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DOG CONTROL REPORT 2022/23

Annual Section 10A Dog Control Act Report 2022/23

This report has been prepared to satisfy the requirements of Section 10A of the Dog Control Act 1996 ('the Act').

The report covers the 2022/23 fiscal year.

Policy on Dogs

The Dog Control Policy review process is scheduled to start around November 2023 and will continue through until May 2024. As a result of this review, the current Dog Control Bylaw is scheduled to be repealed and substituted with a new version in June 2024.

Accommodation

The Animal Management Office is located at Palmerston North City's Central Administration Building, situated on The Square. The Council Pound can be found on Totara Road, Palmerston North, positioned at the rear of the racecourse and adjacent to the wastewater treatment plant. Within this facility, there is kennelling for 36 dogs and six puppies, alongside a designated dog exercise area and administrative space for two staff members.

At present, a new Shelter is being constructed. Once completed, the new facility will have the capacity to house 45 dogs distributed among three kennel blocks, with room for expansion on the site should Council need to add another kennel block in the future. These kennel blocks will include a dedicated area for pregnant dogs, accommodating whelping needs, as well as eight kennels specifically designed for small dogs or puppies. Additionally, there will be 11 purpose-built kennels to safely house and manage dangerous dogs. There will be administrative space to accommodate the current Animal Management team with room for expansion.

Personnel

The Animal Management team is part of the Customer Unit and reports to the Environmental Protection Services Manager. The Team Leader of Animal Management and Education is focused on service efficiency improvements for the benefit of customers. Supporting the Team Leader are three experienced Animal Control Officers and a Kennel Manager/Education Officer, who is also warranted as an Animal Control Officer.

Hours of Operation

Normal working hours are 8am to 5pm on weekdays. The contracted after-hours services, provided by Allied Security, are limited to responding to dog attacks, secured dogs, aggressive dogs and roaming dogs.

The Pound is open to the public Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 9.30am and 2.30pm to 4.30pm. The emergency release of animals outside these hours is available but is subject to an additional fee.

Fees

The Palmerston North City Council has fee categories for general registration, with a reduced fee for de-sexed dogs, approved preferred owners and rural working dogs. Disability assist and special working dogs do not attract fees.

Under the Dog Control Act 1996, fees and charges are reviewed annually. As of 1 July 2022, there was an average increase of 4% across all dog registration fee categories except for the Preferred Owner application fee which was not increased. The increases were in line with CPI.

Dog registration fees, fines and impound fees contributed 88% of the cost of dog control in Palmerston North City in 2022/23. This is up 2% on the last fiscal year however, still within the approved funding policy of 80/20.

Dog Registration

There were 9636 dogs registered in 2022/23 to 7252 owners, this is an increase of 0.7% (71 dogs) in registered dogs from the previous year. Alongside this, there was a decrease in the number of dog owners within the city, with a decline of 161 owners.

Preferred Owners

The financial benefit of being a preferred owner is a reduction in the annual registration fees. In July 2020, changes were made to the structure of registration categories allowing both urban and rural pet dog owners to be eligible for this scheme.

To qualify as a preferred owner, the owner must;

- Have had the dog(s) registered for the past 12 months,
- Provide a satisfactory secure environment in respect to fencing, sleeping quarters and exercise space,
- Demonstrate an understanding of basic dog welfare and owners' obligations,
- Have no more than one dog impounded or found roaming in the past 12 months,
- Have no more than one substantiated complaint about their dog(s) in the past 12 months and
- Have paid dog registration fees on time.

In 2021/22 there were 2739 preferred dog owners, which decreased by 2.41% to 2673 in 2022/23. The decrease in numbers is thought to be from older dogs passing, owners having left the city and removal of preferred owner status due to non-payment of registration.

Complaints

During the year, a total of 2,967 complaints or investigations took place, showing a 6.2% decrease (197 fewer complaints) compared to the previous year. Reported dog attacks decreased by 3.42% (four attacks less) from last year, making this year 8.5% higher than the five-year average. The primary source of complaints were roaming/secured dogs, accounting for 1,357 complaints (45.7%), which marked a 19.6% increase (222 more complaints) on the previous year. Barking dogs accounted for 917 complaints (30.9%), reflecting a 29.2% increase in barking complaints on the previous year. Successful efforts to identify unregistered dogs resulted in a 96.9% compliance rate for dog registration.

