

# DOG CONTROL REPORT 2023/24

# Annual Section 10A Dog Control Act Report 2023/2024.

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

The report covers the 2023/24 fiscal year.

## **Policy on Dogs**

Council reviewed the Dog Control Policy during the 2023/24 reporting period. The review found the Policy was generally working well, with some changes required to bring it up-to-date, and meeting the needs and expectations of the community.

The changes proposed were:

- adding conditions for dogs classified as dangerous or menacing, to align the Policy with the Act;
- changing the wording around barking dogs, to align the Policy with the Act;
- adding clauses related to controls for prohibited public places, and temporary areas of control for dogs; and
- a change to how officers assess our Preferred Owner Scheme to include criteria for emergency preparedness.

77 submissions were received on the proposal, representing a variety of views from the community. Having considered all submissions, the Council adopted the revised Policy on 5 June 2024.

The Dog Control Bylaw, which gives effect to the Policy, was adopted on 26 June 2024 and came into effect on 1 September 2024.

The Policy and Bylaw will next be reviewed in 2029.

## **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 establishment, there are accommodations for 36 dogs and six puppies, alongside a designated dog exercise area and administrative space for two staff members.

In the next financial year the Animal Management Office will be located at Te Whare Kouru – Animal Shelter located at 115 Totara Road, Palmerston North, positioned at the rear of the



racecourse and adjacent to the wastewater treatment plant. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May Te Whare Kouru was blessed marking a significant point in the progress of the project. Rangitāne and those present welcomed a breath of new life into the building, making it ready to receive occupancy. It was a proud moment having the Animal Management team be part of the blessing party along with Councillor Johnson, thus, completing the connection from Iwi to Community and Council Officers. There was a nice connection to animals as well; throughout the ceremony there was the light drumming of running horses in the background as they ran the racecourse opposite Te Whare Kouru, the birds including Tui began to sing as the sun rose, and in the distance could be heard the distinct barking of dogs at the existing site only several hundred metres away.

This build is a significant addition to the city's infrastructure, giving the Animal Management team a purpose built facility that will allow us to better care for the animals and interact safely with the community in a remote location. Within this establishment, there are accommodations for 37 dogs and 13 puppies, alongside seven designated dog exercise areas, one outdoor enrichment space, four isolation kennels and four quarantine kennels. The site has administrative space for eight Dog Control Officers, a Receptionist and Kennel attendant totalling a capacity for ten staff.

Additional features of Te Whare Kouru are; two of the kennel blocks include a dedicated area for pregnant dogs, accommodating for whelping needs. There are 11 purpose-built kennels to safely house dangerous dogs which allow for a dog to be housed and exercised without the need for hands-on interaction from staff. There is a consultation room where an owner and dog can talk with staff and have their dogs microchipped. A dog wash has been included so that officers can bath dogs before rehoming or when they come in dirty from their adventure. There is emergency cleaning water stored onsite and the ability to link a generator to the main power board in the event of prolonged power outage.

Should it be needed for a civil defence emergency there is space within the exercise yards to put in temporary crates to increase the sites capacity.

### **Personnel**

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

An incident during the year resulted in the Kennel Supervisor and Education being vacant for an extended period, and the duties were covered in part by the afterhours contractor providing additional services. The job position is currently under review before advertising a second time.

### **Hours of Operation**

Normal working hours are 8am to 5pm on weekdays. The contracted After-hours services 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 2023, there was an increase of 7% across all dog registration fee categories.

Dog registration fees, fines and impound fees contributed 73% of the cost of animal management in Palmerston North City in 2023/24. This is up 15% on the last fiscal year. This means that the policy of 80% self-funded for the year was not met, which is largely attributed to the interest portion of debt repayments for the construction costs of Te Whare Kouru. As a result, and the need to maintain future payments, the funding policy for Animal Management was adjusted to 60% self-funded and 40% rates funded for the 2024/25 financial year.

### Dog Population

The number of known dogs in the city increased from an annual high of 9,636 in 2022/23 to its highest annual level of 9,735 during 2023/24, however the overall population has decreased by 93 dogs.

