

Far North District Council Annual Report on Dog Control Policy and Practice **2022/2023**



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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 Dog Control Act 1996 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 2021 to 30 June 2022 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 two 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 2022/2023

Responding to complaints (RFS)

AMOs responded to a total of 2,858 dog control customer requests for service over the 2022/2023 period. This does not include proactive work. This is 247 more individual requests for service than the previous year. This increase is likely due to the lifting of covid restrictions and the increased visibility of Animal Management Officers in the field proactively locating unknown dogs.

The Animal Management team completed the year meeting response times with an average of 94.5% for urgent RFS (attacks and aggressive RFS) and 92.8% for non-urgent against a Level of Service target KPI of $\geq 93\%$.

Dog Registration

The number of known dogs in the district has increased to 12,124. This is a result of Animal Managements proactive work in finding an additional 1000 previously unknown dogs. Of these 8,618 were registered for 2022/2023 period. This is an increase of 271 registered dogs from the previous year.

The team will be taking an early focussed proactive effort on following up all known unregistered dogs once the annual re-registration period has ended (1 September).

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

The popular social media campaign promoting dog registration and responsible dog ownership was launched in June 2023. This campaign was continued with an information insert 'Kuri Kārere Doggo Digest' included with dog registration reminder notices.



Probationary and Disqualified Owners

There are seven 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 must 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 an infringement 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 5 years.

FNDC follow the VADE (Voluntary, Assisted, Directed, Enforced) model to facilitate compliance.

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 633 infringements issued for offences under the Dog Control Act 1996. This is 434 more infringements issued than in 2021/2022. This is largely due to the proactive work by the team to locate unknown dogs. Infringements are issued if dog owners do not register within given time frames.

The Far North District Council initiated two prosecutions during the year, one against a dog owner for a serious breach of the Dog Control Act 1996 which involved a dog attack against a person and the second for a serious dog attack on another dog.

Both cases saw the dog owners convicted and destruction orders issued for the offending dogs.

Although prosecution numbers are low it is preferable not to be prosecuting. Prosecutions are used only as a last resort where it is necessary to ensure community safety.

Menacing and Dangerous Dogs

There is a total of 195 menacing dogs in the district, this is an increase of 24 dogs from the previous year.

175 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 Dog Control Act 1996 (the Act) all dogs must be classified as menacing if it belongs 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 three classified dangerous dogs in the district. One classification is a result of sworn evidence attesting to the aggressive behaviour of the dog, one due to a conviction and the third by owner admittance. This dog was classified by another territorial authority and transferred into district.

Impounded Dogs

A total of 517 dogs were impounded in the council shelter in 2022/23. This is 180 more dogs than the previous year.

53% of impounded dogs were either returned to their owners or rehomed.

241 (47%) of dogs impounded at the shelter were euthanised due to not being claimed by an owner and not being suitable for rehoming. This is 15% higher than last year and is attributed to the reduction in claimed dogs and the type of dogs impounded not meeting the adoption threshold.

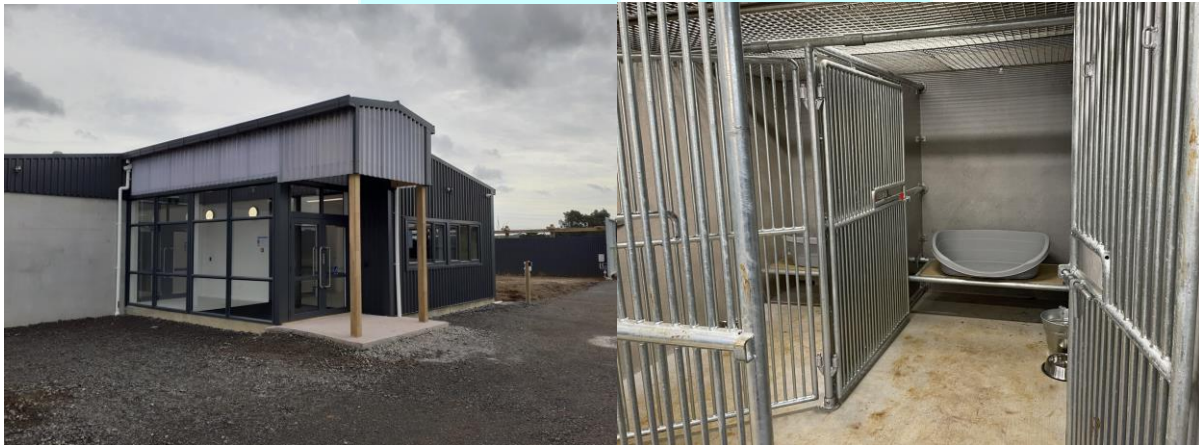
All unclaimed dogs are put through the same behavioural assessment program and if they are designated for euthanasia its likely they failed this behavioural assessment test.

