available for minor attacks to increase Council's enforcement options, but this did not eventuate. This has resulted in an increase in menacing classifications as few other options exist in many cases where an attack does not warrant prosecution and no infringement offence is committed.
- 2.7. To the end of June 2022, 163 infringement notices were issued, with 39 subsequently cancelled, mostly due to compliance by the dog owner. The remaining 124 notices were issued under the following Sections of the Act:
 - 1 for breach of section 18 wilful obstruction of officer
 - 18 for breach of section 20(5) breach of bylaw
 - 18 for breach of section 33EC(1) failure to comply with menacing classification
 - 13 for breach of section 36A failure to microchip
 - 60 for breach of Section 42 for non-registration
 - 14 for breach of Section 53(1) failure to control.
- 2.8. Only 26 of these infringement notices have been paid to Council to date, with the majority being filed in court. This does not make them a particularly effective enforcement measure as many of these will not be paid, and some may be cancelled by Courts and substituted for community work.
- 2.9. The relatively small number of infringements is due principally to the high registration rate and the focus on getting dogs registered rather than on enforcement action. However offences such as failing to comply with the requirements of a menacing dog classification, and failing to microchip feature, along with failing to control (either in a public place or on private property other than where the dog usually resides).
- 2.10. There were no prosecutions by Council in 2021/22.

3. Dogs prohibited, leash only and dog exercise areas

- 3.1. In Waipa, Council's policy is for all dogs to be on a leash in public places, except in designated dog exercise (off leash) areas, and most dog owners adhere to this. There are also dog prohibited areas, such as sports grounds, children's playgrounds and schools. Signage is installed in exercise and prohibited areas to distinguish them.
- 3.2. There are 45 dog faeces receptacles across the District which are regularly emptied. They are located mainly at exercise areas. The dog exercise areas and dog faeces receptacles are well-used by dog owners.

3.3 Last year Council received a request from Te Kopoua Marae Trustees to restrict dog access to the entire Kakepuku Maunga, near Te Awamutu. This has triggered a review of Council's Dog Control Policy which would not otherwise be due until 2025. Council has started early public engagement, and the formal consultation process for the review has been scheduled for around February 2023. The early consultation phase finished on 31 August 2022 following a webinar and four public forums. 298 individuals provided feedback that will now guide any policy changes.

4. Dog registration and other fees

4.1. The fees for the 18/19 year were held at the previous levels and essentially had not increased in over 5 years. The fees for 2019/20 increased by \$1 for urban dogs. In the 2020/21 year rural fees increased by \$2 per dog to \$52. No changes were made to fees for the 2021/22 period, but all fees increased by \$1 - \$2 for the 2022-23 year. The fees are low compared to many other locations.

4.2. There are still discounts of \$15 and \$10 available to urban owners for fencing and neutering respectively. These can be regarded as good preventative measures to stop dogs wandering which account for the majority of complaints referred to Council. Rural dogs pay a lesser registration fee due to them generally having less access to Council services.

4.3. Council staff followed up on unregistered dogs as they do each year and, following a reminder letter and a follow-up phone call or property visit, issued infringement fines. If registration took place immediately the infringement fine was usually waived, but a number of dog owners still failed to register within the time frame resulting in the infringements being processed. There were also a small number of seizures of dogs that were held until the owner completed registration.

4.4. Dog owners are able to pay online via Council's website and this method of payment is strongly encouraged as an alternative to online bank payments, due to the significant levels of staff time spent managing bank payments. In previous years Council implemented a pre-payment arrangement where owners who struggle to pay registration were able to start paying in advance for the coming year's registration. A number of dog owners were invited, however there wasn't a large uptake. And some dog owners reneged on the arrangement. As a result we haven't continued with offering pre-payment options, but where there is a genuine desire to pay off dog registration fees, our admin team will work with dog owners to achieve this.

4.5. The levy share for Waipa District in the operation of the National Dog Database for the 2021/22 was \$6,200 including GST. There is no fee for Waipā District in 2022/22 due to previous over-recovery.

5. Dog education and dog obedience courses

5.1. An annual newsletter is sent to all dog owners with their registration notice. Usually each year Council either organises or attends a seminar or event to which owners/public are invited. There haven't been any events this past year though due to Covid restrictions. Likewise Animal Control Officers have not visited any schools, kindergartens or other groups over the last year or two.

5.2. All new dog owners in the district are issued with an "owner information and dog registration pack" which contains a variety of information of interest to dog owners (including dog training and obedience courses) and Council also has a number of information leaflets to assist owners with specific issues.

- 5.3. Council has continued with its Facebook page dedicated to Animal Control (Waipā Animal Control). The page is used to try and locate the owners of impounded dogs, to advise about events and topical information, and to advertise dogs needing homes. This is usually well received by the public, however the negative aspect of social media i.e. circulating mis-information and criticising Council has also continued to some extent.

6. Disqualified and probationary dog owners

- 6.1. There are currently 16 disqualified owners recorded in our database, although three of these are due to expire this month. We don't currently have any classified probationary owners recorded.
- 6.2. We received one disqualification objection from a dog owner this year, with the appeal being heard by Council's Regulatory committee. The disqualification had been issued following three infringement offences being committed by the dog owner within a two year period. The disqualification was over-turned by the committee due to the offences being admin type offences (eg failing to microchip and failing to register) rather than related to any issues with the control of the owner's dogs. Recommendations were also made by the committee in terms of strengthening communications with Council's offending dog owners, with texting or phoning suggested in addition to sending formal letters. Introducing a graduated scale of disqualification is being considered as part of Council's policy review rather than a five-year default.

7. Menacing and dangerous dogs

During this period 31 dogs were classified as menacing, and at the end of June 2022 a total of 136 active dogs remained classified as menacing in the District out of a population of over 9292 dogs. There were no new dangerous dog classifications, and five remained classified as dangerous.

