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Submission number 102

Name Julie Deeley

Support or oppose Support

Reasons for support or oppose SEE ATTACHED SUBMISSION

Submission in Support of the
Statement of Proposal – Review of Part 8 of the Consolidated Bylaws 2020

Julie Deeley, 40 Elliott Street Ōpōtiki 3122

24 September 2021

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I support council's proposal to ban the keeping, but not riding, of horses in Ōpōtiki township. I don't think there is a middle ground as there appears to be little compliance by a great many of Ōpōtiki's horse owners to existing bylaws, animal welfare laws or council's horse management requests; such as keeping numbers down. If the keeping of horses in town is prohibited Pony club will still be held in town, as will horse sports. Horses can still be ridden on the horse trail. Owners who want to ride in town still can. Horse related events will be catered to by temporary grazing exemptions by council during the events so overnight horse events can also carry on as usual. I like horses. I have owned 3 and kept one in town for a number of years.

I live in town and I see a lot of town horses every day. Most of what I write here is from first hand observation. Examples from public Facebook posts can be confirmed by looking them up. I reference the Council documents and news links provided by Council on the bylaw change proposal web page, one submission to Council from 2016, an additional online news report and a news archive web page in my submission. A list of clickable references used can be found on the last page.

There are multiple issues with the horses in town limits. Whereas once loose horses were sighted only occasionally and quickly rounded up once reported by the public, now loose horses within the town have become normalised. They are frequently getting onto streets, into private gardens and on recreational reserves. There have been instances of stallions in town which can hurt people and impregnate mares. Tethered horses were always common on the stop banks but now they are also being tethered in public reserves. Horses are almost always tethered without water and are often located in flood prone parts of the town causing welfare concerns.

Horses are costing ratepayers a significant amount of money because Animal Control staff hours, impounding fees, damage costs for fences and stop banks as well as damage to pound facilities and animal destruction fees are not recouped from horse owners. If horses continue to be a problem in town at the level they are now Council may have to raise rates 2% on every household just to cover horse related staffing costs.

The way most of the horses are kept in town make them a danger to public safety— a danger to people driving automobiles, to cyclists, occasionally to pedestrians and to the horses. Horses are a concern to a great many people in town. Quote '*Neither police nor Council have the resources to address the number of horse complaints they receive.*' (Reference: Report to Council Tuesday 1 June 2021, Item 8 – Animal Control – Roaming Horses within Opotiki Township p.104) There are likely many more horse related incidents not officially reported as people often use social media instead to communicate about horses on their property, unauthorised use of private paddocks, roaming horses and welfare concerns.

I used to see only tethered or fenced horses in Ōpōtiki but the last two years there are definitely far more loose horses than ever before and the overall numbers of loose horses have increased markedly since 2019. I have observed more this year than there were last year despite repeated Council pleas to remove them to reduce numbers and Council issuing a 'last warning' in September 2020.

There is an existing bylaw (8.4.1 a, b and c) which states an owner must...

- (a) Ensure the animal is not kept in a manner that creates a nuisance, endangers, or is likely to endanger, public health or safety.
- (b) Ensure that the animal is under proper control when in a public place and does not cause a nuisance or danger to any other person, cause damage to the public place, or damage property belonging to any other person in a public place.
- (c) Prevent the animal from wandering or being at large without proper guidance on a public place.

There are a minimum of a dozen horses in town on any given day breaking these bylaws.

Attempts by Council to deal with the horse issues have failed to resolve them.

Quote: '*The measures staff put in place following the December 2020 Council meeting have not successfully dealt with the issue....These measures include the following:*

- *Development of a register to identify owners and horses*
- *Removing stallions from town*
- *Supporting the police in response to horse complaints*
- *Meeting with a number of horse owners to discuss the issues and to identify their horses,' unquote. (Reference: Report to Council, Tuesday 1 June 2021, Item 8 – Animal Control – Roaming Horses within Opotiki Township p.104)*

Frequent posts on the Ōpōtiki Community Notices Facebook page and reports by the public to ODC or police show how often horses roaming, horses on private property and horse welfare in town are a problem. Those are only the reported horses, there are probably more going completely unreported. I don't report loose horses now unless they are already a direct threat to traffic. Reporting them to anyone seems pointless because the loose horses don't diminish in number. Animal Control staff are abused by owners— police have been involved when there were altercations in relation to impound and roaming horses. Animal Control staff have quit due to threats and stand-over tactics resulting in even less ability by Council to ensure public safety and do something about roaming stock. Impounded horses are removed from the pound and facilities damaged.

Quote: 'The Police have now advised that due to resourcing issues, they can no longer operate as the lead agency, as they cannot respond to all the calls being received. Furthermore, our animal control team and our out of hours provider are also insufficiently resourced to appropriately respond to the number of complaints being received.' (Reference: Tuesday 1 June 2021, Item 8 – Animal Control – Roaming Horses within Opotiki Township)

Quote: 'The owners have been warned repeatedly and the Police are involved but at the moment the owners are simply taking the horses from the pound or using standover tactics to take the horses from rehoming agencies who have been engaged to take the horses out of the district.' (Reference: Wednesday 16 September 2020 – End of the line for equine repeat offenders)

Council have a duty of care to the public to address roaming stock but lack of staff and the overwhelming number of complaints make it almost impossible. If horses are allowed to continue to graze in town these issues are likely to be ongoing. The longer it is left the more powerless Council seems to be and the worse the situation gets.

Tethered Horses in town including mares with foals typically have no water or shade and are sometimes left on the Otara and Waioeka river banks in all weather creating welfare issues and putting the horses' lives at risk during flooding. It is rare to see a tethered horse in Ōpōtiki with access to water.

There were often horses tethered between the Otara bridge and Memorial Park before the cycle trail was created when the top of the bank was grass. After the cycle trail was built it in 2011 it wasn't uncommon to come across horses tethered there in such a way that their ropes crossed the cycle trail. Tethering horses over the trail has become far less common since about 2018 and effectively has stopped this past year or two. Horses are still tethered along there, just usually not over the cycle trail.

However, I came across a horse on 14 August 2021 (2 photos included) with its almost-invisible tether rope across the bike trail at the bottom of the north west side of the Otara bridge. You can see in the second photo how hard the rope is to see; even knowing it's there. The horse was tied such that having the rope across the path was unavoidable. When taut I observed the rope at thigh height. Anyone riding a bike or scooter or other wheeled vehicle would most likely have suffered an injury running into a taut rope. The horse could be injured too. Walkers on the bike trail could either place themselves in jeopardy and walk over the long rope or widely detour around through the grass. If you were mobility impaired the only sensible choice would be to turn back. I contacted one of the Ōpōtiki horse owner Facebook group members and she contacted the owner of the horse and by the next day the horse was moved. Someone could easily have been hurt in the mean time though.



