

# Annual Dog Control Report

## 2022-2023



# Introduction

Wellington City Council, as a territorial authority, is required to manage and enforce provisions pursuant to the Dog Control Act 1996 (the Act) and subsequent amendments in 2003, 2004, 2006 and 2010.

S10A of the Act requires the Council to report annually to the Secretary of Local Government on its Dog Control Policy and practices.

This report fulfils this statutory requirement for the dog registration year: 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023.

# The Council's Dog Control Policy and Practices

The Council adopted a Dog Policy in December 2009 making provisions relating to the control of dogs in public places, which are enforceable under the Wellington Consolidated Bylaw 2008 - Part 2: Animals.

The objectives of the policy are to:

- Ensure that the owners of dogs comply with their obligations under the Act; that dogs are well cared for and Wellingtonians are able to enjoy dog ownership;
- Prevent any danger caused by dogs to the public and to wildlife and natural habitats;
- Minimise the risk of distress and nuisance caused by dogs to the public and to wildlife and natural habitats;
- Actively promote the responsible ownership of dogs; and
- Provide for the reasonable exercise and recreational needs of dogs and their owners.

A review of the current Policy was undertaken during 2015/16 and a further review is currently in process. The Council adopted the finalised Dog Policy on 17 August 2016 and set areas where dogs can exercise off-leash.



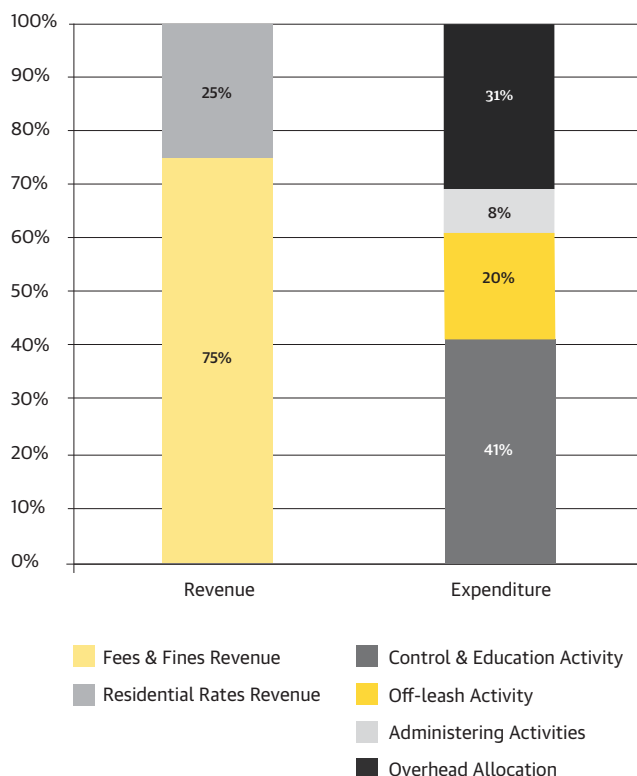
# Fees

Dog Registration fees, fines, and impound fees contribute approximately 75% to the cost of dog control in Wellington City. The Council also operates a responsible dog owner scheme which provides a discounted rate for dog owners who meet the relevant criteria. Dog registration fees are set by Council resolution and have not seen an increase for the registration periods from 2019 to 2023. Following public consultation and Council Resolution, this year registration fees have increased by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) of 3.5% for the 2023-24 registration period. The fee structure has also been simplified to allow for implementation of an online registration process.

Fees are used for:

- Dog control activities including law enforcement, patrols, and complaint and attack investigations.
- Education programmes for schools, community groups, and businesses.
- Signs and promotion of the Council’s animal bylaw and dog policy.
- Providing shelter facilities.
- Managing the dog registration programme - this includes forms, tags, maintaining the National Dog Database, and related promotional material.

The graph below sets out the level of income and expenditure in relation to dog control activities during the year:



There has been a small increase in revenue this year, due to infringements being issued for noncompliance under the Dog Control Act 1996, including failure to register a dog.

