

Dog Control Policy and Practices Annual Report

1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022



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Background

The Marlborough District Council is required to manage and enforce provisions pursuant to the Dog Control Act 1996.

Section 10A of the Dog Control Act 1996 requires the Marlborough District Council (Council) to report annually on its Dog Control Policy and Practices and provide statistical information.

This report fulfils this statutory requirement for the financial year 1 July 2021 – 30 June 2022.

The objectives of this report are to:

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

This report will be available to the public on the Marlborough District Council website and published in a local newspaper.

Operations

The Dog Control function has been contracted out to Maataa Waka Ki Te Tau Ihu Trust since 1998.

Council and the contractor are parties to a contract, under which the contractor provides animal control services to the Council (current contract).

- Contract commencement date – 1 April 2022.
- Expiry date - 31 March 2026.
- Extension term three years.
- Maximum contract term – seven years.

Council retains the administration of the contract, makes decisions on classifications of dog and owners, objections to classifications and infringements, and on decisions on whether or not to undertake prosecutions.

Dog Control Policy

The Council first adopted a policy and bylaw which came into force on Monday, 1 October 2012.

Council undertook a review of our Dog Control Policy and Dog Control Bylaw which is required to be undertaken every 10 years. The review looked at dog access to all public places and included new Council reserves which have been created since the bylaws were previously reviewed.

The new Marlborough District Council Dog Control Policy and Bylaw were adopted by full Council on 24 June 2021 and came into effect on 1 August 2021.

This policy deals with various matters, including dog areas, fees, and education. Council must have regard to:

- a) The need to minimise danger, distress, and nuisance to the community generally.
- b) The need to avoid the inherent danger in allowing dogs to have unimpeded access to public places that are frequented by children, whether or not the children are accompanied by adults.
- c) The importance of enabling, to the extent that is practicable, the public (including families) to use streets and public amenities without fear of attack or intimidation by dogs; and,
- d) The exercise and recreational needs of dogs and their owners.

Council's objective is to encourage responsible dog ownership that allows owners to enjoy their dogs without infringing on the enjoyment and safety of others. Good dog owners should:

- a) Register their dogs and make sure they wear a current registration tag.
- b) Keep their dogs under control.
- c) Provide their dogs with care and attention.
- d) Provide their dogs with proper and sufficient food, water, shelter, and exercise.

- e) Not let their dogs be a nuisance to others.
- f) Make sure their dogs do not injure, endanger, intimidate or distress any person or other animal or damage property.
- g) Comply with the Act, any regulations, and the Dog Control Bylaw.

A copy of the new Dog Control Policy can be viewed on the Council's website:

<https://www.marlborough.govt.nz/services/dogs-and-other-animals/dog-and-animal-laws/dog-control-policy>

A copy of the new Dog Control Bylaw can be viewed on the Council's website:

<https://www.marlborough.govt.nz/your-council/bylaws/dog-control-bylaw-2021>

Dog Exercise Areas

Dog areas are set out in Council's Dog Control Policy and Bylaw.

Dogs are allowed off leash in some areas, provided they are kept under control at all times.

There is a total of 32 dog off leash 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 or sight lines is limited on narrow walkways and pedestrians may be threatened.

There are 48 dog prohibited areas in Marlborough, the majority being sports grounds, reserves, domains, and wetland areas. These are outlined in the new Dog Control Policy and Bylaw.

Dogs are allowed in any public area that is not identified as a dog prohibited area or dog off leash area but must be always kept on leash and under control. There are 84 public areas across the Marlborough district where dogs are required to be on leash. These are outlined in the new Dog Control Policy and Bylaw

Blenheim Central Business District (CBD) and Picton Central Business District allows dogs on a leash.

Marlborough currently has one purpose-built dog park at Renwick which is a fenced dog exercise area with three separate areas: a large dog area, a small dog area and a quiet zone.

Planning is underway for the development of a second Dog Park in Blenheim.

Fees

The registration categories and fee structure for the 2021/22 year are set out in the table below.

