REPORT WITH RESOLUTION

7.5 Annual Report on Dog Control Policy and Practices 2025/26

Report To:	Local Services Committee
Meeting Date:	Wednesday, 16 September 2026
Author:	Kerry Beckett
Author Title:	Compliance Manager
Interim Executive Manager:	Executive Manager - Delivery

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to present the Annual Report on Dog Control Policy and Practices 2025/26 prepared in accordance with section 10A of the Dog Control Act 1996.

Recommendation

That the Local Service Committee:

a. Receives and notes the Annual Report on Dog Control Policy and Practices Report 2025-26 (Resolve # 2026-331).

Council Resolution

Planning and Performance Manager, Gary Knighton and Compliance Manager, Kerry Beckett presented the report and responded to questions from elected members.

LS2026-16 ***Moved / Second*** ***Cr Lipscombe / Cr Van Der Leden***

That the Local Service Committee:

a. Receives and notes the Annual Report on Dog Control Policy and Practices Report 2025-26 (Resolve # 2026-331).

Carried

Executive Summary

The Dog Control Act 1996 requires territorial authorities to report each financial year on the administration of their Dog Control Policy and dog control practices. The attached Annual Report on Dog Control Policy and Practices 2025/26 provides Council with an overview of dog control activity for the reporting period 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026. The annual report includes the statutory information required under section 10A, including registered dog numbers, probationary and disqualified owners, dangerous and menacing dog classifications, infringement notices, dog-related complaints and prosecutions. The report also summarizes the operational practices undertaken by Council to support responsible dog ownership, public safety and compliance with the Dog Control Act 1996.

The annual report must be made publicly available and will be published on Council's website in accordance with section 10A(3) of the Dog Control Act 1996.

Context

The South Waikato District Council has a registered dog population of 3,726 which are owned by 2,636 owners. The biggest population of dogs is to be found in the urban areas.

Dog control in the district is implemented pursuant to Council's Dog Control Policy (as required by Section 10 of the Dog Control Act 1996) and Council's Dog Control Bylaw 2017.

Discussion

Resources

Council employs a total of 4 full time staff in Dog Control roles. Staff comprises the Manager of the Animal Control/Compliance Unit and 4 Field Officers. There are 3 vehicles available, 2 are fitted with purpose-built canopies, for the securing and transporting of impounded dogs.

The Pound Facility is managed by an Animal Shelter Manager.

Dog Control Enforcement Practices

Council provides a seven day a week service. Staff working to a roster, are proactive in patrolling throughout the district to apprehend straying dogs and to deal with complaints regarding inadequate control of dogs. Many offences against the provisions of the Dog Control Act and Dog Control Bylaw are detected by staff during the course of their patrols. A significant number of complaints about dog control matters are phoned directly to Council through our Customer Service Department or after hours calls are taken through the Palmerston North After Hours Service.

The majority of complaints received relate to roaming and barking dogs. A significant number of complaints are dealt with by written warnings but repeat offenders are dealt with by the issue of Infringement Offence Notices as provided for in the Dog Control Act 1996.

Council provides cage traps, free of charge to residents who are experiencing problems with dogs wandering on to private property.

Prohibition of Dogs in Public Places

Council's Policy and Bylaw requires that dogs in public places must be always on a lead. In terms of the provisions of the Dog Control Act 1996 there are some exceptions from the Bylaw provisions which relate to working and hunting dogs whilst each are engaged in their respective activities. Dogs are allowed to be off leads in dog exercise areas provided they are always under full voice command of the person in charge of the dog. There is generally a good level of compliance with the leash requirements with most first-time breaches generally being dealt with by way of a warning. Officers are permitted to use individual discretion in requiring Infringement Notices to be issued for repeat offenders.

Dogs are prohibited from the entire Central Business District of Tokoroa between the hours of 8am and 6pm daily. They are also banned from all school grounds, public barbeque areas and children's playgrounds including those that may be included in dog exercise areas. With the latest amendments to the 2017 Dog Control Bylaw, the Central Business Districts of Putaruru and Tirau are now classified as 'dogs on leash' areas.

Dog Registration and Other Fees

Dog registration fees are set by Council in respect of each registration year. These fees are set, based on recovering the balance of Council's costs for providing dog control.

There is an ongoing door to door programme that the Animal Control Unit carries out to check for the existence of unregistered dogs. Any person located with an unregistered dog for the current year is issued with an Infringement Notice. That notice is cancelled providing the dog is registered or automatic payments have been activated within 28 days of the notice being issued. Seizure under the Dog Control Act is often an option the Animal Control Unit enforces when compliance has been unsuccessful previously.

Fee Differentiation

The fee for registering a dog domiciled in an urban area within the South Waikato District is greater than that payable by owners whose dogs are domiciled in the rural area or who have qualified for selected owner policy status.

The reasoning for the differential in fee is the continually higher number of complaints within urban areas compared with those received for rural domiciled dogs. Often urban domiciled dogs continue to use a greater portion of resources available to the Animal Control operation.

