

Wellington City Council

Annual Dog Control Report 2021-2022



Absolutely Positively
Wellington City Council

Me Heke Kī Pōneke

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.

S10A 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 2021 to 30 June 2022.



2. The Council's Dog Control Policy and Practices

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 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.

A review of the current Policy was undertaken during 2015/16. The Council adopted the finalised Dog Policy on 17 August 2016 and also set areas where dogs can exercise off-leash.

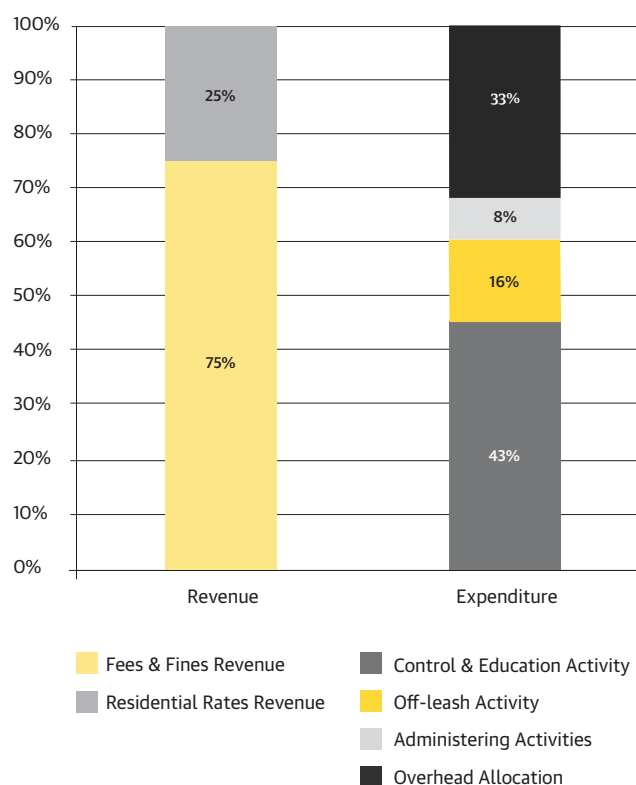
3. Fees

Dog registration fees, fines and impound fees contribute approximately 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 and were not increased during this year.

Fees are used for:

- Dog control activities including law enforcement, patrols and complaint investigation.
- Education programmes for schools, community groups and businesses.
- Signs and promotion of the Council's animal bylaw and dog policy.
- Providing shelter facilities.
- Running the dog registration programme - this includes forms, printing, tags, maintaining the national dog database and related promotional material.

The graph below sets out the level of income and expenditure in relation to dog control activities during the year:



4. Key Achievements

One Tag

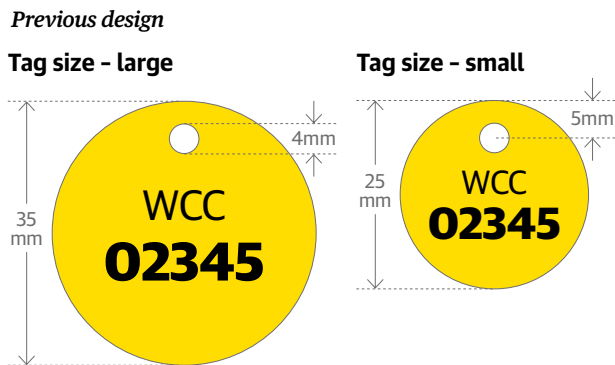
With the introduction of One Tag last year, this was the first year for which we have not issued plastic registration tags for our dog owners.

The metal tag which was issued last year remains with the dog for the duration of its life. The many benefits of One Tag include:

- Reduced plastic waste (we are no longer issuing 15,000+ plastic tags every year)
- Reduced postage and administration costs (as the tag is posted just once, rather than a new tag annually)
- More convenient for dog owners - no need to replace their plastic tag every year.

We also acted on feedback from our customers regarding the design of the tag. Customers were telling us that the tag was wearing out at the point where it was connected to their dog’s collar. Based on this feedback the tag was redesigned to make it more robust.

As the original design of the tag was a prototype, we are replacing all worn out tags free of charge.