Category	Annual Fee
Dog registration – category One <ul style="list-style-type: none">Each dog must be desexed and microchipped and have no infringement notice or conviction under the Dog Control Act 1996 for the last two years, ie, since 1 July 2020.	\$60.00
Dog registration <ul style="list-style-type: none">Any non-working dog that does not meet all the category One criteria. This includes any dogs that have been classified as 'menacing'.	\$90.00
Old Dog <ul style="list-style-type: none">For dogs over 12 years (as of 1 July 2020) that were registered for the first time prior to 1 July 2008 (proof of registration is required).	\$45.00
Dangerous Dog <ul style="list-style-type: none">This includes any dog classified as 'dangerous.' Dangerous dogs are excluded from the old dog and categories One and Two.	\$135.00
Working Dog <ul style="list-style-type: none">Includes farm dogs primarily used for herding stock,10 + working dogs (for each extra dog).	\$20.00 \$10.00
Disability assist dogs and Police dogs	No Fee

Note: Late penalty fees were charged (50 percent of the applicable fee) for payments made after 31 July 2021.

Funding

Dog Control is 80 percent funded from dog registration fees and 20 percent rates funded. The fees are set to cover the budgeted cost of the Dog Control function.

Education

A dog safety education course is available to schools and groups of primary school and pre-school aged children. The purpose of this course is to promote safety around dogs as well as responsible dog ownership and care. This programme is provided free of charge. There were 31 presentations provided to pre-school and primary schools for the year 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022.

There were also two presentations to adults on dog safety and dog behaviour.

Due to the continuation of Covid in the community a number of events that were programmed were cancelled to ensure public and staff safety.

An information insert on dog registration, responsible ownership and dog owner obligations was sent to all dog owners with their dog registration forms.

Information on relevant topics such as barking dogs and roaming dogs is distributed to owners of dogs that come to Animal Control's attention.

Animal Control is also involved in a collaborative interactive safety programme that has developed from within the Marlborough Child Safety Group and is based on the Clued Up Kids project developed in Strathclyde, Scotland in 2001.

The pilot Marlborough Clued Up Kids project was designed to instil confidence and develop life skills through the practical hands-on application of safety messages. Year 5/6 students from Marlborough Schools are taken in small groups on a 15-minute rotating circuit of safety sets around Bradshaw Park ie, Police, St Johns, Rail Safety, Water Safety, Emergency Response, Personal Safety, Dog Safety, Cycle Safety, ATV Safety, Home Hazards and Fire Safety. This event goes for one week in November each year.

In 2021/22, due to Covid-19's lockdowns and restriction on group gatherings the Clued Up Kids event was not held. Instead, school children worked on a Clued Up Kids activity book in class.

Interaction with the Public

Each of the four Animal Control Officers (ACO's) undertake five hours per week of patrolling across the Marlborough district to monitor roaming dogs and other potential breaches of the Dog Control Act 1996 and the Marlborough District Council Dog Control Bylaw. ACO's take appropriate enforcement action where necessary.

The patrols are an opportunity for the ACO's to interact with the public to encourage compliance, responsible dog ownership, dog safety and to also check on doggie-doo stations and dog signage.

Dogs and Owners

As at 30 June 2022, the Marlborough District had a total of 10,758 active dogs¹. Active dogs (last year 10,639) which included 2823 dogs registered as working dogs (including disability assist dogs and Police dogs) (last year 2,816) and 7935 dogs registered as non-working dogs (last year 7,823).

Multiple Dog Property Licence

The Marlborough District Council Dog Control Bylaw requires that no owner shall keep more than two dogs on a property (not zoned rural) without being the holder of a Multiple Dog Property Licence issued by Council.

There are currently 255 current and active licences out of a total of 396 which have been issued over the years.

The table below shows that 31 Multiple Dog Property Licences were issued which is down on the previous year.

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Total issued	17	24	42	31

Enforcement

Disqualifications and Probationary Owners

There are no probationary owners in the Marlborough district.

There were no new disqualified owners in the Marlborough district in this reporting period.

There was one active disqualification which expired over the 2021/2022 reporting period. There are currently three active disqualified owners in the Marlborough district.

