

ANNUAL REPORT

DOG CONTROL POLICY AND PRACTICES

2025/26

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INTRODUCTION

This is Waipā District Council's report on Dog Control Policy and Practices for the period 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026, as required by section 10A of the Dog Control Act 1996.

SUMMARY

The Dog Control Act 1996 ("the Act") requires all territorial authorities to report annually to central government on their Dog Control Policy and Practices.

The format of the report follows that previously prescribed by the Secretary for Local Government, Department of Internal Affairs (DIA), along with some recent amendments issued to Councils in July 2026 by the new Ministry of Cities, Environment, Regions and Transport (MCERT) who now administer local government functions that were previously under DIA.

PART 1 – DOG CONTROL POLICY AND PRACTICES

1. Dog control in Waipā District

- 1.1. The total number of *active*¹ dogs on Council's register at the end of the 2025/26 registration year was 9379, down from 9420 in 2024/25.
- 1.2. There had been a consistent increase in dog numbers in previous years, in keeping with levels of population growth across the district, but a drop the last two years. This is possibly a reflection of an increase in registration fees along with financial struggles in the community. Similar themes have occurred in other Councils where fees have increased.
- 1.3. Council provides a twenty-four-hour animal control service, with Council's Animal Control Officers covering business hours, and contractors covering after hours. The after-hours contract combines after-hours animal control activities with noise control and general property security.

The contract was awarded to Allied Security in September 2019 and has since been renewed. It was due for retendering in June 2026, but the current contract has been extended until February 2027. The new contract will have two parts, one for enforcement duties, and one for pound-keeping, with the option to tender for one or the other, or both parts.

- 1.4. An active Institute of Animal Management has been valuable, with Waipā District Council hosting a number of the meetings for the Waikato/BOP branch of the Institute. Our Animal Control Team Leader has been the Secretary/Treasurer for the branch for the last four years until June this year. These meetings have helped foster good connections with staff from our neighbouring Councils. Good relationships have also been maintained with the Police and other agencies.

¹ total of registered and unregistered dogs

- 1.5. Council restructured the Animal Control Team in 2020 to form a dedicated Team Leader, plus 3 full-time and one part-time animal control officers. An additional part-time Administrator was employed in 2018/19 (total of 1.6) due to the growth in dog numbers and internal organisational demands. An additional full-time Animal Control Officer position was further approved for the 2025-26 period (total of 4.6), and this new ACO was subsequently appointed in September 2025. The Manager Compliance is responsible for the overall Department (Animal Control, Health and Licensing, Enforcement and Building Compliance).
- 1.6 During the 2025-26 year, two of our team were on extended leave following injuries, and after they returned (initially on light duties) another went on extended annual leave. This did have an effect on the level of service provided. We were fortunate to be able to employ a fixed term part-time Animal Control Officer (two days per week) and this proved invaluable in helping to keep the essential duties covered during these times, along with our very dedicated but also extremely busy remaining staff. The fixed term position will end in February 2027.
- 1.7 Council has had a shared service arrangement with Waitomo District Council over previous years, with our animal control team providing an animal control officer to their animal control team two days per week since 2021. The animal control shared service ceased in January 2024, with Waitomo now employing their own staff for this purpose. There has been a subsequent loss of income to our animal control budget.
- 1.8 Council continues to operate two animal control pounds, one in Cambridge and one in Kihikihi with facilities for impounding dogs and stock. Council has approved a project in its Long-Term Plan to replace the Cambridge pound, and this is on track for detailed design work to commence in 2026/2027.
- 1.9 There were 4132 animal control requests for service received (including dogs, stock and general/admin enquiries), an increase of around 481 from the previous year. Impounding rates decreased a little. There were 227 dogs impounded (244 last year), with 117 dogs claimed, 85 dogs rehomed, and 16 dogs euthanased, with 8 still in care at the end of June.
- 1.10 Dog owners claiming impounded dogs are required to pay an impounding fee, as well as registration fees if the dog is unregistered, plus micro-chipping fees if applicable (i.e. if unregistered and not already chipped). In addition, sustenance fees are charged for each additional day the dog is in the pound. However, a dog impounded for the first time will often be released for free if registered at the time of impounding. Council simplified its impounding fees in 2019 to a two-tier rate rather than an increasing scale per impounding, which has made administration easier.
- 1.11 The associated fleet consists of four dedicated vehicles. Two were upgraded in the 20/21 financial year, with one other replaced in 2024 and another replaced in early 2025. All are now GPS fitted. Specially designed dog cages have been provided in all vehicles to ensure the safety of the dogs being transported and the safety of staff handling the dogs.