There are 7,872 owners, of whom 2,735 are approved as a “preferred owner”. This equates to 1 dog owner for every 9.5 people in the city and 1 preferred owner for every 2.87 owners.

The decrease is not totally unexpected, with current economic pressures and the costs associated with owning a dog is becoming increasingly difficult.

It is typical to see dog numbers change in quarters 1, 3 and 4 as they overlap officer efforts to maintain the dog register and seek out registration renewals.

Quarter	Number of Dogs at Start Date	Number of New Dogs	Number of Deceased Dogs	Number of Departed Dogs	Number of Dogs at Finish Date
<b>Q1</b>	9,435	485	208	147	9,565
<b>Q2</b>	9,565	265	94	74	9,662
<b>Q3</b>	9,662	311	114	231	9,628
<b>Q4</b>	9,628	311	246	351	9,342
<b>Year total</b>	9,435	1,372	662	803	9,342

## Preferred Owners

This scheme benefits both dog owners and officers. There is financial benefit for the dog owners as the registration fee is lower. For officers there is certainty that dog owners are aware of the rules of owning a dog within the city as these are emphasised through the application process.

In 2022/23 there were 2,673 preferred dog owners, which increased by 0.97% to 2,735 in 2023/24.

To qualify as a preferred owner, the owner must;

- Have had the dog(s) registered without issue 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 substantiated complaint about their dog(s) in the past 12 months (includes impounding).

With the changes to the Dog Control Policy coming into place next financial year there are additional considerations around emergency readiness and evacuation planning for pets. Comments from other agencies indicate that pet owners are hesitant to evacuate unless they can bring their pets, so having an emergency plan for dogs aims to support the emergency readiness of the city through the education of registered dog owners.

## Complaints and interactions

Officers group complaint types into two categories; Priority one and Priority two. Priority one consists of high risk to public complaints, such as dog attacks, aggressive / rushing dogs, secured dogs (roaming dogs *captured by the public*) / roaming dogs. All other complaint types are fitted into the Priority two category.

The number of complaints lodged by customers have increased by 35 (1.17%) to 3,002. There were 2,242 complaints received during normal business hours and 765 priority one jobs received afterhours. The average response time for officers is 5.39 minutes across all complaint types.

	KPI - Minutes	Count	Percentage	Average time Minutes
Met	< 30	2983	99.83%	5.04
Exceeded	30 - 40	11	0.37%	34.45
	40 - 50	3	0.10%	43.62
	50 - 60	1	0.03%	57.91
	60 +	4	0.33%	135.00*
<b>Total</b>		<b>3002</b>		<b>5.39</b>

\* On review these were caused during the lodging of the complaints.

The most significant source of complaints was roaming / secured dogs (roaming dogs *captured by the public*) with a combined total of 1,381 (accounting for 46% of complaints). This was an increase of 1.75% on the previous year, followed by barking dogs at 744 (25%), down 20.8% on the previous financial years' count of 917.

### **Dog Attacks**

The number of reported dog attacks increased by 22% (28 more reported attacks) from last year putting this year 21.1% above the five-year average.

There were 141 reported dog attacks during the year, with 52 of these being attacks on a person. 25 were assessed as minor, 6 moderate, 4 were serious and 17 not possible to score. There were 48 attacks on other dogs, with 24 assessed as minor, 10 as moderate, 1 as serious and 13 were not possible to score. There were 41 attacks on other animals, with 8 assessed as minor, 6 as moderate, one as serious and 26 as not possible to score.

Note: The minor, moderate, serious and not possible ratings relate to the investigation in its entirety, not solely the injury/s sustained. It also includes other factors such as dog and owner history, attitudes towards the offending, and victim impact.

### **Impounded Dogs**

In 2023/24, 358 dogs were impounded compared with 428 for the previous year which was a 17.8 percent decrease in impounded dogs. Of these, 199 (55.5 percent) were returned to their owner, 94 (26 percent) were euthanised and 55 (15 percent) were rehomed 17 of which were transferred to the SPCA or another rehoming agency. The remaining 10 are dogs that are awaiting collection.