Dog Attacks

There were 113 reported dog attacks during the year, 47 of these were attacks on a person, 26 were assessed as minor, 14 moderate, four were serious and the remaining three complaints were false or withdrawn. There were 51 attacks on other dogs, with 23 assessed as minor, 19 as moderate, seven as serious (four of which were in relation to the same attack) the remaining two complaints were false or withdrawn. There were 15 attacks on other animals, with 7 assessed as minor, 7 as moderate and the remaining attack was false.

Impounded Dogs

In 2022/23, 428 dogs were impounded compared with 351 for the previous year. Of these, 273 (63.8%) were returned to their owner, 109 (25.5%) were euthanised and 46 (10.8%) were rehomed, with 20 being transferred to the SPCA or another rehoming agency. The remaining four (1%) are dogs that are awaiting collection.

In comparison with the 2021/22 figures, which saw 17% of dogs euthanised, euthanasia numbers have increased by 8.5% (50 dogs) additionally, the number of dogs rehomed or transferred to another agency also rose by 21% (8 dogs) this bucks a trend being experienced in other TA's where there has been difficulty rehoming dogs. Contributing to the number of dogs euthanised in this period there were 30 dogs surrendered to the Council, 26 were deemed unsuitable for rehoming due to behavioural problems or were deemed a menacing breed, and were euthanised. In addition to these 14 dogs were seized for attacks and subsequently euthanised due to either not being collected or being surrendered to Council.

Note: The number of dogs impounded directly relates to the increase in roaming complaints and the actions that officers have taken when responding to these.

Infringements

Council continued to focus on ensuring that all known dogs were registered and kept under proper control by their owners. Infringements were issued to multiple offenders and in some cases, dogs were impounded.

In 2022/23, a total of 163 infringement notices were issued, 138 for unregistered dogs, 20 for failing to have a dog under control or confined, four for failing to comply with a classification and one for failing to comply with a barking notice. Of the 163 infringements issued, 10 (6%) were waived or cancelled because of extenuating circumstances.

Menacing Dog Classification Appeals

There was one objection to a Menacing Classification made during the 2022/23 year. Despite dates being set for the dog owner to have their objection heard, they did not appear, subsequently the Classification was upheld.

Prosecutions

There was one prosecution brought before the courts in the 2022/23 year, this was a successful prosecution for a serious dog attack on a person

Customer Satisfaction

A residents' satisfaction survey for 2022/23 found 59% satisfied (63% in 2021/22 with the control of roaming dogs, while 26% were neutral, and 15% were dissatisfied. On the control of barking dogs, 51% were satisfied, 34% neutral and 15% dissatisfied. In 2021/22 50% were satisfied. The survey indicated that residents in Takaro ward are more likely to be dissatisfied than other wards when it comes to control of roaming (43%) and barking (40%) dogs. The survey had 536 independently selected respondents from across the city.

Improvement Opportunities

The Code of Welfare amendment for the Temporary Housing of Companion Animals Code came into force in 2018. This meant the current dog pound was identified as not being fit for purpose. A Ministry for Primary Industries audit identified the most concerning matters, which were remedied in June 2020.

The construction of the city's new animal shelter facility has commenced and is due for completion in February 2024. The existing facility has continued to operate during the construction to allow for continuity of service.

The new facility will not only meet the current requirements of the code of welfare, but also allows Council to comply with any future amendments to the code.

In addition, the new facility provides expansion opportunities for the facility to grow with the city's animal management needs.

Community Outreach and Education

The Animal Management team attended two community events during the year, these being Linton Camp Community day, Esplanade open day in addition to hosting a free microchipping and education event at Linklater Reserve.

Four educational events were held at local schools targeting bite prevention, and one dog safety training was provided to a local agency. The team received positive feedback for the events. Further events were planned however these are currently on hold due to resourcing.

Following the evacuation of local homes due to severe flooding caused by a severe weather event in early 2023, four dogs were placed under the care of Civil Defence Emergency Management and housed at the PNCC Pound. Animal Management staff worked with the owners to care for the dogs and ensure visiting their pets was seamless. Additionally, during the recovery from Cyclone Gabrielle, Animal Management offered to house animals for effected Territorial Authorities.

