

*Dog Control Policy and
Practices under the Dog
Control Act 1996
1 July 2010 – 30 June 2011*

To the Secretary for Local Government
Department of Internal Affairs
As required under Section 10A of the Dog Control Act 1996

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.

Section 10A 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 2010 to 30 June 2011.

2. The Council's Dog Control Policy and Practices

2.1 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 potential 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.

2.2 Dog Exercise Areas

The Council provides 51 designated off-leash exercise areas and eight beach exercise areas across the city. The criteria used to determine these areas include:

- The area is not used extensively for sporting or other purposes
- The area is of significant size and has appropriate access
- There are sufficient sight lines
- The area is well bounded from adjacent areas
- There is no potential risk to other groups.

2.3 Dog prohibited areas

Dogs are restricted or prohibited in places that are used frequently by the public and areas where there is the presence of significant wildlife and/or wildlife habitat. The following criteria are used in assessing prohibited areas:

- Is it a children's play area?
- Is it a sports field?
- Is it ecologically sensitive?

Patrols were carried out in areas where dogs are prohibited. Publicity on beach restrictions took place during October to December in 2010 to alert dog owners and the general public about variations in dog exercise areas in the summer months. Dog Control signage is also installed and maintained at sensitive prohibited areas.

The City's parks and recreation areas were patrolled by Animal Control Officers during the 2010/11 year. Particular attention was paid to the Central Business District, dog exercise areas, Town Belt, play areas and sports fields, and the City's beaches during the summer holiday season. The majority of dog owners spoken to were aware of the rules and of their obligations.

2.4 Fees

Dog registration fees, fines and impound fees contribute 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.

3. Dog Control Statistics

3.1 Section 10A (2) information

The following information is required under section 10A (2) clauses a – g.

a. Number of registered dogs in Wellington

Category	2009/10	2010/11
Total number of registered dogs	8970	9635

b. Number of probationary and disqualified owners

Category	2009/10	2010/11
Total number of probationary owners	0	0
Total number of disqualified owners	0	0

Analysis

There has been an increase of 665 dogs registered during 2010/11 which is the result of the upward growth in the total dog population and the Council's ongoing focus on registration.

Wellington City has no probationary or disqualified owners in its District since March 2010.

c. Number of dogs classified as dangerous (Section 31)

Category	2009/10	2010/11
Dangerous by Owner Conviction Under s31(1)(a)	1	1
Dangerous by Sworn Evidence s31(1)(b)	16	12
Dangerous by Owner Admittance in Writing s31(1)(c)	3	3
Total # Dangerous Dogs	20	16

Trend:

Percentage decrease of 20% between 2009/10 and 2010/11. The total number of dangerous dogs represents 0.17% of the Wellington City registered dog population.

Analysis:

There is no clear explanation for the downward trend apart from classified dogs dying from 'old-age'.

The dog classified as dangerous by Owner Conviction was classified dangerous by another Territorial Authority (in 2007/08) and subsequently transferred into Wellington City. The dangerous classification remains in force throughout New Zealand.

d. Number of dogs classified as menacing (Section 33A & 33C)

Category	2009/10	2010/11
Menacing under s33A(1)(b)(i) - by Behaviour	60	70
Menacing under s33A(1)(b)(ii) -by Breed characteristics	13	10
Menacing under s33C(1) by Schedule 4 Breed.	86	97
Total # Menacing Dogs	159	177

Trend:

Percentage increase of 11% between 2009/10 and 2010/11.

Analysis:

The largest area of increase is through registration and identification of menacing dogs by breed. There is also a continuing focus by Officers in imposing menacing classifications as a mitigation measure to prevent harm to people, other animals and wildlife.

e. Number of infringement notices issued

Category	2009/10	2010/11
Number of infringement notices issued	263	188

Trend:

Percentage decrease of 28% between 2009/10 and 2010/11 in the total number of infringements issued. Percentage decrease of 21% between 2009/10 (160) and 2010/11 (126) in the number of infringements issued for failure to register.

Analysis:

Failure to register a dog and failure to control a dog accounted for 67% and 25% respectively, of infringements issued in 2010/11.

The Council's current approach acknowledges that the first step to responsible dog ownership is dog registration. Therefore, a continued focus by the Council on registration education and compliance has seen the total number of infringements reduce.

f. Number of dog related complaints

Category	2009/10	2010/11
Attacks on people	48	41
Attacks on domestic animals	47	67
Challenging/rushing	71	81
Barking dogs	538	683
Bylaw (excludes roaming dogs)	28	27
Roaming dogs	1308	1380
Miscellaneous: education/advice breed id/beaches	59	89
Total number of dog related complaints	2099	2431

Trend:

Dog complaints have increased in conjunction with the increased number of registered dogs over the past year.

Attacks on people have decreased in the past year, however attacks overall have increased, from 95 in 2009/10 to 108 in 2010/11. There is no clear explanation of this trend.

Analysis:

Focus on dog owner education along with patrolling and enforcement of infringement offences has seen a decrease in the number of dog attacking person complaints in comparison to 2009/10.

All complaints of dog aggression were investigated during the year. These are compared with previous years, as follows:

777 dogs were impounded in the 2010/11 period. This includes dogs roaming, captured, trapped or seized; 643 dogs were released, 68 were destroyed and 66 dogs were adopted or transferred.

g. Prosecutions

Category	2009/10	2010/11
Number of summary prosecutions	0	0

The effective use of enforcement options such as infringements has resulted in prosecutions rarely being required. Wellington City Council's last prosecution of a dog owner was initiated under Section 57 of the Act in 2007/08 and was successfully completed (owner convicted and both dogs destroyed) in 2008/09.

4. Other Information

4.1 Dog Education and Dog Obedience courses

- Education presentations were made to 1 Wellington school reaching 4 classes and 141 children. All Wellington schools were offered a free presentation and every school was visited who had requested a visit. The remainder of the schools who accepted the offer were scheduled for visits from July 2011 onwards.
- Dog Owner Community Training was provided in December 2010 and May 2011 where free dog training and assessment classes were provided to 45 dogs and their owners.
- A series of dog educational brochures are available and were distributed. This material is focused on bite prevention in the community. Adult education classes are offered to adults at risk such as postal delivery staff, Housing NZ staff, Ministry of Justice Bailiffs, Council building and licensing staff and meter readers.
- A copy of the Dog Control Policy and Animal Bylaw is available to every dog owner through the Council website, and includes information regarding dog exercise areas. These publications are also available on request in hard copy.