This horse by the Otara bridge is tethered right over the cycle track on a long rope. Photo 1/2



Most horses tethered in Opotiki have no water, shelter or shade and some are in poor looking condition. Horse welfare issues are not new in Ōpōtiki. This is despite the fact the regulations for animal welfare state that, quote:

'tethering is not recommended and...The owner of, and every person in charge of, an equid that is tethered for the purpose of grazing must ensure that, at all times while the equid is tethered, the equid has access to—

(a) food; and (b) water; and (c) shade; and (d) protection from extremes of heat and cold.

(2)A person who fails to comply with this regulation commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$900.

(3)The offence in subclause (2) is an infringement offence with an infringement fee of \$300.

One horse tied for days at the stop bank was so desperate for water that that it bolted, pulled the rope out of my hands, galloped straight to the river under the Otara Bridge and stood there drinking for half an hour. Many town citizens have resorted to lugging buckets up the river bank to attempt to water horses they don't even own out of concern for their welfare or have taken to Facebook to plead with the owners to care for them. To tie an animal in the hot sun in sight and hearing of a river has got to be a terrible kind of torture. It is a fact that horses require full time access to water and an average horse will drink 20-40 Litres per day and more if it is hot, dry or windy out. Quote: *'Welfare is SPCA's area of responsibility and they have raised issues with horses tethered without water or without enough feed, no shelter or tethered in flood-prone areas in the Ōpōtiki District...'* Thursday 20 August 2020 – Horse numbers tracking down but more action required

A Facebook post on 31 March 2020 reported a horse tied on Richard Street left with no water for 3 days. A person who was not the owner finally moved and watered it. By April 27 2020 a horse tied up on Richard Street died and was left there to decompose. The insinuation was it died from dehydration. It may or may not have been the same horse. Fairly recently someone (not me) called the SPCA to report a mare and an injured foal at the skate park. I happened to run into the SPCA officer and she was concerned the horses and the mare in particular had lack of access to water. Occasionally tethered horses are tangled. My husband and I have untangled a few mostly from fences or objects they were tied to.

There have been scores of horse related posts on the Ōpōtiki Community Notice page of horses, some with foals, tied with no access to water or posted as roaming on or off the streets. A a very short walk around the town would usually allow you to confirm these sights for yourself. There were so many horse posts related to roaming and horse welfare on the Ōpōtiki Community Facebook page that the moderators banned further posts related to horses on July 3 2021 unless the horse was a direct threat to public safety. A search on the Facebook Ōpōtiki Community Notices page for 'horses' will give some idea of the extent of the problem and again these are just the reported incidences.

Tethering horses between the Otara bridge and Pakowhai bridge with no access to water continues to be very common but tethered horses are now also joined by large numbers of loose ones, including a large number on the east side of the stop-bank directly beside the Otara river and adjacent to the pony club grounds. Typically there are 5 or more loose horses in this location and 5 or 6 tethered ones if you include both the landward and river side of the stop bank near the rodeo arena. Often there are another 3 to 6 horses on the North East side of the Otara next to the river in the flat area adjacent to Thornton Park.



Loose horses next to the Otara River have full access to the river which is good for hydration purposes for the horses but will contribute a great deal to equine waste discharged into the river and eventually to the sea since the whole area floods completely in heavy rainfall. Ōpōtiki children have a swing and slide at the river downstream. The mussel farm is past the river mouth and mussel quality relies on clean water. The location also puts the horses' safety at risk during sudden heavy rain. Further, any loose horses in any of these areas have the potential to get onto the streets with fairly little effort. The town side of the bank is only partially fenced. The river sides are unfenced and it isn't possible or desirable to fence them since they flood and any fencing put there is destroyed and washed into the rivers.

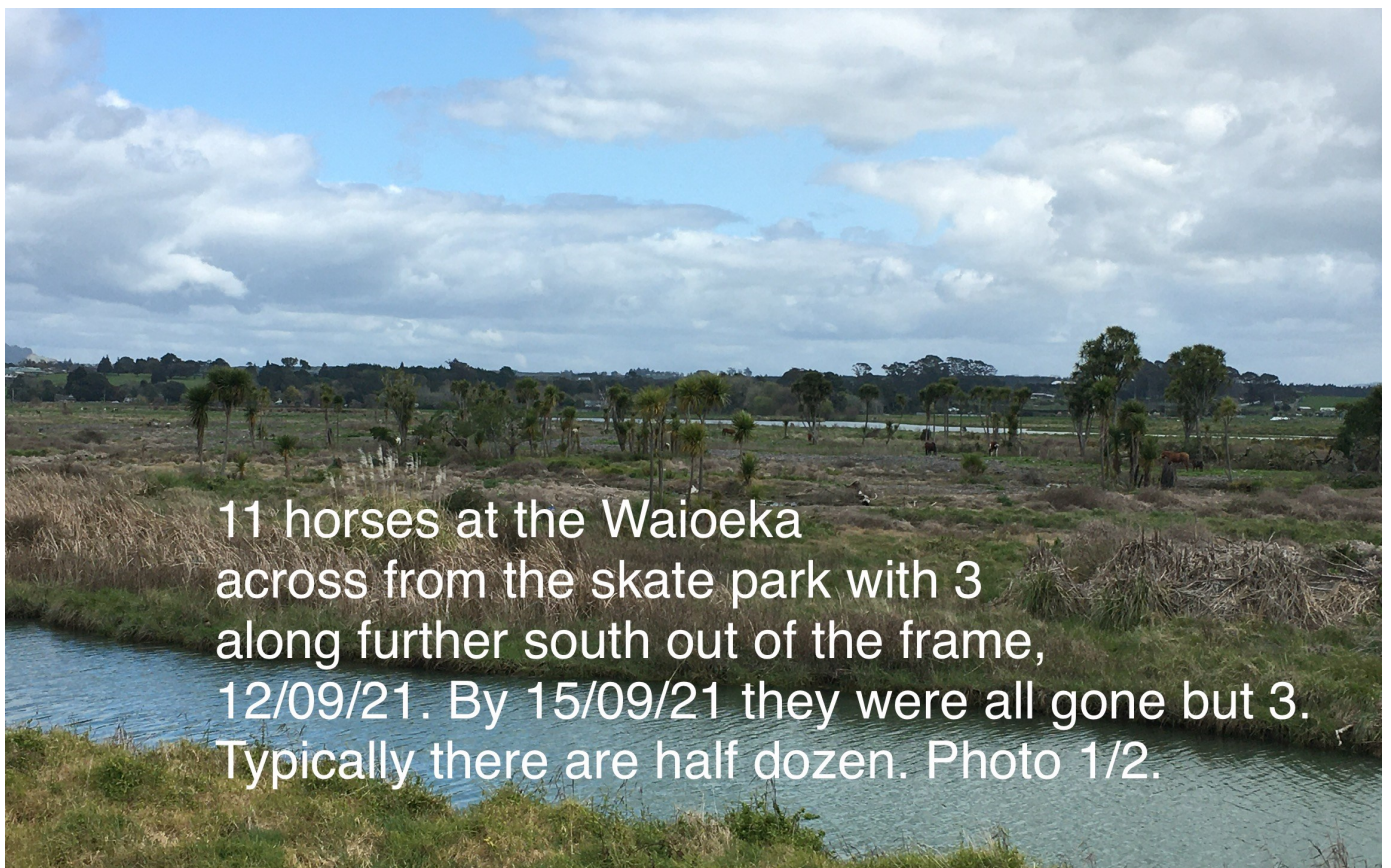
Typically there have been around 4 horses grazing loose outside the stop bank right beside the Otara bridge though the number fluctuates and there can be both more or fewer horses. On a few occasions this autumn and winter there were tethered mares here with foals. The nursing mares had no access to water. There is easy access to Elliott Street and SH35 or other streets in either direction and horses are often found loose on those streets. On 19 August 2021 there were 12 horses by the Otara bridge reported on Facebook by a person who lives nearby. The last week or so since the notice of possible ban by ODC there have been just 2. Horses loose along the banks are a fatal accident waiting to happen as they regularly get on roads.

