

**REPORT ON  
WAITOMO DISTRICT COUNCIL DOG CONTROL POLICY AND PRACTICES  
2020/2021**

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**TO:** The Secretary for Local Government  
**FROM:** Executive Assistant – Strategy and Environment  
**SUBJECT:** Report on Waitomo District Council Dog Control Policy and Practices - 2020/2021  
**DATE:** 27 July 2021

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**1 INTRODUCTION**

This is Waitomo District Council’s (WDC) annual report on Dog Control Policy and Practices for the period 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021, as required by section 10A of the Dog Control Act 1996.

**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 2020/2021 registration year was 3,363, a decrease of 98 dogs from 2019/20.

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, a Compliance Administrator and one part-time ACO through its shared services arrangement.

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, there was a decrease in the number of dogs impounded from the previous year. 116 dogs were impounded (compared to 125 in 2019/20), with 68 dogs returned to their owner, 18 dogs euthanized, and 30 re-homed.

The 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 Bylaw was formally adopted in 2015 and due for review in December 2024.

## **2.2 Dog Control Enforcement Practices**

For this period, WDC received 319 dog control related complaints (284 in 2019/20) 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 163 this year, a slight increase from the 2019/20 period (157). In addition, 68 complaints were received in relation to barking dogs (44 in 2019/20), and 17 complaints were received for rushing/aggression (25 in 2019/20). 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 three barking Abatement Notices in this period (zero issued in 2019/20).

WDC received 46 complaints related to attacks, rushing and/or aggressive dog incidents (52 in 2019/20). Each incident is investigated, and a report completed (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, 31 (19 in 2019/20) Infringement Notices have been issued and have since either been paid by the Dog Owner or sent to the Court.

The Infringement Notices were issued as follows:

- One for failure to comply with the bylaw;
- Three for breach of section 33EC(1) (failure to comply with effects of classification of dog as menacing dog);
- 22 for breach of section 42 (failure to register dog);
- Three for breach of section 52A (failure to keep dog controlled or confined); and
- Two for breach of section 53(1) (failure to keep dog under control).

### **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 were minor changes to the Dog Registration fees for 2020/21. The urban registration fee increased from \$115.00 to \$118.00. The neutered or spayed urban dog fee had no change. Rural registration increased from \$45.00 to \$50.00. Consent to keep more than 2 dogs in the urban are from \$30.00 to \$40.00. There has not been any official monitoring of feedback, however, an increase in dissatisfied comments concerning the increases has been noted. The majority of which have been addressed and satisfied when they have contacted the WDC customer services team.

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 / visit to the Owner. If dog owners continue to fail to register their dogs, the dog(s) are then seized and impounded. Dogs are only released from the pound once they are registered. 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 WDC's two Facebook pages (one dedicated to Animal Control).

### **2.6 Disqualified and Probationary Dog Owners**

Waitomo District has three disqualified dog owners, and zero probationary owners.

### **2.7 Menacing and Dangerous Dogs**

For this period, there are two dangerous dogs and 27 menacing dogs classified in the District out of a population of 3,363 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 2021, 25 dogs have been neutered under this campaign (since the commencement in May 2017). 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 2017 – 30 June 2018	For period 1 July 2018 – 30 June 2019	For period 1 July 2019 – 30 June 2020	For period 1 July 2020 – 30 June 2021
Total number of Registered Dogs	3,468	3,401	3,461	3,363
Total number of Probationary Owners	0	0	2	0
Total number of Disqualified Owners	1	1	1	3
Total number of Dangerous Dogs	0	0	2	2
▪ Dangerous by Owner Conviction Under s31(1)(a)	0	0	0	0
▪ Dangerous by Sworn Evidence s31(1)(b)	0	0	0	0
▪ Dangerous by Owner Admittance in Writing s31(1)(c)	0	0	2	2
Total number of Menacing Dogs	28	28	24	27
▪ Menacing under s33A(1)(b)(i) - i.e. by Behaviour	3	8	5	6
▪ Menacing under s33A(1)(b)(ii)- by Breed Characteristics	7	5	5	5
▪ Menacing under s33C(1) by Schedule 4 Breed	18	15	14	16
Total number of Infringement Notices (excluding cancelled)	51	48	19	31
Total number of prosecutions	1	0	1	2
Complaints received:				
▪ Aggressive	8	21	19	9
▪ Bins/Signs	0	0	0	0
▪ Bite/attack	37	39	27	29
▪ Barking	40	59	44	68
▪ Breach of Council Bylaw or permits	3	2	2	5
▪ Lost Dog/other	26	18	15	21
▪ Rushing in public place	14	2	6	8
▪ Unregistered	4	5	2	2
▪ Wandering	277	194	157	163
▪ Worrying animals	1	1	3	3
▪ No water, shelter, food or exercise	16	8	9	11
<b>Total Complaints Received</b>	<b>426</b>	<b>349</b>	<b>284</b>	<b>319</b>

*Note: Variations in reporting numbers on aggressive, bite/attacks and rushing between years can occur as a result of how service requests are coded.*