

Whangarei District Council

Annual Report on Dog Control Policy and Practice

2021 – 2022



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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 activities.

1.2 Background

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

Through the contract, and during the period to which this report relates, Council funded six (6) full time Animal Control Officers, two more than in previous years. This being in addition to an adequate number of pound (shelter) staff and administrator/receptionist staff.

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

The contractor's animal control 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 ('the Act'), encouraging responsible dog ownership and registration of dogs as well as community education.

This year, the focus has been on compliance in all areas including registration, microchipping, and responsible dog ownership.

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 relating to compliance and welfare.

The statutory review of this policy and the related bylaw is planned for later this year and/or in 2023, as provided for under relevant legislation.

2.2 Fees

Dog registration fees, fines and impound fees aim to contribute up to 90% of the cost of dog control in Whangarei District. The Council provides a discounted rate for owners of 'working dogs'; dog owners that de-sex their dog and for those who pay registration prior to 1 August. In addition, Council charges a zero rate for "service" dogs.

Fees are used for:

- Dog Control activities including complaint investigation, patrols, and law enforcement
- Dog incident prevention (including finding unregistered dogs, owner disqualification, and the classification and enforcement of menacing and dangerous dogs)
- Running the annual dog registration renewal program.
- Signs for the Council's Dog Management Bylaw and Dog Management Policy
- Shelter (pound) Services, including lost and found, and adoption
- Education programs for schools and community groups

3 Key Achievements 2021/2022

3.1 Responding to complaints (CRM)

Dog related complaints have decreased in all key areas, with the exception of attacks, (discussed in more detail below). There were 3711 dog control service requests over the 2021/2022 period compared to the previous year's total of 4981.

The contractor also carried out 384 proactive patrols in identified risk areas this year compared to 269 proactive patrols in 2020/21.

3.2 Enforcement Activities

There were 767 infringements issued for offences under the Dog Control Act in 2021/22. This represents an 11% increase from the 688 infringements issued in 2020/2021.

In addition to the increase in infringements, Council's contractor has maintained a focus on the 'three strikes' rule. Section 25 of the Act provides that where three or more infringements (relating to more than one incident) are issued within twenty-four months, then Council must disqualify the dog owner from dog ownership (except in certain limited circumstances). This is being underpinned by the increase in infringements, along with the issue of formal warning letters where practicable, highlighting to the owner that they are at risk of disqualification. A warning regarding incurring three infringements within a twenty-four month period has also been added to the dog registration reminder.

Attacks, increased by 30 events this year compared to 166 last year. Total attack numbers however remain lower than in all other previous years since reporting commenced for 2016/17.

Over the current year and going forwards, dog classification (menacing/dangerous) has, and will continue to be, a heightened area of focus.

The quality of investigation/files being produced by the contractor's officers, has continued to increase leading to both enforcement action, and where deemed appropriate, prosecution. Two prosecutions were brought and successfully concluded during the period covered by the report. A further seven prosecutions were commenced during the period, but as of 30 June 2022 these had not yet concluded. Two prosecutions brought prior to 1 July 2021, and outside the period covered by this report, were also successfully concluded during the period. In all, 9 prosecutions were brought during the period covered by this report, and 11 matters were being actively prosecuted.

3.3 Impounded dogs

During the year, there were 504 dogs impounded at the shelter, which is roughly equivalent to the number of dogs impounded in the previous year.

The process for realising Council's need for a new Animal Management Shelter (pound) is progressing well, with Council recently having appointed a contractor to construct this new facility. This follows earlier tender and 2021-31 Long-term Plan budget setting processes. It is anticipated that once consenting processes have been finalised, that construction will start within the current 2022/23 financial year.

As many dogs as possible that enter the shelter (that are assessed as suitable), are rehomed. This is supported by adoptions, the 'Pound Pooch' feature in the 'Whangarei Leader', and through relationships that have been developed by the Shelter Supervisor with charitable trusts that rescue, rehabilitate, and rehome dogs. This year advertising around adoption dogs expanded with the addition of a dedicated adopt a dog page on Council's website, and the establishment of a 'Pound Pooch' Facebook page administered by Council's contractor.

