



STAFF REPORT

TO: Environment & Planning Committee

FROM: Annie Brown, Administration Officer - Regulatory

REFERENCE: D402

SUBJECT: **DOG CONTROL POLICY AND PRACTICES JULY 2009 - JUNE 2010 - REPORT REP10-08-05** - Report prepared for meeting of 12 August 2010

1. REASON FOR REPORT

The Dog Control Act requires territorial authorities to publicly report annually on dog control policy and practices as outlined under Section 10a of the Dog Control Act 1996. This report contains information and statistics on Council's dog control activity for the year 1 July 2009 to 30 June 2010.

2. DOG CONTROL AND ENFORCEMENT PRACTICES IN TASMAN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Control Services (Nelson) Ltd carries out Council's dog control activities, providing 24 hour, seven day per week coverage for the Tasman District. Three full time dog control officers are employed by Control Services to implement Council's policy and practices throughout the Tasman District. Nine on-call staff attend to the emergencies and/or after hours activities in the outlying areas of Murchison (three), Golden Bay (two), Motueka (two) and the Tapawera and Wakefield districts (two).

Council staff and Control Services work closely with local veterinarians, the three SPCA branches in the district and Department of Conservation staff. Good relations are also fostered between Dog Control and the Police and Dog Obedience Clubs.

Dog Control Officers provide regular educational visits to local schools as well as community organisations and businesses, reinforcing the message of ensuring safety around dogs in the home and in the wider community.

2.1 Website and Media

Increasingly, Council's website is being utilised by the public as a first point of contact for information on dog control, safety around dogs and for dog registration information. The content of the web pages relating to Animal Control is reviewed and updated regularly enabling Council to provide the latest information on legislative changes and items of interest to dog owners. Feedback from dog owners indicates

that they appreciate the pro-active approach Council takes towards providing them with informative articles on dog care and safety, as well as the essential information on the registration and enforcement processes.

Council continues to use its fortnightly newsletter as a tool for informing both dog owners and the community of any issues relating to dog control. These articles serve to remind dog owners of their responsibilities as well as providing educational items on the care and control of dogs. Such publicity fulfils the obligation imposed on Council by the Dog Control Act 1996 to inform and educate owners and the community in general.

3. DOG REGISTRATION, ENFORCEMENT AND SERVICE REQUEST STATISTICS FOR TASMAN DISTRICT COUNCIL 2009-2010

3.1 Number of Dog Owners in the District

Number of probationary owners	Nil
Number of disqualified owners	Nil
Total	6,447

3.2 Number of Registered Dogs in the Tasman District Council

Number of rural dogs	5758
Number of urban dogs	4428
Number of dogs not charged fee	12
Total	10,207

3.3 Number of Dogs Classified as Dangerous Under Section 31

s31 1(a) due to owner conviction	2
s31 1(b) due to sworn evidence	4
s31 1(c) due to owner admittance	3
Total	9

3.4 Number of Dogs Classified as Menacing

Dogs classified as menacing under Section 33A (Section 33A 1(b) - the territorial authority considers the dog may pose a threat to any person, stock, poultry, domestic animal, or protected wildlife).	31
Dogs classified as menacing under Section 33C: (Section 33C (1) - the territorial authority has reasonable grounds to believe that the dog belongs wholly or predominantly to one or more breeds or types listed in Schedule 4 of the amendment Act 2004).	38
Total	69

3.5 Infringement Notices Issued

Failing to register a dog	66
Failure to keep dog controlled or confined	9
Failure to keep dog under control	3
Failure to comply with Bylaw	2
False statement of registration	1
Total	81

3.6 Number of Impounded Dogs

Claimed	92
Re-homed	36
Disposed of	11
Still in Shelter (June 2009)	6
Total	143

4. SERVICE REQUESTS

Service Requests include complaints, but can relate to dogs lost by owners and/or found by members of the public, requests for advice or dog owner education etc. These annual statistics have also been included in the breakdown below.

4.1 Number of Service Requests received as Complaints

Barking / Whining	415
Aggressive Behaviour / Rushing	88
Wandering/Fouling	308
Attack on Persons	36
Attack on Stock	43
Attack on Pets	63
Unregistered	8
Welfare Concerns	128
In Restricted Area	15
Not on Leash	2
Excess Dogs on Property	3
Total	839

4.2 Other Service Requests

Found dogs	573
Lost dogs	458
Education	12
Total	1043

5. DOGS PROHIBITED, LEASH ONLY AND DOG EXERCISE AREAS

Council's Policy on Dogs and the Bylaw were reviewed in 2009, during the reporting period. Minor changes were made to the exercise areas designated in the previous Policy and Bylaw to more clearly define those areas concerned. The Dog Control Bylaw 2009 sets out the areas in the District which are "Dog Prohibited", "Leash only" and "Controlled Dog Exercise Areas". The wording in the Policy on Dogs has also been simplified. The Dog Control Bylaw 2009 became operative in September 2009.

Council continues to work in co-operation with Department of Conservation to monitor areas where protected wildlife could be at risk. A limited number of Department of Conservation Rangers are warranted under the Dog Control Act 1996 as they work in the remote areas where stray dogs occasionally appear.

6. DOG REGISTRATION AND OTHER FEES

The registration fees for dogs are set each year as part of the Council's Annual Plan Process. In 2009/2010 the registration fees were \$44.00 for Urban Dogs and \$27.00 for Rural Dogs which included the fees to cover the National Dog Database costs. Tasman District Council continues to provide one of the most cost effective and simply administered fee structures in the country for its dog owners.

7. FURTHER COMMENTS ON REVIEW OF THE POLICY ON DOGS AND DOG BYLAW

Council is aware of its twofold responsibility under the Dog Control Act 1996 to provide areas where dogs may be exercised, as well as striving to minimise the potential danger, distress and nuisance uncontrolled dogs may cause to the community generally.

During last year's review of its Policy and Bylaw, Council set out to better achieve these objectives through using simpler language and providing maps so that both dog owners and the general public know whether an area has a particular designation in relation to dogs.

Council has been replacing and renewing signs in areas where dogs may or may not be allowed and will continue to do so over the next few years.

8. PROPERTY VISITS

Council has adopted a targeted approach in carrying out property visits in order to allow more time to follow up on unregistered dogs and owners who fail to meet their obligations. Specific areas of concern will continue to drive this approach such as historically noted places where there is potential for unregistered dogs to be housed without directly coming to Dog Control Officers' attention.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Report REP10-08-05 required pursuant to Section 10A of the Dog Control Act 1996, be received and adopted by Council.
2. That the adopted report REP10-08-05 be publicly notified and be made available on the Council's website with a copy being sent to the Secretary for Local Government.

Annie Brown
Administration Officer