

REPORT ON DOG CONTROL POLICY AND PRACTICES: 2018

Westland District Council

This report is prepared pursuant to the provisions of Section 10A of the Dog Control Act 1996 for the year ended 30 June 2018. This is the 14th annual report prepared pursuant to the Act.

Statistics:

	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18
No of registered dogs	1511	1458	1561	1729	1777	1897	1912	1911
No. of probationary/ disqualified owners	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
No. of dogs classified as dangerous	0	0	0	0	3	3	3	3 total (2 new based on s31(1)(b))
No. of dogs classified as menacing	0	2	9	9	9	24	36	28 total (0 new classifications)
No. of infringement notices issued	19	16	70	60	53	196	127	25
No. of dog complaints received (barking, wandering, attacks, etc)	110	133	184	212	148	223	360	104
No. of prosecutions undertaken	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

Staff

After several years of service, in July 2017 the Hokitika branch of the SPCA gave notice of their intent to exit the contract for the provision of dog control services in the Westland district, effective at the end of October 2017. That contract had been set to expire in June 2018.

A tender process was run, and Westland Dog Services was selected as the preferred tenderer. They have staffed the dog control function with two employees on a job-share basis. In April 2018 the Council gave notice to Westland Dog Services that it would be terminating the contract in October 2018, in order to bring the service in-house. A recruiting process has been undertaken and will be reported on in next year's annual report.

Training was provided by Council staff to the contractors in the past year. In addition, dog control procedures have been further documented and refined.

Policy on Dogs

In 2017/18 the Council amended its Dog Control Bylaw and Policy on Dogs, under the Special Consultative Procedure. The major change was to require dogs to be on-leash in most areas of urban Hokitika, and in certain beach areas at certain times to protect penguin habitat. Another change was to introduce penalties for owners not cleaning up any dog fouling.

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.

Dog Control

Dog Control contractors for 2017/18 were based in the Hokitika area, although patrols were also required to be undertaken in 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.

Proactive work such as patrols and searching for unregistered dogs appears to have dropped in 2017/18. This will be a focus for the 2018/19 dog registration 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 decreased this year, as shown in the table at the start of this report. The reasons for this are unknown.

Dog Pound

A new dog pound has been built by the SPCA on Hau Hau Road, Hokitika, and will be leased to Council when it is fully operational. Temporary pound facilities (e.g. with neighbouring Councils) have been used in the past several months.

Registration Revenue and Costs

Standard dog registration fees for the year remained at \$74.00 for dogs registered within the Hokitika area and \$58.50 for dogs registered in other areas. New dog ownership categories implemented in the 2016/17 year are 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.

Dog registration fees also included a 50% penalty additional to the registration for late payment.

Unlike previous years, the costs associated with dog registration and dog control in 2017/18 were not entirely funded by dog registration fees and fines; a contribution has been required from general rates. This has resulted from increased contractor costs and Council overheads based on the amount of Council staff involvement required.

External Satisfaction Survey

The previous 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 across New Zealand.

Unfortunately, the 2018 external satisfaction survey did not ask residents generally what their level of satisfaction was with dog control - only complainants. The satisfaction level was 39%, compared with 26% in 2016. This is an improvement, but 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.