67 dogs were rehomed from the shelter in 2021/2022 compared to 45 dogs in the previous year.

The number of dogs having to be euthanized increased to 168 from 137 last year however this is still lower than years previous to that.

3.4 Menacing Dogs

Under the Dog Control Act 1996, 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 that the dog poses a threat to people or other animals and wildlife due to its behavior. A classified dog must be muzzled when in a public place and be de-sexed. De-sexing menacing dogs is a key component of reducing dog-related harm.

112 dogs have been classified in the district as menacing dogs under section 33C of the Act. These dogs are of the American Pitbull Terrier type. The number of dogs that are classified as menacing based on reported behavior increased to 72, in 2021/22 from 51 the previous year.

The Act provides the Council with a graduated enforcement mechanism to support compliance with classification, which Council is increasingly making use of. This commences with infringement for non-compliance with the classification (29 infringements were issued for this type of non-compliance this year, as opposed to 10 issued last year, and negligible numbers in the years prior).

The Act also allows for repeat non-compliant dogs to be seized, culminating with active decision making by Council regarding the ownership and placement of the dog where non-compliance is an ongoing issue.

Council's contractor has previously reviewed and strengthened its classification protocol and drafted a standard operating procedure in relation to the identification and classification of menacing dogs, which is currently being reviewed by Council.

3.5 Other Achievements

There has been a continued focus on dog registration, which increased from 12,349 in 2020/21 to 13,170 in 2021/22. Infringements issued for non-registration increased by almost 200 infringements, from 285 issued in 2020/21 to 482 in 2021/22. This reflects an emphasis on actively disincentivising registration avoidance, as this behaviour increases the burden on law abiding dog owners who ensure their registration is kept up to date.

The full impact of the contractual enhancement for 2021/22 will continue to be analysed over time, however the reduction in complaints in most areas, coupled with a demonstrated increase in

enforcement activity, including notably registration enforcement, points to effective earlier intervention and gains being achieved.

In terms of dog safety initiatives, local schools have been approached and those that expressed positive interest have been provided with a sample education pack that the Contractor has accessed from the Department of Internal Affairs. The schools that have taken up the sample pack are; Hikurangi, Hora Hora, Kamo, Kaurihohore, Manaia View, Morningside, Raurimu, Onerahi, Otangarei, Tikipunga, Whananaki and Totara Grove school. Due to the impact of both Covid 19 and Covid precautions in-person presentations have not been undertaken in schools during the period, however it is anticipated that these will resume during the year ahead.

3.6 Planned Activities for 2022/2023

- Continued focus on comprehensive and early intervention in response to negative dog behaviours, such as wandering, and aggressive behaviours with a view to maintaining and enhancing reductions in wandering, rushing and dog attack numbers.
- Continuing and expanding the greater focus on proactive work carried out by the contractor, in terms of enforcement in relation to unregistered dogs
- An increasing focus on working with local schools to provide dog safety resources and where requested education to high risk and hard to reach communities following a renewal of activity in this area that has occurred this year
- Placing renewed priority on ensuring all dogs that are required to be classified either by reason of the animal's breed or type, or due to observed, or reported behaviour, are identified and classified
- Exploring further opportunities to increase dog adoption rates

4 Summary

The Council's regulatory enforcement contractor, Armourguard, has now completed almost six years as the Animal Management unit for the Whangarei District, with a new 5-year contract having been approved, as of 1 July 2022.

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

As the project culminating in the construction of a new shelter advances, Council staff will also be increasingly involved in supporting the implementation of this project.

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 2022/2023 year.