- 7.1. Menacing dogs can be classified under two subsections of the Act (commonly referred to as "breed" or "deed") i.e. 33A due to reported or observed menacing behaviour of the dog, and 33C due to the dog's breed or type being one listed in schedule 4 of the Dog Control Act - in most cases an American Pitbull Terrier type. Dangerous dogs are classified following receipt of a sworn statement from a complainant attesting the dog is a threat to any person or domestic animal, or following prosecution. Both menacing and dangerous dogs are required to be muzzled when in any public place.
- 7.2. Animal Control Officers do compliance checks after one month for any dog newly classified as either menacing or dangerous. Council's Dog Control Policy requires classified menacing dogs to be neutered and most owners comply with this requirement without further enforcement. Animal Control Officers endeavour to assist owners with full compliance by providing low-cost micro-chipping. Local charity Pound Hounds Rescue also offers reduced cost desexing, and this is actively promoted by animal control staff.
- 7.3. In this period two dogs were seized due to their owners not complying with menacing classification requirements, and held in the pound because their owners failed to show willingness to comply. In both cases, the owners did not appeal Council's decision through the Courts, and the dogs were subsequently disposed of after the required period of time.
- 7.4. The dangerous dog classification is also a useful tool, due to the legislative requirement for the dog to be kept within a fenced enclosure, in addition to being neutered.

- 7.5. Under the Act, owners may object within 14 days to classifications, which are usually heard by Council's Regulatory Committee. There was one hearing in the 2021-22 period, and the committee upheld the classification.
- 7.6. The number of menacing classifications pursuant to Section 33A (deed) is partly due to a gap in enforcement options when, following an attack, a decision is made not to prosecute. No infringement offence exists for an attack. So unless the dog owner has committed another offence, classification can often be the only alternative. A high-value infringement for minor attacks would be a useful addition to the schedule. Monitoring compliance for classifications can be onerous requirement.
- 7.7. Council's dog control policy 2015 includes that any American-Staffordshire terrier that does not have pedigree papers will be considered "predominantly American pit-bull type" where it exhibits those traits, and be classified pursuant to Section 33C accordingly.

8. Other information

- 8.1. Council requires owners of more than five dogs on rural properties and owners of more than two dogs on any urban land to apply for a three-year permit from Council. As registration applications are received, owners are advised to apply for a permit.
- 8.2. Waipa District Council continues to have a high rehoming rate of unclaimed pound dogs. Local charities assist with some of the adoptions, while the remainder of adoptions are co-ordinated by the animal control team. Council continues to operate a very successful Facebook page (facebook.com/WaipAnimalControl) which has provided an additional avenue to promote rehoming, and to provide general information to dog owners. This works in conjunction with Council's formal Facebook page (facebook.com/WaipDistrictCouncil).
- 8.3. Council is also working closely with its neighbours, including through shared training assisted by the Waikato/BOP branch of the New Zealand Institute of Animal Management. This has seen a range of networking and/or training opportunities for staff.
- 8.4. Council has also made a significant investment in dog agility related equipment in recent years with the aim of developing "destination dog parks" in Te Awamutu and Cambridge areas. A full set of agility equipment has been installed in two parks and has been well received.
- 8.5. With the recent movement of Council IT systems to "the cloud" staff will hopefully be able to complete a range of administration tasks in the field, using tablets in the near future.

PART 2 – STATISTICAL INFORMATION

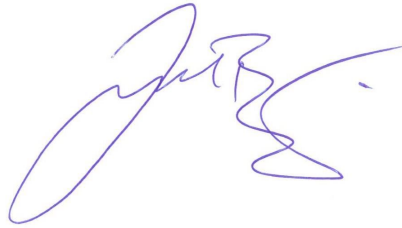
Category		1 July 2018 – 30 June 2019	1 July 2019 – 30 June 2020	1 July 2020– 30 June 2021	1 July 2021 – 30 June 2022
1	Total # active dogs	8561	8714	8983	9292
2	Total # probationary owners	1	1	1	0
3	Total # disqualified owners	15	12	18	16
4	Total # dangerous dogs (current at end of period)	8	5	7	5
	▪ Dangerous by owner conviction under s31(1)(a) – new	0	0	0	0
	▪ Dangerous by sworn evidence s31(1)(b) - new	3	4	4	0
	▪ Dangerous by owner admittance in writing s31(1)(c) – new	1	1	0	0
5	Total # menacing dogs (end of period)	118	126	135	136
	▪ Menacing under S33A(1)(b)(i) - i.e. by Behaviour – new	13	5	11	7
	▪ Menacing under s33A(1)(b)(ii)- by Breed Characteristics – new	1	0	0	0
	▪ Menacing under s33C(1) by Schedule 4 Breed – new	14	20	24	24
6	Total # infringement notices (excluding cancelled)	121	88	119	124
7	Total # complaints received (needing action)	2133	1706	1575	1477
	▪ Aggressive	64	47	52	53
	▪ Bins/signs	18	21	24	65
	▪ Bite/attack	75	84	71	63
	▪ Barking	476	392	369	333
	▪ Breach of Council bylaw or permits	14	22	23	24
	▪ Lost dog/other	360	247	202	228
	▪ Rushing in public place	47	37	43	36
	▪ Unregistered	48	40	39	17
	▪ Wandering	989	767	695	621
	▪ Worrying animals	5	9	6	9
	▪ No water, shelter, food or exercise	37	40	51	28
8	Total # prosecutions taken	0	0	0	0

Prepared by



Helen McLean
ANIMAL CONTROL TEAM LEADER

Approved by



Karl Tutty
MANAGER COMPLIANCE