

Far North District Council Annual Report on Dog Control Policy and Practice 2019/2020



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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

Section 10A of the Dog Control Act 1996 requires each territorial authority to report on its dog control policy and practices and provide specific statistical information.

This report acts as a medium for this information and is an update on the progress and processes of the Far North District Council Animal Management services.

1.2 Background

All Dog Control functions in the district are carried out in-house which includes field and shelter services. FNDC have a total of ten Animal Management Officers, including a Team Leader and a Senior Animal Management Officer.

This team is responsible for the reactive response to complaints about dogs at large or causing nuisance, ensuring compliance with the Dog Control Act 1996, encouraging responsible dog ownership and registration of dogs as well as community education.

Animal Management was an essential service during the COVID-19 lockdown. During Level four priority response continued as BAU (Dog Attack, Dog Aggression and Wandering Stock) with a strong focus on staff safety. The lockdown period did have a significant impact on the number of total RFS received and the ability for the team to continue with proactive work in the community.

Shelter operation continued as normal during lockdown with the welfare of the animals being paramount.

2. The Council's Dog Control Policy and Practices

2.1 FNDC Dog Management Policy

The new Dog Management Policy and Bylaws came into effect February 2019 and outlines the Council's requirements regarding controlling dogs. Key objectives of the policy are:

- Prevent injury, distress and nuisance from dogs
- Identify dog access areas
- Provide for the neutering of menacing dogs
- Minimise potential danger or distress to protected wildlife
- Promote responsible dog ownership

2.2 Fees

The council provides a discounted rate for dog owners that de-sex their dog and those who pay registration prior to 1 September.

Fees are used for:

- Dog Control activities including law enforcement, patrols and complaint investigation.
- Dog incident prevention (including finding unregistered dogs, and the classification and enforcement of menacing and dangerous dogs)
- Education programs for schools and community groups
- Signs for the Council's Dog Management Bylaw and Dog Management Policy
- Shelter Services (including lost and found, adoption and micro-chipping)
- Running the annual dog registration renewal program

Key Achievements 2019/2020

Responding to complaints (RFS)

There has been a total of 1908 dog control customer requests for service received over the 2019/2020 period. This is 257 less individual requests for service than the previous year. This decrease is in part to less RFS received over the lockdown period, than may have been received normally. Proactive work in the community with the de-sexing of dogs and working with dog owners around their responsibilities has also contributed to this decrease.

The ongoing reduction in the number of dog attacks and straying incidents received over the year further supports the proactive work in the community.

There has also been a significant decrease in barking complaints received. This decrease is a result of complaints being addressed within a new operational process designed to provide better service, by working with the dog owner in the first instance and improving the education and assistance. This in turn reduces the number of repeat complaints. The lock down period also would have aided in the reduction of barking complaints, as dog owners would have been home with their dogs more.

During the lock down period, Animal Management operated as an essential service. Priority 1 Request for Service (dog attacks, aggressive dogs, stock on roads) were responded to as per normal process following Covid-19 guidelines. Priority 2 RFS were responded to by Officers remotely. There were 375 Requests for Service during March – April; 71 of these Request for Service were Priority 1 and 98% of all RFS' were responded to on time.

Dog Registration

The number of known dogs in the district remains steady at 11,119. Of these 8,284 were registered for 2019/2020 period. This compares to 11,060 known dogs in 2018/2019 where 8,620 dogs were registered for that period.

Due to the Covid-19 lock down, the period for registration follow up was reduced. Historically approximately 50% of the noncompliant dogs (approx. 1500/3000) are either deceased or left the area with no notification to Council. A focused effort on following up on dog registration will be a priority for the coming year.

Probationary and Disqualified Owners

There continues to be one Disqualified owner in the district and no Probationary owners.

Enforcement

There has been a total of 166 infringements issued for offences under the Dog Control Act 1996. This is down by 66 from the 2018/2019 and is again reflective of less RFS received, and the lock down period which did not allow the continuation of proactive work in the unregistered dog area.

There were five prosecution for dog attacks over the year. This is a decrease from the previous year where there were 14 prosecutions. Although prosecution numbers are less it is preferable not to be prosecuting. Prosecutions are used only as a last resort where it is necessary to ensure community safety.

Menacing and Dangerous Dogs

There is a total of 237 menacing dogs in the district, 201 of these dogs were menacing dogs under section 33C of the Dog Control Act 1996. These dogs were of American Pitbull Terrier type. Under the Dog Control Act 1996 (the Act) all dogs must be classified as menacing if it belongs to a breed or type currently listed in schedule 4 of the Act, or if the local authority considers the dog poses a threat to people or other animals and wildlife due to its behaviour. De-sexing menacing dogs is a key component of reducing dog-related harm.

There is only one classified dangerous dog in the district. This classification is a result of sworn evidence attesting to the aggressive behaviour of the dog.

