

Rotorua Lakes Council

ANNUAL REPORT ON DOG CONTROL FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 2022

The Report

This Report covers the year 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022 and has been prepared pursuant to Section 10A of the Dog Control Act 1996.

Dog Control in the District

The Rotorua District has a registered dog population of 12,198 which are owned by approximately 8,999 owners. The biggest population of dogs is to be found in the urban area.

Dog control in the district is implemented pursuant to the Dog Control Act 1996, Council's Dog Policy (as required by Section 10 of the Dog Control Act 1996) and Council's Dog Control Bylaw 2005. Both Council's Dog Policy and Dog Control Bylaw were last reviewed in September 2012 with the next review due to begin during September 2022.

Rotorua Lakes Council Animal control staff respond to about 5,300 complaints per year.

Resources

Rotorua Lakes Council currently employs nine staff in the Animal Control unit including one-pound keeper. This is to accommodate the workload generated but also allows a minimum of two staff members to be available at any time to help ensure officer safety in potential high-risk situations.

Staff comprise of an Animal Control Team Leader, seven Animal Control Officers (field staff) and one-pound keeper. Council's Customer Services Team carry out the unit's business support. The field staff and team leader each have a vehicle, fitted with purpose built canopies for safely securing and transporting of impounded dogs.

Dog Control Enforcement Practices

Council provides a seven day a week service, 365 days of the year. Staff work to a roster and are proactive in patrolling throughout the district to pick up straying/roaming dogs and to deal with complaints resulting from inadequate control of dogs. Due to this proactive approach, many offences against the provisions of the Dog Control Act and the Dog Control Bylaw are detected by staff during the course of their patrols.

5,325 complaints about dog control matters are phoned directly to Council where they are lodged by Customer Advisors and forwarded to an Animal Control Staff. Staff are able to access and action this information in the field

Priority one complaints are those that comprise of dog attacks on persons or a domestic animal, dogs rushing, stock on local roads and secured dogs. These are dispatched to field staff for immediate attention. The use of mobile technology such as tablets in the field has significantly reduced the amount of verbal communication through RT's (radio communication system) etc., and has made for a more efficient service to the community.

The majority of complaints received relate to roaming or barking dogs. Most are dealt with by way of warnings, however repeat offences are dealt with by serving Infringement Offence notices as provided for in the Dog Control Act 1996. In extreme circumstances, dog owners are sometimes disqualified from owning dogs for up to five years.

Council provides, free of charge, cage traps to residents experiencing problems with dogs wandering onto private property. Captured dogs are collected immediately at any time as it is appreciated they can cause further nuisance from being secured in a cage and to ensure the welfare of the animal.

Prohibition of Dogs in Public Places

Council's Policy and Bylaw require that dogs in public places must be on a lead at all times unless in a specified dog exercise area. In terms of the provisions of the Dog Control Act 1996, there are some exceptions from the Bylaw provisions, which relate to working and hunting dogs whilst each are engaged in their respective activities. Dogs are allowed to be off leads in dog exercise areas provided they are at all times under full command of the person in charge of the dog either by way of voice or whistle command or by hand signal. Generally, there is a reasonable level of compliance with the leash requirements with first time breaches generally being dealt with by way of a warning. Infringement notices are issued for further breaches at the discretion of individual officers.

While there has been some lobbying from dog owners that are domiciled within the Rotorua CBD, dogs remain prohibited from the entire Inner City area of the District. The inner city dwellers however are permitted to walk their dogs, on lead in specified areas during specified times. They are also prohibited from principle reserves such as the Government Gardens and Lakefront. Dogs are also banned from all school grounds, public barbeque areas and children's playgrounds that might be located on an area set aside as a dog exercise area. A review of the Bylaw is underway and began in September 2022

Dog Registration and Other Fees

Dog registration fees are set by Council in respect of each registration year. These fees are set on the basis of moving to cost recovery of this activity with an input from rates for wandering stock. The setting of fees takes into account any adjustment in the Consumer Price Index and any additional direct costs that Council incurs in its administration of the Dog Control Act 1996, Rotorua Dog Control Bylaw 2005 and the Rotorua Dog Policy.

Due to COVID19 there was no increase in fees for the 2021/22 Registration year.