2. Dog control enforcement practices

- 2.1. For the period to the end of June 2026, of the 4132 total calls Council received, 1800 were dog-related complaints or requests for service that required action, with another 9 requests relating to dog bins/signage, and a further 809 general enquiries. This does not include complaints about stock or other animals. The rest were spread over other request types.
- 2.2. In line with our Enforcement Guidelines, the first approach by animal control staff when following up complaints is generally one of education which then increases if a matter is not resolved. If a currently registered dog is picked up for a first wandering offence, the dog is usually returned to the owner free of charge with a verbal warning rather than charging an impound fee.
- 2.3. Complaints relating to wandering dogs numbered 695 this year (746 last year), and 428 complaints were received in relation to barking dogs (586 last year). These seem to be the most common complaints in other districts also. In the case of wandering dogs, we generally ask the caller to contain the dog if at all possible until it can be collected. When this isn't possible animal control staff work with complainants to locate and to either capture the dogs (sometimes using Council-owned cage traps), or to address the matter with the dog owner.
- 2.4. Most barking complaints are resolved swiftly once the owner is aware of the problem. In more persistent cases, the Animal Control Officer will gather evidence, usually by asking the complainant(s) to keep a log of the barking, and will survey other neighbours to establish if the barking is a problem. An Abatement Notice can be served under the Act, with any objections heard by Council's Regulatory Committee. We did not issue any abatement notices this year. Ten were issued last year, and we have had very few subsequent complaints in relation to those.
- 2.5. Aggressive dog complaints decreased slightly compared to last year, while reported attacks increased. When attack incidents are investigated, a rating sheet is completed by staff to help ensure a consistent approach to enforcement as there is discretion in the Act as to what action can be taken, ranging from a verbal warning to prosecution. Cases are assessed on an individual basis.
- 2.6. Attacks often result in an infringement notice for an associated offence or a menacing dog classification (or both), as few other options exist in many cases where an attack does not warrant prosecution. While Councils are required to classify dogs as dangerous when we have sworn evidence attesting to the dog's aggression, the legislation around the disposal of seized/impounded classified dangerous dogs is not practical, and staff can usually obtain better outcomes with classified menacing dogs.
- 2.7. At the end of June 2026, 55 infringement notices had been issued, with 10 subsequently cancelled, mostly due to compliance by the dog owner.
- 2.8. Not all infringement notices are paid to Council, with the majority being filed in court. This does not make them a particularly effective enforcement measure as many of these will not be paid.

- 2.9. The relatively small number of infringements is due principally to our initial focus on education rather than on enforcement action. Most of the infringements for this period were issued for failing to control or failing to register, however other offences such as failing to comply with the requirements of a menacing dog classification, and failing to microchip also feature, along with breach of Council bylaw, and failing to comply with barking abatement notice requirements.
- 2.10. There was one prosecution by Council in 2025/26, following an incident of a classified dangerous dog attacking a six year old child, resulting in significant facial injuries. The owner was convicted of the offence, and is currently awaiting sentencing at a future date. The offending dog had already been euthanased, as agreed by the dog owner, prior to the case being heard.