In comparison with the 2022/23 figures which saw 109 (25.5%) dogs euthanised and 46 (10.8%) dogs rehomed, euthanasia numbers have decreased and rehome numbers have increased. Officers consider every dog for adoption and ensure that dog complaint history and temperament testing is completed for all dogs.

Of the dogs euthanised in the 2023/24 year, further work has been done to identify the reasons for each and they have been grouped into categories. 20 were due to Welfare concerns. Of these, 11 were due to contracting Parvo, the remaining 9 had other health concerns that made them unsuitable for rehoming.

3 were due to not finding a home and had been in the shelter over 3 months with no other agency willing to take them.

One was rehomed and returned as it had attacked a farm animal, 10 were due to a classification on the dog (menacing), the remaining 60 failed their temperament testing meaning they showed behaviours considered unsafe to be rehomed.

Parvo is managed as best as can be in the pound. Officers test as soon as they have concerns and take the dogs to a vet for checking and to confirm diagnosis. The upgraded features at Te Whare Kōwhiri will allow for appropriate isolation and separation of dogs that are showing symptoms of illness.

## **Infringements**

Council continued to focus on ensuring that all known dogs are registered and kept under proper control by their owners. Infringements were issued to multiple offenders throughout the year.

A total of 114 infringement notices were issued; 106 for unregistered dogs, 5 failing to have a dog under control or confined, and 3 for failing to comply with a classification. Of the 114 infringements issued, 4 (3%) were waived or cancelled because registration payments had incorrect references.

## **Menacing Dog Classification Appeals**

There were no objections heard by the hearings committee in the 2023/24 financial year.

## **Prosecutions**

There were no prosecutions or charges taken to court in the 2023/24 financial year.

## **Customer Satisfaction**

The residents' satisfaction survey for 2023/24 found 54% satisfied (59% in 2023) with the control of roaming dogs, while 27% were neutral, and 14% were dissatisfied. On the control of barking dogs, 49% were satisfied (51% in 2023), 32% neutral and 14% dissatisfied. The survey reflects the increase in complaints about roaming dogs as the main concern. The survey had 514 independently selected respondents from across the city.

## **Improvement Opportunities for the 2024/2025 year**

This year officers will be focused on establishing processes to ensure that the capabilities that Te Whare Kouru – Animal Shelter offer are fully realized.

In Quarter one neighboring Territorial Authorities are being hosted at Te Whare Kouru – Animal Shelter for the purpose of considering opportunities for shared services.

Officers are reviewing how delivery of education to school-aged children can be effectively delivered, and which may involve collaboration with Wildbase Education and Programmes Officers.

Officers are also exploring the viability of implementing life-long registration tags. which have been implemented by other Territorial Authorities. There are some known issues that other Councils have experienced, for example tag durability, however, officers are optimistic that the delay in adopting this idea means these issues can be mitigated.

## **Community Outreach and Education**

A public event was successfully hosted and positively received by the community. This was a free microchipping event in Linklater Reserve, aimed at increasing the number of microchipped dogs in the city and helping to increase the chances of reuniting them with their owners if they become lost. Stalls have been held at two other community events, The Dog Catwalk, and Linton Military Camps' Wellness Expo, where officers spent time educating community and dog owners on processes and best practices for the keeping of dogs.

Getting into school curriculum has been difficult this year. Officers have sought advice from Wildbase on their practises and look to partner with them where possible to deliver school education.

### Summary

The reporting requirements of the Dog Control Act 1996 for the period 2023/24 are:

➤ Number of registered dogs	9,735
➤ Number of disqualified owners	0
➤ Number of probationary owners	0
➤ Number of dogs classified as dangerous under Section 31 of the Act	14
➤ Number of dogs classified as menacing under Section 33A of the Act	93
➤ Number of dogs classified as menacing under Section 33C of the Act	36
➤ Number of dog-related complaints (See Appendix 1 for details)	3,092
➤ Number of prosecutions	0
➤ Number of infringements	114

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 2019/20 to 2023/24. This contains the information above with the addition of a breakdown of types of complaints processed by staff.