Each year the Animal Control Unit carries out a door-to-door survey to check for the existence of unregistered dogs. Any person located with an unregistered dog for the current year is issued with an infringement notice. If the dog remains unregistered, legislation allows for seizure of the dog.

For the 2021-2022 year, 101.83% of known dogs were either registered or infringed. The increase over the 100% is due to new dogs being identified during the door-to-door compliance program where dogs not known at the beginning of the registration year were identified.

Fee Differentiation

The fee for registering a dog domiciled in the urban area of the district is greater than that payable by owners whose dogs are either domiciled in the rural area or who have qualified for selected dog owner status.

The rationale for the difference in fee is that statistical information continues to prove that those dogs that are kept within the urban area of the district are typically the subject of more complaints and therefore require a greater portion of resource available to the Animal Control operation.

Dog Pound

Council operates a Dog Pound where 50-70 dogs (Dependant on size) are able to be contained and cared for pursuant to the Animal Welfare Act 1999. Wherever possible and appropriate, we aim to reunite dogs with their owners. In terms of the Dog Control Act 1996, impounded dogs are kept for a minimum of 7 days. If they remain unclaimed by their owners after the expiry of 7 days the dogs are, where possible, re-homed to new owners, or are humanely euthanized.

The Pound facility is open to the public for visiting and/or retrieval of impounded dogs Monday to Friday between the hours of 2pm and 4.30pm, except public holidays. Owners wishing to recover dogs outside of those hours can do so by arrangement with the on duty Animal Control Officers.

Dogs are selected for rehoming based on their temperament and are then determined whether or not they are suitable to be either rehomed or fostered until a permanent home can be found. Our team do their very best to get all suitable dogs into new homes where practicable, this work is a huge credit to our dedicated pound keeper. The total number of dogs rehomed during this period is 135.

Staff maintain the Pound to a very high standard of hygiene. Many of the dogs that are found wandering on the street have never been vaccinated for any diseases including Parvo Virus which is a debilitating and often fatal disease that affects canines. Rehomed dogs are also vaccinated before leaving the pound to ensure they get the best new start possible.

Menacing Dogs

Schedule 4 of the Dog Control Act 1996 lists four breeds of dogs and one type of dog which Territorial Authorities are required to classify as "menacing". The four breeds of dogs listed in the Act are the Brazilian Fila, Dogo Argentino, the Japanese Tosa and the Perro de Presa Canario. In addition to the list the American Pitbull Terrier, type is specified in part 2 of schedule 4. All dogs of that type and cross breeds of that type that are known to Animal Control staff have been classified as "menacing". The term "menacing" is used when a dog from a specific breed ie: American Pitbull Terriers or the dog's behaviour deems it as such. Dogs that's are classified menacing must be on leash and muzzled at all times in a public area.

It is Council's view that there is a problem with American Pit Bull Terriers and their crosses.

Rotorua Lakes Council is exercising and has done so since 2012 the option provided in section 33E(i)(b) of the Dog Control Act 1996 and ensure all dogs classified as menacing are desexed. Council further supported the option by previously introducing a bylaw to that effect. Council have adopted a zero tolerance policy on all dogs classified as dangerous or menacing. Failure to comply with any effect of a classification is dealt with by way of an Infringement Notice or a District Court Prosecution.

Dangerous Dogs

Section 31(1) of the Dog Control Act requires the classification of dogs as dangerous based on one of the following criteria:

- Any dog, in respect of which, the owner has been convicted of an offence under Section 57A(2) (this relates to dogs rushing persons, animals or vehicles);
- Any dog, which the Territorial Authority has, on the basis of sworn evidence attesting to aggressive behaviour by the dog on one or more occasions, reasonable grounds to believe

Dog Exercise Areas

Council provides a number of areas throughout its district where dogs can be exercised off a lead, providing they are at all times under the strict control of the person in charge of the dog. Council continues to endeavour to identify and make available, additional areas that are suitable as dog exercise areas. A list of dog exercise areas and details as to their location is included in Council's Dog Policy, while a booklet of aerial maps is also available on Council's website.

There is a total of 34 dog exercise areas located throughout the district, these can be located online by searching 'dog exercise areas' at <http://rotorualakescouncil.nz>.

