



# **Dog Control Annual Report**

## **For the 12 Months Ending 30 June 2018**

Section 10A Dog Control Act 1996

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## Document Revision

Date	Amendment	Amended by	Approved by	Approval date

The Southland District Council is required to publicly report each financial year on the administration of its Dog Control Policy and its Dog Control practices.

## What we do

This activity provides for the control of dogs to protect the public, and promotes responsible dog ownership. The activity involves registering dogs, investigating complaints about dogs, education, monitoring and enforcement.

## Why we do it

Dog control contributes to creating safe places (homes, public places and roads), the abatement of nuisances from dogs, and the protection of protected wildlife. The Council is required to comply with the legal requirements of the Dog Control Act 1996 and the Impounding Act 1955.

## Dog Control in the Southland District

The Southland District Council covers a large geographical area, which includes both urban and rural dog owners.

In order to deliver an Animal Control service, the Council has an Animal Control Unit consisting of:

- a manager
- a full time Dog Control Officer
- a 0.8 full time equivalent Dog Control Officer
- three casual Dog Rangers
- an afterhours contractor (Armourguard)
- a shared service with the Invercargill City Council

The Animal Control Unit has a close working relationship with key stakeholders in the community such as the Society for the Protection of Animals (SPCA), Furever Homes, local veterinarians, Police and other local authorities.

The Animal Control Unit operates a seven day, 24 hour service.

Staff believe that resourcing is currently adequate to fulfil its statutory duties. A quality management officer has been employed by the Council to assist with the development of a quality system across Environmental Services.

## Commentary on statistical information

Some commentary on the statistical information in Appendix 1 is as follows:

### Wandering dogs:

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There has been a reduction in wandering dog complaints. Dog Control Officers advise that there has been an improvement in dog containment, with fewer wandering dogs being observed than several years ago.

## Microchipping:

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The number of dogs' microchipped by SDC has increased, as it did the year prior to that as well. This is likely due to the new fee discounts, where chipping is mandatory for the responsible owner discount.

## Infringement notices:

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The new fee discounts have introduced warning letters as an intermediate step, prior to the need to issue an infringement. The absence of a warning letter is one requirement for the responsible owner discount. Officers have been using warning letters for compliance more, and issuing infringements less. The number of infringements relating to unregistered dogs has increased.

## Attacks/rushing:

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There has been a decrease in the number of rushing/attack incidents, as there was the year before that as well. This may be related to observations of less wandering dogs - that is, dogs are being better contained, and this is a factor that is directly related to rushing/attack incidents.

## Incentive to re-register online

It is highly desirable to increase the number of dog owners re-registering their dogs online. Benefits are:

- less staff time in processing an application = less cost
- high accuracy – this also results in less cost, due to less time following up on errors

Staff recommended that a prize draw is conducted, to increase the number of online applications. 20 free dog registrations were promoted as prizes for dog owners that apply online by 1 July 2018.

Applying online means that the dog owner, once receiving the registration pack in the post, goes onto Council's website to the "Payments" shortcut, and then pays for the dog registration using a credit/debit card. Owners that register by this method are not required to send back their registration form.

## Online Registration for new dogs

Council approved the collection of less dog registration fees, for new dogs registered using the online registration option.

This was needed because Council's online system currently cannot back calculate the puppy fee from the date of birth of the dog, rather it calculates it from the date of registration. This will result in less fees being collected, though the loss is relatively minor.

## Signs on gates

Staff started a project to consider providing signs to dog owners for free, such as "beware of dog". The project was discontinued following legal advice, the main concern being that signs do not remove liability in the event of a person being attacked entering a private property; rather dog owners must take extra precautions when they believe that their dogs may attack a person entering their property. This information was provided to the public in Council's first edition newsletter in the 18/19 year.

## Workshop

Animal Control Staff organised a workshop on 9 October 2017 for agencies that have staff that enter private property, such as posties and meter readers. The workshop was well attended; and run in cooperation with the Gore District and Invercargill City Councils.

## Curio Bay

Staff considered concerns raised about dogs endangering protected wildlife at Curio Bay. Options include improved signage, another local communication run, adding dog control duties to the freedom camping ranger, or perhaps even extending the prohibited zone via bylaw amendment. This issue is to be considered by the Regulatory and Consents Committee in the 18/19 year.

