

# ANNUAL SECTION 10A Dog Control Act 1996 Report – 2023/ 2024

## PART 1 – Dog Control Policy and Practices

### Dog Control in the District

During the 2023-2024 year, the Council's Animal Control Team, delivered animal control services across both the Rangitikei and Manawatu Districts (through our shared service agreement), a combined area of 7050km<sup>2</sup>. The team enforced the Dog Control Act 1996 and adhered to the Council's Dog Control and Owner Responsibility Policy 2016.

Comprising five Animal Control Officers supported by the Manager Animal Control, the team operated 24/7 to respond to service requests and complaints within the timeframes specified in the Council's Long Term and Annual Plans. Proactive efforts focused on identifying unregistered and wandering dogs, and addressing complaints related to aggressive dog behaviour, including attacks.

Normal hours of operation are 8am – 5pm on weekdays. Animal Control Officers work on rostered shifts to enable 24-hour response to Priority One calls after hours including weekends and public holidays. Priority One calls include dog attacks and secured dogs.

A graduated enforcement approach was employed for all unregistered dogs, progressing from property inspections to verbal or written warnings, infringement notices, and impounding as a final measure.

- Number of dog owners in District – 2384
- Number of dogs in District
  - 5080 comprising
  - 2514 working dogs
  - 1951 Good Dog Owners and
  - 615 non-working dogs

### **Infringements**

There was a slight increase in the number of infringements issued this year compared to the previous year (46 versus 32). This increase can be attributed to a higher number of infringements issued to unregistered dog owners during the year.

Court action is initiated if infringements remain unpaid for 56 days.

## **Roaming Dogs**

Roaming dogs account for 27.5% (261) of all service requests. While some are found during patrols, public reporting is essential. Unfortunately, many people resort to social media to report lost, found, or roaming dogs rather than contacting Council directly. This delay hinders our response and can result in dogs being returned to their owners without consequences. Additionally, there has been growing concern that in some instances where social media has been utilised to reunite dogs, dogs have been handed over to individuals who are not the rightful owners.

## **Barking Dogs**

Barking dog complaints comprise 16% (153) of service requests. Contributing causes of nuisance barking include inadequate socialization, dogs being left outdoors during working hours, and reduced owner interaction. This issue has often been linked to increased separation anxiety due to owners returning to work post-pandemic. Our Barking Dog Policy provides a framework to assist both complainants and dog owners in resolving these issues.

## **Dog Control Enforcement Practices**

Animal Control Officers responded to 949 service requests/ complaints during the reporting period in response to the following:

- 77 Attacks (human and animal – includes rushing)
- 153 Barking dogs
- 261 Wandering/ roaming dogs
- 34 Animal Welfare/Property Investigation
- 102 Found/ Secured dogs
- 96 Lost dogs
- 170 Other (e.g. microchipping, Good Dog Owner status/ Bylaw/ General, MDP)
- 46 Infringement notices issued
- 56 Stock complaints attended

## **Dogs Prohibited, Leash Only and Exercise Areas**

The problem of dogs in public places or otherwise prohibited areas is not one that is common within this District. When dogs are reported as wandering unaccompanied within such areas, the Animal Control Officers respond promptly.

## **Dog Control Registration and Other Fees**

- Non-working dog registration went from \$149 to \$155
- Non-working neutered/spayed went from \$100 to \$104
- Good Dog Owner went from \$70 to \$73
- Working Dogs went from \$48 to \$50

The dog registration fees reflect the respective levels of service required by each category of dog owner. The good dog owner system aims to provide an incentive within the registration fee structure that promotes responsible dog ownership. The fee structure will reward dog owners who:

- adequately fence their section,
- de-sex their dog,
- have a good record of dog ownership,
- register their dog on time, and
- care for their dogs properly, i.e. provide them with a secure yard and a kennel that is weatherproof, of sufficient size, clean and sanitary.

The Rangitikei District Council is committed to promoting responsible dog ownership and ensuring compliance with local dog control regulations. While education remains our primary focus, the Council also takes enforcement actions to address persistent non-compliance.

In cases where dog owners have consistently failed to register their animals despite warnings and penalties, Animal Control Officers (ACOs) implement a targeted approach. These officers visit properties that were previously known to house registered dogs, conducting thorough checks to determine if the dogs are still present.

If an ACO verifies that a dog continues to be owned at the property, infringement notices are issued to the owners. In instances where non-compliance persists, dogs may be impounded under Section 42 of the Dog Control Act 1996 for failing to be registered.

## **Dog Education and Dog Obedience Courses**

The Rangitikei District Council has contracted a qualified dog education presenter to deliver a comprehensive program aimed at teaching children about responsible dog ownership and safety. This program is specifically designed for schools within the district and has garnered positive feedback from participating schools.

The presenter utilizes her own dogs as engaging visual aids during her presentations, effectively reinforcing the key messages about dog safety and interaction.

The Council has continued its commitment to promoting dog education by supporting the presenter in purchasing her recently published book. This book is tailored for children aged 5-8 and provides valuable information on dog safety in an age-appropriate manner. The book has been enthusiastically received by the schools visited and the Council continues to sponsor copies for distribution to children following the dog safety presentations. Additionally, an Animal Control Officer (ACO) assists whenever possible to support the program's effectiveness.

## **Disqualified and Probationary Dog Owners**

No owners were classified as disqualified or probationary during the year.

## **Menacing and Dangerous Dogs**

The Council has not had any issues with owners of menacing dogs not complying with the requirements relating to their classification.

There are 2 dogs classified as dangerous in the district.

## **Multiple Dog Permits**

The Council introduced a new policy under the Control of Dogs Bylaw, for multiple dog permits to be required by owners in any residential area having more than two dogs.

This has proved beneficial and has reduced barking dog complaints, roaming dogs and dogs causing general disturbance due the numbers on a property.

## **PART 2 – Statistical Information**

<b>Category</b>	<b>As at 30 June 2023</b>	<b>As at 30 June 2024</b>
1) Total Registered Dogs	5065	5080
2) Total Probationary Owners	Nil	Nil
3) Total Disqualified Owners	Nil	Nil
4) Total Dangerous Dogs	5	2
Dangerous by Owner Conviction Under s31(1)(a)	Nil	Nil
Dangerous by Sworn Evidence s31(1)(b)	5	2
Dangerous by Owner Admittance in Writing s31(1)(c)	Nil	Nil
5) Total Menacing Dogs	40	40
Menacing under s33A(1)(b)(i) – i.e. by behavior	19	20
Menacing under s33A(1)(b)(ii) by Breed Characteristics	4	3
Menacing under s33C(1) by Schedule 4 Breed	17	17
6) Total Infringement Notices	32	46
7) Total Complaints Received	894	949
8) Total Prosecutions Taken	Nil	Nil
9) Infringements Sent to Court	13	16