



Report

Date : 22 August 2023
To : Mayor and Councillors
Tararua District Council
From : James Single
Regulatory Services Manager
Subject : **2022/2023 Annual Report on Dog Control Policy and Practices**
Item No : **11.4**

1. Recommendation

- 1.1 *That the report from the Regulatory Services Manager dated 12 July 2023 concerning the 2022/2023 Annual Report on Dog Control Policy and Practices be received and adopted.*

2. Reason for the Report

- 2.1 This report informs Council about its Dog Control service delivery and practices for the financial year 2022/2023.
- 2.2 It seeks Council adopt this annual report on the administration of dog control and to comply with reporting requirements under the Act.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Tararua District Council is required to manage and enforce provisions under the Dog Control Act 1996 (the Act) and subsequent amendments in 2003, 2004, 2006 and 2010.
- 3.2 Section 10A of the Act requires the Council to produce an annual report on its dog control policy and operations. This section requires Council to report on several statistical aspects of its dog control policy responsibilities and make the report publicly available.
- 3.3 This report fulfils the statutory requirement for the dog registration year 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023. Additionally, this report allows the community to see how Council is managing its dog control responsibilities.

3.4 Additional information is provided in relation to reports of uncontrolled dogs, dog bites and dog impound data. The Council is required to report each financial year on its dog control policies and practices, and statistical information under Section 10A of the Dog Control Act 1996.

3.5 Council must give public notice of the report and make the report publicly available.

4. Bylaw and Policy on Dogs

4.1 The Council reviewed its Dog Control Policy and Dog Control Bylaw last year and both were adopted on 30 March 2022, taking effect from 1 July 2022.

5. Significance Assessment

5.1 This item does not trigger Council's significance and engagement policy, and it has no financial impacts on the approved Long Term Plan.

6. Discussion

6.1 Council is responsible for the enforcement of regulations relating to the keeping, welfare and control of dogs within Tararua district. Council is required under the Dog Control Act to make provision for the control of dogs and the damage they can cause.

6.2 Impounding of dogs is an activity required by the provisions of the Dog Control Act and associated Tararua District Council Dog Control Bylaw and Dog Control Policy.

6.3 The Council has a responsibility to respond to complaints relating to dogs. Council's long-term focus for dog control activities is to ensure a safe living environment maintained through the monitoring and enforcement of legislation, regulations and bylaws.

6.4 Council adopted a new Dog Control Policy last year. The policy provides a practical framework for the care and control of dogs throughout the district while minimising any danger, distress and nuisance to the community.

6.5 The policy outlines expected standards and behaviours from dog owners and provides information about how Council will administer dog control. Dog practices and specific dog control functions include:

- Dog registration
- Impounding
- Cleaning the pound
- Feeding and providing care for impounded dogs
- Returning, rehoming or euthanising impounded dogs
- 24-hour service
- Targeted education
- Investigation of complaints
- Enforcement of the Act and Council Dog Control Bylaw

- Issuing of infringements and prosecutions
- Other duties also include roaming stock

6.6 Council has 3 full-time Animal Control Officers and an Animal Control Support Officer to cover administration. The Officers are responsible for dog control responsibilities throughout the district and are on duty from 8am to 5pm weekdays. After hours is covered 24/7 by a contractor, including weekends and public holidays.

6.7 Properties are checked for unregistered dogs and dog/owner changes by spot check compliance at both urban and rural properties.

6.8 All properties within the district with more than two dogs require a multiple dog licence (working dogs exempt). Additionally, a licence is required for the keeping of breeding or boarding kennels. Licences are issued on meeting the dog control policy criteria. Extra care is taken to ensure dogs' welfare needs are met and there are no noise problems for neighbours. Generally, neighbouring property owner consent is required.

6.9 Animal Control Officers visited and checked 26 properties of 'Preferred Owner' registration category applicants. Applications to become a Preferred Owner must be completed prior to 1 May each year, allowing time to adjust fees for invoicing. Preferred Owners are entitled to a special discounted registration fee. There are 6922 registered dogs in the district of which 663 are registered under the Preferred Owner scheme. All dog registration information is automatically transferred to the National Dog Database on a nightly basis.

7. Community Engagement

7.1 Our Animal Control team often helps SPCA officers with reported welfare incidents, on their request. We currently work with SPCA operating our dog rehoming programme, finding suitable homes for unclaimed dogs of good temperament.

7.2 We have a close working relationship with veterinarians concerning microchipping records, neutering of menacing and dangerous dogs and sharing up to date information regarding dog health problems.

7.3 We do our best to have an active presence across the district by way of monitoring in each area and by responding quickly to reports and complaints.

7.4 When Council adopted the new Dog Control Bylaw and Dog Control Policy last year, registration fees reduced for most dog owners with significant discounts available for those owners meeting strict criteria.

8. Education

8.1 Animal Control Officers are available on request for speaking engagements and presentations. Educational presentations have been made to several schools in the district.

