



Annual Report

Dog Control Policy and
Practice 2025/2026

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INTRODUCTION

Waikato District Council, as a territorial authority, is responsible for administering and enforcing the provisions of the Dog Control Act 1996 (the Act).

Section 10A of the Act requires territorial authorities to report annually on their dog control policy and practices and to provide prescribed statistical information.

This report fulfils that statutory requirement for the dog registration year from 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026. It provides an overview of Waikato District Council's Animal Control activities, performance, and key achievements during the reporting period.

BACKGROUND

Dog control services within the Waikato district are delivered entirely in-house and encompass administration, field operations, and pound services.

The Animal Control team is responsible for responding to complaints relating to roaming, uncontrolled, and nuisance dogs; enforcing compliance with the Dog Control Act 1996 and the Waikato District Council Dog Control Policy and Bylaw 2022; promoting responsible dog ownership; encouraging timely dog registration; and providing education and support to the community.

Animal Control Officers are assigned to either the northern or southern areas of the district. This localised service model enables officers to develop strong relationships within their communities, build local knowledge, and respond to service requests efficiently. An after-hours roster also operates to ensure urgent public safety incidents can be addressed promptly.

THE COUNCIL'S DOG CONTROL POLICY AND PRACTICES

The Council adopted the Dog Control Policy in April 2022. The policy sets out requirements for the control of dogs in public places and is enforceable through the Waikato District Council Dog Control Bylaw 2022.

The objectives of the policy are to:

- Minimise the danger, distress, and nuisance caused by dogs in the community.
- Prevent the risk of injury in public places frequented by children, whether accompanied by adults or not.
- Enable the public, including families, to use streets and public amenities without fear of attack, intimidation, or harassment by dogs.
- Promote opportunities for dogs and their owners to meet their exercise and recreation needs.

DOG REGISTRATION

The Council provides one year's free registration for dogs that have been desexed and offers discounted registration fees for owners who pay before 1 August each year.

Additional discounts are available through the Approved Owner, Selected Owner, and Farm Owner categories.

Dog registration fees contribute to:

- Dog control activities, including enforcement, patrols, and complaint investigations.
- Dog incident prevention, including identifying unregistered dogs and managing menacing and dangerous dog classifications.
- Supporting dog desexing initiatives within the district through the PUP (Preventing Unwanted Puppies) Programme. One dollar from every dog registration fee is allocated to the desexing fund.
- Education programmes for schools and community groups.
- Pound services, including lost and found services, adoption programmes, and microchipping.
- Delivery of the annual dog registration renewal programme.



Key Points 2025/2026

RESPONDING TO REQUESTS FOR SERVICE

Animal Control responded to 4,902 dog-related requests for service during 2025/26, excluding proactive patrol activity. This represents an increase of 878 requests compared with the previous year.

The increase was primarily driven by a proactive communications campaign encouraging dog owners to review and update their dog and contact information before registration renewal notices were issued. The campaign generated a significant increase in customer enquiries and administrative requests.

The team maintained a 100% response rate within one hour for complaints involving aggressive dogs presenting an immediate risk to public safety. This is the second consecutive year that this service standard has been achieved.

DOG REGISTRATION

As of 30 June 2026, there were 14,573 known dogs recorded within the district, compared with 16,030 in the previous year.

The reduction largely reflects a comprehensive database cleansing programme and a targeted communications campaign encouraging owners to update dog ownership and contact information before annual registration notices were issued.

Of the known dogs recorded in the district, 13,529 were registered, resulting in a registration compliance rate of 92.8%. This represents an improvement of 10 percentage points compared with the previous year.

Importantly, despite the reduction in the known dog population following the database review, the number of registered dogs increased by 256, demonstrating the effectiveness of the Council's proactive registration and compliance initiatives.

A key focus during the year was the earlier identification and follow-up of unregistered dogs after the annual registration due date of 1 August. This approach was supported by targeted infringement action and, where necessary, dog impoundment for persistent non-compliance.

PROBATIONARY AND DISQUALIFIED OWNERS

Under the Dog Control Act 1996, a person who receives three or more infringement notices within a two year period, or who is convicted of certain offences under the Act, must be classified as a Disqualified Owner. In some circumstances, a territorial authority may determine that a Probationary Owner classification is more appropriate.

Disqualified Owners must dispose of all dogs owned by them for a period of up to five years by transferring ownership to another person at a different address.

Probationary Owners may retain their existing registered dogs but are prohibited from acquiring additional dogs for a period of up to five years.

At the end of the reporting period, there were four Disqualified Owners and one Probationary Owner within the district.

ENFORCEMENT

Animal Control Officers have a range of compliance and enforcement tools available to address non-compliance. These range from education and infringement notices for lower-level offences through to prosecution for the most serious offending. Prosecution may result in criminal convictions, dog destruction orders, and disqualification from dog ownership for up to five years.