Customer Experience Project of the Year

In June, we picked up an award from the Association of Local Government of Information Managers for Customer Experience Project of the year.

We were commended on our collaboration with other Councils, introducing significant process improvements, a great communications plan and changing to a more environmentally friendly offering to our dog owners.

During the year we have been contacted by many local councils who have been keen to learn more about One Tag and many are intending to introduce this initiative in their own Districts.



Jane Hadaway and Julie Sleep receiving their award from ALGIM.

Yellow is the new black



Yellow Ribbon Campaign

In June we launched our Yellow Ribbon Campaign. This campaign is aimed at reducing the number of dog attacks in the Wellington Area.

Yellow ribbons on dog collars are commonly used internationally to signify that the dogs wearing them need extra space when on a walk or around strangers. These dogs are not necessarily aggressive but can be uncomfortable or nervous around people they don't know or may be experiencing pain from a recent surgery or not fully trained.

The campaign was launched via our digital channels, social media and our news channels including the *Our Wellington* newsletter. We also produced posters

for veterinary practices in Wellington and other animal facilities (the dog pound and the SPCA). Details were also included in our dog registration packs that go out to all registered dog owners.

We are hoping that the introduction of this campaign will go some way to making the public more aware of the fact that all dogs are not 'pat friendly' and thereby reduce the incidents of dog attacks. The messaging is aimed at both general members of the public through creating an awareness that it's not OK to pat every dog they come across but also at dog owners, who should understand how their dog is likely to react in a range of different circumstances.

5. Dog walkers and trainers

On 1 July 2022 the Council’s Trading and Events in Public Places Policy came into effect. One requirement of this new policy is to formally ‘licence’ commercial dog walkers and trainers who train their dogs on public land.

We undertook a lengthy consultation period with representatives from the professional dog walkers community and gained their feedback on a range of issues.

Some of the questions we considered were:

- What does a ‘good’ dog walker look like?
- Should there be a compulsory training course and assessment for people registering their business?
- What is the maximum number of dogs that a walker can be permitted to walk at any one time?

We received great feedback from the dog walkers that we worked with who are pleased to see regulation of their industry:

“... the response from council has been open to input, well thought out and in general thoughtful of those of us that make a living from dog handling.”

Now that this requirement has gone live, all applicants must complete a compulsory knowledge training session before they can be registered. Additionally, during the first year of being registered, an animal control officer will accompany the dog walker out on a walk to observe them handling their dogs



6. Dog attacks

This year we witnessed a sharp rise in the number of serious dog attacks. Correspondingly there was also a significant increase in the number of menacing classifications placed on dogs. This increase is proportionally higher than the increase in dog ownership. (An increase in dog registration of 15% but a 150% rise in dangerous dog classifications and a 800% rise in menacing dog classifications) Menacing and dangerous dog classifications are placed on a dog after an attack - either on animals or people. Officers attribute the rise in attacks to a number of reasons.

More people are out walking their dogs than in pre-COVID-19 times. It has also been acknowledged internationally that dogs pick up on the anxiety of their owners and New Zealanders have generally

experienced higher levels of stress than pre-pandemic times. Dogs have also been seen to exhibit signs of separation anxiety now their owners are returning to work.

Due to the rise in attacks, this year officers implemented a more robust procedure for identifying and classifying dangerous and menacing dogs, using an attack rating assessment tool. Previously not all dogs were classified using the same strict criteria. This is the main reason for the increase in recorded attacks and subsequent classifications

Appeals against classifications resulted in 3 hearings before Council's Regulatory Processes Committee. All classification decisions were subsequently upheld by the Committee.

7. Community Engagement

The Wellington City Council contracts the operations of its animal management function to Hutt City Council and has a team of Animal Management Officers based at the Wellington Animal Control Centre at Moa Point.

The Animal Services Team has officers dedicated to various wards in the city which allows for the officers to interact with dog owners and the general public in those areas. By having the local knowledge of each ward, the officers can respond to complaints and requests for service in a very timely manner.

Covid restrictions have made it difficult to plan our community engagement events over the past 12 months, however we did set up mobile pop-up dog registration stands during the registration period and delivered four Responsible Dog Owner courses and four dog Safety Education courses.

