

REPORT

Date : 3 July 2023

To : Ordinary Council Meeting, 1 August 2023

From : Group Manager Planning and Regulatory, Gerard McCormack

Subject : **DOG CONTROL POLICIES AND PRACTICES REPORT 2022-2023**

File ID : A1032202

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Council is required to publicly report on its dog control policies and practices each financial year under section 10A of the Dog Control Act. A copy of the Annual Report is to be submitted to the Secretary for Local Government. The Annual Report for the 2022-23 financial year is attached.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with the annual report setting out Council's dog control practices for the year 2022/23. Following receipt by Council, the Annual Report will be submitted to the Secretary for Local Government. The Annual Report is included in Appendix 1 attached.

BACKGROUND

The Dog Control Act requires territorial authorities to publicly report on dog control policy and practices under section 10A of the Dog Control Act.

Section 10A of the Dog Control Act 1996 states that the report "*must, in respect of each financial year, report on the administration of -*

- (a) *its dog control policy adopted under section 10; and*
- (b) *its dog control practices."*

Section 10A(3) specifies that *"the territorial authority must give public notice of the report in one (1) or more daily newspapers circulating in the territorial authority district."*

Section 10A(4) requires the Council, *"within one month after adopting the report, to send a copy of it to the Secretary for Local Government"*.

DISCUSSION

The attached report summarises the key information requirements set out in the Dog Control Act in terms of reporting. Also included below are some of the key statistics for the financial year, and reasoning for any notable changes. More generally, Animal Control staff continue to be proactive within the community. They undertake daily patrols, respond to service requests and look after the pound. They also spend time with customers on a one-on-one basis talking about the responsibilities of individual dog owners.

Council continues to work with the Department of Conservation regarding the change in classification for hunting dogs, to be classified as working dogs rather than a complete dog. It required that for these dogs to be considered working dogs they must undertake avian awareness and aversion training, providing more protection for the native wildlife that is found in the Ōpōtiki bush. This initiative gave incentive for hunters to register their dogs, as well as ensuring that kiwi, weka, whio and other ground nesting birds have a higher chance of survival when encountering these dogs.

Statistical analysis

- 1447 dogs were registered during this financial year which is down on previous years.

During the annual registration period Animal Control Officers phone dog owners to remind them about the discount rate that's applied to the registration fee if paid prior to 1 August, and the need to have their dogs registered by the 1 September to avoid infringements being issued against them.

- 29 dogs were rehomed during this financial year which represents 9.4% of all dogs impounded and is the lowest percentage of dogs rehomed within a financial year. We have struggled to rehome dogs due to the limited demand from within the Ōpōtiki community and rehoming agencies previously used. The difficulty in rehoming dogs is a nationwide problem and has been attributed to people getting dogs during covid lockdowns and subsequently abandoning them.

- 307 dogs were impounded. This represents almost 6 dogs being impounded each week.
- Of the 307 dogs impounded 203 of these dogs were euthanised this represents 66% of dogs for this financial year. This is a significant increase compared to the previous years where 30% for 2021/22 and 43% for the 2020/21. This is representative of the difficulty in rehoming dogs that we have experienced this year and increase in owners abandoning dogs.
- 61 dogs impounded were returned to their owners which is the lowest percentage (19%) of dogs returned to owners following impoundment ever recorded within a financial year. This low percentage is due to the increase in owners abandoning their dogs or not claiming them when they have been impounded after they were caught roaming.

Following Council incentives to micro-chip all dogs registered prior to 1 August, with free, public education campaigns about micro-chipping dogs, the number of dogs micro-chipped in the district has increased making it easier for officers to return impounded dogs to their owners.

- There was one break-in at the pound resulting in one dog being stolen during this financial year. Those responsible were identified on CCTV and were dealt with by the police. The dogs were subsequently registered, with impoundment charges and fines paid.

This provides proof that the CCTV cameras installed within the new pound work in deterring any break outs or thefts.

Customer Survey

Council undertakes an annual satisfaction survey which includes a question around whether the responder was satisfied with Dog Control. Results for the last five years are presented below:

2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19
34%	25%	46%	51%	59%

There was a change in how the survey was undertaken in the 2021/22 year which meant that year's data could not be read as a direct comparison to the previous year. The 2022/23 results presented here are now able to be compared reliably against the 2021/22 year.