Waikato District Council applies the 4E compliance model:

- Engage
- Educate
- Enable
- Enforce



This approach prioritises voluntary compliance by supporting and informing dog owners before enforcement action becomes necessary. The model continues to foster positive relationships with dog owners and communities across the district while maintaining appropriate regulatory oversight.

Where serious offending or significant public safety risks are identified, enforcement action may be taken immediately without progressing through all stages of the 4E framework.

During 2025/26, Animal Control issued 1,388 infringement notices, an increase of 776 notices compared with the previous year. The increase reflects Council's proactive approach to addressing registration non-compliance and following up unregistered dogs soon after the annual registration period concluded.

Registration-related offending accounted for the majority of infringement activity, with 1,105 notices issued for failure to register a dog within the prescribed timeframe.

Council initiated three prosecutions during the reporting period. These matters remain before the Courts and await determination.

One prosecution initiated during 2024/25 was concluded during the current reporting period. The case involved a dog attack resulting in serious injury to a person and led to:

- A fine of \$1,000, with 50% payable to Council.
- 100 hours of community work.
- Emotional harm reparation of \$2,500 to the victim.

While prosecution numbers remain low, this reflects Council's commitment to achieving compliance through engagement, enablement, education, and enforcement wherever possible.

Prosecution remains an important regulatory tool for serious offending and situations where public safety is at risk.

MENACING AND DANGEROUS DOGS

At the end of the reporting period, there were 217 classified menacing dogs within the district, a decrease of 74 dogs compared with the previous year.

This reduction is largely attributable to continued database cleansing and record verification.

Of the total:

- 134 dogs were classified as menacing under section 33C of the Dog Control Act 1996 because they belong to a breed or type listed in Schedule 4 of the Act.
- 83 dogs were classified as menacing on behavioural grounds, where Animal Control Officers determined the dog posed a threat to people, animals, or wildlife.

All menacing dogs within the district must be desexed and muzzled when in a public place.

There were 25 classified dangerous dogs within the district at the end of the reporting period.

Of these:

- Twenty-two were classified based on sworn evidence.
- Three were classified following owner acknowledgement or admission.

In addition to desexing and muzzling requirements, dangerous dogs must be kept on a leash while in public places and are subject to enhanced containment requirements at their residential property.

IMPOUNDED DOGS

A total of 757 dogs were impounded during 2025/26.

Of these, 358 dogs (47%) were either returned to their owners or successfully rehomed.

The remaining 399 dogs (53%) were euthanised after being assessed as unsuitable for rehoming or remaining unclaimed. A proportion of these dogs had also contracted parvovirus.

All unclaimed healthy dogs undergo behavioural assessment before a rehoming decision is made. Dogs selected for euthanasia generally do not meet the behavioural or health criteria required for successful placement in a new home.

REHOMED DOGS

During the reporting period, 104 dogs were successfully rehomed through Waikato District Council's Pound Pups Facebook page, which now has more than 29,000 followers.

The continued success of the rehoming programme reflects the dedication and commitment of the Animal Control team and its community supporters.

Before rehoming, all dogs are temperament assessed, vaccinated, microchipped, registered, and desexed. Prospective owners undergo a screening process, including property suitability assessments, to help ensure each dog is matched with an appropriate home.

DESEXING DOGS

The Preventing Unwanted Puppies (PUP) Programme continued to support responsible dog ownership across the district.

During 2025/26, the programme funded the desexing of 109 dogs.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Throughout the year, the Animal Control team hosted and participated in several community events, providing opportunities to engage with dog owners and promote responsible dog ownership.

POOL PARTIES

Animal Control hosted its annual Pound Pups Pool Parties in April 2026.

More than 220 dogs and their families attended events held at the public pools in Ngaaruawaahia and Tuakau. The events take place at the conclusion of the swimming season, allowing dogs to enjoy the pools before they close for winter maintenance.

Proceeds from entry fees and raffles were shared between:

- The PUP Desexing Scheme, which provides subsidised desexing services to Waikato dog owners; and
- Fundraising for Impounded Dogs (FFID), which supports veterinary treatment and transportation for impounded dogs being rehomed throughout New Zealand.



DRIVING OUT PARVO – FREE VACCINATION AND MICROCHIPPING EVENT - RAAHUI POOKEKA (HUNTLY)

In response to increasing cases of parvovirus within both the community and Council pound, Animal Control partnered with Anexa Veterinary Services to deliver the inaugural Driving Out Parvo event in Raahui Pookeka (Huntly) in September 2025.

The event provided free parvovirus vaccinations and microchipping for dogs belonging to whaanau who may otherwise have faced barriers to accessing these services.