2022/23 Programme

Some additional points of focus are:

- Contributing to the final design detailing and development of the new animal shelter.
- To improve animal welfare, owner behaviour and the public's understanding of how to safely behave around dogs, by continuing to deliver animal management and education.
- Contribute to the Bylaw and Policy review

Summary

The reporting requirements of the Dog Control Act 1996 for the period 2022/23 are:

➤ Number of registered dogs	9636
➤ Number of disqualified owners	0
➤ Number of probationary owners	0
➤ Number of dogs classified as dangerous under Section 31 of the Act	12
➤ Number of dogs classified as menacing under Section 33A of the Act	112
➤ Number of dogs classified as menacing under Section 33C of the Act	50
➤ Number of dog-related complaints (See Appendix 1 for details)	2967
➤ Number of prosecutions	1
➤ Number of infringements	163

Attached as Appendix 1 are details of dangerous and menacing dogs.

Attached in Appendix 2 is a comparative summary of Dog Control Statistics for the period 2018/19 to 2022/23. This contains the information above with the addition of a breakdown of types of complaints processed by staff.

Aaron Thornton

ACTING ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION SERVICES MANAGER



Appendix 1: Dangerous and Menacing Dog Details

Dog Control Act 1996 S 31 – Dangerous Dogs

Section 31 requires the territorial authority to classify a dog as a dangerous dog if:

- The owner of the dog has been convicted of an offence in relation to dog attack,
- The territorial authority has sworn evidence and reasonable grounds to believe that the dog constitutes a threat to the safety of any person, stock, poultry, domestic animal, or protected wildlife; or,
- The dog owner admits in writing that the dog constitutes a threat to the safety of any person, stock, poultry, domestic animal, or protected wildlife.

Dogs within the jurisdiction of Council that are classified as dangerous under S 31 were as follows:

Breed	Number
Alaskan Malamute	1
German Shepherd	1
Greyhound	1
Rottweiler	2
Siberian Husky	2
Shar Pei	2
Terrier, American Staffordshire	1
Terrier, Staffordshire Bull	1
Whippet	1
Total	12

Dog Control Act 1996 S 33C – Menacing Dogs

Under section 33CA the territorial authority must classify as menacing any dog that the territorial authority has reasonable grounds to believe belongs wholly or predominantly to one or more of the following breeds or types:

- Brazilian Fila
- Dogo Argentino
- Japanese Tosa
- Perro de Presa Canario
- American Pit Bull Terrier Type

A total of 50 dogs are classified under section 33c of these 8 were newly classified in the 2022/23 year.

Dogs within the jurisdiction of Council that were classified as menacing under S33C, were as follows:

Breed	Number
Dogo Argentino	4
Terrier, American Pit Bull Type	46
Total	50



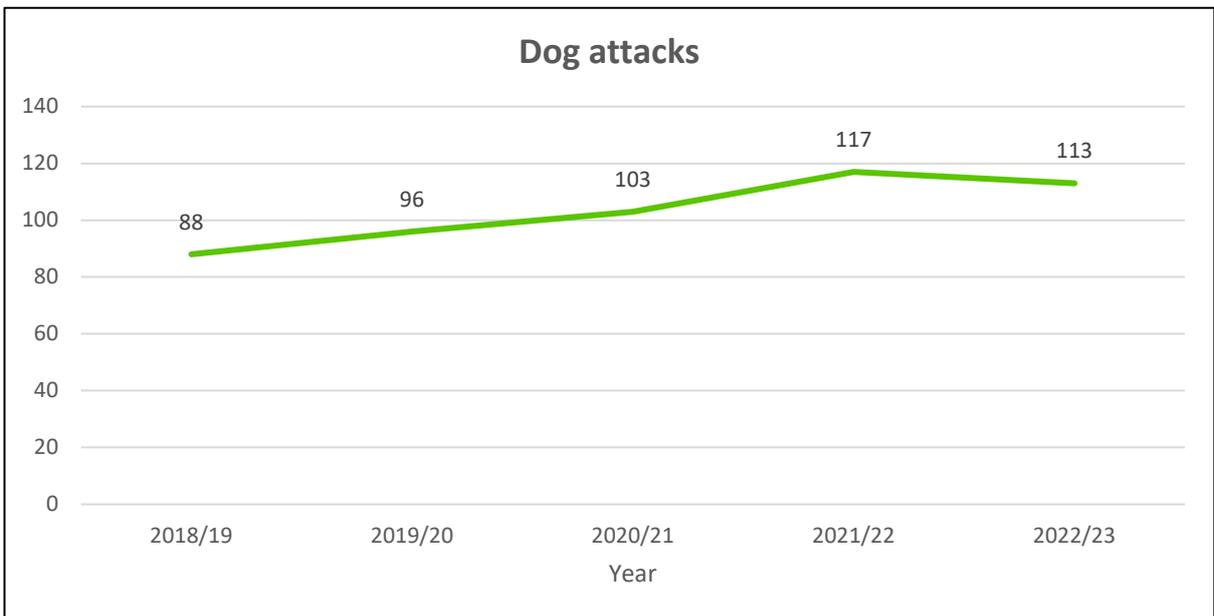
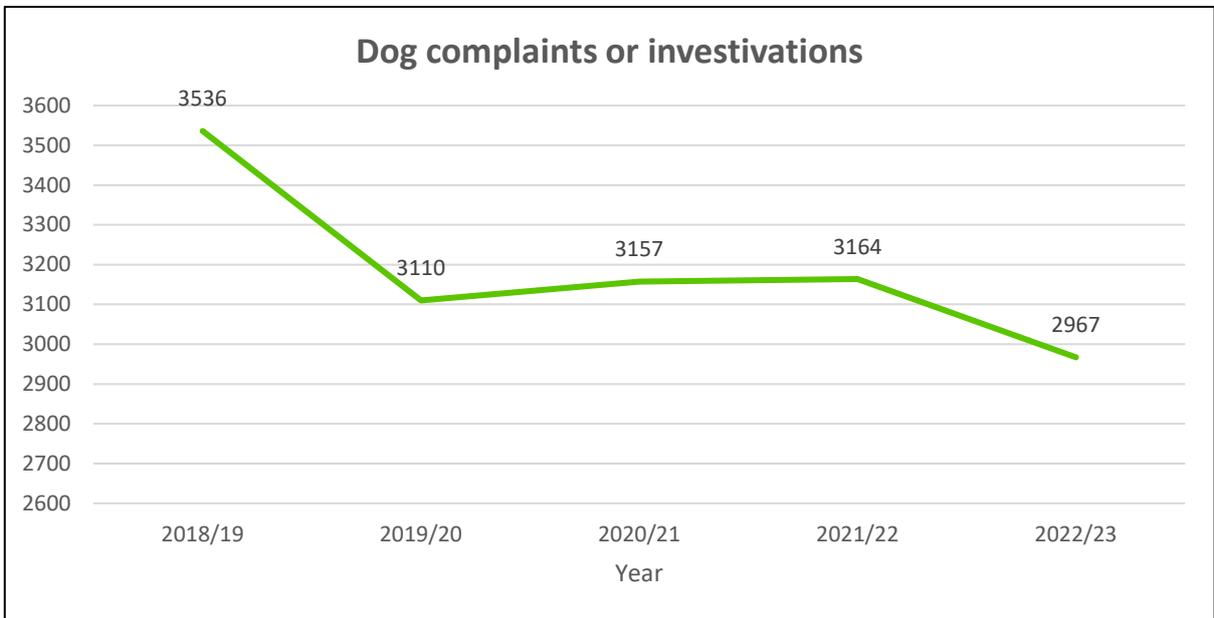
