

3. PROPOSED DOG REGISTRATION AND RELATED FEES FOR THE 2000/2001 DOG LICENSING YEAR

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Corporate Plan Output: Animal Control	

The purpose of this report is for the Council to consider the setting of dog registration and other related fees for the 2000/2001 dog-licensing year, which commences 1 July 2000.

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 normally domiciled and, in the case of a young dog reaching registerable age after 1 July, on or 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.

It has been the common practice of territorial authorities to send to each known dog owner in their area, an application form for dog registration. In Christchurch these forms are pre-printed with the dog and owner details, and also show the dog registration fees and 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 applications, it is considered an advantage to do so in the effort to have dogs registered by 1 July of each year.

In order that the application forms are printed and ready for posting by early May it is necessary that the fees be set by the Council no later than its **April** meeting, as it is intended that the dog registration fees continue to be printed on the registration application form. A brochure containing dog registration information and the owners' legal responsibilities will also be sent with the application form.

DOG REGISTRATION POLICY

The Council at its meeting on 23 April 1997 adopted the following recommendations of the Environmental Committee in regard to fees:

1. *That the Responsible Dog Ownership category be continued with a suitable concessionary fee as resolved by 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 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.*
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 22 April 1999 adopted a recommendation to restore the fee to release a dog to a new home. In view of the comments made in the report on de-sexing and euthanasia of dogs which appears earlier in this agenda, it is recommended that this fee be dropped. Similarly, the same report recommends that no registration fee be charged for the remainder of the current year in which a dog is adopted from the shelter.

DOG REGISTRATION AND ASSOCIATED FEES RECOMMENDED

The proposed dog registration schedule of fees for the 2000/2001 period is attached (refer Attachment 1). The Environment Committee is being asked to recommend these fees to the April Council meeting to enable the team to meet printing date deadlines.

Provision has again been made to allow for a concessionary fee for those persons having been granted Responsible Dog Owner Status, in accordance with the criteria previously adopted by the Council (refer Attachment 3).

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 however, 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.

The basic fee structure initiated in 1998/99 was retained for the 1999/2000 year, and it is recommended that this continue for 2000/2001. This fee structure sought to ensure that throughout the registration period, the fees for concessionary categories of dogs would retain some fee advantage, and also sought to limit the effect of the expected drop in revenue as a result of the Council's decision to provide a concession for registration of spayed or neutered dogs.

The number of spayed or neutered dogs on record has been static for some time now. 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.

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 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 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.

For the 2000/2001 year it is proposed to apply by way of a penalty an additional charge for the registration of any dog, being a dog that should have been registered by 1 July, but is not registered until after 1 August. A penalty fee is to be set for each category of dog and the recommended amounts range from \$25 to \$30.

The Dog Control Act 1996 requires that the fee for a dog certified 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 48 dogs on its records that are classified as dangerous.

It is recommended that the basic fee structure for 1999/2000 be continued for 2000/2001. The reasons for this are covered in the report on the review of the Animal Control service, which appears earlier in this agenda. It should be pointed out, however, that as part of the current Annual Plan process, the Council resolved to change the funding policy so that 5% of animal control expenditure is funded from rates. This equates to approximately \$70,000, or a reduction of \$3 per Responsible Dog Owner.

The Committee therefore has the option of reducing RDO fees (refer Attachment 2) or retaining the status quo (refer Attachment 1).

Stock Control

The cost of undertaking stock ranging and stock pound activities are required to be paid from rates and the net cost is estimated to decrease from \$28,538 in the 1999/00 year to approximately \$22,500 for the 2000/2001 year.

Costs associated with stock ranging and the stock pound cannot be charged to the Dog Control Account.

- Recommendation:**
1. That pursuant to the provisions of the Dog Control Act 1996 the Council adopt the schedule of dog control fees contained in Attachment 1 for the registration year commencing 1 July 2000.
 2. That in the 2000/01 budget year consideration be given to the introduction of the Responsible Dog Owner status in the first year of registration rather than the second year, and to reducing the Responsible Dog Owner Fee by \$8 rather than \$5.