5 Dog Control Statistics

5.1 Table one: Registration/Classification related data

	Total 2021/22	Total 2020/21	Total 2019/20	Total 2018/2019	Total 2017/2018
Dogs Registered	13,170	12,349	10,852	12,019	9,081
Dog Owner Classification					
Probationary	2	1	1	1	0
Disqualified	9	12	10	1	1
Menacing Classification					
By Breed	112	104	178	67	132
By Deed	72	51	36	5	2
Combined	184	155	214	72	134
Dangerous Classification					
Section 31(1) a	0	0	0	0	0
Section 31(1) b	3	2	2	2	2
Section 31(1) c	0	0	0	0	0
Total Dangerous	3	2	2	2	2

5.2 Table two: Service data

Customer Request Breakdown by job type

Job Type	2021/2022	2020/2021	2019/2020	2018/2019	2017/2018
Wandering	1296	1901	2213	1883	1653
Barking	1064	1234	1174	1504	1541
Attacks	196	166	281	293	272
Rushing	131	186	176	242	154
Unregistered dog check	527	1117	158	812	996
Miscellaneous*	497	377	356	68	101
Total	3,711	4,981	4,358	4,802	4,717
Proactive Community Patrols	384	269			
	4095	5250			

*Miscellaneous: Reactive patrols, worrying/trapping, fouling, condition check, miscellaneous bylaw breach

5.3 Table three: Compliance Data

	2021/22	2020/21	2019/2020	2018/2019	2017/2018
Prosecutions					
Number of people prosecuted (note there may be more than one charge)	Concluded (Successful) 2	Concluded (Successful) 4	Concluded (Successful) 9	5	1
	Concluded Total 2	Concluded Total 4	Concluded Total 12		
	Commenced but not concluded in the period 7	Commenced but not concluded in the period 2	Commenced but not concluded in the period 4		
Infringement offence					
18 Willful Obstruction of dog control officer or ranger	14	11	6	1	2
19(2) Failure or refusal to supply information or willfully providing false particulars	3	0	3	0	2
19A (2) Failure to supply information or willfully provide false about dog	0	0	0	0	0
20(5) Failure to comply with any bylaw authorised by the section	0	2	0	0	0
23A (2) Failure to undertake dog owner education program of dog obedience course (or both)	0	0	0	0	0
24 Failure to comply with the obligations of a probationary owner	0	0	0	0	0

	2021/22	2020/21	2019/2020	2018/2019	2017/2018
28(5) Failure to comply with the effects of disqualification	1	0	0	0	0
32(2) failure to comply with the effects of classification of dog as dangerous	0	0	0	0	0
32(4) Fraudulent sale or transfer of dangerous dog	0	0	0	0	0
33EC (1) Failure to comply with the effects of classification of dog as menacing	29	10	6	2	0
33F (3) Failure to advise person of muzzle and leashing requirements	0	0	0	0	0
36A (6) Failure to implant microchip transponder in dog	11	34	66	174	259
41 False statement in relation to dog registration	0	0	0	0	0
41A Falsely notifying death of dog	0	0	0	0	0
42 Failure to register dog	482	285	165	321	557
46(4) Fraudulent procurement or attempt to procure replacement dog registration label or disc	1	0	0	1	0
48(3) Failure to advise change of dog ownership	1	0	0	1	0

	2021/22	2020/21	2019/2020	2018/2019	2017/2018
49(4) Failure to advise change of address	5	0	0	3	0
51(1) Removal, swapping or counterfeiting of registration label or disc	0	0	0	0	0
52A Failure to keep dog controlled or confined	199	298	208	203	146
53(1) Failure to keep dog under control	15	45	3	9	8
54(2) Failure to provide proper care and attention, to supply proper and sufficient food, and to provide adequate exercise	1	2	1	0	0
54A Failure to carry leash in public	0	0	0	0	0
55(7) Failure to comply with barking dog abatement notice	5	1	1	0	2
62(4) Allowing dog known to be dangerous to be at large unmuzzled or unleashed	0	0	0	0	0
62(5) Failure to advise of muzzle and leashing requirements	0	0	0	0	0
72(2) Releasing dog from custody	0	0	0	0	0
Total	767	688	459	715	976

5.4 Table four: Shelter data

	2021/22	2020/21	2019/2020	2018/2019	2017/2018
Impounded Total	504	502	368	557	388
Total number of returned to owner	269	320	140	231	164
% dogs returned to owners	54%	63%	38%	42%	42%
Total number of adopted dogs	67	45	54	33	40
% dogs adopted	13%	9%	15%	6%	10%
Total number of euthanised dogs	168	137	174	293	184
% dogs euthanised	33%	27%	47%	52%	47%