Increases in expenditure reflect the increased costs of services from Hutt City Council’s contract for Animals Services. Other increases in expenditure come from an increase to the operations as more areas are made available to dogs in line with cost increases from Wellington City Council Parks, Sports & Recreation team, this has increased from in 2020/2021 registration year by 4% from 16% to 20% for the 2022/23 registration year.



# Key Achievements

## Cyclone Gabrielle - Animal Welfare

In response to an official request for assistance issued by the Ministry for Primary Industries, our Animal Services assisted Hawkes Bay in reuniting displaced dogs with their owners, working closely with animal welfare organisations Huha and the SPCA. Hawkes Bay Animal Services had lost its communications and resources due to the state of emergency.

Our role involved:

- Hawkes Bay’s Animal Services lost their communications and resources, our Animal Control Officers assisted by receiving dog microchip information and retrieving owner information from the National Dog Database, facilitating emotional reunions with their owners.
- Two Animal Control Officers were dispatched to the stricken area where an animal shelter had been established. This involved housing dogs, where the owners were displaced themselves, and decontaminating dogs by removing toxic flood water and silt from their fur.



## Going Paperless - administrative efficiencies

To reduce our waste and provide an enhanced customer experience, dog registration is now completely online. With an average of 200 new dog registrations being processed a month, Wellington City Council is making registering your dog easier, faster, and more efficient by going paperless for the 2023/24 registration period.

Instead of the traditional printed forms, dog owners can easily register, or re-register, their dogs online, through user-friendly digital forms. You can find the new dog registration form and re-registration form on our website. Our customer services centre has been on hand to assist those not familiar with online processes.

The new system will save a lot of time and paper and is a good follow-up to the sustainable introduction of the reusable metal One Tag in 2021 - which has saved an estimated 50,000 plastic tags from being produced in Wellington since the initiative began. We are currently still working on online processes that will enable dog owners to change their details, let us know when they change address and to notify us when their dog has died.

With nearly 16,000 dogs in the Wellington City region, going digital will streamline the process for the Council and our customers. This year the number of existing dog owners receiving paper renewal forms has reduced from 5,000 to 1,000. The next re-registration period will be entirely paperless.

## Hapa - online infringement system.

A new infringement software ‘Hapa’ has been developed and implemented in a further effort to reduce improve efficiency. This digital process allows our officers to issue infringements via their mobile devices and reduces the time needed in office administration. This will also allow our Animal Services team to be more present in the field and more time on patrols.

Mobile devices also help our officers to access dog owners and dog information and systems in the field, a useful tool when coming across wandering dogs.

We have also introduced a new approach in relation to owners failing to register or re-register dogs, to simple 2-step reminders delivered digitally.

## Dog Attacks

We are still receiving high numbers of dog attacks and/or aggressive dog behaviour being reported. This appears to be an issue nationwide.

Contributing factors are possibly due to the rising dog population, roaming dogs, inadequate confinement, and dogs being walked off lead. The number of uncontrolled dog reports has increased by 26%.

## Probationary owners and disqualified owners

Under the Dog Control Act 1996, dog owners who commit and are issued with three separate infringement offences within 24 months must be disqualified or put on probation.

No disqualifications or probationary classifications were applied to any dog owners during the 2022/2023 year.

## Number of dog owners prosecuted by Wellington City Council

Prosecution considerations are undertaken in line with the Department of Internal Affairs guidelines, generally in the event of a serious harm attack, or ongoing offending. No dog owners were prosecuted during the 2022/2023 year. One prosecution consideration was undertaken, but due to the actions taken by the owner to secure and control their dog we are confident that the dog no longer poses a risk to the public.

## Community Engagement

Wellington City Council contracts the operations of its animal management field services function to Hutt City Council with a team of experienced Animal Control Officers based at our Animal Control Centre at Moa Point.

The Animal Services Team has officers dedicated to various wards in the city which allows for the officers to interact with dog owners and the public in those areas. A benefit of this is the officer's local knowledge of each ward, allowing officers to respond to complaints and requests for service in a timely manner.

As part of our 2022-23 community engagement obligations, we provided dog safety training to a range of front-line workers including Downers, Wellington Predator Free, Brownies, St Johns, and WCC staff.