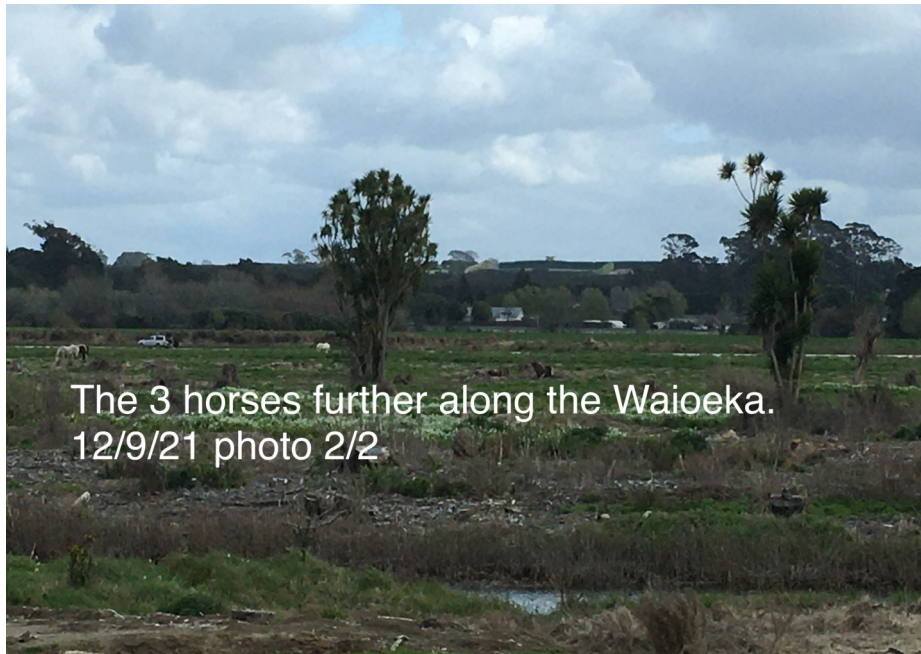


The tethered and loose Waioeka River horses are in the same situation as the Otara horses. Horses are tethered or loose outside the stop bank from north of the Waioeka River bridge south to roughly Grey Street. On Wednesday 8 September for example, there were 8 horses next to the Waioeka River roughly behind Peria House on the river side of the stop bank— 2 horses were mares with foals and another horse popped up on the bank while I was walking on the footpath behind Peria. (photo below)



There are a few places the horses could access town streets from there. For example, the stop bank paddock gate behind Peria has been left open 24/7 most of the time since white baiting started. The usual number of horses outside the stop bank by the Waioeka in that area near Peria is maybe half a dozen. On September 12 2021 there were 14 horses there (photos below). By 15 September there were 3. Presumably the sudden drop were horses being removed by owners after ODC's call for submissions for changing the bylaw to disallow grazing. Likewise, the usual group on the river side of the stop bank by the pony club were temporarily gone, after having been a regular fixture there the last couple of years at least. Some horses are back there again after a large number (10 plus foals) were found on the Memorial playing fields and taken off by horse owning volunteers.





Horses often roam Ōpōtiki's streets in groups or singly during all hours including at night when visibility is low. There are many places they can get onto town streets from where they are left to graze. They are frequently seen on heavily trafficked streets such as St John and Elliott as well as minor streets, causing traffic hazards and risks to human and equine life. I have reported horses on streets a number of times in the past. One early morning at 6 am on 25 April approximately 8 horses walked by in the dark on Elliott street heading west (photo included, not all horses visible in it).