## Council offer to owners of existing menacing dogs

In September 2017, staff wrote to all owners of classified menacing dogs that had not been neutered (10 of them), and were not required to be as they were classified prior to the adoption of the Dog Control Bylaw 2015. The letter offered free de-sexing; and none of the recipients accepted the offer.

## Amnesty

Council ran a dog control amnesty from Monday 12 February 2018 until Friday 13 April 2018. The amnesty applied to dogs that are ordinarily kept in the District but were not currently registered.

39 dogs were registered for free under the amnesty, and none of them were menacing breeds.

## Dog registration fee discounts

The number of non-working dogs that qualified for the discounts is shown in the graph below:



## Dog Education

Dog education is achieved in a number of ways, including during registration process, patrols, site visits, articles and Facebook. The unit also places promotional material in Council's First Edition which is sent quarterly to all ratepayers in the Southland District Council area.

## Otautau Community Board request for amendment to the Dog Control Bylaw 2015

The Otautau Community Board gave some consideration to changing the dog access rules at the Otautau Arboretum, in early 2017. Council initiated a process to amend the Dog Control Bylaw 2015 (the Bylaw) to change part of the Arboretum into a dog exercise area. The amendment was not approved by Council (late 2017) and the whole of the Arboretum remains a dog on-leash area.

The Otautau Community Board then resolved on 12 December 2017:

*Agree that staff proceed with further investigation to find a suitable area within the Otautau Township to be designated as a dog exercise area and that an advertisement be placed in the local Otautau News and Views to obtain community input.*

Five submissions were received, all recommending that the flood bank between Chester and Durham Streets is designated as a dog exercise area. This area is currently under Council's default access rule, so dogs may be off leash there currently. Designating this area as a dog exercise area will encourage dog owners to exercise their dogs there.

This issue is to be considered by the Regulatory and Consents Committee in the 18/19 year.

## Shared service

The Council shares services with the Invercargill City Council:

1. Council has warranted three ICC Animal Control officers and can draw on their services when the demand arises.
2. Council operates a Combined Dog Control Facility with the ICC. Five of the 28 kennels are dedicated for use by Council. Council has an exclusive licence to occupy five kennels signed in 2012, with the licence to have a life of 50 years with a right of renewal. SDC paid a one-off capital contribution and has an arrangement for paying for ongoing expenses and a daily tariff for each kennel when in use by SDC.

## Free microchipping

The Council continues to offer free microchipping for dogs registered with it.



**Michael Sarfai**

Manager Environmental Health

## Appendix 1 - Statistical Information

Category	For Period 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017	
Registrations for Dogs	Approximately 13,426 as at 30 June 2017	Approximately 12,834 as at 30 June 2018
% Pet dogs	50%	49%
Probationary Owners	0	0
Disqualified Owners	6	6
Dangerous Dogs - still active	14	12
• dangerous by Owner Conviction under s31(1)(a)	0	0
• dangerous by Sworn Evidence s31(1)(b)	12	11
• dangerous by Owner Admittance in writing s31(1)(c)	1	1
Menacing Dogs - Active	59	47
• menacing under s33A(1)(b)(i) - by behaviour	23	22
• menacing under s33A(1)(b)(ii) - by breed characteristics	1	0
• menacing under s33C(1)(ii) by Schedule 4 Breed	35	25
Infringement Notices	89	120
• obstructed a dog control officer or dog ranger	0	0
• failed to comply with bylaw	0	3
• failed to comply with disqualification	0	0
• fail to comply dangerous dog classification	2	0
• kept an unregistered dog	46	72
• failed to keep dog controlled or confined	36	40
• failed to keep dog under control	2	4
• failure to provide proper care	1	0
• failure to comply with menacing dog classification	1	1
• failure to comply with barking abatement notice	1	0
Complaints received	721	465
• dog attacks	42	38
• barking dogs	194	161
• found dogs	187	117
• dog rush/threaten (nil bite)	31	42

<b>Category</b>	<b>For Period 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017</b>	
• wandering dogs	267	215
• general enquiries (new code introduced in 2016)	47	82
Number of dogs microchipped by SDC	486	522
Number of prosecutions	0	0