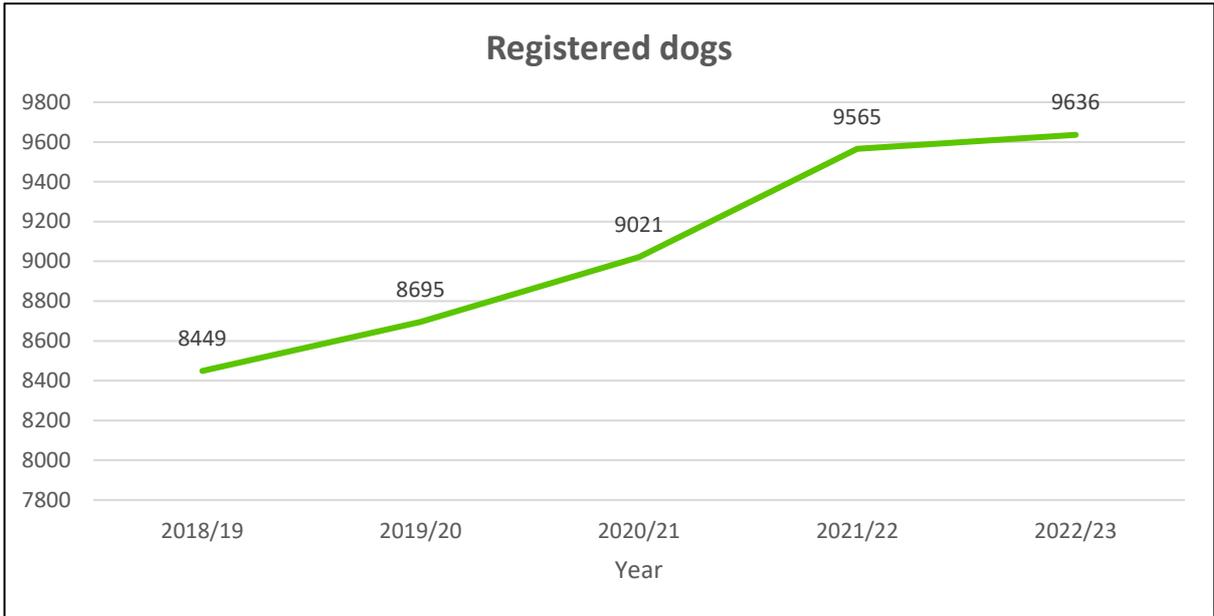
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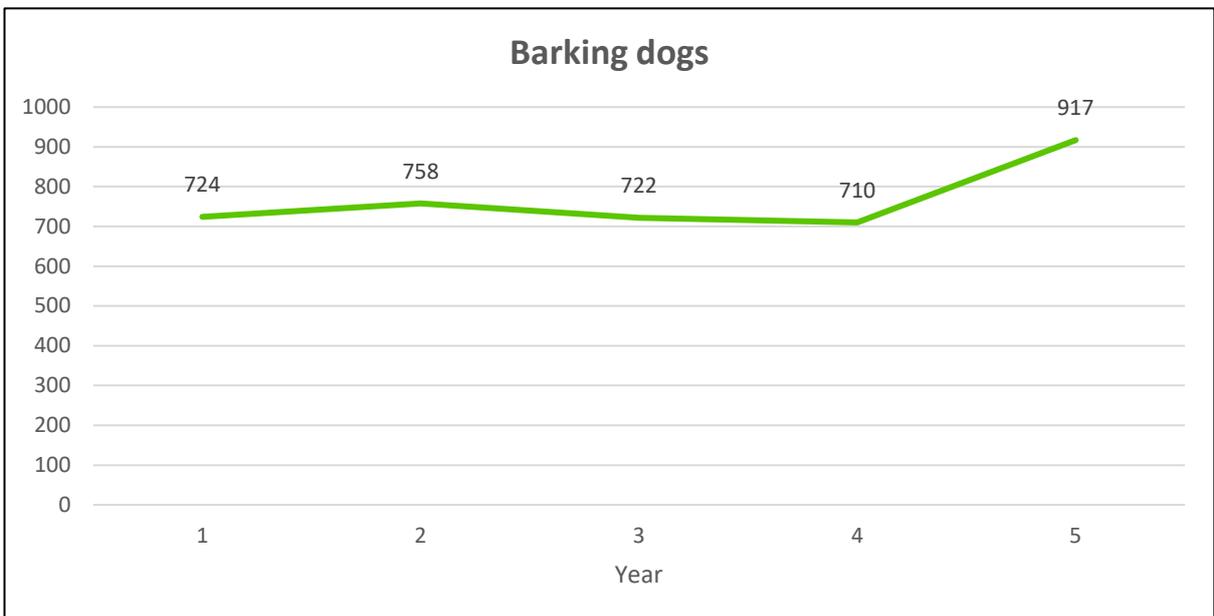
