

Dog Control Policy and Practices Annual Report

1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024



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Background

The Marlborough District Council is required to manage and enforce provisions pursuant to the Dog Control Act 1996.

Section 10A of the Dog Control Act 1996 requires the Marlborough District Council (Council) to report annually on its Dog Control Policy and Practices and provide statistical information.

This report fulfils this statutory requirement for the financial year 1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024.

The objectives of this report are to:

- report on Council's administration of dog control policies and practices; and
- provide information on dog control activities.

This report will be available to the public on the Marlborough District Council website.

Operations

The Dog Control function has been contracted out to Maataa Waka Ki Te Tau Ihu Trust since 1998. Council and the contractor are parties to a contract, under which the contractor provides animal control services to the Council (current contract).

- Contract commencement date – 1 April 2022.
- Expiry date - 31 March 2026.
- Extension term three years.
- Maximum contract term – seven years.

Council retains the administration of the contract, makes decisions on classifications of dog and owners, objections to classifications and infringements, and on decisions on whether or not to undertake prosecutions.

Dog Control Policy

The Council first adopted a policy and bylaw which came into force on Monday 1 October 2012.

Council undertook a review of our Dog Control Policy and Dog Control Bylaw which is required to be undertaken every 10 years. The review looked at dog access to all public places and included new Council reserves which have been created since the bylaws were previously reviewed.

The new Marlborough District Council Dog Control Policy and Bylaw were adopted by full Council on 24 June 2021 and came into effect on 1 August 2021.

This policy deals with various matters, including dog areas, fees and education. Council must have regard to:

- a) The need to minimise danger, distress and nuisance to the community generally.
- b) The need to avoid the inherent danger in allowing dogs to have unimpeded access to public places that are frequented by children, whether or not the children are accompanied by adults.
- c) The importance of enabling, to the extent that is practicable, the public (including families) to use streets and public amenities without fear of attack or intimidation by dogs; and
- d) The exercise and recreational needs of dogs and their owners.

Council's objective is to encourage responsible dog ownership that allows owners to enjoy their dogs without infringing on the enjoyment and safety of others. Good dog owners should:

- a) register their dogs and make sure they wear a current registration tag,
- b) keep their dogs under control,
- c) provide their dogs with care and attention,
- d) provide their dogs with proper and sufficient food, water, shelter, and exercise,
- e) not let their dogs be a nuisance to others,
- f) make sure their dogs do not injure, endanger, intimidate or distress any person or other animal or damage property; and
- g) comply with the Act, any regulations, and the Dog Control Bylaw.

A copy of the new Dog Control Policy can be viewed on the Council's website:

<https://www.marlborough.govt.nz/services/dogs-and-other-animals/dog-and-animal-laws/dog-control-policy>

A copy of the new Dog Control Bylaw can be viewed on the Council's website:

<https://www.marlborough.govt.nz/your-council/bylaws/dog-control-bylaw-2021>

Dog Exercise Areas

Dog areas are set out in Council's Dog Control Policy and Bylaw.

Dogs are allowed off leash in some areas, provided they are kept under control at all times.

There is a total of 32 dog off leash areas in the Marlborough district.

Dogs are prohibited from areas that have an intense public use, where dogs may compromise the enjoyment of the area, where ecological or economic values would be threatened, where space or sight lines is limited on narrow walkways and pedestrians may be threatened.

There are **48 dog prohibited areas** in Marlborough, the majority being sports grounds, reserves, domains, and wetland areas. These are outlined in the new Dog Control Policy and Bylaw.

Dogs are allowed in any public area that is not identified as a dog prohibited area or dog off leash area but must be kept on leash and under control at all times. There are **85 public areas across the Marlborough district where dogs are required to be on leash**. These are outlined in the new Dog Control Policy and Bylaw.

Blenheim Central Business District (CBD) and Picton Central Business District allows dogs on a leash.

Marlborough currently has one purpose-built dog park at Renwick which is a fenced dog exercise area with three separate areas: a large dog area, a small dog area and a quiet zone.

Planning is underway for the development of a second Dog Park in Blenheim.

Fees

The registration categories and fee structure for the 2023/24 year are set out in the table below.