3. Dog prohibited, leash only and dog exercise areas

- 3.1. In Waipa, Council's policy is for all dogs to be on a leash in public places, except in designated dog exercise (off leash) areas, and most dog owners adhere to this. There are also areas that are prohibited to dogs such as some sports grounds and children's playgrounds.
- 3.2. Following the review of our Dog Control Policy and Bylaw at the end of 2023, signage was reviewed and updated to reflect the changes in the bylaw. Additional signage has been purchased and will be rolled out as resources allow. Signage is erected/managed by animal control staff wherever possible to reduce contractor costs.
- 3.3. There are 52 dog faeces receptacles across the district which are regularly emptied by contractors. They are located mainly at exercise areas. The dog exercise areas and dog faeces receptacles are well-used by dog owners, and we regularly receive public requests for additional bins around the community. Unfortunately at some locations they can tend to be treated as rubbish bins with general litter and picnic items disposed in them.

We have an exciting opportunity this year via local business KRA Dog Scoops, which has received funding from Waipā's Waste Minimisation Community Fund to trial dog poo collection and composting at five park sites around Waipā. Five bins will be set up in areas around the district within the next couple of weeks, and these will be managed by the business at no cost to the animal control team. We look forward to reporting back on the success of this venture in future reports.

4. Dog registration, micro-chipping and other fees

- 4.1. There were 8931 dogs registered at the end of June 2026, compared to 9113 the previous June.
- 4.2. We continued our focus on unregistered dogs this year but, largely due to staff shortages, the end result was just over 95% registered. 448 dogs (4.7%) were known to be unregistered at the end of the year, and while some of these owners had received a phone call or visit from animal control staff, they remained unregistered.

Those not followed up during the year were targeted at year end (collecting fees for the new 2026/27 period), mostly via property visits. These are typically people who struggle financially, and the team worked with them to register prior to penalty fees being added, with some taking up the offer of a payment plan. This approach achieved some excellent results, and will ultimately mean less unregistered dogs to follow up later.

- 4.3. There was an increase of \$5 per dog for dog registration fees for the 2024-25 year, and a further increase of \$3 for the 2025-26 year, and another \$3 per dog for the 2026-27 year. The fees are comparable to many other Councils.
- 4.4. There are discounts of \$15 and \$10 available to urban owners for fencing and neutering respectively. These can be regarded as good preventative measures to stop dogs wandering which account for the majority of complaints referred to Council. Rural dogs pay a lesser registration fee due to them generally having less access to Council services. The designation of rural vs urban areas for the purpose of dog registration was updated as part of the bylaw review, and these areas now reflect the designations from Council's district plan zoning.

After starting the re-registration process 4–6 weeks late the last two years due to delays with fee approval, the team started the annual renewal process on time again this year (i.e. early May), and notices were sent out to dog owners by mid-May. While still a very busy time for our admin team and customer support, this significantly reduced the pressure of the last two years by spreading out payments over a longer period.

- 4.5. Fees are due by 30th June, with penalty fees added after 1st August. Once again Council offered the chance for one dog to win free registration for the life of the dog as an incentive for early registration. In the last three years we have sent email reminders to dog owners during the lead-up, and also just prior, to the final due date before penalty fees are applied, with great results, and will do the same in the future.
- 4.6. Dog owners are able to pay online via Council's website and this method of payment is strongly encouraged as an alternative to online bank payments, due to the significant levels of staff time spent managing bank payments when insufficient information is provided by the payee. There is a surcharge for payments made by credit card and debit card, however at the current time the online account to account payments do not create any additional fees. The animal control admin team are very keen to maintain this, as any return to online banking payments by customers in order to avoid merchant fees will very likely result in the above issues occurring once again.
- 4.7. In previous years Council implemented a pre-payment arrangement where owners who struggle to pay registration were able to start paying in advance for the coming year's registration. A number of dog owners were invited, however there wasn't a large uptake, and some dog owners reneged on the arrangement. As a result we haven't continued with offering pre-payment options, but where there is a genuine desire to pay off dog registration fees, our admin team will work with dog owners to achieve this.