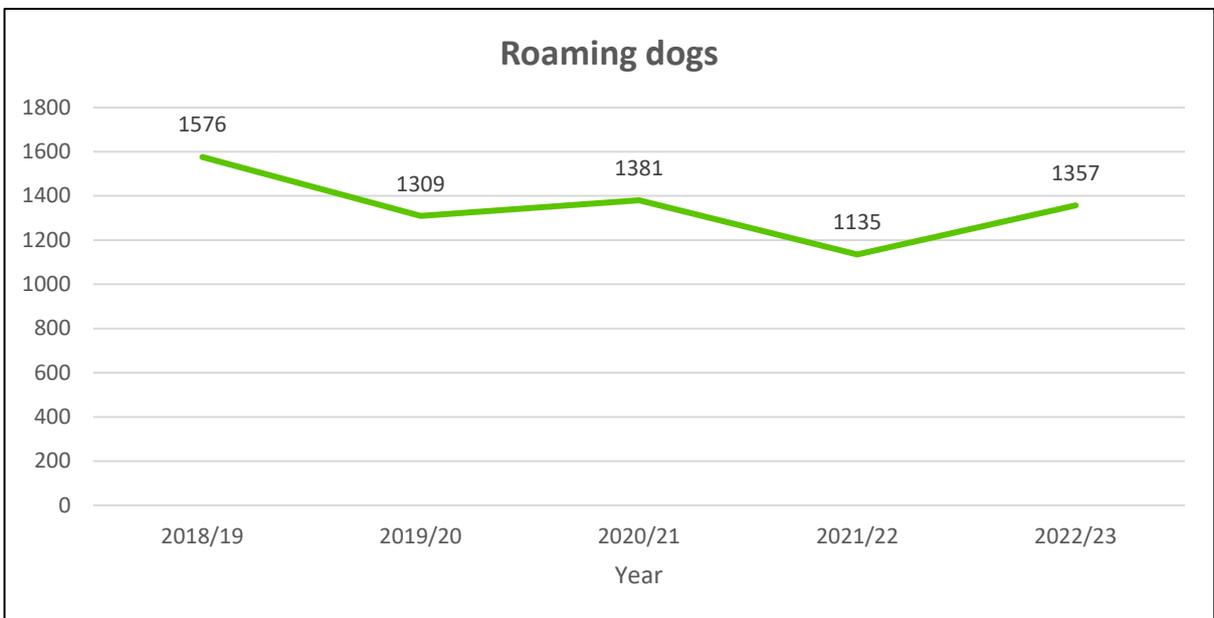
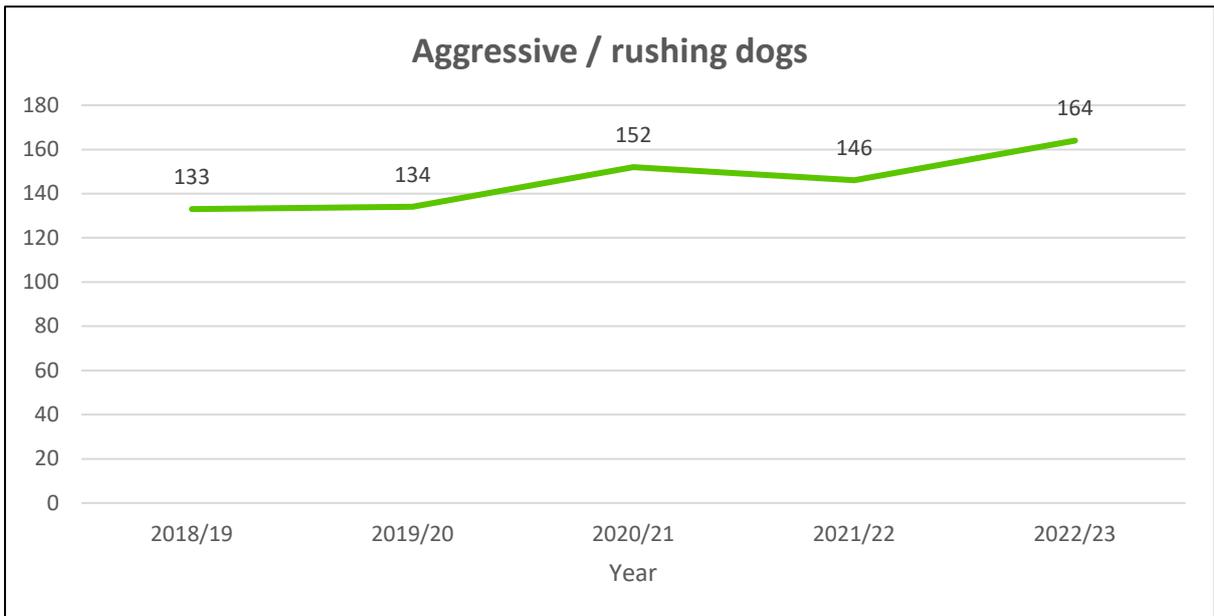
Appendix 2: Dog Control Statistics 2017/2018 to 2022/2023