Category	Annual Fee
Dog Registration – Category One Each dog must be desexed and microchipped and have no infringement notice or conviction under the Dog Control Act 1996 for the last two years ie, since 1 July 2020.	\$62
Dog Registration Any non-working dog that does not meet all of the Category One criteria. This includes any dogs that have been classified as ‘menacing’.	\$92
Old Dog For dogs over 12 years (as of 1 July 2023) that were registered for the first time prior to 1 July 2011 (proof of registration is required).	\$46
Dangerous Dog This includes any dog classified as ‘dangerous’. Dangerous dogs are excluded from the old dog and categories One and Two.	\$138
Working Dog Includes farm dogs primarily used for herding stock, 10 + working dogs (for each extra dog).	\$22 \$11
Disability/assist dogs and Police dogs	No fee

Note: that late penalty fees were charged (50 percent of the applicable fee) for payments made after 31 July 2023.

Funding

Dog Control is 80 percent funded from dog registration fees and 20 percent rates funded. The fees are set to cover the budgeted cost of the Dog Control function.

Education

A dog safety education course is available to schools and groups of primary school and pre-school aged children. The purpose of this course is to promote safety around dogs as well as responsible dog ownership and care. This programme is provided free of charge. There were 53 presentations provided to pre-school and primary schools for the year 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024.

There were also two presentations to adults on dog safety and dog behaviour and three attendances at public events.

An information insert on dog registration, responsible ownership and dog owner obligations was sent to all dog owners with their dog registration forms.

Information on relevant topics such as barking dogs and roaming dogs is distributed to owners of dogs that come to Animal Control’s attention.

Animal Control is also involved in a collaborative interactive safety programme that has developed from within the Marlborough Child Safety Group and is based on the “Clued Up Kids” project developed in Strathclyde, Scotland (2001).

The pilot Marlborough Clued-Up Kids project was designed to instil confidence and develop life skills through the practical hands-on application of safety messages. Year 5/6 students from Marlborough Schools are taken in small groups on a 15-minute rotating circuit of safety sets around Bradshaw Park, ie, Police, St Johns, Rail Safety, Water Safety, Emergency Response, Personal Safety, Dog Safety, Cycle Safety, ATV Safety, Home Hazards and Fire Safety. This event goes for one week in November each year.

Interaction with the Public:

Each of the four Animal Control Officers undertook five hours per week of patrolling across the Marlborough district to monitor roaming dogs and other potential breaches of the Dog Control Act 1996 and Bylaws and take appropriate enforcement action.

The patrols are an opportunity for the Animal Control Officers to interact with the public to encourage compliance, responsible dog ownership, dog safety and to also check on doggie-doo stations and dog signage.

Dogs and Owners

As of 30 June 2024, the Marlborough District had a total of 10,695 active dogs (active dogs last year 10,897) which included 2,787 dogs registered as working dogs (including disability assist dogs and Police dogs) (last year 2,779) and 7,908 dogs registered as non-working dogs (last year 7,992).

Multiple Dog Property Licence

The Marlborough District Council Dog Control bylaw requires that no owner shall keep more than two dogs on a property (not zoned rural) without being the holder of a Multiple Dog Property Licence issued by Council.

There are currently **290 current** and active licences, out of a total of 421, which have been issued over the years.

The table below shows that 21 Multiple Dog Property Licences were issued which is the same as the previous year.

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Multiple Dog Property Licence Issued	17	24	42	31	21	21

Enforcement

Disqualifications and Probationary Owners

There are no probationary owners in the Marlborough district.

There are no new disqualified owners in the Marlborough district in this reporting period.

There were no disqualifications which expired over the 2023/2024 reporting period. There are currently four active disqualified owners in the Marlborough district.

Period of Disqualification	Expiry Date	Section
5 Years	16 September 2027	25(1)(a)
5 Years	23 March 2025	25(1)(a)
5 Years	06 October 2025	25(1)(b)
5 Years	04 November 2025	25(1)(b)

Menacing and Dangerous Dogs

There are 0 new dogs which were classified as dangerous in the 2023/24 year in accordance with section 31 of the Dog Control Act 1996. A total of 12 dogs are classified as dangerous (last year there were 13).

There were 17 dogs classified as menacing. For the dogs classified as menacing:

- 12 were classified as menacing based on observed and reported behaviour in accordance with section 33A,
- 5-were classified as menacing by breed or type listed in Schedule 4 in accordance with section 33C of the Dog Control Act 1996, and
- The total dogs classed as menacing in the Marlborough area are 92 (last year there were 98).