- 4.8. Microchipping services continue to be offered to dog owners at weekly clinics held at our pounds, by appointment. Owners were charged \$30 to cover microchip costs and Animal Control Officers carry out the micro-chipping.
- 4.9. Letters are sent to all owners that are legally required to chip their dogs, and who have not already produced a microchip certificate to Council. Legislation requires dogs being registered for the first time to be chipped within two months of registration (with herding dogs exempt from the requirement). Classified dangerous and menacing dogs are also required to be micro-chipped. This process is followed by the issue of infringements to owners of all non-complying dogs, with a 28-day waiver opportunity. Currently 94% of all dogs on the register are microchipped.
- 4.10. There is an annual levy by Waipa District for the operation of the National Dog Database. Previously this was paid to the Department of Internal Affairs, but from this year onwards the Ministry for Cities, Environment, Regions and Transport (MCERT) will be responsible for the management of the database. The levy for the 2025/26 year was \$6,359.85 including GST.

5. Dog education and dog obedience courses

- 5.1. An annual newsletter is sent to all dog owners with their registration notice.
- 5.2. Usually each year Council either organises or attends a seminar or event to which owners/public are invited. Last November we supported and attended “BarkFest” in Cambridge which was a huge success. We are excited to be doing this again in November 2026. For more info see <https://www.barkfest.co.nz/>
- 5.3. Animal Control Officers have visited primary and pre-schools in 2025/2026 to talk to children about being safe around dogs, and we are fortunate to have a past early-education teacher on the team who is very comfortable doing these presentations. They have been very well received and we hope to visit more schools/pre-schools in the coming months.
- 5.4. All new dog owners in the district are issued with an “owner information and dog registration pack” which contains a variety of information of interest to dog owners (including dog training and obedience courses) and Council also has a number of information leaflets to assist owners with specific issues.
- 5.5. Council has continued with its Facebook page dedicated to Animal Control (Waipā Animal Control). The page is used to try and locate the owners of impounded dogs, to advise about events and topical information, and to advertise dogs needing homes. This is usually well received by the public.

6. Disqualified² and probationary³ dog owners

- 6.1. There are currently 10 disqualified owners recorded in our database. Currently there are no probationary owners with the last one expiring in April 2026.

² A disqualified owner cannot own any dogs

³ A probationary owner is allowed to own registered dogs they had at the time, but not acquire additional dogs.

- 6.2 Disqualification results either after conviction for an offence under the Dog Control Act or Animal Welfare Act, or after a dog owner has received (and paid or had lodged at Court) three infringement notices within a two year period. Any dogs owned by a disqualified owner must be disposed of, and not to another person residing in the same household.

7. Menacing⁴ and dangerous⁵ dogs

- 7.1. During this period eight dogs were classified as menacing, and at the end of June 2026 a total of 105 active dogs in the district had a menacing classification recorded against them. Menacing dogs can be classified under two subsections of the Act (commonly referred to as “breed” or “deed”) i.e. 33A due to reported or observed menacing behaviour of the dog, and 33C due to the dog's breed or type being one listed in schedule 4 of the Dog Control Act - in most cases an American Pitbull Terrier type.
- 7.2. We had a total of three classified dangerous dogs on the register at 30th June. Dangerous dogs are classified following receipt of a sworn statement from a complainant attesting the dog is a threat to any person or domestic animal, or following prosecution.
- 7.3. Both menacing and dangerous dogs are required to be muzzled when in any public place.
- 7.4. The dangerous dog classification is a useful tool, due to the legislative requirement for the dog to be kept within a fenced enclosure, in addition to being neutered. However, the legislation around the disposal of seized/impounded classified dangerous dogs is not practical, and staff can usually obtain better outcomes following the seizure of non-complying classified menacing dogs.
- 7.5. Animal Control Officers do compliance checks after one month for any dog newly classified as either menacing or dangerous. Council’s Dog Control Policy requires classified menacing dogs to be neutered and most owners comply with this requirement without further enforcement. Animal Control Officers endeavour to assist owners with full compliance by providing low-cost micro-chipping. Local charity Pound Hounds Rescue also offers reduced cost desexing from time to time, and when available this is actively promoted by animal control staff. Monitoring compliance for classifications can be an onerous requirement.