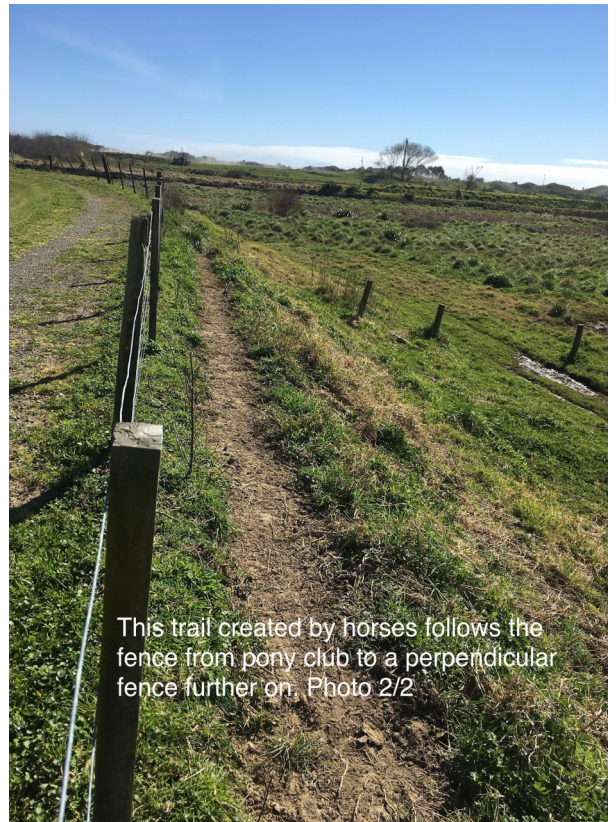
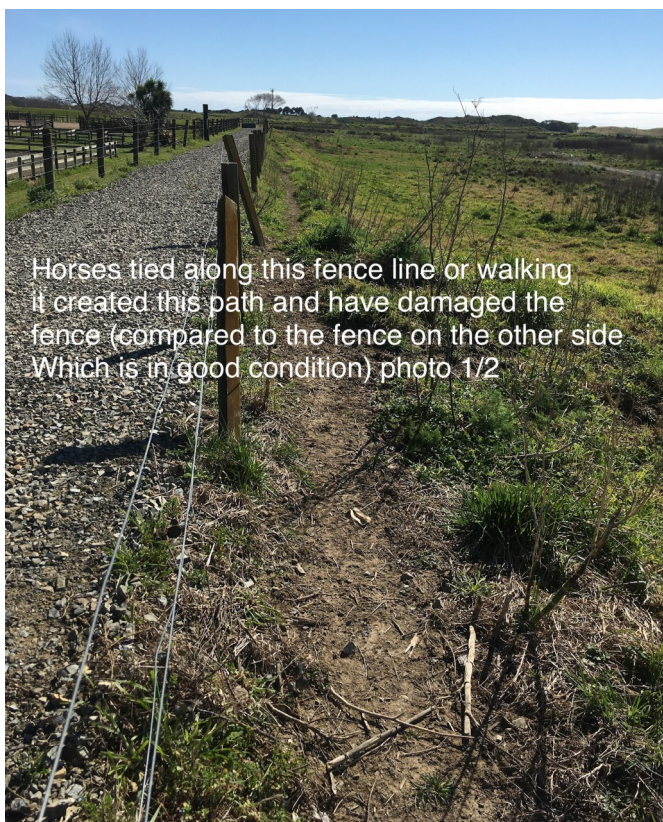


Even in daylight a horse bolting from a side street into traffic would be hard not to hit regardless of the speed of the vehicle. There was a horse/car collision in town on August 2020 reported in the news. While the car was damaged, the adult and two children in the car were luckily unharmed. (Reference: <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/122504666/crash-in-bay-of-plenty-town-overrun-with-horses-reinforces-councils-mission-to-lower-roaming-equine-numbers> Stuff news article) Presumably the horse was injured.

Horse owners' responses on Facebook to complaints of horses on the street before the accident included advice to 'drive slower', that 'roaming horses were not any more of a danger than roaming cats', that horses were 'always in Opotiki' and that 'people know there are horses and look out for them'. Horse owners seem unaware of the bylaws, part 8, animal control which state that an owner must ensure there is no danger to public health and safety.

Horse owners often jury rig fences near the pony club stop bank (Photo included) or the bank opposite by Thornton Park and— on a few occasions shortly after the cycle trail was created— across the cycle trail itself near the lane by the cement plant, causing a nuisance to other users and a potential hazard.