Period of Disqualification	Expiry Date	Section
Five years	23 March 2025	25(1)(a)
Five years	06 October 2025	25(1)(b)
Five years	04 November 2025	25(1)(b)

¹ Active – ie, the dog is alive and currently living at the address listed in the national dog database.

Menacing and Dangerous Dogs

Five new dogs were classified as dangerous in the 2021/22 year in accordance with section 31 of the Dog Control Act 1996. A total of 13 dogs are classified as dangerous (last year there were eight).

There were 20 dogs classified as menacing during 2021/22. For the dogs classified as menacing, 18 were classified as menacing based on observed and reported behaviour in accordance with section 33A and two were classified as menacing by breed or type listed in Schedule 4 in accordance with section 33C of the Dog Control Act 1996. Total number of dogs classed as menacing in Marlborough area are 100 (last year there were 97).

Infringements

A total of 220 infringement notices were issued in the 2021/22 year compared with 239 infringement notices issued in the 2020/21 year.

	Number Issued 2018/19	Number Issued 2019/20	Number Issued 2020/21	Number issued 2021/22
Total issued	192	205	239	220

The most common infringement notice was failure to register dog with 146 infringements. The table below shows the sections that the infringement notices were issued under.

Section	Breach	Number Issued 2018/19	Number Issued 2019/20	Number Issued 2020/21	Number Issued 2021/22
18	Wilful obstruction of dog control officer or ranger	2	3	2	0
19(2)	Failure or refusal to supply information or wilfully providing false particulars	1	3	-	0
20(5)	Failure to comply with any bylaw authorised by the section	7	3	-	3
32(2)	Failure to comply with effects of classification of dog as dangerous dog	1	1	-	2
33EC(1)	Failure to comply with effects of classification of dog as menacing dog	19	10	10	11
41	False statement relating to dog registration	-	1	-	0
41A(4)	Falsely notifying death of dog	4	-	2	1
42	Failure to register dog	101	137	151	146
48(3)	Failure to advise change of ownership	-	-	1	1
52A	Failure to keep dog controlled or confined	45	30	22	24
53(1)	Failure to keep dog under control	11	17	51	28
54(2)	Failure to provide proper care and attention, to supply proper and sufficient food, water, and shelter, and to provide adequate exercise	-	-	-	1
72(2)	Releasing dog from custody	1	-	-	3

Complaints

A total of 2,532 complaints were received in the 2021/22 year. This is down on the total of 2,650 complaints received in the previous year. All complaints were attended to and investigated.

The majority of complaints received related to roaming, found or lost dogs or, dog nuisance barking. The number of dogs that were reported to Animal Control as found in the 2021/22 year was 595 which was down from 629 in the previous 2020/21 year. It seems a number of dogs that are found are posted on social media sites to try and reunite the dogs with their owners before contacting Animal Control.

There were 87 complaints related to dog attacks, bite or rushing at a person/animal compared with 112 in the previous reporting period. These complaints are the most time consuming to investigate and determine what enforcement action should be taken.

Type of complaint	Number 2018/19	Number 2019/20	Number 2020/21	Number 2021/22
Barking	450	385	389	413
Bylaws	48	43	21	22
Dog Attack/Bite/Rush Person	47	53	64	38
Dog Bite Other	31	23	36	42
Dog Nuisance	23	34	49	67
Dog Rush Other	13	7	5	7
Found	519	778	629	595
Fouling	13	14	16	5
General Request/Other	96	622	634	597
Lost	229	326	302	265
Roaming	559	380	360	346
Uncontrolled	55	41	43	49
Unregistered Dog	38	59	64	71
Welfare	43	54	38	45
Total	2,164	2,819	2,650	2,532

Impounded/Unclaimed/Surrendered Dogs

A total of 157 dogs were impounded for the 2021/22 year which is down from the 193 (total reported in last year's 10A report) dogs impounded for the previous 2020/21 year.