Ross McDermott

**TEAM LEADER ANIMAL MANAGEMENT AND EDUCATION**

Rebeka Adamson

**ACTING MANAGER ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**



# 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 a 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 are as follows:

Breed	Number
Alaskan Malamute	1
Greyhound	1
Rottweiler	2
Shepherd German	1
Siberian Husky	1
Terrier American Pit Bull	2
Terrier American Staffordshire	1
Terrier Staffordshire Bull	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>

## Dog Control Act 1996 S 33A – Menacing Dogs

Section 33A menacing dogs are dogs that have not been classified as a dangerous dog, but the territorial authority considers may pose a threat to any person, stock, poultry, domestic animal, or protected wildlife because of any observed or reported behaviour of the dog or any characteristics typically associated with the dog's breed or type.

The 2022/23 financial year saw a total of 112 dogs classified under section 33A, this has decreased to a total of 90 in the 2023/24 year.

Dogs within PNCC jurisdiction that are classified as menacing under S33A were as follows:

Breed	Number
Akita	1
Australian Koolie	1
Bulldog	1

Bulldog American	2
Collie Bearded	1
Collie Border	1
Greyhound	2
Heading	2
Mastiff	1
Mastiff Neapolitan	1
Poodle Standard	1
Retriever Labrador	10
Rottweiler	8
Shar Pei	3
Shepherd German	7
Siberian Husky	4
Terrier American Pit Bull	33
Terrier American Staffordshire	4
Terrier Bull	2
Terrier Jack Russell	1
Terrier Staffordshire Bull	5
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>91</b>

**Note:** Some dogs that would normally be classified under Section 33C are included above as they have displayed behaviours which better fit a classification under section 33A, this behaviour has been identified and confirmed through customer complaint investigations.

#### **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

The 2022/23 financial year saw a total of 50 dogs classified under section 33C, this has decreased to a total of 35 in the 2023/24 year.

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

Breed	Number
Dogo Argentino	3
Terrier, American Pit Bull Type	32
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>

# Appendix 2: Dog Control Statistics

## 2019/2020 to 2023/2024

Serial	Topic	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
1	Number of Dogs on the Register	8,695	9,021	9,565	9,636	9,735
2	Number of Disqualified Owners	5	2	0	0	0
3	Number of Probationary Owners	1	1	0	0	0
4	Number of Dogs classified as dangerous under S31 of the Act	7	6	10	12	14
5	Number of Dogs classified as menacing under S33A of the Act (Behaviour)	79	88	117	112	91
6	Number of Dogs classified as menacing under S33C of the Act (Breed)	77	69	51	50	35
7	Number of Dog Complaints or investigations initiated by public or ACO. (Refer to below for details)	3,110	3,157	3,164	2,967	3,002
	7a Aggressive/Rushing Dogs	134	152	146	164	162
	7b Dog Attacks	96	103	117	113	141
	7c Barking Dogs	758	722	710	917	744
	7d Roaming Dogs	1,309	1,381	1,135	1,357	1381
	7e Lost Dogs	327	290	244	232	228
	7f Property Checks	220	85	124	37	172
	7g Other Dog Related Incidents	31	52	56	66	54
	7h Identified/Reported Unregistered dogs	235	305	632	81	116
8	Number of Prosecutions	0	0	0	1	0
9	Number of Infringements	341	182	127	163	114

### Comments

- The total number of complaints or investigations continued in an upward trend with an increase of 1.17% on the 2022/23 totals. This is expected as dog numbers increase in the city.
- Barking dog complaints saw a reduction, which may in part be attributed to improvements made to Council procedures, and efforts to educate owners.

- Rushing dog notifications decreased slightly over the previous year and sit just over the five-year average, while dog attack notifications have increased to sit 21.1% over the 5-year average.
- With the cost of living ever increasing there has been an uptake in preferred owner applications in efforts to reduce household spending.