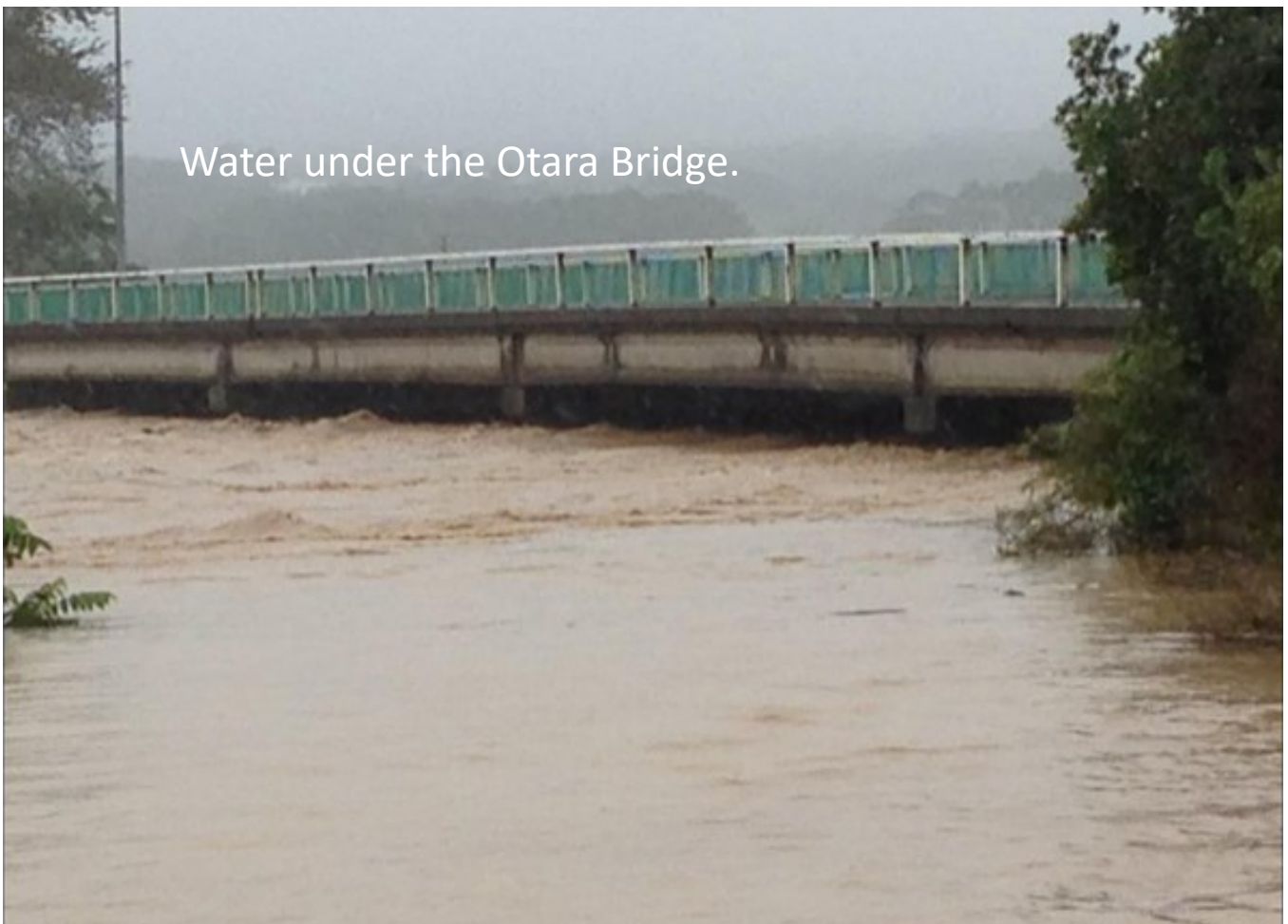
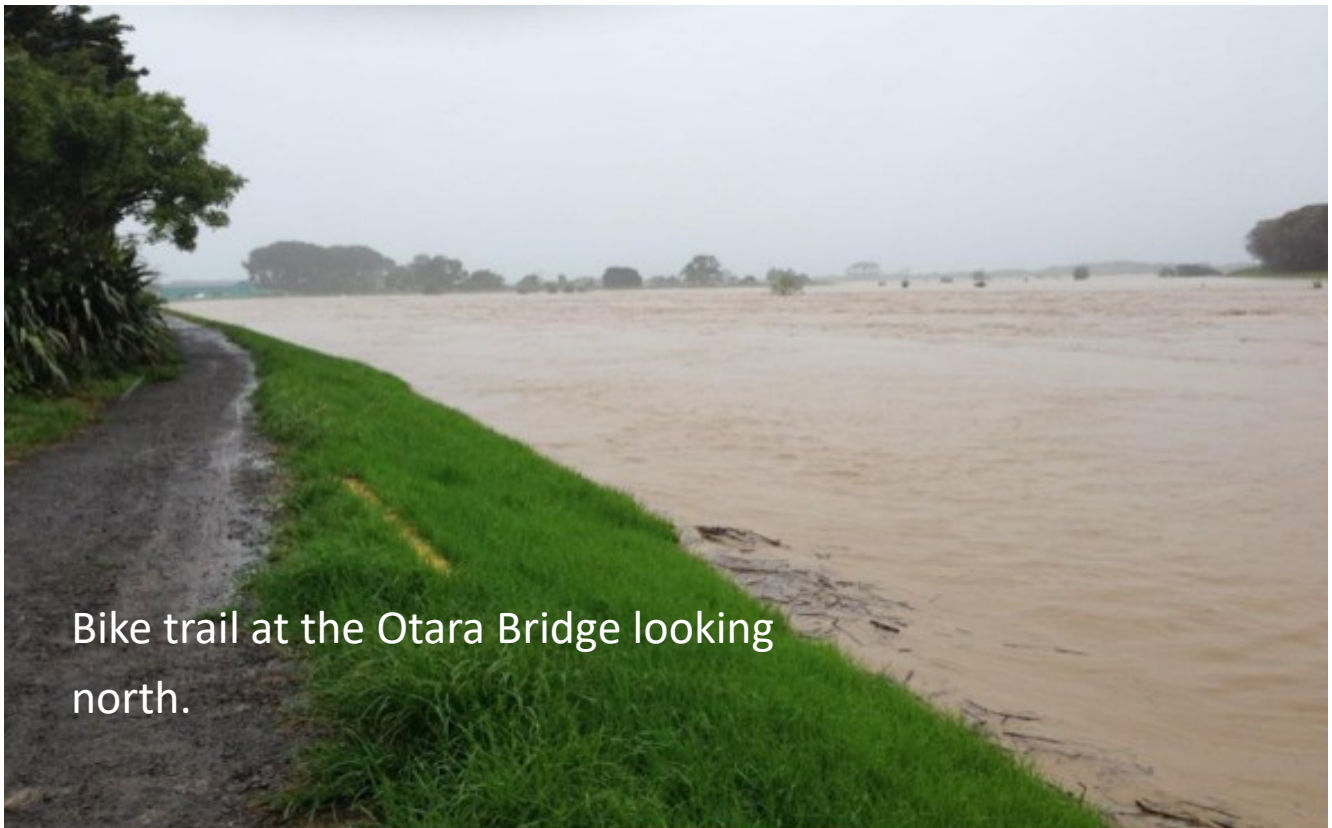
Horses are damaging the stop banks by creating ridges along fences on the river side of the banks, pugging the banks and denuding it of the vegetation which prevents scouring of the bank during heavy rain events. This puts the town at risk and costs ratepayers money for repairs. Stop banks in good condition are essential to protect the town. Regional Council does not want stock on stop banks. Quote: *'Regional Council have also raised concerns about roaming horses undermining the performance of the stopbanks, noting that "these animals can reduce grass cover, cause tracking, stock holes and pugging which weakens the integrity of the stopbank. A 'good stopbank' has no bare soil. Grass cover is very important acting as a 'protective seal' reducing soil scouring and slumping during heavy rainfall."*' (Reference: Tuesday 1 June 2021, Item 8 – Animal Control – Roaming Horses within Opotiki Township p.105)

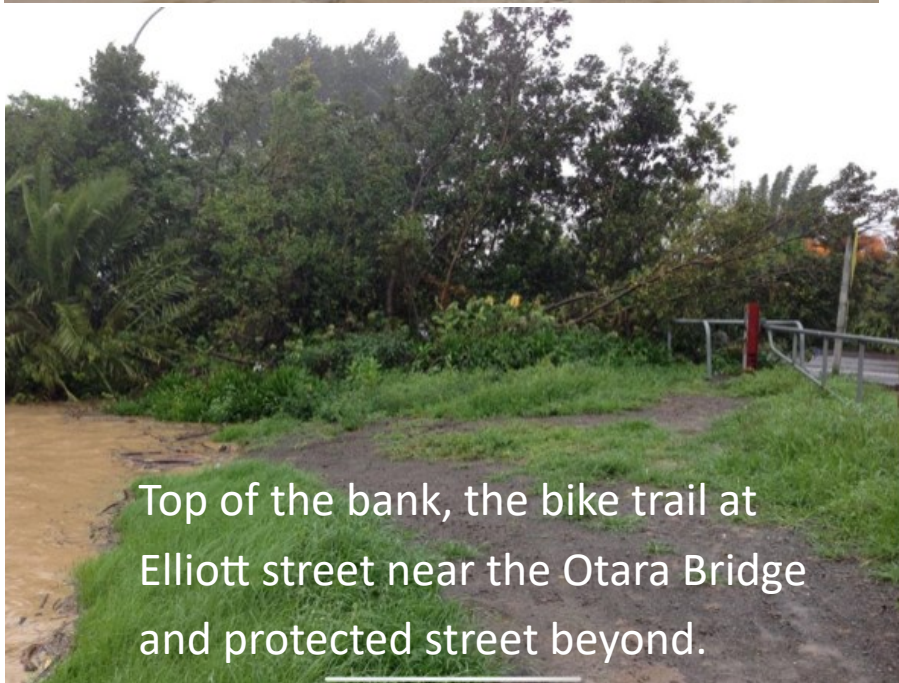




Another shot of the damaged wire and posts and stop bank near the pony club next to the Otara River. 22/9/21

Here is a reminder of why it is so important to maintain our stop banks all the way to the top. These are photos I took of the Otara 12 February 2018. The water was close to the top of the bank and low lying areas near the river completely flooded. All the grazing areas often used by Opotiki horses are completely submerged. This is not the first time water has been this high. Stop banks in good condition are crucial to the town. Views of the Otara River from near Otara Bridge.