Impounded Dogs

There was a total of 373 dogs impounded at the council shelter.

FNDC in collaboration with the Bay of Islands Animal Rescue (BOIAR) are achieving great outcomes for dogs that enter the shelter and can be rehomed. Over 30% of impounded dogs were rehomed to Rescue Groups or adopted via the Council website. This is a credit to the Animal Management Officers and BOIAR team and something we are very proud of.

Planned Activities for 2020/2021

- Continue to review standard operating procedures to provide efficient and consistent customer centric processes for the delivery of Animal Management services.
- Explore further opportunities to make the Far North District Animal Shelters a point of contact for people wanting a dog to increase adoption rates.

- Commence proactive registration and compliance action plans to increase registration rates and identify unknown dogs as well as ensuring compliance with classifications.
- Dog related pages on the council's website reviewed to enable a more customer friendly interaction
- Complete the build and refurbishments of the Districts Animal Shelters. These establishments will be a catalyst to increase the levels of service available and an opportunity to change the perception of the community towards council run shelters. These levels of service will focus on and benefit animal welfare, health and safety and community education and service.

Summary

Future work will be focused on encouraging responsible dog ownership, concentrating on the registration and compliance of dogs, with clear action plans in place.

Going forward, the Animal Management team aim to achieve a continued improvement in all areas as well as focusing their resources on consistency in operations and improving value for the customer in the 2020/2021 year.

Dog Control Statistics

Table one: Registration/Classification related data

	Total 2019/2020	Total 2018/2019
Dogs Registered	11,119 Known 8,284 Registered	11,060 Known 8,620 Registered
Dog Owner Classification		
Probationary	0	0
Disqualified	1	1
Menacing Classification		
- By breed	201	199
- By deed	36	25
Combined	237	224
Dangerous Classification		
Section 31(1) a	0	0
Section 31(1) b	1	1
Section 31(1) c	0	0
Total Dangerous	1	1

Table two: Request for Service Data

Customer request break down by job type		
Job Type	2019/2020	2018/2019
Attacks	172	223
Straying	318	580
Rushing	30	80
Barking	180	349
Aggressive	100*	-
Miscellaneous	438**	473**
Lost and Found	240	-
Pick-Up Request	373	-
Micro-chip Request	19	-
Dog Welfare	38	-
Other	-	460
Grand Total	1908	2165

* In 2019/2020 the coding of RFS received was expanded from the previous year. This is to give a clearer indication of the exact work being done in the field. Aggressive incidents were separated out from Attacks, where they were previously captured.

** Miscellaneous includes refund requests, infringement notice enquiries, bylaw enquiries, signage, general information etc.

Table three: Compliance Data

	2019/2020	2018/2019
Prosecutions	5	14
Infringement Offence		
18 Wilful Obstruction of dog control officer or ranger	0	1
19(2) Failure or refusal to supply information or wilfully providing false particulars	0	0
19A (2) Failure to supply information or wilfully provide false about dog	0	0
20(5) Failure to comply with any bylaw authorised by the section	19	29
23A (2) Failure to undertake dog owner education program of dog obedience course (or both)	0	0
24 Failure to comply with the obligations of a probationary owner	0	0
28(5) Failure to comply with the effects of disqualification	0	0
32(2) failure to comply with the effects of classification of dog as dangerous	0	0
32(4) fraudulent sale or transfer of dangerous dog	0	0
33EC (1) Failure to comply with the effects of classification of dog as menacing	0	1
33F (3) Failure to advise person of muzzle and leashing requirements	0	0
36A (6) failure to implant microchip transponder in dog	0	0
41 False statement in relation to dog registration	0	0

41A Falsely notifying death of dog	0	0
42 failure to register dog	110	150
46(4) Fraudulent procurement or attempt to procure replacement dog registration label or disc	0	0
48(3) Failure to advise change of dog ownership	0	0
49(4) Failure to advise change of address	0	0
51(1) Removal, swapping or counterfeiting of registration label or disc	0	0
52A Failure to keep dog controlled or confined	8	11
53(1) Failure to keep dog under control	29	40
54(2) failure to provide proper care and attention, to supply proper and sufficient food, and to provide adequate exercise	0	0
54A Failure to carry leash in public		
55(7) Failure to comply with barking dog abatement notice	0	0
62(4) Allowing dog known to be dangerous to be at large unmuzzled or unleashed	0	0
62(5) Failure to advise of muzzle and leashing requirements	0	0
72(2) releasing dog from custody	0	0
Total	166	232

Table four: Shelter data

	2019/2020	2018/2019
Impounded Total	373	Figures Not Captured
Total number of dogs returned to owner	151	
% dogs returned to owner	40.48%	
Total number of dogs to Rescue Groups	95	
Total number of dogs adopted via Council	19	
% dogs to Rescue Groups/adopted	30.56%	
Total number of dogs euthanised	108	
% dogs euthanised	28.95%	