Dog Pound

Council operates a Dog Pound where up to 35 dogs can be contained in humane conditions pending recovery by their owners. Dogs are kept in pound custody for a minimum of 7 days. If they remain unclaimed by owners after the expiry of 7 days, dogs are re-homed to new owners where possible or are disposed of. The Pound facilities are open to the public for the inspection and/or retrieval of impounded dogs five days a week between the hours of 9.00am and 4.30pm. Staff maintain the Pound to a very high standard of hygiene but despite this many of the dogs that are found wandering the streets have never been vaccinated for any diseases. Parvo Virus, a debilitating and often fatal disease that affects canines, is frequently encountered.

Menacing Dogs

There are 4 breeds listed in Schedule 4 of the Dog Control Act 1996 and one ‘type’ (American Pitbull Terrier) of dog which Territorial Authorities are required to classify as “menacing”.

The four breeds of dogs listed in the Act are the Brazilian Fila, Dogo Argentino, Perro de Presa Canario and the Japanese Tosa.

The ‘type’ of dog listed in the Act is the American Pitbull Terrier. All dogs of that type and cross breeds of that type that are known to Animal Control Staff have been classified as “menacing”.

It is the belief of Animal Control practitioners in Council that breed specific legislation achieves nothing in reducing dog attacks and for that reason, is active in classifying dogs known to exhibit aggressive behavior under Section 33A of the Dog Control Act 1996.

Dog Exercise Areas

Council provides several areas throughout its district where dogs can be exercised off a lead, providing they are, always, under the strict control of the person in charge of the dog. Council provides a list of dog exercise areas and details as to their location are included in Council’s Dog Policy.

Dog Education and Dog Obedience Courses

Council has a wide range of information available to dog owners about dog control and responsible dog ownership. Council does not provide dog obedience or education programmes itself but supports the work done by local dog obedience clubs and will direct all enquiries of this nature from interested dog owners accordingly.

Council provides bark collars for sale which have been very successful in abating nuisance barking. This resource is regularly recommended by Officers when dealing with complaints of this nature but education is the first and preferred method of enforcement. Infringement Notices

Section 66 of the Dog Control Act 1996 provides for the issue of infringement offences for minor offences under the Act. Council uses the infringement offence provisions and finds this to be an extremely useful tool in dealing with minor offences. The alternative of laying an information in the District Court can sometimes be a lengthy process given the delays that exist in the Court system. The infringement offence procedure is a preferable method, used by the Dog Control Unit as a method of achieving compliance.

Dangerous Dogs

Section 31 of the Dog Control Act requires the classification of dogs as dangerous based on one of the following criteria:

1. Any dog, in respect of which, the owner has been convicted of an offence under Section 57A (2) (this relates to dogs rushing people, animals or vehicles);
2. Any dog which the Territorial Authority has, based on sworn evidence attesting to aggressive behavior by the dog on one or more occasions, reasonable grounds to believe constitute a threat to the safety of any person, stock, poultry, domestic animal or protected wildlife; and
3. Any dog that the owner admits in writing constitutes a threat to the safety of any person, stock, poultry, domestic animal, or protected wildlife.

Classes of Dog Ownership

Council has four categories of dog ownership. These are:

1. Rural Dog Owners (those whose dogs are domiciled in the rural area of the district);
2. Urban Dog Owners (those whose dogs are domiciled within the urban area of the district);
3. Those who have qualified for “selected owner status”;
4. Those owners who own sterilized, (neutered or spayed) dogs.

A Selected Owner Policy requires an owner to meet the following criteria:

1. Keep the dog(s) within a suitably fenced property with suitable kenneling for their dog.
2. Must not have been the subject of any justified complaints regarding his/her dog(s) for the 12 months prior to the application.
3. Must not have had a prosecution for a dog related offence for the 24 month period prior to the application.
4. Must have paid the dog registration fees before the 1st August each year.

Disqualified and Probationary Dog Owners

Council has classified no owners in accordance with the Dog Control Act 1996 during the 12 months under review, on behalf of the SPCA because of a conviction under the Animal Welfare Act. There are no owners classified as probationary during the period under review.

Statistical Information

The statistical information attached to this Report meets the requirements of Section 10A of the Dog Control Act 1996.

CATEGORY	AS AT 30 JUNE 2026
Total No. Registered Dogs	3,762
Total No. Probationary Owners	0
Total No. Disqualified Owners	0
Total No. Dangerous Dogs	1
Dangerous by Owner Conviction Under s31(1)(a)	0
Dangerous by Sworn Evidence s31(1)(b)	1
Dangerous by Owner Admittance in Writing s31(1)(c)	0
Total No. Menacing Dogs	188

Menacing under s33A(1)(b)(i) – i.e. by Behaviour	15
Menacing under s33C (1) by Schedule 4 Breed	173
Total No. Infringement Notices	318
Total No. Complaints Received	2,451
TA Complaint Category 1 Attack and Rushing) TA Complaint Category 2 (Barking and Roaming)	 191 972
Total No. Prosecutions	1

Options

The report is provided for information only.

Linkage to Strategic Plan Priorities

N/A

Consultation (Internal and External)

N/A

Financial Considerations

N/A

Risks

N/A

Significance & Engagement Policy

The report is provided for information only and an assessment of significance is not required.

Reference

N/A

Attachments

None