Infringements

A total of 243 infringement notices were issues in the 2023/24 year compared with 190 infringement notices issued in the 2023-24 year.

Infringements	Number Issued 2018/19	Number Issued 2019/20	Number Issued 2020/21	Number Issued 2021/22	Number Issued 2022/23	Number issued 2023/24
Total issued	192	205	239	220	190	243

The most common infringement notice was failure to register dog with 189 infringements. The table below shows the sections that the infringement notices were issued under.

Section	Breach	Number Issued 2018/19	Number Issued 2019/20	Number Issued 2020/21	Number Issued 2021/22	Number Issued 2022/23	Number issued 2023/24
18	Wilful obstruction of dog control officer or ranger.	2	3	2	0	1	3
19(2)	Failure or refusal to supply information or wilfully providing false particulars.	1	3	-	0	1	1
20(5)	Failure to comply with any bylaw authorised by the section.	7	3	-	3	1	1
32(2)	Failure to comply with effects of classification of dog as dangerous dog.	1	1	-	2	6	1

Section	Breach	Number Issued 2018/19	Number Issued 2019/20	Number Issued 2020/21	Number Issued 2021/22	Number Issued 2022/23	Number issued 2023/24
33EC(1)	Failure to comply with effects of classification of dog as menacing dog.	19	10	10	11	10	6
41	False statement relating to dog registration.	-	1	-	0	-	0
41A(4)	Falsely notifying death of dog.	4	-	2	1	2	2
42	Failure to register dog.	101	137	151	146	117	189
48(3)	Failure to advise change of ownership.	-	-	1	1	1	0
52A	Failure to keep dog controlled or confined.	45	30	22	24	29	26
53(1)	Failure to keep dog under control.	11	17	51	28	18	14
54(2)	Failure to provide proper care and attention, to supply proper and sufficient food, water, and shelter, and to provide adequate exercise.	-	-	-	1	2	0
72(2)	Releasing dog from custody.	1	-	-	3	2	0

Complaints

A total of 2,372 complaints were received in the 2023/24 year. This is slightly down on the total of 2,478 complaints received in the previous year. All complaints were attended to and investigated.

The majority of complaints received related to roaming, found or lost dogs or dog nuisance barking. The number of dogs that were reported to Animal Control as found in the 2023/24 was 513, which were down from 521 in the previous 2022/23 year. It seems that a number of dogs that are found are posted onto social media sites to try and reunite the dogs with their owners before contacting Animal Control.

There were 88 complaints related to a dog attack, bite or rushing at a person/animal compared with 69 in the previous reporting period. These complaints are the most time consuming to investigate and determine what enforcement action should be taken.

Type of complaint	Number 2018/19	Number 2019/20	Number 2020/21	Number 2021/22	Number 2022/23	Number 2023/24
Barking	450	385	389	413	459	409
Bylaws	48	43	21	22	16	15
Dog Attack/ Bite/ Rush Person	47	53	64	38	42	45
Dog Bite Other	31	23	36	42	21	35

Type of complaint	Number 2018/19	Number 2019/20	Number 2020/21	Number 2021/22	Number 2022/23	Number 2023/24
Dog Nuisance	23	34	49	67	53	47
Dog Rush Other	13	7	5	7	6	8
Found	519	778	629	595	521	513
Fouling	13	14	16	5	4	6
General Request/Other	96	622	634	597	533	507
Lost	229	326	302	265	256	248
Roaming	559	380	360	346	441	353
Uncontrolled	55	41	43	49	39	59
Unregistered Dog	38	59	64	71	45	85
Welfare	43	54	38	45	42	42
Total	2,164	2,819	2,650	2532	2478	2366

Impounded/Unclaimed/Surrendered Dogs

A total of 197 dogs were impounded for the 2023/24 year which is a decrease from the 229 (total on last year's 10A report) dogs impounded for the previous 2022/23 year.

With the rising cost of living, it appears that the public are finding it harder on the affordability of owning a dog. This has also become noticeable in rehoming dogs as fewer members of the public are willing to take on a new dog at this time and rehome centres such as the SPCA are also full as they struggle to find homes for dogs.