The initiative resulted in 144 dogs being vaccinated and 84 dogs being microchipped. Given the success of the event and the positive community response, planning is underway to make the programme an annual initiative.

EDUCATION

A total of 102 education and engagement visits were undertaken across the district during 2025/26.

These sessions focused on responsible dog ownership, dog care, bite prevention, and dog safety awareness, helping build safer communities for both residents and their pets.

SUMMARY

The 2025/26 reporting period reflected a more proactive and community-focused Animal Control service, marked by significant improvements in registration compliance, strong community engagement, and sustained responsiveness to public safety concerns.

A comprehensive database review reduced the number of known dogs in the district which now gives a more reflective registration compliance rate across the district.

Targeted proactive activity centred around known areas of concern and customer requests, with enforcement efforts focused on registration non-compliance and roaming dogs.

The reporting period also saw continued investment in responsible dog ownership initiatives, including subsidised desexing programmes, community education, and the introduction of the Driving Out Parvo vaccination programme.

Together, these outcomes demonstrate Council's commitment to protecting public safety, promoting responsible dog ownership, and delivering an effective and responsive Animal Control service for the Waikato district.

DOG CONTROL STATISTICS

Table one: Registration/Classification Data

Registration	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Known Dogs in District	16,079	16,030	14,573
Registered Dogs	12,550	13,273	13,529
Percentage Registered	78.05%	82.8%	92.8%
Dog Owner Classification			
Probationary	0	0	1
Disqualified	2	4	4
Menacing Classification			
By Breed	78	194	134
By Deed	91	96	83
Total Menacing	169	290	217
Dangerous Classification			
Section 31(1)a	0	0	0
Section 31(1)b	19	21	22
Section 31(1)c	6	7	3
Total Dangerous	25	28	25

Table two: Request for Service (RFS) Data

RFS Type	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Dog Nuisance (Barking)	473	501	489
Roaming/Stray/Trespass	1,574	1,486	1,627
Property Visit (unregistered/classifications etc)	313	371	432
Dog Welfare	114	71	65

RFS Type	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Trap Request	15	18	16
Dog Collection (surrender)	114	134	102
Dog Attack/Aggression	418	412	408
PUP Desexing Requests	128	162	109
Other*	721	869	1,654
Total	3,870	4,024	4,902

*Other includes customer queries (registration/adoption/infringement/missing dog reports etc)

Table three: Compliance Data

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Prosecutions			
Initiated	2	2	3
Completed	2	2	1
Infringement			
18 Wilful Obstruction of dog control officer or ranger	0	0	3
19(2) Failure or refusal to supply information or wilfully providing false particulars	0	0	0
19A (2) Failure to supply information or wilfully provide false about dog	0	0	0
20(5) Failure to comply with any bylaw authorised by the section	16	21	11
23A (2) Failure to undertake dog owner education program of dog obedience course (or both	0	0	0
24 Failure to comply with the obligations of a probationary owner	0	0	0

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
28(5) Failure to comply with the effects of disqualification	0	4	1
32(2) failure to comply with the effects of classification of dog as dangerous	1	0	1
32(4) fraudulent sale or transfer of dangerous dog	0	0	0
33EC (1) Failure to comply with the effects of classification of dog as menacing	0	17	31
33F (3) Failure to advise person of muzzle and leashing requirements	0	0	0
36A (6) failure to implant microchip transponder in dog	0	0	0
41 False statement in relation to dog registration	0	0	0
41A Falsely notifying death of dog	0	0	3
42 failure to register dog	43	358	1,105
46(4) Fraudulent procurement or attempt to procure replacement dog registration label or disc	0	0	0
48(3) Failure to advise change of dog ownership	0	0	0
49(4) Failure to advise change of address	1	1	0
51(1) Removal, swapping or counterfeiting of registration label or disc	0	0	0
52A Failure to keep dog controlled or confined	79	160	160
53(1) Failure to keep dog under control	19	49	70
54(2) failure to provide proper care and attention, to supply proper and sufficient food, and to provide adequate exercise	1	0	0

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
54A Failure to carry leash in public	0	0	0
55(7) Failure to comply with barking dog abatement notice	0	0	1
62(4) Allowing dog known to be dangerous to be at large unmuzzled or unleashed	0	0	0
62(5) Failure to advise of muzzle and leashing requirements	0	0	0
72(2) releasing dog from custody	0	0	2
Total	159	612	1,388

Table four: Shelter Data

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Impounded Total	770	758	757
Total number of dogs returned to owner	214	221	254
% dogs returned to owner	28%	29%	33%
Total number of dogs rehomed	184	185	104
% dogs rehomed	24%	25%	14%
Total number of dogs euthanised	372	351	399
% dogs euthanised	48%	46%	53%

