

Staff

The SPCA (Hokitika) successfully retained the contract for the provision of dog control services in the Westland region in April 2015. That contract expires in June 2018.

The new contractual arrangements provided for at least the same level of general service but with an increased number of patrols in key areas, an improved consistency of data collection and greater clarity around roles and processes.

The SPCA appointed an additional staff member in August 2015 whose role is exclusively animal control. The contractor's performance is monitored on a monthly basis.

The Council values the contractual arrangement with the SPCA, as Council believes that a better standard of dog control can be achieved by having an emphasis on education as well as the statutory dog control function.

The level of training of dog control staff improved significantly in the 2015/2016 year. Prior to this time the training had been ad hoc in nature and not extensive.

In addition a set of procedures around dog control have been drafted with the intention of being available to current staff but also any new staff that are employed in the future.

Policy on Dogs

During the 2015/2016 year Council adopted a new policy on dogs after completing the Special Consultative Procedure. Council's objective is to keep dogs as a positive part of people's lives in Westland by adopting measures that minimise the problems caused by dogs while at the same time maintaining dog owner's rights to enjoy recreational opportunities with their dogs.

Council recognises dog owners as users of public places and seeks to integrate (not separate) dogs and their owners with other users of public spaces.

Council will ensure that obligations imposed on dog owners in terms of the care and control of their dogs under the Dog Control Act 1996 and the Westland Dog bylaw are maintained and enforced if necessary.

Council's primary and preferred method of seeking compliance is through encouragement and education of dog owners where possible, in order to ensure public safety and comfort. Enforcement options such as infringement notices, menacing and dangerous dog classifications, probationary dog ownership or disqualification as a dog owner or prosecution will only be used where necessary.

Council supports the use of a graduated enforcement system starting with education of the dog owner, through the issuing of warning notices for a first minor offence, infringement notices for subsequent or more serious offences, to a prosecution in the District Court for a very serious offence.

Council has introduced two new classes of dog ownership in the new dog policy. Selected Dog Ownership will be offered to dog owners who meet certain criteria such as having no justified complaints in the last two years, a property that is fully fenced (or has a fenced portion of the property within which the dog can be secured), no dogs impounded within the last two years, the dog owner has received no infringement notices within the last two years, the dog is currently registered and was registered by 31 July in the previous year and the dog is microchipped. Council now also recognises working dogs as a separate category of dog.

Dog Control

Dog Control is based in the Hokitika area, although increased numbers of patrols have been negotiated with the contractor for Kaniere, Kumara, Ross, and Franz Josef. The sheer size of Westland makes the provision of the same levels of service at the southern extremity of our district very difficult to achieve.

A new set of dog control procedures has been drafted and has become part of the training that the new officer received from Council.

The amount of proactive work across the district has increased tremendously with areas with identified dog issues receiving additional attention, including patrols and follow-up visits from the dog control officer. Council has received

positive feedback from members of the local community where this action has been taken.

In the year ending 30 June 2016 Council focused on ensuring that all known dogs were registered and microchipped and also on implementing and maintaining a graduated enforcement system.

A significant amount of effort went into tracking down those dog owners who had not currently registered their dog or who had never registered their dog. As a result officers identified many new dog owners that have now registered their dogs with Council. This means that the number of newly identified dogs now registered within the district has increased by approximately 7% over the year. This work will be continued in the 2016/2017 dog registration year.

During the 2016/2017 dog year the monitoring plan is to visit those remaining areas not seen this year. It is widely accepted that unregistered dogs cause a disproportionate amount of harm and nuisance in the community than registered dogs.

The number of dog complaints has increased this year from 148 in 2014/2015 to 223 in 2015/2016. In 2015 Council made changes to provide easier access to services for members of the public. Complaints are directed through the Customer Call Centre which ensures that all complaints are recorded and forwarded to the contractor in an appropriate manner.

There is some evidence that people are becoming less tolerant of the damage and nuisance caused by dogs in our community as evidenced by comments made in the annual residents survey and the rise in complaints about dogs causing nuisance by barking or wandering.

Dog Registrations

Dog control fees for the year remained at \$74.00 for dogs registered within the Hokitika area and \$58.50 for dogs registered in other areas. Dog registration fees also included a 50% penalty additional to the registration for late payment. The costs associated with dog registration and dog control are funded entirely by dog registration fees.

New dog ownership categories will be in place for the 2016/2017 dog registration year. These will include urban and rural dogs (current categories) along with two new classes of dog ownership including Selected Dog

Ownership (SDO) with a fee of \$45 and working dog category with fees of \$30 for the first dog and \$20 for any subsequent dog.

External Satisfaction Survey

An external satisfaction survey has generally been undertaken on a biannual basis but was not undertaken in 2014/2015 due to Council's financial constraints. The results of the last biannual external satisfaction survey in 2012 indicated that 35% of residents are 'very satisfied' or 'just satisfied' with the control of dogs within the district, 27% were 'not very satisfied' and 38% did not know.

The latest external satisfaction survey undertaken in 2016 showed that 72% of the public were very satisfied or fairly satisfied with the level of dog control in the district. This level of satisfaction is similar to both peer group local authorities and with the national average for dog control in across in New Zealand.

Over the last few years there has been a steady increase in the levels of customer survey participants being either very or fairly satisfied and a corresponding decrease in the levels of people not very satisfied with dog control services.

While it is pleasing to see that the levels of public satisfaction of dog control services is increasing there is still more work to do in the area, particularly in terms of wandering dogs in the community, ensuring all dogs are registered, and ensuring that dog owners are educated about the adequate care and control of their dog.