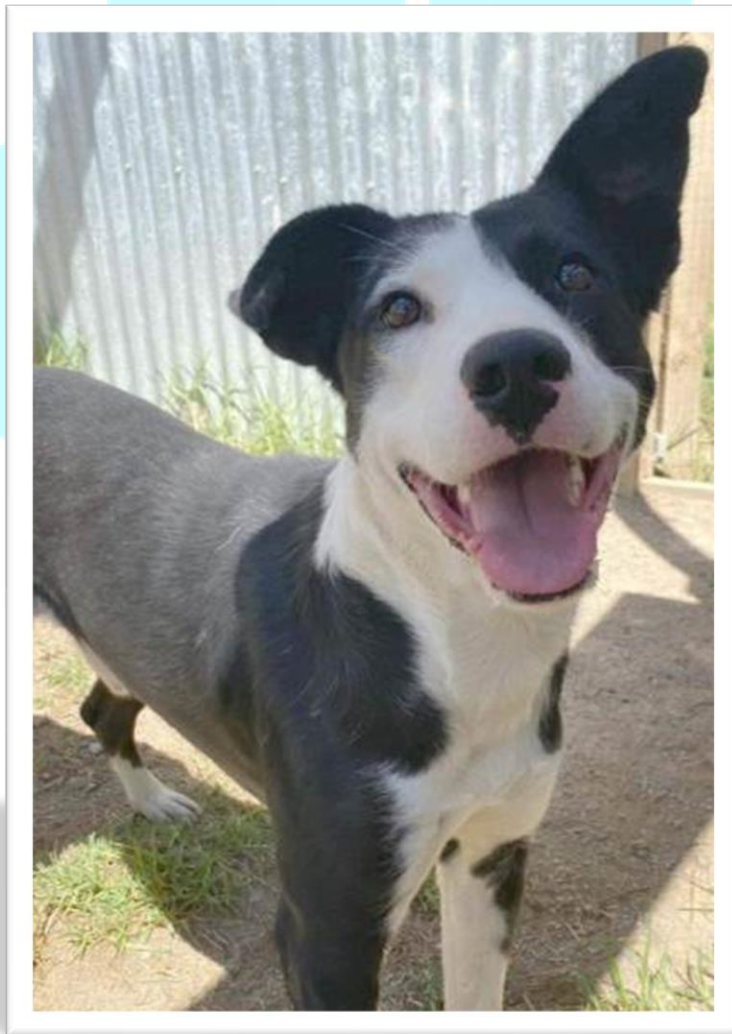


Far North District Council Annual Report on Dog Control Policy and Practice **2020/2021**



Author: Rochelle Deane, Manager Environmental Services

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

The Far North District Council, as a territorial authority is required to manage and enforce provisions pursuant to the Dog Control Act 1996 (the Act).

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

This report fulfils this statutory requirement for the dog registration year 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021 and provides 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 the administration, field and shelter services. FNDC have a total of ten Animal Management Officers across the district, which includes a Team Leader and Senior Officers.

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 and the Far North District Council Dog Management Policy and Bylaw, encouraging responsible dog ownership, the registration of dogs as well as community education.

The Animal Management team have officers dedicated to either the north or south of the district which allows for the officers to interact with dog owners and the public in those areas. By having local knowledge, the officers can respond to complaints and request for service in a timelier way. The Animal Management team have a work roster to cover after-hour emergencies.

2. The Council's Dog Control Policy and Practices

2.1 FNDC Dog Management Policy

The Council adopted a Dog Management Policy in February 2019 which outlines the Council's requirements regarding controlling dogs in public places. The policy is enforceable under the FNDC Dog Management Bylaw 2018.

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

Dog Registration

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 2020/2021

Responding to complaints (RFS)

There has been a total of 2809 dog control customer requests for service received over the 2020/2021 period. This is over 900 more individual requests for service than the previous year. A large proportion of the increase is due to the high number of adoption and registration queries received from the community.