## Responsible dog owner training

To qualify for responsible dog owner approval (RDO), dog owners are required to apply to the Council and provide proof that they have attended a training course and a pass certificate on completion.

We received 258 RDO applications that required property inspections as part of the RDO approval process.

Animal Services provides a free training course focussed on educating dog owners. The course focuses on the owner's knowledge rather than training the dog and covers extensive information regarding dog ownership, owner responsibilities, wildlife-sensitive areas, dog control laws, and council bylaws.

Animal Services ran 4 courses between October 2022 and April 2023 with a total of 148 attendees. The courses were well received, and feedback has been that this was a great customer service and education tool. It also provides an opportunity for dog owners to meet animal control officers in a positive learning environment.

We are committed to running more of these courses in the future as they prove to be very popular, and excellent feedback we received from those that attend.

## Proactive Patrols

During the past 12 months officers spent over 260 hours carrying out 569 proactive patrols mostly in our wildlife-sensitive and frequently reported locations. These patrols were conducted between the hours of 7am-7pm. Officers identified 232 compliance breaches and were able to take enforcement action on 173 of them ranging from verbal warnings, written warnings, and Infringement Notices. During these patrols, Officers sighted 1098 dog owners behaving responsibly and abiding by the WCC bylaws.

For the upcoming year, you can expect to see more Animal Control Officers patrolling our coastal areas where our penguins and endangered bird species are nesting. Increased patrolling is also programmed for Makara Peak to protect our growing Kiwi population.

# Dog Control Statistics

**Table 1 Dogs in the register**

Year	2022/2023	2021/2022	2020/2021	2019/2020	2018/2019	2017/2018
Number	15,812	15,631	14,676	14,110	13,578	13,335

**Table 2 Dangerous dogs**

The total number of dogs that have been classified as dangerous during 2022/2023 under s31 of the Dog Control Act 1996:

Category	2022/2023	2021/2022	2020/2021	2019/2020	2018/2019
Dangerous by owner conviction s31(1)(a)	0	0	0	0	0
Dangerous by sworn evidence s31(1)(b)	8	20	8	4	5
Dangerous by owner admitting in writing s31(1)(c)	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total dangerous dogs</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

**Table 3 Menacing dogs**

The total number of dogs that have been classified as menacing during 2022/2023 (s33A and s33C):

Category	2022/2023	2021/2022	2020/2021	2019/2020	2018/2019
Menacing by behaviour s33A(1)(b)(i)	7	18	2	0	2
Menacing by breed characteristics s33A(1)(b)(ii)	16	39	19	9	15
Menacing by schedule 4 breed s33C(1)	16	0	6	14	5
<b>Total menacing dogs</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>22</b>

**Table 4 Infringements**

All unpaid registrations were followed up with an infringement notice resulting in 197 notices being issued to dog owners.

Year	2022/2023	2021/2022	2020/2021	2019/2020	2018/2019
Number	357	135	114	103	101



**Table 5 Dog related complaints**

Category	2022/2023	2021/2022	2020/2021	2019/2020	2018/2019
Attacks on people	65	63	37	53	56
Attacks on animals	78	94	65	99	77
Barking dogs	446	370	527	455	660
Uncontrolled dogs	697	512	529	650	731
Miscellaneous	605	510	574	731	655
<b>Total number of dog related complaints</b>	<b>1,891</b>	<b>1,549</b>	<b>1,732</b>	<b>2,118</b>	<b>2,179</b>

**Table 6 Miscellaneous animal complaints**

Category	2022/2023	2021/2022	2020/2021	2019/2020	2018/2019
Challenging (dog may be on a lead but moves towards person/animal)	107	105	94	79	95
Education (giving advice to owner)	3	2	11	44	0
Fouling	17	29	24	50	55
Relinquishing a dog (handing dog over)	21	6	0	4	2
Stray pickups	398	385	440	544	501
Concerns for welfare	16	4	5	10	2
Stocks at large	43	50	81	41	64
<b>Total</b>	<b>605</b>	<b>581</b>	<b>655</b>	<b>772</b>	<b>719</b>



**Absolutely Positively**  
**Wellington City Council**

Me Heke Ki Pōneke