

# Annual Report: Dog Control Policy and Practice 2023/2024

## Introduction

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 2023 to 30 June 2024 and provides an update on the progress and processes of the Far North District Council Animal Management services.

## Background

All Dog Control functions in the district are conducted in-house which includes the administration, field, and shelter services.

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.

## The Council's Dog Control Policy and Practices

### 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

## **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 2023/2024**

### **Responding to complaints (RFS)**

AMOs responded to a total of 2,969 dog control customer requests for service over the 2023/2024 period. This does not include proactive work. This is 111 more individual requests for service than the previous year.

The Animal Management team completed the year meeting response times with an average of 93.8% for urgent RFS (attacks and aggressive RFS) and 95.5% for non-urgent against a Level of Service target KPI of  $\geq 93\%$ .

### **Dog Registration**

The number of known dogs in the district has reduced to 10,484. This is a result of a focused data base clean up and an administrative focus on registration follow up. A fixed term additional administrator was employed for this purpose.

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

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

The popular social media campaign promoting dog registration and responsible dog ownership was launched in June 2024. This year's campaign continues the theme of 'Dogs are whānau' featuring a local family and their whānau dogs. The campaign also ran on the council's social media channels to give residents plenty of notice of the payment period starting on 1 July.

The whānau theme of the campaign focuses on responsible dog ownership which includes keeping your dog under control in public spaces and avoiding situations where they could frighten or injure people or other dogs.

This campaign was continued with an information insert 'Kurī Karere Doggo Digest' included with dog registration reminder notices.

**Best rates from 1 July to 31 August**

Pay your dog registration fees online or at a service centre. Ask if you're eligible for free registration or a 10% discount. All dogs must be registered. For more information go to: [www.fndc.govt.nz/register-your-dog](http://www.fndc.govt.nz/register-your-dog)

**Te Kaunihera o Te Hiku o te Ika**  
For North District Council

## Probationary and Disqualified Owners

There are two Disqualified owners in the district and three Probationary owners in the district.

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 issuing 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 424 infringements issued for offences under the Dog Control Act 1996. This is 209 less than issued than in 2022/2023. This is largely due to the positive result towards the early proactive administrative work following up noncompliance for dog registration. Infringements are issued if dog owners do not register within given time frames.

The Far North District Council have initiated one prosecution for an attack that occurred in 2023/2024, against a dog owner for breaching the Dog Control Act 1996 which involved a dog attack on another dog. The hearing for this case will be held during 2024/25.

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 120 menacing dogs in the district, this is a decrease of 75 dogs from the previous year. This decrease is again due to the focused data base cleanse.

One hundred 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 no classified dangerous dogs in the district. Previous classified dogs have since left the district or have died.

### **Impounded Dogs**

A total of 452 dogs were impounded in the council shelter in 2023/24.

Thirty-seven percent of impounded dogs were either returned to their owners or rehomed.

281 (62%) of dogs impounded at the shelter were euthanised due to not being claimed by an owner and not being suitable for rehoming. 106 of these dogs were surrendered by the dog owner for euthanasia. This is 15% higher than last year and is attributed to the reduction in claimed dogs, increase in surrendered dog for destruction by an owner 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.

Twenty-three dogs found new homes via the FNDC adopt a dog Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/adoptadogFNDC>. This page now has over 5,500 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.

### **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 eighty-four dogs desexed across the district.

### **Planned Activities for 2024/2025**

The Animal Management team capacity has recently increased with two additional Animal Management Officers and two dedicated Shelter Officers. Additional staffing will allow for an increase in proactive field work.

This work involves more regular patrolling of problem areas, door to door checks for unknown and unregistered dogs. This gives the team more visibility within communities and the ability to speak with dog owners around their responsibilities and issues they may be having.

The team is also looking to engage 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.

There will be a continuation of proactive registration and compliance action plans to increase registration rates and identify unknown dogs as well as ensuring compliance with classifications.

Initiate the recruitment of an Education/Iwi -Community Liaison Officer – a dedicated Officer to provide school and community education. Collaborating with high-risk communities to reduce dog related harm.

## Dog Control Statistics

**Table one: Registration/Classification related data**

	Total 2020/2021	Total 2021/22	Total 2022/3	Total 2023/24
Dogs Registered	11,069 Known 8,949 Registered	10,917 Known 8347 Registered	12,214 Known 8,618 Registered	10,484 Known 8489 Registered
<b>Dog Owner Classification</b>				
Probationary	0	0	0	3
Disqualified	5	5	7	2
<b>Menacing Classification</b>				
- By breed	159	154	175	100
- By deed	32	17	20	20
<b>Combined</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>120</b>
<b>Dangerous Classification</b>				
Section 31(1) a	0	0	1	0
Section 31(1) b	1	1	1	0
Section 31(1) c	1	1	1	0
<b>Total Dangerous</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>

**Table two: Request for Service (RFS) Data**

Customer requests break down by RFS type				
RFS Type	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024
Attacks	201	229	257	278
Straying	486	446	526	532
Rushing	54	89	108	125
Barking	323	285	255	374
Aggressive	128	100	97	123
Miscellaneous Enquiries*	869*	671*	698*	703*
Lost and Found	252	281	273	223
Pick-Up Request	416	424	532	511
Dog Welfare	80	86	112	100
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2809</b>	<b>2,611</b>	<b>2,858</b>	<b>2969</b>

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

**Table three: Compliance Data**

	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024
<b>Prosecutions</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Infringement Offence</b>				
18 Wilful Obstruction of dog control officer or ranger	0	1	2	8
19(2) Failure or refusal to supply information or wilfully providing false particulars	1	1	0	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	12	17	29	24
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	3	0
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	1	0
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	179	131	506	295
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	4	6	0	8
53(1) Failure to keep dog under control	35	43	92	88
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
<b>Total</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>633</b>	<b>424</b>

**Table four: Shelter data**

	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024
Impounded Total	423	337	517	452
Total number of dogs returned to owner	178	117	161	115
% dogs returned to owner	42%	35%	31%	25%
Total number of dogs to Rescue Groups	64	48	76	33
Total number of dogs adopted via Council	69	65	39	23
% dogs to Rescue Groups/Adopted	31%	34%	22%	12%
Total number of dogs euthanised	112	107	241	281
% dogs euthanised	27%	32%	47%	62%