With no lock down periods during 2020/2021 there was a predicted increase across all job types. However, it is promising to see a further decrease in dog attack and straying incidents than recorded in the previous pre-lockdown year (2018/2019).

The Animal Management team completed the year meeting response times with an average of 95.4% for urgent RFS (attacks and aggressive RFS) and 94.6% for non-urgent

Dog Registration

The number of known dogs in the district remains steady at 11,069. Of these 8,949 were registered for 2020/2021 period. This is an increase of 665 registered dogs from the previous year and gives 81% compliancy with registration up from 75% in 2019/2020.

The Animal Management team have undertaken a focussed effort on following up on unregistered dogs over the year which, as well as increasing registration numbers, has also cleansed the database to remove dogs that had gone from the district or had died.

Historically approximately 50% of the noncompliant dogs are either deceased or left the area with no notification to Council.

A social media campaign (AROHA) promoting dog registration and responsible dog ownership was launched in May 2021. This campaign was continued with an information insert 'Kuri Kāreere Doggo Digest' included with dog registration reminder notices.



Probationary and Disqualified Owners

There are five Disqualified owners in the district and no Probationary owners.

Anybody who has received three or more infringement notices within a two-year period, or who has been convicted of any offence under the Dog Control Act 1996 may be classified as a Disqualified Owner.

Enforcement

Animal Management has a range of enforcement measures that can be taken for offending. These can be as simple as sending a Dog Control Notice requiring the further control of dogs to infringement notices for lower levels of offending, or as serious as prosecuting the dog owner which can lead to a criminal conviction, destruction of the dog and disqualification as a dog owner for up to 5 years.

FNDC follow the VADE (Voluntary, Assisted, Directed, Enforced) model to facilitate compliance and Animal management have a department operational motto of “Education before Enforcement”

This means our staff take the approach of engaging with our customers in the first instance, taking every opportunity to educate them and provide an opportunity to be voluntarily compliant, and then, if necessary, taking the appropriate enforcement action. This approach has resulted in better relationships with dog owners in our communities.

There has been a total of 231 infringements issued for offences under the Dog Control Act 1996. This is an increase of 65 from 2019/2020 and is reflective of proactive work in the unregistered dog area (179 infringements).

There was only one prosecution for dog attacks over the year compared to four the previous year.

- S 57 Dog Control Act
- Defendant did not show.
- Hearing by formal proof went ahead.
- Council proved its case.
- Dog Owner convicted.
- Court ordered the following:
 - Destruction order granted.
 - \$850 penalty.
 - \$2252 in pound costs
 - Court costs \$130.
- Council to issued s 25 letter to Dog Owner for prohibition of ownership.

Although prosecution numbers are less it is preferable not to be prosecuting. Less prosecutions also reflect the proactive work the Animal Management team are performing by way of community engagement promoting responsible dog ownership. Prosecutions are used only as a last resort where it is necessary to ensure community safety however a prosecution may not be in the best interests where either victim are not willing to attend court or where alternate actions would have a greater impact

Menacing and Dangerous Dogs

There is a total of 191 menacing dogs in the district, this is a decrease of 46 dogs from the previous year. This is also a further result of the registration follow up program identifying dogs that had died or left the district.

159 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 Act all dogs must be classified as menacing they belong 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. All dogs registered within the district and classified as menacing by Council, or any other territorial authority must be neutered.

There are two dogs classified as dangerous in the district. One classification is a result of sworn evidence attesting to the aggressive behaviour of the dog, and the other was as a result of a

dog transferred into our district with a classification already imposed on it by another territorial authority. Every dangerous dog classification under section 31 of the Act is in force throughout New Zealand.

Impounded Dogs

A total of 423 dogs were impounded in the council shelter. This is an increase of 50 dogs from the previous year.

73% of impounded dogs were either returned to their owners or rehomed.