Animal Control does try to return lost and found dogs to their owners without impounding the dogs if they are able to contact the owners provided that the dogs are registered, microchipped and they have no previous history of roaming.

Animal Control runs a Pound Hounds Facebook to advertise if any lost and found dogs have been impounded and they are unable to identify the owners as their dogs are not microchipped or wearing their dog registration tag and/or owners have not updated their contact details.

The majority of the dogs that were impounded were released to their owners. The dogs that were not claimed by their owners were sent to the SPCA, re-homed from the pound or euthanised, depending on temperament and characteristics.

All dogs unclaimed from the pound go through a temperament and characteristics test to make sure that they are suitable for re-homing to the SPCA or to members of the public. Members from the public who want to apply for a dog from the pound must complete an application form and have a background check of no previous breaches to the Dog Control Act 1996 to make sure they are suitable for Animal Control's rehoming programme.

There is a Care and Custody Agreement between Council and the SPCA with respect to the care and costs of caring for these dogs.

During 2023/24, a total of 18 dogs were rehomed from the pound, a decrease on the 25 dogs rehomed in the 2022/23 year. There were three dogs rehomed to the SPCA and 15 dogs were rehomed to members of the public.

Outcome for Impounded Dogs	Number 2018/19	Number 2019/20	Number 2020/21	Number 2021/22	Number 2022/23	Number 2023/24
Impounded dogs released to owner. (% of total dogs released to owner)	264 (88.6%)	160 (83.3%)	158 (81.8%)	132 84.%	192 83.8%	170 86.3%
Impounded dogs rehomed. (% of total dogs impounded rehomed)	22 (7.4%)	23 (12%)	25 (13%)	18 11.5 %	25 10.9%	18 9.1%
Impounded dogs euthanised (% of total dogs impounded euthanised)	12 (4%)	9 (4.7%)	10 (5.2%)	7 4.5%	12 5.3%	9 4.6%

The table below shows the reason why dogs that were impounded were euthanised. Of the nine dogs that were euthanised in 2023/24 they had been involved in dog attacks on people, other dogs or stock, failed a temperament test or classified as Menacing or Dangerous. If court proceedings are taken, for dogs attacking persons or animals, and the court is satisfied that the dog has committed an attack as described in section 57 of the Dog Control Act 1996 and the dog has not been destroyed, the court must make an order for the destruction of the dog unless it is satisfied that the circumstances were exceptional and do not warrant destruction of the dog.

Reason for Euthanasia	Number 2018/19	Number 2019/20	Number 2020/21	Number 2021/22	Number 2022/23	Number 2023/24
Classified dangerous/menacing (deed)	2	1	-	2	1	1
Menacing breed or type	2	2	-	1	1	-
Health or welfare issues	-	-	-	0	1	-
Failed temperament test	4	4	-	0	2	3
Surrendered to Animal Control after an attack	4	2	7	4	7	5
Court Ordered Destruction	-	-	3	0	-	-
% of all dogs euthanised as American Pit Bull Terrier	16.6%	22.2%	0%	14.3%	8.33%	0%

Prosecutions during 2023/24 under the Dog Control Act 1996

No prosecutions were taken during 2023/24.

Unregistered Dogs

Animal Control runs a project to identify and follow up any unregistered dogs, being the Unaccounted-for Dog Check Project. As part of this project, dogs were found that had been previously registered, but not re-registered for the 2023/24 registration year.

Dog registration forms were sent out by the start of June 2023 and reminder letters were sent to all dog owners who had not paid their dog registration fees by mid-July 2023. Any dogs that had still not been registered by the 31 July 2023 had penalty fees applied and were sent a Penalty Notice Letter. Follow up also included phone calls, emails and property visits to the last known address.

Dogs that were still in Marlborough and alive were correctly registered. Records were also updated for those dogs that had died, changed address or were gone with no contact address. Owners of unregistered dogs received an infringement notice under section 42 of the Dog Control Act 1996.

Due to staff shortages the project was ongoing through to the start of the 2023/24 registration period, there were still 83 dogs to be followed up with, which have all now been accounted for.

Microchipping

The total number of dogs microchipped in the Marlborough district was 8,723.

Dogs still required to be microchipped are 487.

Working dogs or dogs born before 1 July 2006 are not required to be microchipped.