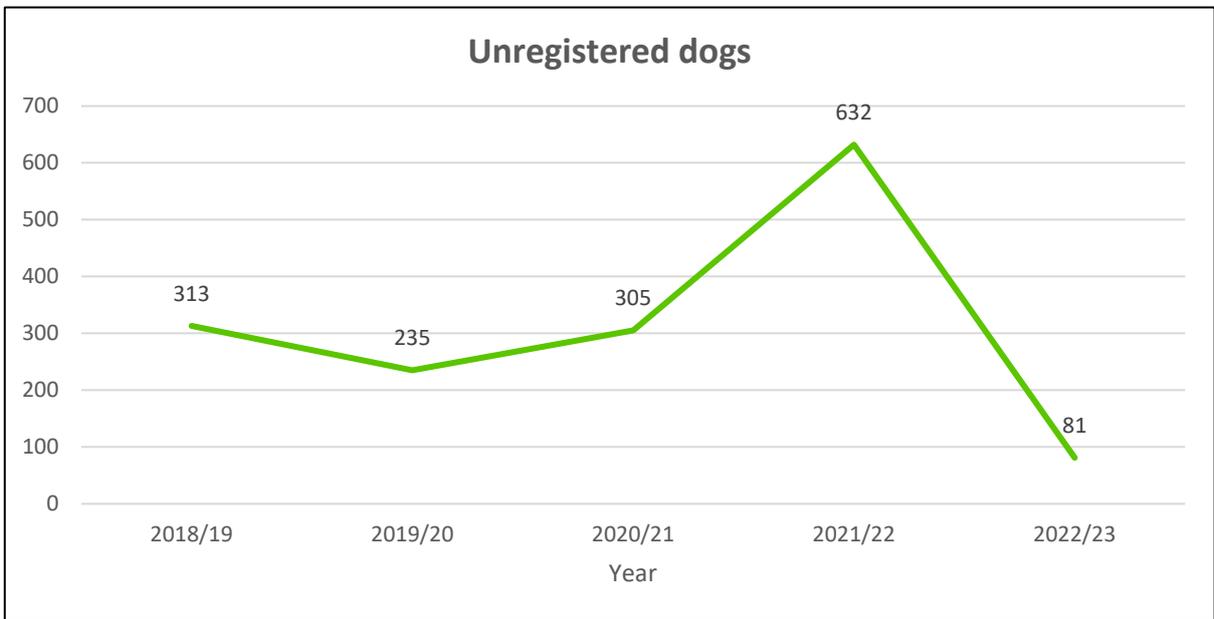
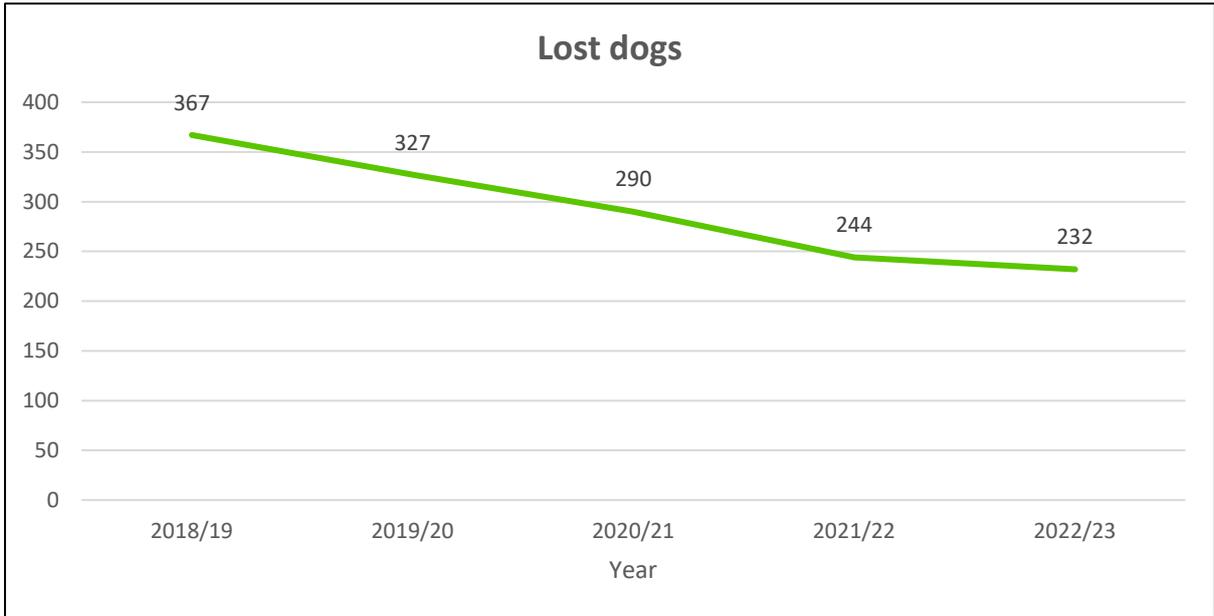
Serial	Topic	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	
1	Number of Dogs Issued with a Registration Tag (Registered Dogs)	8449	8695	9021	9565	9636	
2	Number of Disqualified Owners	5	5	2	0	0	
3	Number of Probationary Owners	1	1	1	0	0	
4	Number of Dogs classified as dangerous under S31 of the Act	5	7	6	10	12	
5	Number of Dogs classified as menacing under S33A of the Act (Behaviour)	91	79	88	117	112	
6	Number of Dogs classified as menacing under S33C of the Act (Breed)	71	77	69	51	50	
7	Number of Dog Complaints or investigations initiated by public or ACO. (Refer to below for details)	3536	3110	3157	3164	2967	
	7a	Aggressive/Rushing Dogs	133	134	152	146	164
	7b	Dog Attacks	88	96	103	117	113
	7c	Barking Dogs	724	758	722	710	917
	7d	Roaming Dogs	1576	1309	1381	1135	1357
	7e	Lost Dogs	367	327	290	244	232
	7f	Property Checks	311	220	85	124	37
	7g	Other Dog Related Incidents	24	31	52	56	66
	7h	Identified/Reported Unregistered dogs	313	235	305	632	81
8	Number of Prosecutions	1	0	0	0	1	
9	Number of Infringements	105	341	182	127	163	