In this period three dogs were seized due to non-compliance with menacing classification requirements, and each were held in the pound while the owner was given the opportunity to “show willingness to comply”. Two dogs were subsequently claimed by their owners following desexing, and one was euthanised.

- 7.6. Under the Act, owners may object within 14 days to classifications, which are usually heard by Council’s Regulatory Committee. There were no objections/hearings in the 2025-26 period.

⁴ Menacing classification requiring desexing and muzzling in public due to breed or minor aggression incidents

⁵ Dangerous classification requires desexing, muzzling in public and confinement due to significant aggression.

- 7.7. The number of menacing classifications pursuant to Section 33A (deed) reflects one of the enforcement options following an attack when a decision has been made not to prosecute. No infringement offence exists specifically for an attack, and a high-value infringement for minor attacks would be a useful addition to the schedule.

8. Other information

- 8.1. Council requires owners of more than five dogs on rural properties and owners of more than two dogs on any urban land to apply for a three-year permit from Council. As registration applications are received, owners are advised to apply for a permit.
- 8.2. Waipa District Council continues to have a high rehoming rate of unclaimed pound dogs, with 85 rehomed in this period, possibly the highest number ever recorded in Waipa. Staff who returned to work on light duties following injury this year were able to spend more time in this area than usual, with positive results. The majority of adoptions are co-ordinated by the animal control team, but local charities also assist with some of the adoptions. Council continues to operate a very successful Facebook page (facebook.com/WaipAnimalControl) which has provided an additional avenue to promote rehoming, and to provide general information to dog owners. This works in conjunction with Council's formal Facebook page (facebook.com/WaipDistrictCouncil).
- 8.3. Council is also working closely with its neighbours, including through shared training assisted by the Waikato/BOP branch of the New Zealand Institute of Animal Management. This has seen a range of networking and/or training opportunities for staff. Council's animal control team leader has also been Secretary/Treasurer for the branch for four years until June this year.
- 8.4. Council has made a significant investment in dog agility related equipment in recent years with the aim of developing "destination dog parks" in Te Awamutu and Cambridge areas. A full set of agility equipment has been installed in two parks and has been well received, as have the majority of changes to Council's Dog Control Policy.
- 8.5. With the movement of Council IT systems to "the cloud" we are hopeful that staff will be able to complete a range of administration tasks in the field using tablets, in the future. There have been some teething issues with our requests management and compiling of statistics following an upgrade to our database late last year, but we are slowly working through these. Council will be upgrading the dog register module of the database early next year which will be more compatible with the requests module.

PART 2A – COMPULSORY STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Category		1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023	1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024	1 July 2024 – 30 June 2025	1 July 2025 – 30 June 2026
1	Total # active dogs	9545	9612	9420	9379
2	Number of registered dogs	9446	9390	9113	8931
2	Total # probationary owners	3	3	1	0
3	Total # disqualified owners	19	15	9	10
4	Total # dangerous dogs (current at end of period)	8	5	5	3
	▪ Dangerous by owner conviction under s31(1)(a)	0	0	0	0 (0 new)
	▪ Dangerous by sworn evidence s31(1)(b)	6	4	4	2 (0 new)
	▪ Dangerous by owner admittance in writing s31(1)(c)	2	1	1	1 (0 new)
5	Total # menacing dogs (end of period)	139	124	117	105
	▪ Menacing under S33A(1)(b)(i) - i.e. by Behaviour	38	41 (15 new)	48 (17 new)	48 (8 new)
	▪ Menacing under s33A(1)(b)(ii)- by Breed Characteristics	0	0	0	0
	▪ Menacing under s33C(1) by Schedule 4 Breed	98	83	69	57 (0 new)
6	Total # infringement notices (excluding cancelled)	98	38	69	45