It appears social media is increasingly being used by the public to report lost and found dogs to help reunite them with their owners. Impounding (by ACO's) is considered a last resort, as Animal Control does endeavour to return lost and found dogs to their owners provided the dogs are registered, microchipped, and have no previous history of roaming.

Animal Control runs a Pound Hounds Facebook page to advertise if any lost and found dogs have been impounded and they are unable to identify the owners as their dogs are not microchipped or wearing their dog registration tag and/or owners have not updated their contact details.

The majority of impounded dogs were released to their owners. The dogs not claimed were sent to the SPCA, re-homed from the pound or, euthanised depending on their temperament and characteristics.

All dogs unclaimed from the pound go through a temperament and characteristics test, to make sure that they are suitable for re-homing to the SPCA, or to members of the public. Members of the public who want to apply for a dog from the pound must complete an application form and undergo a background check to determine there have been no previous breaches of the Dog Control Act 1996; this ensures they are suitable for Animal Control's rehoming programme.

There is a Care and Custody Agreement between Council and the SPCA regarding the care and costs of impounded dogs.

During 2021/22, a total of 18 dogs were rehomed from the pound, including 13 rehomed to the SPCA and five rehomed to members of the public.

Outcome for Impounded Dogs	Number 2018/19	Number 2019/20	Number 2020/21	Number 2021/22
Impounded dogs released to owner (% of total dogs released to owner)	264 (88.6%)	160 (83.3%)	158 (81.8%)	132 84.%
Impounded dogs rehomed (% of total dogs impounded rehomed)	22 (7.4%)	23 (12%)	25 (13%)	18 11.5 %
Impounded dogs euthanised (% of total dogs impounded euthanised)	12 (4%)	9 (4.7%)	10 (5.2%)	7 4.5%

The table below shows the reason why impounded dogs were euthanised. All seven dogs euthanised in 2021/22 had been involved in dog attacks on people, other dogs, stock or, classified as Menacing or Dangerous.

If court proceedings are taken for dogs attacking persons or animals and the court is satisfied that the dog has committed an attack, as described in section 57 of the Dog Control Act 1996, and the dog has not been destroyed, the court must make an order for the destruction of the dog unless it is satisfied that the circumstances were exceptional and do not warrant the dog's destruction.

Reason for Euthanasia	Number 2018/19	Number 2019/20	Number 2020/21	Number 2021/22
Classified dangerous/menacing (deed)	2	1	-	2
Menacing breed or type	2	2	-	1
Health or welfare issues	-	-	-	0
Failed temperament test	4	4	-	0
Surrendered to Animal Control after an attack	4	2	7	4
Court Ordered Destruction	-	-	3	0
% of all dogs euthanised as American Pit Bull Terrier	16.6%	22.2%	0%	14.3%

Prosecutions during 2021/22 under the Dog Control Act 1996

There were no prosecutions during the 2021/22 year.

Unregistered Dogs

Animal Control runs an Unaccounted-for Dog Check project to identify and follow up any unregistered dogs.

Dog registration forms were sent out by 1 June 2021 and reminder letters were sent to all dog owners who had not paid their dog registration fees by mid-July 2021. Follow ups included phone calls, emails, and property visits to the owner's last known address.

Dogs still in Marlborough and alive were correctly registered. Records were also updated for dogs that had died, changed address, or were gone with no contact address.

Owners of unregistered dogs received an infringement notice under section 42 of the Dog Control Act 1996.

Microchipping

In April 2021 the total number of dogs microchipped in the Marlborough district was 8,102. Working dogs or dogs born before 1 July 2006 are not required to be microchipped.

At the end of April letters were sent to 874 dog owners of un-microchipped dogs. The owners are legally required to microchip their dogs.

During May Animal Control held a '\$15.00 May Microchipping Special'. The actual microchipping fee is \$25.00.

By 30 June 2021, the total number of dogs microchipped in the Marlborough district was up to 8,592 with 444 dogs outstanding.

Due to the effects of Covid-19 the follow up was placed on hold but, a plan is in place to follow up with the remaining dogs which are not microchipped, that are required to be over the registration period and, when any property visits are undertaken as part of the unaccounted-for dog checks.