While the results of this year's survey continue to highlight that dog control is a significant issue within the district, there have been positive improvements.

A 9% increase in satisfaction was reported from the 2021/22 and with Council’s newly upgraded customer request system, and a continuing increase in the use of online tools like Antenno, Council hopes to start turning around the under-reporting of dog attacks and roaming dogs.

For the first time in a long while our team has been fully staffed during the reporting period, but we can’t be everywhere all the time. We rely on reports from the community so investigations can take place in a timely manner. It also allows staff to see where extra patrols may be required and means infringements can be issued when dogs have been found to be roaming.

We continue to encourage the community to continue to report roaming dogs – Council’s Antenno app is a great tool our customers can use. This will mean investigations will be undertaken in a timely manner, with those who report issues to us being provided with an outcome. Having the new system enables us to easily see where the majority of reports are coming from and means we can schedule patrols from time to time outside of regular office hours to target specific problem areas.

SIGNIFICANCE ASSESSMENT

Assessment of significance


On every issue requiring a decision, Council is required to determine how significant a decision is to the community, and what the corresponding level of engagement should be.

Council uses the Significance Flowchart in the Significance and Engagement Policy to determine the level of significance.

The level of significance related to the decision in this report is considered to be low. Because the decision is determined to have low significance in accordance with the policy, the corresponding level of engagement required is Inform.

Assessment of engagement

As the level of significance has been determined to be low, the level of engagement required is Inform according to the Engagement Framework of the Significance and Engagement Policy:

	Inform	To provide balanced and objective information to assist understanding about something that is going to happen.
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The tools that Council will use for the 'Inform' level of engagement include a report in the public agenda of the Council meeting and may include a combination of public notices in the newspaper and/or on Council's social media.

CONCLUSION

The work of the Animal Control team has resulted in improvements in a number of our statistical reporting measures during this financial year. Dog Control is an activity of Council that will always require a proactive approach to ensure that dog owners fulfil their responsibilities under the Dog Control Act, in particular to ensure that their dogs are registered, and to ensure dogs do not wander and therefore reducing the likelihood of attacks.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. That the report titled "Dog Control Policies and Practices Report 2022/23" be received.**
- 2. That the Dog Control Policies and Practices Report 2022/23 attached in Appendix 1 be adopted by Council and its availability publicly notified in the Ōpōtiki News in accordance with Section 10A(3) of the Dog Control Act.**
- 3. That the Dog Control Policies and Practices Report 2022/23 attached in Appendix 1 be filed with the Secretary for Local Government (Department of Internal Affairs) in accordance with section 10A(4) of the Dog Control Act.**

Gerard McCormack

GROUP MANAGER PLANNING AND REGULATORY



Opotiki District Council
Dog Control Policies and Practices Report 2022-23

Section 10A report in accordance with the Dog Control Act 1996

1 Introduction

Opotiki District Council, as a Territorial Authority, is required to manage and enforce the provisions of the Dog Control Act 1996.

This report is to meet the requirements set under Section 10A of that Act which requires Council to report on its dog control policy and practices.

This report contains information and statistics on the Council's dog control activity for financial year 2023 (1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023).

2 Dog Policy, Objectives and Practices – Section 10A (1) (a)

Opotiki District Council has a Dog Policy, dated 9 November 2004 with the objectives being:

- Minimising the danger, distress and nuisance of dogs to the community generally
- Separating children and dogs in public places
- Enabling, to the extent that is practicable, the public to use streets and public amenities without fear of attack or intimidation by dogs
- The exercise and recreational needs of dogs and their owners

High priority objectives are identified as:

- The need to reduce the number of dogs roaming the streets
- The need to decrease the amount of uncontrolled breeding that occurs

Dog registration and fees are charged annually and used to fund Council's dog control functions along with rates funding given the wider public benefit that is derived by keeping the community safe.

APPENDIX 1

3 Summary of Practices – Section 10A (1) (b)

The Animal control function forms part of the Planning and Regulatory Group of Council.

During the reporting period Council has had 2FTE officers dedicated to Dog Control.

Limited afterhours support is provided by Independent Security Consultants Ltd (ISCL).

The Opotiki Town Centre is patrolled at least three times a day. The purpose of these patrols is to identify non-compliance with the Dog Control Act, the Dog Control Bylaw and Policy. In this reporting period there have also been some after-hour patrols undertaken.

