

Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw Review

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Standing Policy Committee on Community and Protective Services recommend that Council give three readings to the proposed Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw (Attachment 1) to replace Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw 23M2006.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Calgarians' needs have changed since the Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw was updated 12 years ago. The proposed bylaw was guided by input from a municipal scan, internal statistics, input from Councillors' offices, best practice information, corporate research and two phases of comprehensive engagement with the public, industry stakeholders and City staff.
- **What does this mean to Calgarians?** The proposed bylaw is aligned with citizen needs and expectations, balances effective compliance and education and responds to new trends in animal care and ownership that will impact citizens and businesses.
- **Why does this matter?** Whether a Calgarian is a pet owner or not they are affected by this bylaw. This bylaw will improve public safety and liveability related to pet ownership in Calgary.
- Administration is proposing a number of key changes (a summary of major changes can be found in Attachment 2):
 - The **Chief Bylaw Officer has the authority to designate animals vicious in Calgary** rather than the Provincial Court.
 - A proposed **expanded nuisance designation** allows the Chief Bylaw Officer to prescribe conditions for how a nuisance animal is kept to mitigate community concerns and rehabilitate the animal.
 - An **urban hen program** is proposed that requires potential hen keepers to attend training and adhere to generally accepted hen keeping practices to mitigate community nuisance.
 - **Ownership is limited to six dogs and six cats per household.** Proposed regulations **also limit the number of dogs a person can bring to an off-leash area to six.**
- Recommendations regarding a proposed tribunal to hear appeals of nuisance and vicious dog designations can be found in report CPS2021-0739, which is also being brought forward to the 12 May 2021 Standing Policy Committee on Community and Protective Services meeting.
- Through One Calgary 2019-2022 Service Plans and Budgets, Council directed Administration to revise the Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw to bring insightful change based on pet owners and neighbour engagement, that is reflective of current trends and improves satisfaction.
- Strategic Alignment to Council's Citizen Priorities: A well-run city

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DISCUSSION

Information from research and engagement along with a comprehensive municipal scan of 33 Canadian jurisdictions and an analysis of internal statistics informed the proposed Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw amendments. Administration also worked with subject matter experts when refining proposed changes to the Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw. Opportunities were identified to support enforcement and education efforts and increase clarity in the bylaw. Key changes are included below, and major changes are summarized in Attachment 2.

A key proposed change enables the Chief Bylaw Officer to declare an animal vicious and prescribe conditions for how an animal is kept, which seeks to ensure public safety and facilitate the rehabilitation of vicious behaviour where possible. Seeking this designation through Provincial Court is often a lengthy process during which the animal is held at a City facility. Placing conditions on an animal quickly mitigates risk to the public and City staff, and also improves outcomes for animals by releasing them back into the care of their owners under strictly enforced conditions.

An animal can be declared a nuisance when it has engaged in repeated threatening or aggressive behaviour, has been found running at large more than once, repeatedly causes noise that disturbs any person, or the owner has demonstrated an inability to control the dog in an off-leash area. Expanding the nuisance designation allows the Chief Bylaw Officer to place conditions that mitigate community concerns and provide opportunities for rehabilitation.

Engagement showed general support for an urban hen program if proper housing and care is maintained and there are no community nuisance issues. The proposed urban hen program will ensure these conditions are met and Administration will be able to address community nuisance issues. Similar urban hen programs have been implemented in several large municipalities across Canada successfully.

There was widespread support for pet limits in engagement and the proposed bylaw includes exceptions for breeders and those with foster animals. Placing limits to the number of dogs one person is allowed to take to an off-leash area is meant to mitigate safety concerns of bringing more dogs to an off-leash park than can be reasonably monitored and helps to address Calgarians' concerns about inappropriate behaviour in off-leash areas.

With Council's approval changes to the Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw will come into effect January 1, 2022, and the livestock program will be implemented by the end of Q2 2022.

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STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION (EXTERNAL)

- Public Engagement was undertaken
- Public Communication or Engagement was not required
- Public/Stakeholders were informed
- Stakeholder dialogue/relations were undertaken

Administration consulted with internal stakeholders and Councillor offices to confirm the scope of this bylaw review. In order for Administration to understand public awareness and opinions of responsible pet ownership in Calgary, Leger was contracted to conduct city-wide phone surveys and focus group research with citizens (see Attachment 3).

Administration then conducted the first phase of engagement to understand what Calgarians thought was and was not working with the current Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw and to identify what else should be included in the bylaw (see Attachment 4). Phase two engagement sought input on potential amendments on the Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw (see Attachment 5). Opportunities to provide input via engagement in both phases were widely communicated to the public (whether they were pet owners or not), stakeholders in the pet industry and City staff. Opportunities for engagement included online surveys, pop-up events across the city, in-person and online workshops and live presentations. To ensure Administration understood the needs of all Calgarians, communications circulations were inclusive of varying news mediums including multicultural outlets and in varying languages. Engagement participants were informed of how to access free translation services if needed so that they had an opportunity to contribute.

IMPLICATIONS

Social

The Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw is enforced using an education first approach to encourage adherence, using ticketing as a last resort in most cases. The Chief Bylaw Officer has discretion to reduce or waive livestock permit fees for compassionate reasons.

Environmental

Dog waste fines were increased to \$500 to match other City littering fines. Dog waste attracts predators and poses environmental risks including water contamination and the spread of parasites.

Economic

Not Applicable.

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Service and Financial Implications

No anticipated financial impact

There are no operating budget requests associated with this report. If Council approves the proposed bylaw, all costs associated with bylaw training and enforcement would be absorbed into the existing operating budget.

RISK

The recommended changes to the Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw align with the expectations of Calgarians which encourages bylaw compliance. Administration worked with industry experts to ensure that best practices are followed when designing proposed changes so that regulations work as intended. A communications campaign will ensure Calgarians are aware of changes.

Proposed changes to nuisance and vicious animal designations allow Administration to intervene before aggressive behaviour escalates and pose further safety concerns in the community.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Proposed Wording for a Bylaw to replace Bylaw 23M3006
2. Summary of Key Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw Changes
3. Summary of Market Research Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw Review March 2020
4. Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw Review - Summary of Phase One Engagement
5. Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw Review - Summary of Phase Two Engagement
6. Public Submissions
7. Additional Public Submissions
8. Confidential Opinion Poll

Department Circulation

General Manager/Director	Department	Approve/Consult/Inform
Jill Floen	Law	Consult
Katarzyna Martin	City Clerk's Office	Consult