

*Dog Control Policy and
Practices under the Dog
Control Act 1996
1 July 2008 – 30 June 2009*

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 and 2006.

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 2008 to 30 June 2009.

2. The Council's Dog Control Policy and Practices

2.1 Policy objectives

The Council adopted a Dog Control Policy in September 2004 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
- To prevent the danger caused by dogs to the public and to wildlife and natural habitats
- To minimise the distress and nuisance caused by dogs to the public and to wildlife and natural habitats
- To actively promote the responsible ownership of dogs
- To provide for the reasonable exercise and recreational needs of dogs and their owners.

2.2 Dog Exercise Areas

The Council provides 48 designated off-leash exercise areas across the city. Several beach exercise areas are also provided. The criteria used to determine these areas include an assessment of:

- other predominant uses
- assessment of size and access to the area
- the presence of wildlife
- consideration of lines of sight
- potential risk to other groups
- adjoining uses.

The Council initiated a review of its Dog Control Policy in April 2008. Included in this review will be an examination of the Dog Exercise Areas. The Wellington Consolidated Bylaw 2008 - Part 2: Animals will be reviewed in conjunction with the review of the Dog Control Policy.

2.3 Dog prohibited areas

Dogs are prohibited from certain specified areas. In determining the levels of access for dogs, consideration is given to the intensity of public use and the associated risk posed to other groups and the public who use the area. 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 2008 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 2008/09 year. Particular attention was paid to the Central Business District, Karori Cemetery, 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 the 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	2007/08	2008/09
Total number of registered dogs	8570	8770

b. Number of probationary and disqualified owners

Category	2007/08	2008/09
Total number of probationary owners	0	0
Total number of disqualified owners	1	1

Analysis

In 2007/08 a dog owner was disqualified under section 169 of the Animal Welfare Act 1999 for two years. The disqualification expires 26 March 2010.

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

Category	1 July 2007 – 30 June 2008	1 July 2008 – 30 June 2009
Dangerous by Owner Conviction Under s31(1)(a)	1	1
Dangerous by Sworn Evidence s31(1)(b)	19	22
Dangerous by Owner Admittance in Writing s31(1)(c)	3	3
Total # Dangerous Dogs	23	26

Trend:

Percentage increase of 13% between 2007/08 and 2008/09.

Analysis:

There is no clear explanation for the trend.

The dog classified as dangerous in the period 2007/08 by Owner Conviction was classified dangerous by another Territorial Authority 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	1 July 2007 – 30 June 2008	1 July 2008 – 30 June 2009
Menacing under s33A(1)(b)(i) - by Behaviour	38	51
Menacing under s33A(1)(b)(ii) -by Breed characteristics	28	20
Menacing under s33C(1) by Schedule 4 Breed.	35	63
Total # Menacing Dogs	101	134

Trend:

Percentage increase of 33% between 2007/08 and 2008/09.

Analysis:

There has been an increased 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	2007/08	2008/09
Number of infringement notices issued	279	349

Trend:

Percentage increase of 25% between 2007/08 and 2008/09 in the total number of infringements issued. Percentage increase of 39% between 2007/08 and 2008/09 in the number of infringements issued for failure to register.

Analysis:

Failure to register a dog accounted for 67% and failure to control accounted for 19% of infringements issued in 2008/09.

Particular focus by the Council on registering previously unknown dogs has resulted in an increase of infringements issued for failing to register a dog.

The Council's current approach acknowledges that the first step to responsible dog ownership is dog registration.

f. Number of dog related complaints

Category	2007/08	2008/09
Number of dog related complaints	2157	2103
Attacks on people	44	60
Attacks on domestic animals	58	63
Challenging	89	67
Barking dogs	533	502
Bylaw (excludes roaming dogs)	37	29
Roaming dogs	1263	1296
Miscellaneous:		
education / advice breed id / beaches	133	86

Trend:

2.6% decrease in dog complaints over the past year.

Analysis:

Focus on dog owner education along with enforcement of infringement offences has seen a decrease in complaints.

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

Category	1 July 2007 – 30 June 2008	1 July 2008 – 30 June 2009
Rushing People	89	67
Domestic Animal attacked	58	63
Person Attacked	44	60
Total number of attacks	102	123

774 dogs were impounded in the 2008/09 period. This includes dogs roaming, captured, trapped or seized; 622 dogs were released, 98 were destroyed and 54 dogs were adopted or transferred.

g. Prosecutions

Category	2007/08	2008/09
Number of summary prosecutions	1	0

The effective use of enforcement options such as infringements has resulted in prosecutions rarely being required. One prosecution 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 2 Wellington schools reaching 16 classes & 345 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 2009 onwards.
- Dog Owner Community Training was provided in November 2008 where free dog training and assessment classes were provided to 51 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 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.