Comments

- Although overall the total number of complaints have dropped off there has been a spike in both roaming complaints, barking complaints and an increase in aggressive and rushing complaints. It's possible that the spike is not necessarily reflective of a true increase in incidents, but rather an increase in reporting or awareness of such issues. The rise in complaints, despite the overall reduction in dog ownership, could also potentially be linked to a return to normal working arrangements post lockdowns that were due to the pandemic.
 - Lack of socialization and training: During the pandemic, when many people were working from home and practicing social distancing, dogs may have had limited opportunities for socialization with other dogs and people. This lack of exposure and training could lead to increased instances of aggressive or rushing behaviour when they encounter unfamiliar situations or individuals.
 - Separation anxiety: Dogs that became accustomed to having their owners around all day during the pandemic might experience separation anxiety when their owners return to normal working arrangements. This anxiety could manifest as barking, aggression or rushing behaviour in certain situations.
 - Reduced exercise and mental stimulation: With owners returning to work outside the home, there might be a decrease in the amount of exercise and mental stimulation provided to dogs. Insufficient physical activity and mental engagement can contribute to behavioural problems, including boredom barking, aggression or rushing.
 - Changes in routine: Dogs are creatures of habit, and any significant changes in their daily routine can cause stress and behavioural changes. The return to normal working arrangements could disrupt the established routines of dogs, leading to increased anxiety.
 - Increased encounters with unfamiliar individuals or dogs: As people return to work and resume regular activities, there may be more interactions between dogs and unfamiliar individuals or dogs. This increased exposure to new stimuli can trigger defensive or reactive behaviour in some dogs.
- Due to the implementation of application fees for preferred ownership, customers seem to have become more deliberate in submitting their applications. As a result, the quality of the applications has significantly improved, leading to the majority of them being granted preferred owner status without encountering any problems.







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