- 8.2 Educational brochures are available from the Animal Control office and the public counter. Multiple articles were published in the Bush Telegraph, providing dog owner education. Articles covered dog registration, dog safety, nuisance barking, microchips and preferred ownership.
- 8.3 A copy of the Dog Control Policy and Dog Control Bylaw is available to every dog owner through the Council website and includes information regarding dog exercise areas. These publications are also available on request in hard copy. New dog owners are given an information brochure when registering their dog.
- 8.4 An 'Information for Dog Owners' brochure was included with recent registration invoices.
- 8.5 Currently the Council operates one dog exercise area at Mangatera in Dannevirke which is well used by dog owners. Council is working with interested communities to explore options for further exercise areas.

9. Dog Registration

- 9.1 3,298 people are known to own dogs in the district. The number of owners has increased compared to the previous year (3,076).
- 9.2 6,922 dogs are known to be in the district. The number of dogs has increased compared to the previous year (6,362).
- 9.3 45 dogs (previously registered) remained unregistered at the end of the year. Enforcement action has been taken with those owners who have not registered their dogs. Although the number of known dogs has increased by 560 dogs this year, the number of unregistered dogs has decreased compared to the previous year (66).

10. Fees

- 10.1 Council's Revenue and Financing Policy requires the activity be 85% funded by dog registration and pound fees with the balance funded from general rates.
- 10.2 All dogs are required to be registered by 1 August. A 50% penalty fee is applied for late registration after this date. After three months, the owners of any unregistered dogs are issued an infringement notice, which are referred to the district court for collection if unpaid. If a dog owner continues to refuse to register their dog, it may be seized and impounded.
- 10.3 Fees and charges under the Impounding Act 1955 and Dog Control Act 1996 are reviewed annually. The table below compares the dog registration fee categories.

Category	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Urban	\$115	\$115	\$130 (entire) \$110 (desexed)
Over 65's Canine Companion	N/A	N/A	\$85 (new category)
Preferred Owner	\$65	\$65	\$75 (entire) \$65 (desexed)
Rural Domestic	\$50	\$50	\$75
Working Dog	\$50	\$50	\$50 (first 5 dogs only, extra dogs at tag fee)
Disability Assist	Free	Free	Free

11. Preferred Owners

11.1 There is a financial incentive with reduced fees by being classified as a 'Preferred Owner'. A Preferred Owner must have an adequately fenced property to confine their dogs, adequate accommodation for their dogs, and demonstrate good dog management practices.

11.2 633 dogs were classified in the preferred owner category. These dogs are considered a lower risk to public safety. The number of these dogs has increased compared to the previous year (556).

12. Complaints

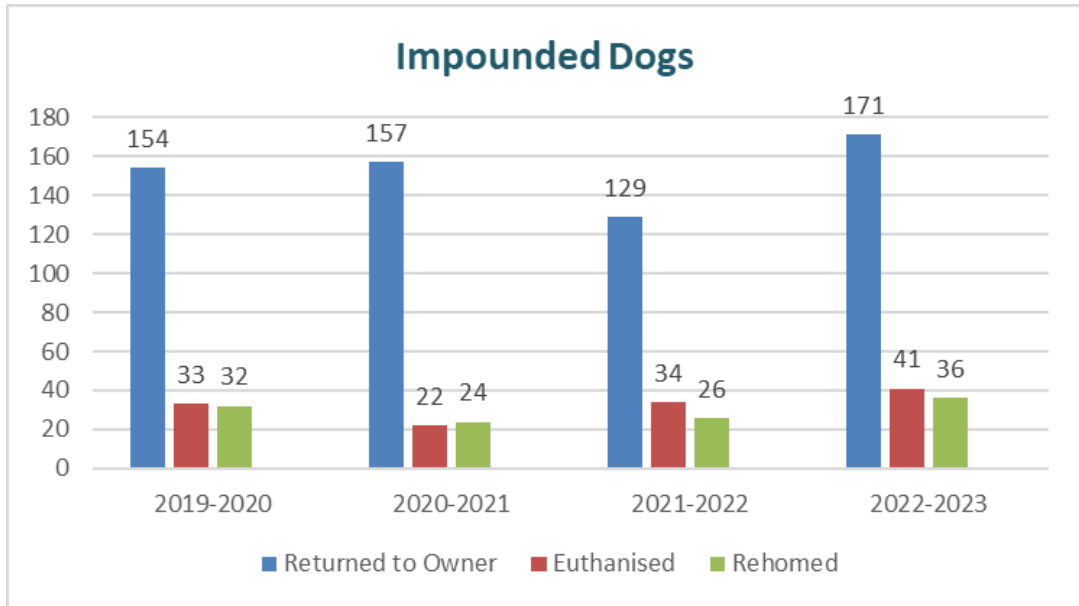
12.1 732 complaints were received about dogs. Complaints have increased compared to the previous year (604).

12.2 79 complaints were received about dogs attacking/biting or rushing people or other animals. These complaints have marginally increased compared to the previous year (72).

12.3 The majority of the complaints (576) were in relation to barking and roaming. The number of these complaints have increased from the previous year (459).

13. Impounded Dogs

13.1 248 dogs were impounded during the year in comparison to 189 dogs impounded last year.

