

3. PROPOSED DOG REGISTRATION AND RELATED FEES FOR THE 2001/2002 DOG LICENSING YEAR

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The purpose of this report is to seek a Council decision on the setting of dog registration and other related fees for the 2001/2002 dog-licensing year, which commences 1 July 2001.

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. (Reference Appendix 1).

It has been the common practice of territorial authorities to send an application form for dog registration to each known dog owner in their area. 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 an effort to have dogs registered by 1 July of each year.

In order that the application forms can be printed for processing and posting in mid May, it is necessary that the Council sets the fees no later than its April meeting. It is intended that the dog registration fees continue to be printed on the registration application form, and that a brochure containing dog registration information and the owner's legal responsibilities will 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. (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. A fee has been submitted as part of the recommended fee structure for 2001/2002.

DOG REGISTRATION AND ASSOCIATED FEES RECOMMENDED

The dog registration schedule of fees proposed for the 2001/2002 period is attached (Reference Appendix 1). The Environment Committee is being asked to recommend these fees to the April 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 (Reference 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.

The Council at its meeting on 28 September 2000 recommended that there be a reduction in the registration fee for holders of Responsible Dog Owner Status in the 2001/2002 year, and a further reduction the following year. A reduction of \$3.00 (to \$37.00 from \$40.00) is proposed in the 2001/2002 year, to register the first dog of such owners. The second and subsequent dogs of the same owners it is proposed would remain at the level of the 2000/2001 year which was \$22.00.

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.

The basic fee structure initiated in 1998/99 continues to be retained. This fee structure seeks to ensure that throughout the registration period, the fees for concessionary categories of dogs retain some fee advantage.

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 \$65.00 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.

For the 2001/2002 year it is proposed to apply an additional charge by way of a penalty 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 \$25.00 to \$30.00.

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 51 dogs on its records that are classified as dangerous.

STOCK CONTROL

The cost of undertaking stock ranging and stock pound activities are required to be paid from rates and the net cost budgeted for the 2000/2001 year was \$22,492.00. For the 2001/2002 year this is budgeted to be \$25,736.00.

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

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 2001, subject to the deletion from the schedule of separate provision for spayed/neutered dogs on the basis that any extra revenue resulting from the removal of this provision will be applied towards a reduction of the fee payable for the registration of the first dog registered by owners granted responsible dog owner status.

(Note: A further report on the implications of this proposal will be separately circulated prior to the Council meeting.)