112 (27%) of dogs impounded at the shelter were euthanised due to not being claimed by an owner and not being suitable for rehoming.

69 dogs found new homes via the FNDC adopt a dog Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/adoptadogFNDC>, this is 50 more than in 2019/2020. This page now has over 3,500 followers.

This is a credit to the Animal Management team and something we are very proud of. Rehomed dogs are temperament tested, vaccinated, microchipped registered and desexed prior to going to their new homes. New owners are also vetted, and properties checked to endeavour to match appropriate dogs with the right owner.

The first new Animal Shelter for the Far North District was completed at the end of June 2021 and was officially opened and became operational on 23 July 2021. The new shelter caters for up to 20 dogs with 12 outdoor kennels and eight indoor kennels. Auxiliary facilities such as exercising areas, quarantining facilities, veterinary and storage facilities are also included.

FNDC was awarded \$1 Million for animal shelter projects through a successful bid for funding from the Provincial Development Unit (PDU) as part of the shovel-ready projects.

A second shelter in Kaikohe is due to be operational in July 2022.



Due to the uncertainty with Covid alert levels during 2020/2021 a Nga Kuri event for the district did not eventuate. Instead, along with the AROHA campaign promoting responsible dog ownership, budget allocated to this event was also used to de-sex and micro-chip dogs across the district via a voucher system.

Dogs were identified by the Animal Management Officer's where it was found owners required assistance towards compliance. A total of 51 dogs across the district were made compliant on the program.

Planned Activities for 2021/2022

- Continue to review standard operating procedures to provide efficient and consistent customer centric processes for the delivery of Animal Management services.
- Hold another community Nga Kuri Auau event in the district in, to connect with dog owners and assist communities to take steps towards compliance. The aim will be to hold the event in Autumn 2022.
- Continue proactive registration and compliance action plans to increase registration rates and identify unknown dogs as well as ensuring compliance with classifications.
- Complete the build and refurbishment of a second new Animal Shelter for the district in Kaikohe.

Summary

2020/2021 has been focused on encouraging responsible dog ownership, concentrating on the registration and compliance of dogs, with clear action plans now in place for future.

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.

Dog Control Statistics

Table one: Registration/Classification related data

	Total 2019/2020	Total 2020/2021
Dogs Registered	11,119 Known 8,284 Registered	11,069 Known 8,949 Registered
Dog Owner Classification		
Probationary	0	0
Disqualified	1	5
Menacing Classification		
- By breed	201	159
- By deed	36	32
Combined	237	191
Dangerous Classification		

Section 31(1) a	0	0
Section 31(1) b	1	1
Section 31(1) c	0	1
Total Dangerous	1	2

Table two: Request for Service Data

Customer requests break down by job type		
Job Type	2019/2020	2020/2021
Attacks	172	201
Straying	318	486
Rushing	30	54
Barking	180	323
Aggressive	100	128
Miscellaneous Enquiries*	438*	869*
Lost and Found	240	252
Pick-Up Request	373	416
Micro-chip Request	19	-
Dog Welfare	38	80
Grand Total	1908	2809

* Miscellaneous Enquiries includes adoption queries (637), refund requests, infringement notice enquiries, bylaw enquiries, signage, general information etc.

Table three: Compliance Data

	2019/2020	2020/2021
Prosecutions	5	14
Infringement Offence		
18 Wilful Obstruction of dog control officer or ranger	0	0
19(2) Failure or refusal to supply information or wilfully providing false particulars	0	1
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	12
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	
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	179
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	4
53(1) Failure to keep dog under control	29	35
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	231

Table four: Shelter data

	2019/2020	2020/2021
Impounded Total	373	423
Total number of dogs returned to owner	151	178
% dogs returned to owner	40%	42%
Total number of dogs to Rescue Groups	95	64
Total number of dogs adopted via Council	19	69
% dogs to Rescue Groups/Adopted	31%	31%
Total number of dogs euthanised	108	112
% dogs euthanised	29%	27%