Top of the bank, the bike trail at Elliott street near the Otara Bridge and protected street beyond.



The path on the right is the bike trail on the south side of the Otara bridge.



A bale floats down the Otara which is in full flood. The stop bank protects the structure behind it.



A daily sight, horses (usually 5 or more) are almost always loose in this flat area adjacent to the rodeo arena. In addition there are typically 3-4 tied along the fence at intervals and a few tethered opposite these ones next to the rodeo arena wooden fence.

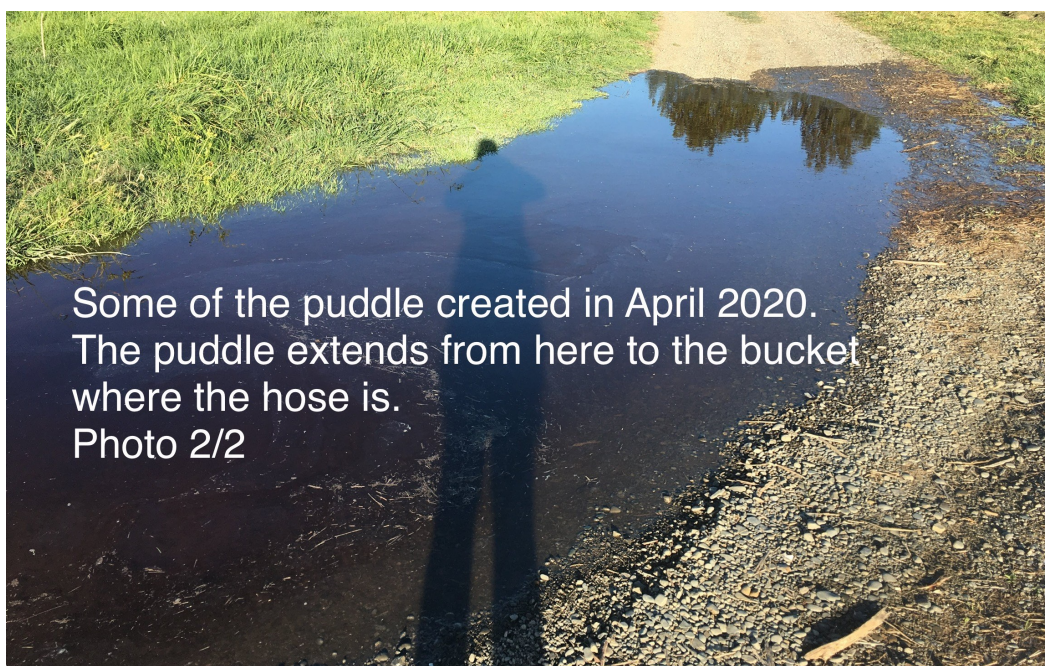
At the top of the photo, just beyond the river by the shelter belt is a similar river-side 'paddock' near Thornton park where up to 6 or so horses graze loose periodically. There were none there on the day of this photo.

The path denuded of grass along the top of the bank is visible here as is damage to the fence.

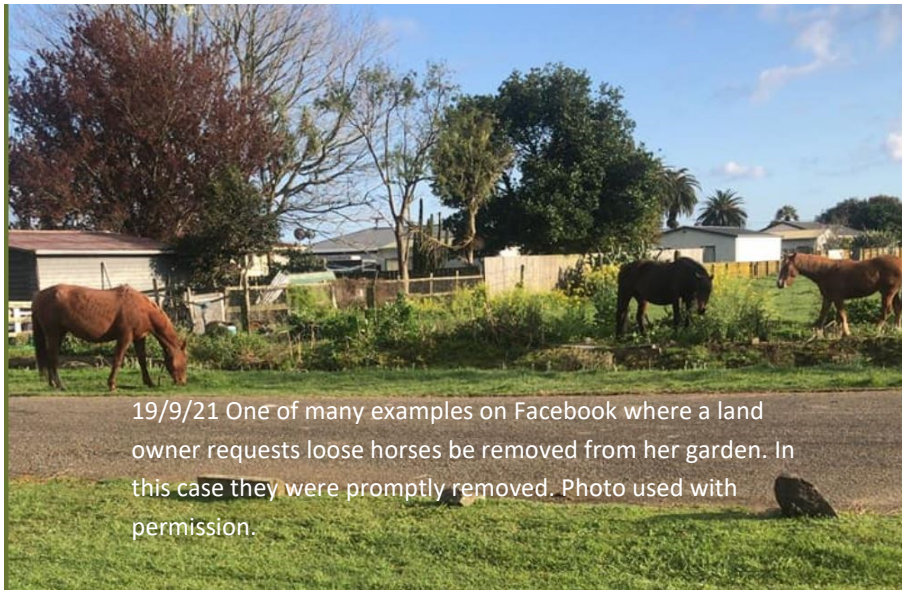
April 2020 someone created a Paddock for horses, moved the Plastic water pipe from the pony club and (probably accidentally) left it running, possibly for days as we were in the first Level 4 Covid lock down. You can see water puddling on the left and the hose gushing by the bucket. The horses are out of the frame.
Photo 1/2



Some of the puddle created in April 2020. The puddle extends from here to the bucket where the hose is.
Photo 2/2



Loose horses damage public and private property and gardens, trees and lawns and break or damage private and Council fences they strain against or are tied to. Recently at the skate park a mature tree was ring barked by a horse tether. Horse owners sometimes place horses into private fenced lots in town that they don't own or that are managed by Council without gaining permission. *Quote 'We have had frequent complaints from those who have a lease or grazing arrangement in place only to have other people's horses added to their paddock without permission. It is clear that we are getting to a critical point with too much pressure on grazing and poor horse-owners not looking after their animals...'* (Reference: Thursday 16 July 2020 – Fewer horses in urban areas is the only solution)



On past social media posts owners of wandering horses have suggested the reporters of wandering horses should take care of any loose horses they see themselves instead of reporting them which is ridiculous.

There are some owners whose horses are the most often loose but even responsible owners have horses that escape their tethers or fences. Whether the horses get out on their own or someone leaves a gate open or the wire is cut doesn't really matter, the horses become loose causing nuisance and safety issues. Lately a group of horse owners are trying to police the other owners but clearly from the ongoing, large number of loose horses it's not working. Those volunteer horse owners have their own families, jobs and lives to attend to and it's not fair or realistic to expect them to be able to keep track of all the dozens of horses in Ōpōtiki. It is also an 'ambulance at the bottom of a cliff' response rather than a preventative one. In order for horses to stay in town all of the owners would need to be equally responsible for their own animals and clearly they are not.