Dog Education and Dog Obedience Courses

Council has a wide range of information available to dog owners about dog control and responsible dog ownership. Council does not provide dog obedience or education programmes itself but rather supports the work done by local dog obedience clubs.

Council can present education talks on safety around dogs, available for delivery in primary and intermediate schools when requested by those schools. This service can also be presented to organisations or companies that require better ways of accessing properties that have dogs and dealing with dogs in general. Council has begun investigating further service delivery improvements in this area for future.

Council provides a bark collar hire or purchase service which has been very successful in curing dogs from nuisance barking.

Infringement Notices

Section 66 of the Dog Control Act 1996 provides for the issue of infringement offence notices for 27 minor offences under the Act. Council uses the infringement offence provisions and finds it to be a useful tool in dealing with minor offences as opposed to going through the process of lodging a charging document in the District Court and the subsequent prosecution process. Given the delays

that exist in the Court system, the infringement offence notice procedure is a preferable method of achieving compliance. We use this tool as part of our graduated response model to many issues the team deal with.

Classes of Dog Ownership

Council has three categories of dog ownership. These are:

- Rural Dog Owners (those whose dogs are domiciled in the rural area of the district);
- Urban Dog Owners (those whose dogs are domiciled within the urban area of the district);
- Those who have qualified for “selected dog owner status”.

This latter category is able to be applied for by dog owners who meet the following criteria:

- Any person who has owned a dog for more than one year.
- Any person whose dog has not been impounded in the last two years.
- Any dog owner whose dog has not been the subject of a justified complaint in the two years prior to application.
- Any person who has not been the subject of any legal proceedings in relation to the control of dogs.
- Any person whose dog is registered in accordance of the Dog Control Act 1996.
- Any person whose property is adequately fenced to contain the dog and who has adequate kennelling for their dog.

Qualification for select dog owner status also requires a secure area on the property the dog is domiciled and having sufficient knowledge to be able to answer a short questionnaire around responsible dog ownership. Applications for this status must be made prior to 31 March in any year to assist in the setting of budgets. Granting of this status will result in a registration fee, which is the same as that for a rural domiciled dog.

Disqualified and Probationary Dog Owners

Ten dog owners have been disqualified from owning a dog in accordance with the Dog Control Act 1996 during the 12 months under review. There were no owners classified as probationary during the period under review.

Level of Satisfaction with the Dog Control Service

There is a comparatively high level of satisfaction on the part of Rotorua residents with the service provided by Council’s Animal Control Unit. This is based on the degree of positive feedback submitted to Council through our customer centre.

Statistical Information

The statistical information attached to this Report meets the requirements of Section 10A of the Dog Control Act 1996.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Arana Waaka-Stockman', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Arana Waaka-Stockman
Team Lead - Rotorua Animal Control

PART 2 - Statistical Information

Category	As at 30 June 2022	For Period 01 July 2021– 30 June 2022
1) Total # Registered Dogs	12,198	~ Not Required ~
2) Total # Probationary Owners	2	2
3) Total # Disqualified Owners	22	8
4) Total # Dangerous Dogs	24	2
<i>Dangerous by Owner Conviction Under s33a(1)(b)(i)</i>	1	0
<i>Dangerous by Sworn Evidence s33a(1)(b)(ii)</i>	17	1
<i>Dangerous by Owner Admittance in Writing s31(1)(c)</i>	6	1
5) Total # Menacing Dogs	418	97
<i>Menacing under s33A(1)(b)(i) - i.e. by Behaviour</i>	111	42
<i>Menacing under s33(1)(b)(ii) – by Breed Characteristics</i>	9	5
<i>Menacing under s33C(1) by Schedule 4 Breed.</i>	298	50
6) Total # Infringement Notices.	~ Not Required ~	817
7) Total # Complaints Received	~ Not Required ~	5,325
<i>TA Complaint Category 1</i>	~ Not Required ~	429
<i>TA Complaint Category 2...</i>	~ Not Required ~	4,896
8) Total # Prosecutions Taken	~ Not Required ~	0

Column titled “As at 30 June 2022” covers the 12 month period prior to 30 June 2022

Category 1 Complaints – attacks on persons and animals and rushings.

Category 2 Bark, roaming etc.