39 dogs found new homes via the FNDC adopt a dog Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/adoptadogFNDC>. This page now has over 5,000 followers.

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 second new Animal Shelter for the Far North District was officially opened and became operational on 31 May 2023. This shelter is located in Kaikohe and services the southern district.

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.



Southern Animal Shelter - Kaikohe

Desexing Dogs

To enable a continued focus on desexing dogs within the Far North district a 'voucher' desexing scheme managed by Animal Management Officers saw an additional 39 dogs desexed across the district.

Planned Activities for 2023/2024

- Engaging further with remote rural communities across the district, to connect with dog owners and assist communities to take steps towards compliance and reduce unwanted dogs.
- Continue proactive registration and compliance action plans to increase registration rates and identify unknown dogs as well as ensuring compliance with classifications.
- Engage with schools to offer 'safety around dogs' education sessions with students.

Dog Control Statistics

Table one: Registration/Classification related data

	Total 2019/2020	Total 2020/2021	Total 2021/22	Total 2022/3
Dogs Registered	11,119 Known 8,284 Registered	11,069 Known 8,949 Registered	10,917 Known 8347 Registered	12,214 Known 8,618 Registered
Dog Owner Classification				
Probationary	0	0	0	0
Disqualified	1	5	5	7
Menacing Classification				
- By breed	201	159	154	175
- By deed	36	32	17	20
Combined	237	191	171	195
Dangerous Classification				
Section 31(1) a	0	0	0	1
Section 31(1) b	1	1	1	1
Section 31(1) c	0	1	1	1
Total Dangerous	1	2	2	3

Table two: Request for Service (RFS) Data

Customer request break down by RFS type				
RFS Type	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023
Attacks	172	201	229	257
Straying	318	486	446	526
Rushing	30	54	89	108
Barking	180	323	285	255
Aggressive	100	128	100	97
Miscellaneous Enquiries*	438*	869*	671*	698*
Lost and Found	240	252	281	273
Pick-Up Request	373	416	424	532
Dog Welfare	38	80	86	112
Grand Total	1908	2809	2,611	2,858

* Miscellaneous Enquiries includes adoption queries, refund requests, trap requests, infringement notice enquiries, bylaw enquiries/patrols, signage, general information etc.

Table three: Compliance Data

	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023
Prosecutions	5	1	1	1
Infringement Offence				

18 Wilful Obstruction of dog control officer or ranger	0	0	1	2
19(2) Failure or refusal to supply information or wilfully providing false particulars	0	1	1	0
19A (2) Failure to supply information or wilfully provide false about dog	0	0	0	0
20(5) Failure to comply with any bylaw authorised by the section	19	12	17	29
23A (2) Failure to undertake dog owner education program of dog obedience course (or both)	0	0	0	0
24 Failure to comply with the obligations of a probationary owner	0	0	0	0
28(5) Failure to comply with the effects of disqualification	0	0	0	0
32(2) failure to comply with the effects of classification of dog as dangerous	0	0	0	0
32(4) fraudulent sale or transfer of dangerous dog	0	0	0	0
33EC (1) Failure to comply with the effects of classification of dog as menacing	0	0	0	3
33F (3) Failure to advise person of muzzle and leashing requirements	0	0	0	0
36A (6) failure to implant microchip transponder in dog	0	0	0	1
41 False statement in relation to dog registration	0	0	0	0
41A Falsely notifying death of dog	0	0	0	0
42 failure to register dog	110	179	131	506
46(4) Fraudulent procurement or attempt to procure replacement dog registration label or disc	0	0	0	0
48(3) Failure to advise change of dog ownership	0	0	0	0
49(4) Failure to advise change of address	0	0	0	0
51(1) Removal, swapping or counterfeiting of registration label or disc	0	0	0	0
52A Failure to keep dog controlled or confined	8	4	6	0
53(1) Failure to keep dog under control	29	35	43	92
54(2) failure to provide proper care and attention, to supply proper and sufficient food, and to provide adequate exercise	0	0	0	0
54A Failure to carry leash in public	0	0	0	0
55(7) Failure to comply with barking dog abatement notice	0	0	0	0

62(4) Allowing dog known to be dangerous to be at large unmuzzled or unleashed	0	0	0	0
62(5) Failure to advise of muzzle and leashing requirements	0	0	0	0
72(2) releasing dog from custody	0	0	0	0
Total	166	231	199	633

Table four: Shelter data

	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023
Impounded Total	373	423	337	517
Total number of dogs returned to owner	151	178	117	161
% dogs returned to owner	40%	42%	35%	31%
Total number of dogs to Rescue Groups	95	64	48	76
Total number of dogs adopted via Council	19	69	65	39
% dogs to Rescue Groups/Adopted	31%	31%	34%	22%
Total number of dogs euthanised	108	112	107	241
% dogs euthanised	29%	27%	32%	47%