

ANIMAL CONTROL ESTIMATES 2004/2005

Introduction

This report details the estimated expenditure of the Animal Control Unit along with the associated sources of funding for the 2004/2005 year.

Significant changes have been made to the Dog Control Legislation following the attack on a young girl in Auckland in 2003. Those changes have significant implications for the operation of all Animal Control Units of Councils.

Those changes necessitate the employment of an additional staff member and require improvement to existing facilities to enable Council to meet its responsibilities under the new legislation.

This has resulted in increased operating costs which in turn result in increased registration fees and impounding fees in relation to dogs.

Current Situation as at 30 June 2004

The Animal Control Unit comprises a total of five staff including the Supervisor who has direct day-to-day control over the operation. The level of staffing in the unit has been at that number since 1996, at which time some staff were shed because Councils were no longer required to provide an Hydatids Control Program.

The level of business generated by responding to complaints and resolving the numerous other issues relating to dogs has necessitated the employment of two full-time Administrative Support staff for the unit.

For the year ended 30 June 2003, the unit responded to 2,447 complaints. From the period 1 July 2003 until 31 January 2004 a total of 1419 complaints had been received. The level of complaints would indicate that we are tracking this year to exceed the total number responded to for the whole of last year.

The Dog Control Act 1996 introduced the Infringement Notice Provision and for the year ended 30 June 2003 a total of 739 infringement notices were issued by staff.

For the year ending 30 June 2003 a total of 974 dogs were impounded. For the period 1 July 2003 until 31 January 2004 a total of 640 dogs have been impounded. Again, this level of activity is tracking upwards.

New Legislative Provisions

There have been significant increases in penalties payable by offending owners who receive either an Infringement Notice (issued by staff) or who are prosecuted through the courts. Whilst Council is entitled to all infringement fees recovered through the Court or paid directly by the offender, it receives nothing from any fines imposed by the court.

From an operational point of view, the new legislative provisions have created a comparatively punitive regime. Some of the new provisions which Council's Animal Control Staff are expected to now enforce include the following:

- The ability to seize unregistered dogs off private property.
- The ability to seize dogs that have come off their own property, rushed or threatened someone and then retreated back to their own property.
- The ability to seize (with effect from 1 June 2004) a dog from its own property if it is not under the direct control of the owner.
- The ability to seize dogs whose owners fail to comply with the requirements following the dog's classification as either "menacing" or "dangerous".

The inevitable upshot of these changes is an increased number of dogs impounded for wandering or as a result of infringing against one of the provisions referred to above. That in turn has raised issues about the current capacity of Council's Dog Pound.

Classification of Dogs

The requirement for staff to classify dogs which they believe belong to the Pitbull breed as 'menacing' is expected to result in many of those classifications being challenged. The Act provides that someone who wishes to appeal such a classification is entitled to be heard by the Territorial Authority in support of their appeal. This will require resources from the Animal Control Unit to be utilised with an officer preparing

evidence to support the classification and appearing before a Committee to present that evidence. Without an increase in staff, current Unit Officers would need to be diverted from existing work requirements.

Estimated Expenditure

The estimated expenditure of the Animal Control Section for the 2004/2005 financial period is \$723,000. This includes provision for an additional staff member, some overtime for that staff member and the provision of a vehicle for that Officer. Total increase of operating costs is estimated at \$56,000.

Sources of Funding

Current sources of funding available for Animal Control, including relevant Council funding policies as applicable are:

- Rates – This activity is funded 46% from general rates as per Council's funding policy.
- Prosecution Fees – Fees collected from prosecutions lodged for a variety of offences and include infringement notices issued.
- Impounding Fees – Fees charged for the impounding of a release of dogs and stock.
- Dog Registration Fees – Registration fees set for the various categories of dogs as determined by Council.

Current Level of Registration

As at 18 February 2004, a total of 10,120 dogs had been registered.

New Registration Fee Structure

There has been comparatively little movement in Dog Registration Fees since 1999, when the fee for registering a dog in the urban area was \$41.20. The fee for registering a dog kept in the rural part of the District or kept by someone who had qualified as a Selected Dog Owner was \$25.75.

To meet the costs estimated of providing additional resources by way of an extra staff member and to meet the costs of proposed capital works to the Pound, a "rounded" increase of 20% has been applied to registration fees.

The following fees have been approved by Council for the 2004/05 year.

The table shows the previous fee, the new fee and the \$ increase:

	Previous Registration Fees	New Fees	Increase
Urban Domiciled Dogs	\$41.50	\$50.00	\$8.50
Rural Domiciled Dogs	\$23.50	\$28.00	\$4.50
Selected Dog	\$23.50	\$28.00	\$4.50
Owner Status Seeing	No fee	No fee	No change
Eye/Hearing Ear Dog			
<small>(All above fees to reduce proportionally during the registration year for registrations made for less than a full twelve months.)</small>			
Penalty for Late Payment	\$10.00	\$10.00	No change
Rebate for Sterilised dogs or for dogs owned by superannuitants	\$10.00	\$10.00	No change
<small>Note – in terms of earlier determinations by Council, only one of either the sterilisation or superannuitant rebate can be claimed, not both.</small>			

Note - All fees are quoted as being inclusive of GST.