The patrols are also an opportunity to get out into the community and talk to dog owners about their responsibilities on an individual basis.

Patrols are also carried out to include the wider Opotiki Township, Woodlands and East Coast settlements such as Te Kaha, Waihau Bay, Ohiwa, Bryan's Beach and Paerata Ridge. East of Te Kaha patrols are undertaken on an as needed basis often through a Service Request or via N.Z. Police.

4 Dog Control Statistics

Section 10A (2) information

The following information is required under section 10A (2) clauses a –g.

	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19
a. Registered Dogs	1447	1511	1480	1545	1591
b. Probationary owners	0	0	0	0	0
c. Dogs classified as dangerous	4	4	5	8	6
d. Dogs classified as menacing	63	69	68	35	28
e. Number of Infringements issued	219	134	103	61	91
f. Number of service requested	314	490	331	256	357
g. Number of Prosecutions	0	0	0	0	0

APPENDIX 1

Pound Statistics

The table below shows the activity at the pound over the last five years:

Activity	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19
Dogs euthanized	203 (66%)	58 (30%)	99 (43%)	79 (38%)	206 (52%)
Dogs stolen from pound	1	3	1	0	3
Dogs returned to owner	61 (20%)	71 (37%)	61 (24%)	71 (34%)	128 (32%)
Dogs rehomed	29 (9%)	56 (29%)	68 (27%)	61 (28%)	60 (15%)
Dogs impounded	307	194	229	211	397

Infringement notices

There were 219 infringement notices issued by the Animal Control Officers over the 2022/23 year.

This represents a 63% increase in infringements for 2021/22.

Details are as follows:

Type of Infringement	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19
Failure to register Dog	169	83	75	52	72
Failure to keep dog under control	45	48	20	9	13
Wilful Obstruction of dog control officer or ranger	2	1	2	0	0
Failure to comply with effects of classification of dog as dangerous dog	1	0	3	0	6
Failure to comply with a Bylaw	0	0	0	0	0
Falsely notifying death of a dog	1	0	0	0	0
Wilfully providing false information about a dog	1	0	3	0	0
Failure to implant microchip	0	0	0	0	0
Failure to advise change of address	0	2			
TOTAL	219	134	103	61	91

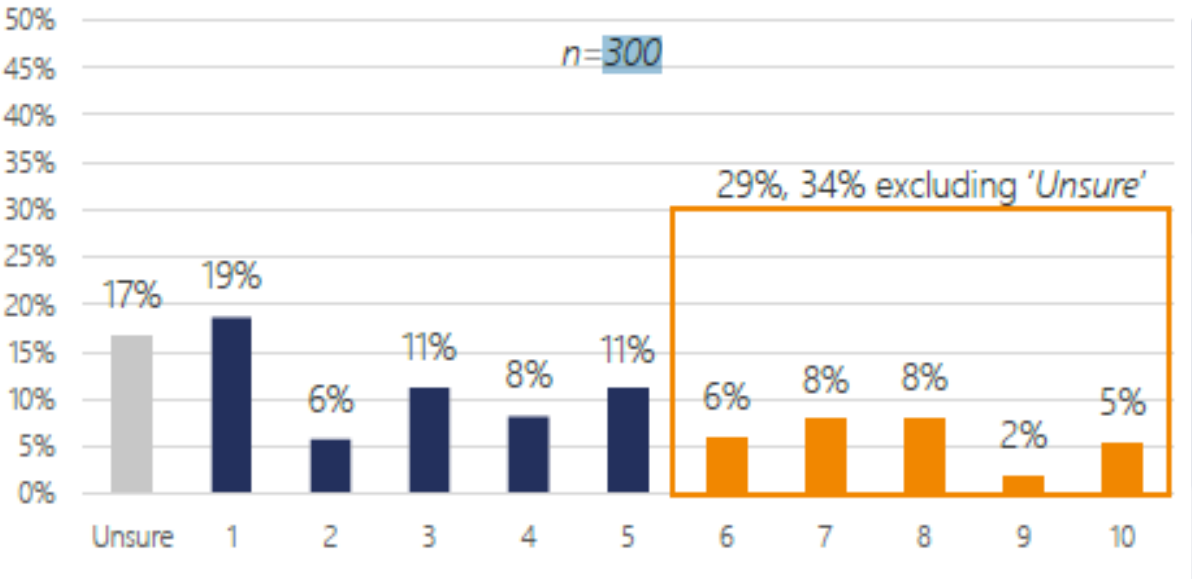
APPENDIX 1

Customer Service Requests

Animal Control related service requests decreased 36% during this period as shown in the following table:

Service request type	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19
Dog Control	332	490	331	265	357

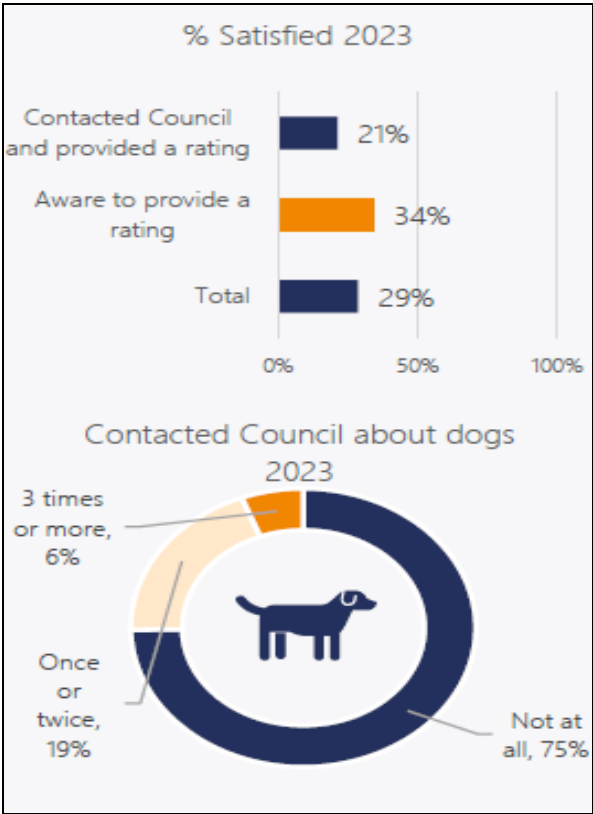
Satisfaction with Council’s Dog Control



- In 2022, 21% of residents reported contacting the Council about dogs.
- 34% were satisfied with this service (on average, 4.5 out of 10).
- Satisfaction was up 9% on last year.

