

4. PROPOSED DOG REGISTRATION AND RELATED FEES FOR THE 2003/04 DOG LICENSING YEAR

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The purpose of this report is for the Committee to consider the setting of dog registration and other related fees for the 2003/04 dog-licensing year, which commences 1 July 2003. No changes are proposed to existing fees.

INTRODUCTION

The Dog Control Act 1996 requires that:

1. All dogs of greater age than three months be registered by 1 July each year with the authority in whose district the dog is ordinarily kept and, in the case of a young dog reaching registerable age after 1 July, before it attains the age of three months.
2. The fees for dog registration set by an authority be publicly notified in a newspaper circulated within its district at least once in the month prior to the commencement of the registration year. (Reference Appendix 1).

It is common practice for territorial authorities to send to each known dog owner in their area an application form for dog registration by way of a reminder that registration is due. In Christchurch these forms are pre-printed with the dog and owner details, and also show the dog registration fees and other owner information required by the Dog Control Act 1996.

While the responsibility to register a dog rests with its owner, and the Council is not required to post application forms, it is considered an advantage to do so in the effort to have dogs registered by 1 July each year.

In order that the application forms are printed for processing and posting late May, it is necessary that the Council set the fees no later than its April meeting. It is intended that the dog registration fee table continue to be printed on the registration application form, and that a brochure containing dog registration information and the owners legal responsibilities be also sent with the application form.

DOG REGISTRATION POLICY

At its meeting on 23 April 1997 the Council adopted the following recommendations of the Regulatory and Consents Committee in regard to fees.

1. *That the Responsible Dog Ownership category be continued with a suitable concessionary fee as resolved by the Council from time to time.*
2. *That a considerable concessional neutering or spaying fee be considered annually by the Council. This fee to be less than the standard registration fee, but greater than the Responsible Dog Owner fee. This to be a sufficiently large concession on the standard registration fee to give a strong incentive to neuter or spay. The concession is to be provided from the Dog Control Account.*
3. *Where a dog is released from the Council's dog shelter to a new owner, the new owner is no longer required to pay a standard release fee, but must pay the cost of registration. (See Note below).*
4. *Where a dog is claimed by its owner from the Council's dog shelter, the dog will not be released from the shelter until all fees and charges have been paid or appropriate arrangements for payment made.*

Note: Subsequently the Council at its meeting on 26 August 1999 adopted the recommendation to restore the fee to release a dog to a new home. This is included in the attached fee schedule.

DOG REGISTRATION AND ASSOCIATED FEES RECOMMENDED

The dog registration schedule of fees for the 2003/04 period is attached (Appendix 1). The Regulatory and Consents Committee is being asked to recommend these fees to the April 2003 Council meeting to enable the team to meet form production deadlines.

Provision has again been made to allow for concessionary fees for those persons having been granted Responsible Dog Owner Status, in accordance with the criteria previously adopted by the Council (Appendix 2).

The fee structure suggested rewards those granted the above status with a generous financial concession, with the second and subsequent dogs registered by the same owner receiving a greater concession than the first. To claim the concessionary fees, owners are required to register their dogs by 30 June each year.

Notwithstanding the fee advantage they may receive, a dog owner holding the Responsible Dog Owner Status who does not register their dog by the date required, has breached a status condition and stands to lose their status for up to two years.

Of the 28,568 dogs currently on record, 12,631 or approx 44% are recorded as being neutered or spayed. While some owners may have been encouraged by the concession to have their dog neutered, the concession has mainly been a bonus for dog owners who may have had this procedure conducted on their dog anyway. No additional concession is offered to holders of Responsible Dog Owner Status where their dog(s) are neutered or spayed.

There is a requirement under the Council's dog control bylaw for the occupier of any premises where more than one dog is kept for more than 14 days in any 12 month period, to obtain a licence from the Council.

A one off fee of \$65.00 is required to be paid for appropriate consultation, inspection and issue of the licence. A licence is not transferable between either owners or properties.

A \$30.00 re-inspection fee is charged where the licensed property requires a further inspection. This may be where the holder of the licence wishes to change the number or types of dogs kept; or vary any of the conditions under which the original licence was issued. A re-inspection may also be required where the Council has received a bone fide complaint arising from the keeping of dogs on the property.

The Dog Control Act 1996 requires that the fee for a dog classified as "Dangerous" under section 31 of the Act shall be 150% of the fee that would apply if the dog were not classified as a dangerous dog. The Council currently has 88 dogs on its records that are classified as dangerous.

Staff

Recommendation: That pursuant to the provisions of the Dog Control Act 1996, the Council adopt the schedule of dog control fees contained in Appendix 1 for the registration year commencing 1 July 2003.

Chairperson's

Recommendation:

1. That officers report verbally to the meeting on the appropriateness of the level of charges contained in section 10 of Appendix 1 (charges fixed by Council for dog related services).
2. That subject to the outcome of (1) above, that the officer's recommendation be adopted.