At a June 2021 meeting, Council resolved to prohibit horses from Ōpōtiki Council reserves which was advertised publicly in a number of ways. (Reference: Monday 30 August 2021, Item 11 – Review of Consolidated Bylaws – Part 8, Animal Control , p.93) Despite this, horses continue to be tethered and roaming freely in public reserves.





February 12 2021

There are pretty much constantly horses tethered outside the rodeo arena. Usually 2 or 3 near the bank and more in the field.

On Sunday 29 August 2021 while I was at the 'skate park' (Volkner's Island between the treatment plant and concrete skate area) no less than half a dozen horses were roaming loose in the park. Only after the town became aware of ODC's proposed bylaw amendment to ban grazing horses did horse numbers suddenly decrease in the skate park and some water buckets were placed on the grass near the remaining tethered horses.



A group of 5 horses July 8 at the skate park with easy access to the main street. The biggest number of loose horses I saw there this year was 8, not including tethered ones. Typically this winter there have been a handful of loose horses and 3-4 tethered plus one fenced by the treatment plant.



Horses at the skate park.

This winter was the largest number of loose horses I counted in the skate park. I didn't look to see if the usual locations near the treatment plant had fenced and tethered horses as well. I counted them because I was astonished at how many there were that day. I initially took photos but deleted them when I got home because I figured it was pointless to tell anyone. Horses in the skate park have unimpeded access to the main street (Church Street) a mere block away.

The skate park is not large. Since the new footpaths have been laid there has been a huge increase in use of the park by the public. Cyclists, roller bladers, walkers, shoppers and a lot more families with young children are using the park and the footpaths in the skate park and behind Peria. After the new facilities in the park are complete it will be even more popular and loose and tethered horses even more incompatible with public safety and the recreational use of the reserves.

Memorial Park and the Pony Club grounds are other examples of what are supposed to be horse free reserves where tethered and roaming horses can be found, even after ODC's announcement of a possible grazing ban.

After ODC announced the possible ban a great number of tethered and loose horses were relocated. By 22/9/21 all the horses that are usually tethered or roaming in the skatepark were finally gone. This is the first time the skate park has been horse free in 2 years. I observed instead a lady throwing a ball as she walked with her dogs across the park where the horses used to graze. Despite this a great number still remain both tethered and loose in town. Despite some horse owners' best efforts to relocate the large number of horses in town, as late as morning of 18/09/21 a post on the Community Facebook page reported



ten horses and some foals described as 'a fleet of horses' on Memorial Park grounds. Some horse owning citizens rounded them up and as of writing this sentence there are still a number of horses, presumably from that lot, still either tied near the rodeo fence or loose on the flood plain over the bank from there.

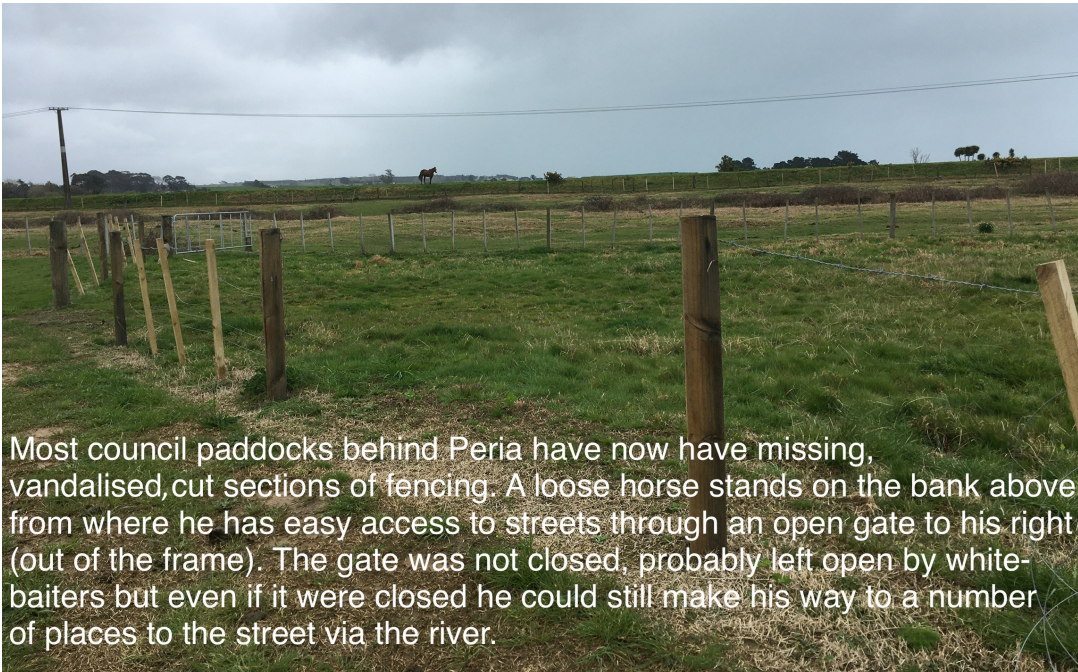
There is no such thing as a free lunch and there is no such thing as free grazing. There is a large and ongoing cost to ratepayers associated with roaming horses and Council cannot legally impose fines other than impound fees to make up the costs; yet impound fees can rarely be collected.

The training and additional staff alone to deal with horses will cost the rate payers and additional \$200,000.00 per year. (Reference: Tuesday 1 June 2021, Item 8 – Animal Control – Roaming Horses within Opotiki Township p.107)

Council suggests there may be a 2% rates rise in the near future **just** to deal with horses. This will be in addition to the rates money already being paid to fix damaged stop banks and fences. Quote: 'A \$200k per annum increase in operational costs represents approximately a 2% rate rise, equating to approximately an additional \$23 per rating unit, or \$7 per \$100k of capital value of property, per annum.' (Reference: Tuesday 29 June 2021, Item 5 – Animal Control – Updated on Roaming Horses within Opotiki Township p.109)

Costs for repairs to vandalised paddock fences behind Peria themselves is estimated by Council to cost between \$3000.00-5000.00. (Reference: Report to Council Tuesday 29 June 2021, Item 5 – Animal Control – Updated on Roaming Horses within Opotiki Township p.105) Council only makes \$4000-\$7000 per year leasing grazing. (Reference: Report to Council Tuesday 1 June 2021, Item 8 – Animal Control – Roaming Horses within Opotiki Township p.107) Council is potentially losing more money than it makes by leasing grazing and Council also reports they can't ensure horses grazing their paddocks won't become loose because quote '... the paddocks licenced for grazing are often not secure (mainly as a result of vandalism) resulting in horses roaming on the road.' (Reference: Tuesday 1 June 2021, Item 8 – Animal Control – Roaming Horses within Opotiki Township p.107) In theory the impoundment of horses should be paid by owners but according to ODC this rarely happens so rate payers foot the full bill for impoundment costs, stop bank and fence repairs and for the additional animal control officers and training and any destruction of horses.