The differential between the fee for an urban dog and those kept either in the rural area or by dog owners who have qualified for "Selected" Dog Owners, takes into account that by far and away the majority of problems with dog control are created by dogs kept in the urban area.

Pound Facilities

As has been alluded to earlier, the new legislative requirements will inevitably see a greater number of dogs being kept at the pound after seizure following the committing of an offence by their owner.

At the end of the 2003/04 year the pound comprised 32 pens with a capacity of 30 dogs (if dogs are not doubled up) and 10 pups. More frequently it is impossible to "double up" dogs because of aggression between animals, resulting in injury.

Whilst dogs are in the custody of Council in the pound, Council has a responsibility to ensure that they are kept humanely and safe. Many of the crossbreeds that are found wandering now, or which are impounded for a whole host of reasons, tend to show unacceptable aggression towards other dogs and need to be kept on their own.

The number of dogs impounded for the year ended 30 June 2003 was 974.

The number of dogs impounded over the period 1 July 2003 until 31 January 2004 was 640. Indications were that the level of impounding was tracking upwards.

Previous Pound Fees

These were set in 1991 as follows:

- First impounding - \$70.00
- Second impounding - \$85.00
- Third impounding - \$100.00

These fees are obviously a deterrent to allowing uncontrolled dogs to roam but also contain an element covering the costs of staff delivering the dogs to the pound, caring for them while they are there and hopefully, subsequently releasing the dog back to its owner. There can be little excuse for the impounding of a dog on a second or third occasion but it happens all too frequently.

A “full” pound is now a regular occurrence. It is becoming increasingly difficult to manage the dogs and keep them in a way that prevents injuries, given the physical constraints of the existing set-up.

An estimated cost of extending the pound by both the sub-division of existing larger pens and the laying of additional concrete and construction of further netting and pipeframe pens, is \$60,000.

Increase in Pound Fees

Given the fact that this additional expenditure is required at the Pound and the fact that the existing pound fees were set over 10 years ago, it was appropriate to consider an increase in those impounding fees to ensure that those who “use” the facility, because of their failure to control their dog or comply with the Dog Control Act, meet that cost.

The average annual rise in the Consumer Price Index over the period September 1991 to September 2003 was 2.02% (a total of 24.24% over twelve years).

The following new scale of impounding fees is therefore not unreasonable and is in line with today’s costs:

- First impounding fee increases from \$70.00 to \$88.00
- Second impounding fee increases from \$85.00 to \$106.00
- Third impounding fee increases from \$100.00 to \$125.00

Other Animal Control Fees

Details of other charges, including impounding fees for wandering stock, are detailed below:

Replacement Tag		\$5.60
Collars:		
Toy Dog		\$3.75
Small		5.20
Medium		6.00
Large		8.25
Extra Large		10.20
Nylon		7.20
Leads:		
Narrow		7.00
Wide		7.50
Muzzles:		
Nylon Mesh		15.00
Wire		25.00
Plastic –		
Size	2	13.95
	3	14.95
	4	16.25
	5	17.30
	6	19.30
	7	21.50
	8	24.30
	9	26.95
	10	26.95

Dog Impounding Fees:		
First Impounding		\$70.00
Second Impounding		85.00
Third Impounding		100.00
Sustenance Fee (Per Day)		6.50

Kennel Licensing:		
Initial Licence		\$42.20
Renewal of Licence		15.40

Re-Homing Fees:		
Re Homing Fee (<u>All Dogs Re-Homed Must Be De-Sexed</u>)		
i) For a Female Dog		\$80.00
ii) For a Male Dog		\$60.00

Hire of Bark Collar:		
Hire For Seven (7) Days		\$20.00
Purchase	Ag'tronics	\$146.00
	K.9 Anti-Bark	\$180.00
	Dog Watch	\$210.00



Stock Impounding Fee

1. Callout Charges (Minimum):

7.00 am to 6.00 pm	\$50.00 per 2 hours.
6.00 pm to 10.00 pm	\$70.00 per 2 hours
10.00 pm to 7.00 am	\$100.00 per 2 hours
Weekends and Holidays	\$100.00 per 2 hours

Where extra labour is used, this cost will be added to the above charges.

2. Transportation:

In addition, transport costs on a distance basis or the actual charge of the carrier (if used) will be added.

3. Release Fee: \$20.00

This fee is charged to the owner of the stock when the stock is released from the pound to cover time and vehicle expenses.

4. Impounding Fees:

For every horse, donkey, cattle beast or deer	\$15.00 per head per day
For every sheep, goat or pig	\$10.00 per head per day

5. Sustenance Fees:

For every horse, donkey, cattle beast or deer	\$10.00 per head per day
For every sheep, goat or pig	\$5.00 per head per day

Note: Such costs for the above are to be increased if necessary to cover the actual labour and vehicle running costs and feeding of the stock. Any special food purchase e.g. pig pellets, hay, etc is to be charged directly to the animal which used it.

(All fees include GST)