

Dog Control Policy and Practices Annual Report

- 1 July 2009 to 30 June 2010

(Section 10A of the Dog Control Act 1996)

Background

Section 10A of the Dog Control Act 1996 requires the Marlborough District Council (“Council”) to report on its administration of Dog Control Policy and Practices in respect of each financial year.

This report focuses on the 2009/10 financial year which is the period 1 July 2009 – 30 June 2010.

The objectives of this report are to:

- Report on Council’s administration of dog control policies and practices;
- Provide information on dog control activities.

This report will be provided to the Secretary for Local Government and will be publicly notified within one month of its release.

Operations

The Dog Control function has been contracted out to Maataa Waka Ki Te Tau Ihu Trust since 1998. The contract was renewed on 1 April 2009 for a further two years.

Council retains the administration of the contract, makes decisions on classifications of dog owners, objections to classifications and infringements, and on prosecutions.

Dog Control Policy

As required by the Dog Control Amendment Act, the Council has adopted a Policy on Dogs.

This Policy deals with various matters, as required by Section 10 of the Dog Control Act including dog areas, fees and education.

The Policy is scheduled for review later in 2010. A copy of the current Policy can be viewed on the Council’s website www.marlborough.govt.nz.

Dog Areas

Dog areas are set out in the Policy on dogs and in Council’s Dog Control Bylaws.

Dogs are allowed off leash in dog exercise areas, provided they are kept under control at all times. There are a total of seven dog exercise areas in the Marlborough District.

Dogs are prohibited from areas that have an intense public use, where dogs may compromise the enjoyment of the area, where ecological or economic values would be threatened, where space is limited on narrow walkways and pedestrians may be threatened. Currently there are several dog prohibited areas in Marlborough.

Dogs are allowed in, but must be kept on leash, in any public area that is not identified as a dog prohibited area or dog exercise area.

The current dog areas will be reassessed as part of the Policy Reviews.

Fees

A new fee system for 2009/10 was introduced providing for lower fees for owners who meet specified criteria.

The registration fee structure for the 2009/10 year was:

- \$48 fee for non working dogs (Category 1)
- \$72 fee for non working dogs (Category 2)
- \$20 fee for working dogs
- A fee for dogs classified as dangerous that is 50% above the standard fee
- A rebate for owners of more than 6 dogs that have no recent recorded breaches of the Dog Control Act.

Non working dogs

Category 1

Dog: Neutered, microchipped and not classified as dangerous or menacing.

Owner: Not classified as probationary or been disqualified, not convicted of an offence or committed an infringement offence under Dog Control Act.

Category 2

Any non working dog that does not meet the criteria for a Category 1 non working dog.

Funding

Dog control is funded entirely from dog registration fees, there is no rate funding. The fees are set to cover the expected cost of the dog control function.

Education

A dog safety education course is available to schools and groups of primary school aged children. The purpose of this course is to promote safety around dogs as well as responsible dog ownership and care.

Information on various aspects of dog behaviour, care and responsible ownership are available from Animal Control. Information on relevant topics is distributed to owners of dogs that come to Animal Control's attention.

There is also a monthly feature regarding dogs in the newspaper. These features include articles on dog health and dog behaviour. These features can also be viewed on the Council website.

Animal Control's dog, Mate, also attends community events and the dog safety programme for children. Mate has an email address a.c.m8@maataawaka.co.nz and also has a Face Book page.

Dogs and Owners

There were 10,185 dogs registered in the Marlborough district. 2266 dogs were registered as working dogs (including disability assist dogs and Police dogs) and 7919 were registered as nonworking dogs.

Enforcement

Disqualifications and Probationary Owners

Marlborough currently has one disqualified owner and three classified as probationary.

Menacing and Dangerous Dogs

There are five dogs classified as dangerous and 74 as menacing.

Infringements

A total of 198 infringement notices were issued. 104 of these notices were for unregistered dogs and 68 were for uncontrolled or roaming dogs. The remainder were for a variety of other breaches.

Complaints

A total of 1696 complaints were received in the 2009/10 year. A majority related to lost or found dogs or dog nuisance. 134 complaints related to a dog attack or rush. All complaints were attended to and resolved.

Prosecutions

There have been no prosecution actions during the 2009/10 registration year.

Impounded/Unclaimed/Surrendered Dogs

There were 357 dogs impounded for various reasons. The majority of these dogs were released to their owners and the ones that were not claimed were either sent to the SPCA or destroyed, depending on temperament and characteristics.

All dogs that are surrendered to Animal Control or are not claimed undergo an assessment. Those dogs determined to have the temperament and characteristics suitable for a family environment are sent to the SPCA for re-homing.

There is an agreement between Council and the SPCA with respect to the costs of caring for these dogs.

During 2009/10 a total of 29 dogs were sent to the SPCA for re-homing.

Unregistered Dogs

Dog control runs two projects to identify and address unregistered dogs, being the Unaccounted for Dog Project and the Property Inspection Programme.

As part of these projects dogs were found that had been previously registered, but not re-registered for the 2009/10 registration year. Dogs that were still in Marlborough and alive were correctly registered. Records were also updated for those dogs that had died, changed address or were gone with no contact address. Owners of unregistered dogs received an infringement notice.

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