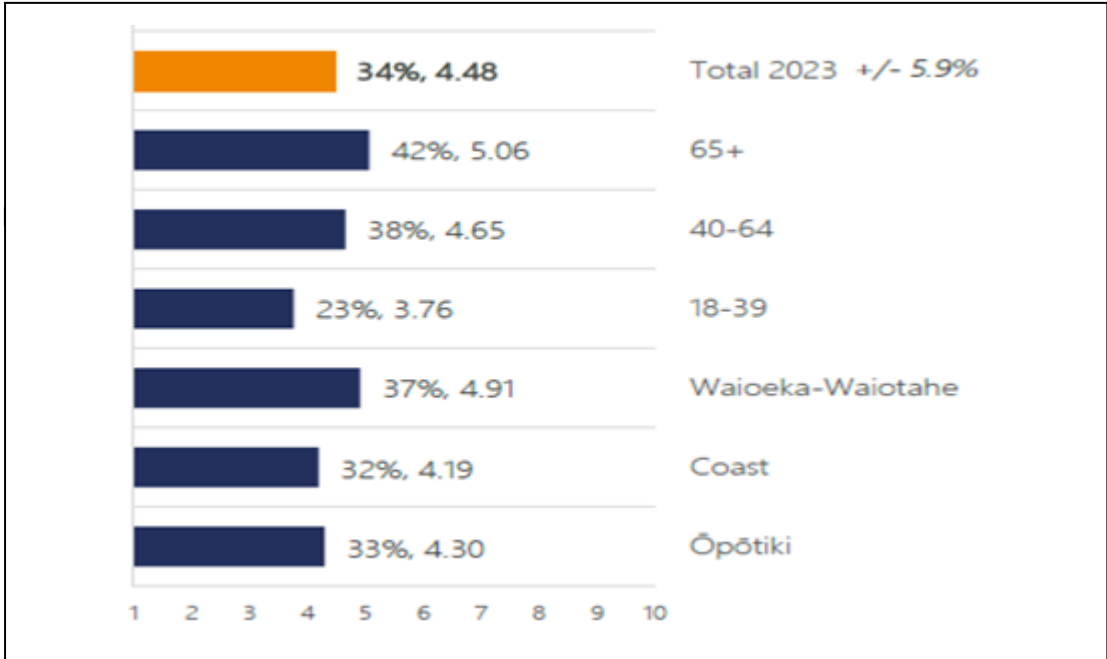
APPENDIX 1

Contacted Council about Dogs

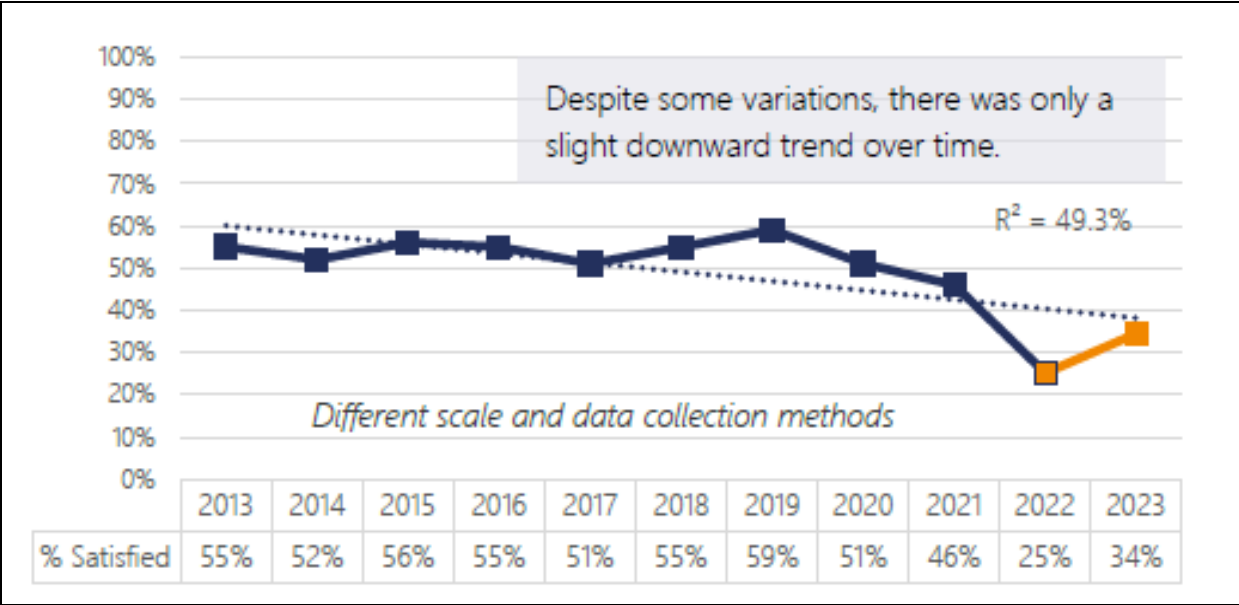


- Respondents who contacted the Council tended to be less satisfied and only 6% of respondents who contacted the Council 3 or more times were satisfied.
- Residents aged under 64 were less satisfied with the service, compared to older residents.

Overall satisfaction by ward and age (%satisfied and average score)



APPENDIX 1



Reason for differences in results over years:

Council changed providers for its customer survey during the 2021/22 year to enable us to utilise a variety of data collection methods instead of just landline phone responses. While this change meant we had an opportunity to answer the Council’s request for us to start using a greater range of response collection methods, gain more input from younger residents, and receive more in depth reporting and insights it has meant a change in reporting methodology.

Our current survey provider uses mixed method data collections (including telephone, online, postal, social media, website), larger proportion of younger residents participating and a 1-10 Likert scale (replaced a 3 point scale with two ‘positive’ rating options and only one ‘negative’ option).

Those changes meant we saw a greater variation in the results for the 2021/22 year than to previous data. Our provider reassured us though that this was to be expected and comparison to earlier surveys should be treated with caution as the two are statistically different and not comparable.

The 2022/23 results presented here are now able to be compared reliably against the 2021/22 year and reflects the survey being conducted quarterly instead of yearly which helps stope seasonal bias.