Quote: 'Between July and November 2020...almost 100 complaints were received in relation to roaming horses, which represents a 44% increase compared to the same time frame in the previous year... \$11,204 was spent responding to roaming horse complaints, including officer and our out of hours contractor's time, advertisements in the paper for impounded horses and the destruction of four horses. These costs do not include repairs required to the pound when horses were broken out or damage to fences on Council reserves.'



Most council paddocks behind Peria have now have missing, vandalised, cut sections of fencing. A loose horse stands on the bank above from where he has easy access to streets through an open gate to his right (out of the frame). The gate was not closed, probably left open by white-baiters but even if it were closed he could still make his way to a number of places to the street via the river.

In terms of income from horses there is no registration fee required or requirement to register horses. Council can recover monies when horses are impounded however this requires the impounded horse's owner to pay the impoundment charges, which rarely happens. Overall there is a high cost to the rate payer in officers responding to horse complaints, with little prospect of expenditure being recovered.' (Reference: Tuesday 26 January 2021, Item 10 – Animal Control – Roaming Horses within Opotiki Township p.131)

On November 13 2016 a submission to Council by Alex Dobie discussed similar concerns around horses and cattle on residential land. He pointed out the pollution of waterways, flies and smells, damage to fences, damage to private and public land and stop banks, animal welfare, the nuisance to neighbours, overgrazing, the large number of animal control call outs, the inappropriateness of grazing on what should be public recreational land and lack of fees paid by horse owners to reimburse costs. He also asked Council '...to [make] the grazing of horses and cattle a Non Complying Activity on Residentially zoned land and asked Council to cease leasing land for grazing within the town immediately.' (Reference: Submission On Proposed Opotiki District Plan 2016 by Alex Dobie— Opotiki District Citizens & Ratepayers Association)

TO THE EDITOR
STRAYING STOCK

Sir,—It is time the council took in hand the matter of stock straying on the county roads. Cattle, horses, even pigs are still roaming the roads and constitute a real menace to traffic, especially at night. If the councillors tackle this matter as rigorously and effectively as they have another—ragwort—they will deserve and earn the gratitude of the travelling public.

FED-UP.

Concerns about horses and their welfare are not new and are not caused by social media. In the Opotiki news you can find examples of impounding and complaints of roaming horses as far back as 1941. (Reference: https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers?title=OPNEWS&start_date=01-01-1938&end_date=31-12-1950&query=roaming+horses)

One of the differences between 1941 and now or even 2016 and now is the amount of automobile traffic in and through town and the increase of horses in town since 2019. With the addition of the new harbour, mussel plant, library and commercial buildings, traffic is only likely to increase even more. It is also likely there will be more town population growth, with Council and Central Government investing in infrastructure and a number of new housing projects both private and non private in the pipeline.

In my opinion Council should not be grazing animals on Park and Reserve land. Horses are selective grazers and without rigorous pasture management the pasture will be overtaken by weeds. The management of pasture and upkeep of fences and land are highly likely to cost rate payers more than mowing established grass or the upkeep of wildflower meadows.

Parks and Reserves should be available for recreational uses especially with the increase of people using them since the new footpaths have gone in. Already many elderly on scooters, walkers, shoppers on foot going to New World, cyclists, mothers with prams, family groups with young children and dog walkers are using the footpaths behind Peria and through the skate park. Eventually the land behind Peria could be made into more refined park grounds like the highly utilised and very pleasant river-side walks, parks and playgrounds below and atop the stop banks in Whakatane. Some scattered trees, park benches,

perhaps a few garden areas with shrubs and herbs and future children's playground would be a welcome addition to that area as the town grows and rates base allows.

Alex Dobie's 2016 submission (already referenced) had some excellent suggestions about the animal welfare standards, fee charges, microchipping, SPCA former offence checks and minimum grazing area required for private-land grazing of horses in town. I suggest that although these are good ideas they would cost a great deal of time and money to implement and maintain and are possibly beyond Council's legal scope to put into a bylaw.

In my opinion the 'freedom' to graze horses in Ōpōtiki does not outweigh public safety, Council's duty of care and the ongoing expense and nuisance to rate payers. Ratepayers are in effect footing the bill for horse owners' 'free' grazing. As the average household income is very low in our district we also can't afford an additional 2% rates rise to cater just for horses on top of what we are already paying for them. Rates may even come down with a ban on horses given the amount of money horses are presently costing us all. The disadvantage of grazing horses in town far outweigh any advantages. How will we feel once someone is killed in a horse/vehicle collision? Should we leave it until then to do something? Just because there have always been horses in Ōpōtiki does not mean there should continue to be. There are other animals that are not allowed to be kept in town that historically would have been when Opotiki was a village. As long as there are horses allowed in town these issues as outlined are apt to continue, so to me at least the only option for Council now is an outright ban. Given the track record of horse issues in the past two years plus I have little belief that there would be permanent compliance to horse ownership bylaws and welfare regulations in the future should horses be allowed to remain. That is why I support Council's proposal to ban the keeping, but not riding, of horses in Ōpōtiki township.

Clickable links to references

Reports to Council:

[Tuesday 26 January 2021, Item 10 – Animal Control – Roaming Horses within Opotiki Township](#)

[Tuesday 1 June 2021, Item 8 – Animal Control – Roaming Horses within Opotiki Township](#)

[Tuesday 29 June 2021, Item 5 – Animal Control – Updated on Roaming Horses within Opotiki Township](#)

[Monday 30 August 2021, Item 11 – Review of Consolidated Bylaws – Part 8, Animal Control](#)

News releases:

[Thursday 16 July 2020 – Fewer horses in urban areas is the only solution](#)

[Thursday 20 August 2020 – Horse numbers tracking down but more action required](#)

[Wednesday 16 September 2020 – End of the line for equine repeat offenders](#)

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/122504666/crash-in-bay-of-plenty-town-overrun-with-horses-reinforces-councils-mission-to-lower-roaming-equine-numbers>

2016 Submission to Council

[Submission On Proposed Opotiki District Plan 2016 by Alex Dobie— Opotiki District Citizens & Ratepayers Association](#)

Opotiki Community Facebook group:

https://www.facebook.com/groups/OpotikiCommunity/?multi_permaLinks=969497463615141 (must join the group)

Papers Past web site:

https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers?title=OPNEWS&start_date=01-01-1938&end_date=31-12-1950&query=roaming+horses