

**REPORT ON
WAITOMO DISTRICT COUNCIL DOG CONTROL POLICY AND PRACTICES
2017/2018**

TO: The Secretary for Local Government
FROM: Terrena Kelly, Group Manager Compliance
SUBJECT: Report on Waitomo District Council Dog Control Policy and Practices
2017/2018
DATE: 31 July 2018

1 INTRODUCTION

This is Waitomo District Council's (WDC) annual report on Council's Dog Control Policy and Practices for the period 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018, 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 WDC's register at the end of the 2017/18 registration year was 3468, down from 3590 in 2016/17, a decrease of 122 dogs.

WDC provides a twenty-four hour animal control service, with 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 an after-hour's contractor. Training is provided to contractors, with both providers working closely together on animal control matters.

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

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

The ACO works predominantly in the field, whilst the compliance administrator oversees the administration of the WDC database, the National Dog Database (NDD), and the registration process.

WDC operates a dog pound in William Street Te Kuiti. The pound equipment is updated on an as needed basis.

This year the statistics show a slight decrease in impounding's from the previous year. There have been 185 dogs impounded (204 last year), with 85 dogs returned to their owner, 44 dogs euthanized, and 56 re-homed.

The dog owners of 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.

Microchipping continues to be a key focus. 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 WDC Dog Control Policy and Bylaw was formally adopted in 2015.

2.2 Dog Control Enforcement Practices

For this period, WDC received 426 dog control related complaints that required action.

WDC takes 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 might be returned to the owner with a verbal warning, rather than impounding.

Complaints relating to wandering dogs numbered 277 this year (314 last year), and 40 complaints were received in relation to barking dogs (93 last year). WDC works with complainants to identify and capture wandering dogs, sometimes using WDC 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 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. WDC has issued no Abatement Notices in this period.

WDC received 37 complaints related to attacks, rushing and/or aggressive dog incidents. Each incident is investigated, a report made (including an attack rating assessment). Upon completion of the investigation and reporting, a decision is made (and recorded) 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, 51 (103 last year) infringement notices had been issued and have since either been paid by the owner, or sent to the District Court. A further 14 infringements were issued, but were subsequently cancelled.

The infringement notices were issued as follows:

- One for wilful obstruction of officer
- Two for breach of section 33EC(1) (failure to comply with menacing dog classification)
- 32 for breach of Section 42 (non-registration)
- 16 for breach of Section 52(a) (failure to confine), and breach of Section 53(1) (failure to control)

There was one prosecution undertaken by the NZ Police with assistance from WDC during this period. The owner pleaded guilty on 30 May 2018 in the Te Kuiti District Court to the charge of owning two dogs that attacked stock. The owner was subsequently convicted and ordered to pay reparation; and was disqualified for owning any dogs for five years.

2.3 Dogs Prohibited, Leash Only and Dog Exercise Areas

WDC'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

There was no change to the dog registration fees for 2017/18, except for the addition of a seizure fee.

Where dog owners have not registered their dogs within the required timeframe, these are followed up. 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.

2.5 Education

WDC 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 one disqualified dog owner, and no probationary owners.

2.7 Menacing and Dangerous Dogs

For this period, there are no classified dangerous dogs and 28 menacing dogs classified in the District out of a population of 3468 dogs. Any new dog of a menacing breed/type is identified following registration, classified and referred for a compliance check.

In April 2017, WDC 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 2018, 15 dogs have been neutered under this campaign (since the commencement in May 2017), with 2 classified due to behaviour, and 13 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 dog owner's property is inspected 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 WDC 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	For period 1 July 2017 – 30 June 2018
1) Total # Registered Dogs	3,698	3,330	3,590	3,468
2) Total # Probationary Owners	0	0	0	0
3) Total # Disqualified Owners	0	0	0	1
4) Total # Dangerous Dogs (current at end of period)	0	0	1	0
▪ Dangerous by Owner Conviction Under s31(1)(a)	0	0	0	0
▪ Dangerous by Sworn Evidence s31(1)(b)	0	0	1	0
▪ Dangerous by Owner Admittance in Writing s31(1)(c)	0	0	0	0
5) Total # Menacing Dogs (end of period)	16	20	26	28
▪ Menacing under s33A(1)(b)(i) - i.e. by Behaviour	2	2	3	3
▪ Menacing under s33A(1)(b)(ii)- by Breed Characteristics	5	5	6	7
▪ Menacing under s33C(1) by Schedule 4 Breed	9	13	17	18
6) Total # Infringement Notices (excluding cancelled)	20	24	74	51
7) Total # Complaints Received (needing action)	670	524	518	426
▪ Aggressive	-	-	2	8
▪ Bins/Signs	12	0	-	-
▪ Bite/attack	44	6	33	37
▪ Barking	50	50	93	40
▪ Breach of Council Bylaw or permits	-	-	4	3
▪ Lost Dog/other	-	-	1	26
▪ Rushing in public place	35	26	17	14
▪ Unregistered	-	-	-	4
▪ Wandering	348	241	314	277
▪ Worrying animals	-	-	19	1
▪ No water, shelter, food or exercise	32	25	35	16
8) Total no of prosecutions	0	0	0	1