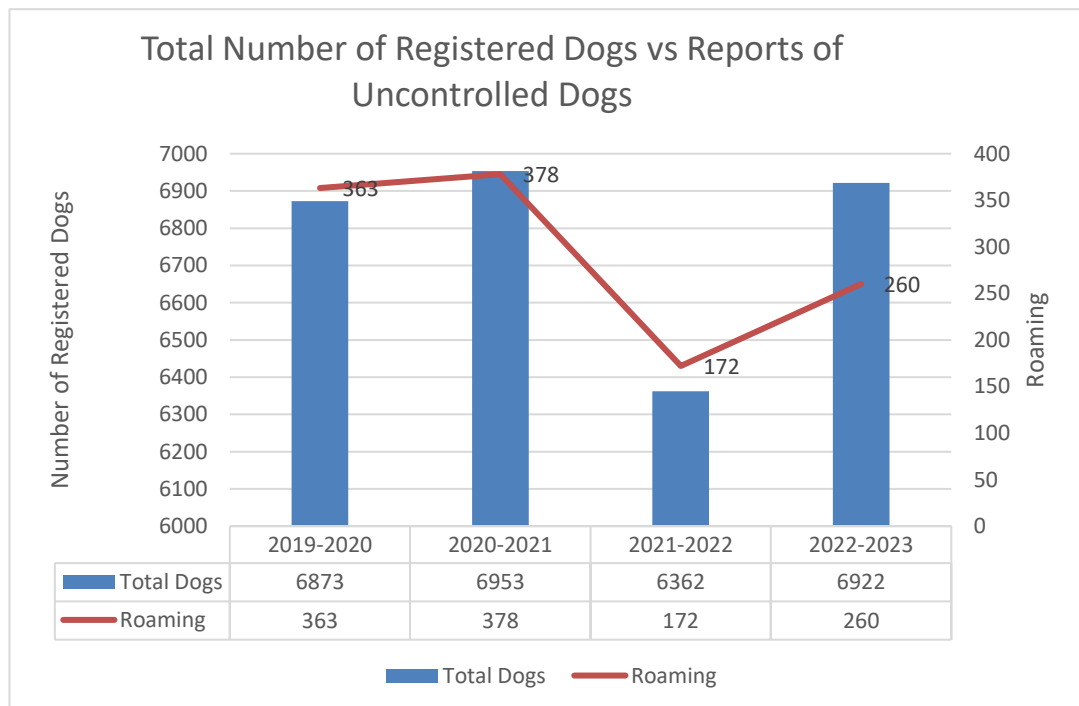


13.2 Of the 248 impounded dogs that were resolved during the year 171 were collected by their owner, 36 were rehomed, and 41 were euthanised.

14. Uncontrolled Dogs

14.1 An uncontrolled dog is generally defined as either a dog reported as being out roaming or has been found and is held by a member of the public for collection.

We recorded 260 uncontrolled dog requests which is an increase compared to last year at 172.



15. Dangerous and Menacing Dogs

- 15.1 All owners of dangerous and menacing dogs are recorded on the Council's dog database.
- 15.2 Owners are written to at the time of the dangerous or menacing classification being applied, advising them of their legal responsibilities as the owner.
- 15.3 1 dog was classified as dangerous and 21 dogs were classified as menacing during the year, consisting of 13 classified by deed because of observed or reported behaviour of the dog and 8 by breed or type which were mainly American Pit Bull Terriers.

16. Infringements

During the year 179 infringement notices were issued. This is an increase from the previous year of 174.

17. Prosecutions

- 17.1 2 prosecutions were initiated during the year for dog attacks.

18. Probationary and Disqualified Owners

- 18.1 Although there were no classifications of probationary or disqualified dog owners during the reporting year, there remains 4 disqualified dog owners in the district.

19. Conclusion

- 19.1 Council consider and adopt this annual report on the administration of dog control policies and practices and statistical information.

Attachments

- 1. Statistical Information on Dog Control Practises 2022-2023

ATTACHMENT 1

Statistical Information on Dog Control Practices 2022/2023

This information shows Tararua District Council's implementation of dog control functions during the 2022/23 financial year. Statistics from two previous financial years are included for comparison.

		2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
(a)	Total registered dogs*	6953	6362	6922
	No. of Owners	3271	3076	3298
(b)	Probationary owners	0	0	0
	Disqualified owners	8	5	4
(c)	No. of Dogs Classified Dangerous (s31)	10	6	1
(d)	Menacing dogs classified because of their observed or reported behaviour or characteristics (s33A)	42	16	13
	Menacing dogs classified because they are listed in schedule 4 of the Act (s33C)	86	6	8
(e)	Infringement notices issued	33	174	179
(f)	Service requests, the nature of which were:	738	604	732
	Barking	228	287	316
	Roaming / Secured	378	172	260
	Rushing	18	16	26
	Attack or Bite	65	56	53
	Aggressive Behaviour	35	43	41
	Dog Welfare	14	30	36
(g)	Prosecutions	5	9	2

*Cumulative total across the financial year