

1. Introduction

The 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.

Section 10A 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 2011 to 30 June 2012.

2. The Council's Dog Control Policy and Practices

2.1 Policy objectives

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 potential 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.

2.2 Dog Exercise Areas

The Council provides 51 designated off-leash exercise areas and eight beach exercise areas across the city. The criteria used to determine these areas include:

- The area is not used extensively for sporting or other purposes
- The area is of significant size and has appropriate access
- There are sufficient sight lines
- The area is well bounded from adjacent areas
- There is no potential risk to other groups.

2.3 Dog prohibited areas

Dogs are restricted or prohibited in places that are used frequently by the public and areas where there is the presence of significant wildlife and/or wildlife habitat. The following criteria are used in assessing prohibited areas:

- Is it a children's play area?
- Is it a sports field?
- Is it ecologically sensitive?

Patrols were carried out in areas where dogs are prohibited. Publicity on beach restrictions took place during October to December in 2011 to alert dog owners and the general public about variations in dog exercise areas in the summer months. Dog Control signage is also installed and maintained at sensitive prohibited areas.

The City's parks and recreation areas were patrolled by Animal Control Officers during the 2011/12 year. Particular attention was paid to the Central Business District, dog exercise areas, Town Belt, play areas and sports fields, and the City's beaches during the summer holiday season. The majority of dog owners spoken to were aware of the rules and of their obligations.

2.4 Fees

Dog registration fees, fines and impound fees contribute 75% of 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.

3. Dog Control Statistics

3.1 Section 10A (2) information

The following information is required under section 10A (2) clauses a – g.

a. Number of registered dogs in Wellington

Category	2010/11	2011/12
Total number of registered dogs	9635	9890

b. Number of probationary and disqualified owners

Category	2010/11	2011/12
Total number of probationary owners	0	0
Total number of disqualified owners	0	0

Analysis

There has been an increase of 255 dogs registered during 2011/12 which is the result of the upward growth in the total dog population and the Council's ongoing focus on registration.

Wellington City has no probationary or disqualified owners in its District since March 2010.

c. Number of dogs classified as dangerous (Section 31)

Category	2010/11	2011/12
Dangerous by Owner Conviction Under s31(1)(a)	1	0
Dangerous by Sworn Evidence s31(1)(b)	12	14
Dangerous by Owner Admittance in Writing s31(1)(c)	3	2
Total # Dangerous Dogs	16	16

Trend:

The number of dogs classified dangerous remains stable. The total number of dangerous dogs represents 0.16% of the Wellington City registered dog population.

Analysis:

There is no clear explanation for the stable trend and officers continue to apply this classification to mitigate the risk posed from dangerous dogs.

The dog classified as dangerous by Owner Conviction was classified dangerous by another Territorial Authority (in 2007/08) and subsequently transferred into Wellington City. The dog has subsequently died.

d. Number of dogs classified as menacing (Section 33A & 33C)

Category	2010/11	2011/12
Menacing under s33A(1)(b)(i) - by Behaviour	70	61
Menacing under s33A(1)(b)(ii) -by Breed characteristics	10	8
Menacing under s33C(1) by Schedule 4 Breed.	97	122
Total # Menacing Dogs	177	191

Trend:

Percentage increase of 8% between 2010/11 and 2011/12.

Analysis:

The largest area of increase is through registration and identification of menacing dogs by breed. There is also a continuing focus by Officers in imposing menacing classifications as a mitigation measure to prevent harm to people, other animals and wildlife.

e. Number of infringement notices issued

Category	2010/11	2011/12
Number of infringement notices issued	188	290

Trend:

Percentage increase of 54% between 2010/11 and 2011/12 in the total number of infringements issued. Percentage increase of 48% between 2010/11 (126) and 2011/12 (187) in the number of infringements issued for failure to register.

Analysis:

Failure to register a dog and failure to control a dog accounted for 65% and 21% respectively, of infringements issued in 2011/12.

The Council's current approach acknowledges that the first step to responsible dog ownership is dog registration. Therefore, a continued focus by the Council on registration education and compliance has seen the total number of infringements increase as new unregistered dogs are found.

f. Number of dog related complaints

Category	2010/11	2011/12
Attacks on people	41	39
Attacks on domestic animals	67	91
Challenging/rushing	81	65
Barking dogs	683	704
Bylaw (excludes roaming dogs)	27	37
Roaming dogs	1380	1503
Miscellaneous: education/advice breed id/beaches	89	57
Total number of dog related complaints	2431	2496

Trend:

Dog complaints have increased in conjunction with the increased number of registered dogs over the past year.

Attacks on people have remained relatively the same in the past year, however attacks overall have increased, from 108 in 2010/11 to 130 in 2011/12. There is no clear explanation of this trend.

Analysis:

Focus on dog owner education along with patrolling and enforcement of infringement offences has seen a stable number of dog attacking person complaints in comparison to 2010/11.

All complaints of dog aggression were investigated during the year. These are compared with previous years, as follows:

703 dogs were impounded in the 2011/12 period. This includes dogs roaming, captured, trapped or seized; 576 dogs were released, 84 were destroyed and 43 dogs were adopted or transferred.

g. Prosecutions

Category	2010/11	2011/12
Number of summary prosecutions	0	0

The effective use of enforcement options such as infringements has resulted in prosecutions rarely being required. Wellington City Council's last prosecution of a dog owner was initiated under Section 57 of the Act in 2007/08 and was successfully completed (owner convicted and both dogs destroyed) in 2008/09.

4. Other Information

4.1 Dog Education and Dog Obedience courses

- Education presentations were made to 4 Wellington schools reaching 16 classes and 277 children. All Wellington schools were offered a free presentation and every school was visited who had requested a visit. The remainder of the schools who accepted the offer were scheduled for visits from July 2012 onwards. Additional presentations were made to other groups such as Brownies, Pippins, and Scouts reaching 57 children.
- A series of dog educational brochures are available and were distributed. This material is focused on bite prevention in the community. Adult education classes are offered to adults at risk such as postal delivery staff, Housing NZ staff, Ministry of Justice Bailiffs, Council staff and meter readers.
- A copy of the Dog Control Policy and Animal 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.