Proactive Patrols

During the year officers spent over 200 hours carrying out 403 proactive patrols mostly in our wildlife-sensitive and frequently reported locations. These patrols were conducted between the hours of 7 am-7 pm. Officers identified 166 compliance breaches and were able to take enforcement action on 136 of these incidents. Officers also sighted 476 dog owners behaving responsibly during these patrols.

Responsible dog owner training

To qualify for responsible dog owner approval, dog owners are required to attend training courses and gain a pass certificate for on completion.

Animal Services provides a free training course focussed on educating dog owners. The course is 'dog free' and covers extensive information regarding dog ownership, owner responsibilities, dog control laws and council bylaws. The courses are well received, a great customer service and education tool. It also provides an opportunity for dog owners to meet animal control officers in positive learning environment.

Our courses were again met with great interest, but due to the social distancing guidelines, group limits, and last-minute cancellations due to health concerns, we lacked numbers from previous years.

Courses ran from October 2021 - April 2022 and 163 participants attended We are keen to continue running these courses in the future as they prove to be very popular, and we receive excellent feedback from those that attend.



8. Moa Point security upgrade

The Moa Point Animal Shelter received a much-needed security system upgrade. This has been invaluable. Due to the remote location of the shelter, it has been vulnerable to break-ins and vandalism in the past. The new system is monitored 24/7 and can see the full perimeter of the shelter.

While there have been two break-ins, both have ended in arrests, and both have been successfully charged through the courts.



9. Staff Training

The four newest members of the Animal Services team completed a ‘Situational Safety and Tactical Communications’ course with CERTNZ. This training is designed to help with identifying potential risks associated with dealing with aggressive people, conflict resolution, and communication.





10. Dog Control Statistics

10.1 Dogs registered

Year	2021/2022	2020/2021	2019/2020	2018/2019	2017/2018
Number	14,260	12,751	12,328	11,897	11,615

10.2 Dangerous and menacing dogs

Number of dogs that have been classified as **dangerous** this year (s31 Dog Control Act 1996):

Category	2021/2022	2020/2021	2019/2020	2018/2019	2017/2018
Dangerous by owner conviction s31(1)(a)	0	0	0	0	0
Dangerous by sworn evidence s31(1)(b)	20	8	4	5	1
Dangerous by owner admitting in writing s31(1)(c)	0	0	0	0	0
Total dangerous dogs classified	20	8	4	5	1

Number of dogs that have been classified as **menacing** this year (s33A and s33C):

Category	2021/2022	2020/2021	2019/2020	2018/2019	2017/2018
Menacing by behaviour s33A(1)(b)(i)	18	2	0	2	7
Menacing by breed characteristics s33A(1)(b)(ii)	39	19	9	15	0
Menacing by schedule 4 breed s33C(1)	0	6	14	5	12
Total menacing dogs	57	27	25	22	19

10.3 Probationary owners and disqualified owners:

We have not disqualified or applied probationary classifications on any dog owners during this period.

10.4 Number of dog owners prosecuted by Wellington city Council:

We did not prosecute any dog owners during the year.

10.5 Number of infringement notices

Year	2021/2022	2020/2021	2019/2020	2018/2019	2017/2018
Number	135	114	103	101	110

10.6 Dog related complaints

Category	2021/2022	2020/2021	2019/2020	2018/2019	2017/2018
Attacks on people	63	37	53	56	48
Attacks on animals	94	65	99	77	80
Barking dogs	370	527	455	660	651
Uncontrolled dogs	512	529	650	731	805
Miscellaneous	510	574	731	655	783
Total number of dog related complaints	1,549	1,732	2,118	2,179	2,367

For this reporting year, miscellaneous complaints can be broken down into the following categories:

Category	2021/2022	2020/2021	2019/2020	2018/2019	2017/2018
Challenging (dog may be on a lead but moves towards person/animal)	105	94	79	95	106
Education (giving advice to owner)	2	11	44	0	5
Fouling	30	24	50	55	32
Relinquishing a dog (handing dog over)	5	0	4	2	7
Stray pickups	364	440	544	501	632
Concerns for welfare	4	5	10	2	1
Total	510	574	731	655	783



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