Category		1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023	1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024	1 July 2024 – 30 June 2025	1 July 2025 – 30 June 2026
7	Total # dog-related complaints received	1722	1648	1800	1732
	▪ Aggressive other than rushing or attacking	48	49	54	50
	▪ Bins/signs (not counted in total)	180	38	42	16
	▪ Bites/Attacks (All)	69	75	81	108
	▪ Bite/attack on people - minor	25	23	22	39
	▪ Bite/attack on people - serious				1
	▪ Bite/attack on animals	44	52	59	68
	▪ Barking	377	483	586	428
	▪ Breach of Council bylaw or permits	34	33	28	40
	▪ Enquiries/Admin calls (not counted in total)	1712	1557	1722	2356
	▪ Dog reported lost	219	212	177	144
	▪ Rushing in public place	41	34	37	74
	▪ Unregistered	19	22	24	26
	▪ Wandering	676	662	746	695
	▪ Worring stock or poultry	7	5	9	6
	▪ No water, shelter, food or exercise	52	35	47	53
8	Total # prosecutions started (but not completed)	0	0	1	0
	# of prosecutions still in progress from prior financial years				0

Category		1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023	1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024	1 July 2024 – 30 June 2025	1 July 2025 – 30 June 2026
	# of prosecutions completed this financial year				1
	# of appeals filed this financial year				0

PART 2B – OPTIONAL ADDITIONAL STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Infringement Notices:

Category		
20(5)	Breach of Bylaw	2
33EC(1)	Failure to comply with menacing classification	5
36A	Failure to microchip	6
42	Failure to register dog	8
53(1)	Failure to keep dog under control	23
55(7)	Failure to comply with barking dog abatement notice	1

Impounding Totals:

		1 July 2021 – 30 June 2022	1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023	1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024	1 July 2025 – 30 June 2025
1	Number of dogs impounded	266	217	244	227
2	Of these, how many claimed by owner?	200	146	145	117
3	Of these, how many were rehomed?	21	34	48	84
4	Of these, how many went to a rescue organisation?				1
6	Of these, how many were euthanised?	22	27	39	16

		1 July 2021 – 30 June 2022	1 July 2022 –30 June 2023	1 July 2023– 30 June 2024	1 July 2025 – 30 June 2025
	Of these, how many died in the shelter?	0	0	0	0
8	Of these, how many were stolen/escaped?	0	0	1	1
	Of dogs impounded, how many were neutered	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	unknown
	What was the average length of stay for impounded dogs?	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	unknown

Impounding Reasons:

Category		1 July 2021 – 30 June 2022	1 July 2022 –30 June 2023	1 July 2023– 30 June 2024	1 July 2024 – 30 June 2025
1	Dog attack on person - minor				3
2	Dog attack on person - serious				1
3	Dog attack on animals				3
4	Dogs worrying stock/poultry				0
6	Dog rushing				0
	Aggressive behaviour				0
8	Roaming/wandering	0	0	0	0
	Dog not confined to owner's property				0
	Barking or howling				0
	Unregistered Dog				23
	Welfare				4
	Request from public to collect				153
	Surrender by owner				37

Category		1 July 2021 – 30 June 2022	1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023	1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024	1 July 2024 – 30 June 2025
	Disqualified Owner				0
	Non-complying Dangerous Dog				0
	Non-complying menacing dog				3

Other information on dog population:

Category		1 July 2021 – 30 June 2022	1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023	1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024	1 July 2025 – 30 June 2026
1	Estimate of known dogs				9252
2	Dogs newly reg this year				1034
3	Dogs transferred from other TA				Minimum 343
4	Lost dogs				2
6	Registered dog owners				7181
	New probationary owners				0
	Transferred probationary owners				0
8	New disqualified owners	0	0	1	1
	Transferred disqualified owners				0
	Reg dogs that are chipped				8666
	Reg dogs that are desexed				5334
	Dangerous dogs desexed				3
	Menacing dogs desexed				90
	New dangerous dogs				0
	Transferred Dangerous Dogs				0

Category		1 July 2021 – 30 June 2022	1 July 2022 –30 June 2023	1 July 2023– 30 June 2024	1 July 2025 – 30 June 2026
	New menacing dogs				8
	Transferred menacing dogs				0
	Welfare referrals to spca, mpi or police				?

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