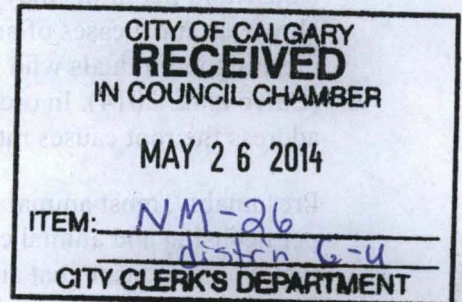


Oops-a-Dazy

Animal Rescue & Sanctuary

Oops-a-Dazy Rescue and Sanctuary Society
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May 23, 2014

Diane Colley-Urquhart
Councillor, Ward 13
PO Box 2100, Station M
Calgary, AB T2P 2M5

Dear Councillor Colley-Urquhart:

Re: Household Pet Limits

I am writing on behalf of a number of concerned individuals and organizations to ask you to revise your Notice of Motion for "review and bylaw amendments restricting the number of household pets" in Calgary (councillordiane.ca). We appreciate and commend your efforts to protect animals in Calgary and we wish to provide comment and guidance which we believe will lead to more effective policy development for Calgarians.

We are well aware of several recent high-profile cases of animal hoarding, neglect, and abuse which have given rise to your Notice of Motion. The organizations and individuals named below work tirelessly to protect animals from the same on a daily basis. We work on the front lines of animal welfare, volunteering our time and personal finances to this very important cause. Our work in the animal rescue community gives us a unique insight to the issues at hand and we ask that you take some time to review our recommendations and revise your Notice of Motion appropriately. We would be happy to meet with you to present our recommendations in person, and facilitate a workshop with politicians, animal welfare experts, and other stakeholders to ensure that the best decisions are made for our city.

Why household pet limits are not the solution

Household pet limits may intuitively seem like a solution to prevent animal hoarding. However, most cases of animal hoarding are a result of mental illness, or sometimes well-meaning individuals who become overwhelmed due to lack of resources (Calvo *et al*, 2014). In order to be effective in preventing animal hoarding cases, we must address the root causes rather than the symptoms.

Presumably, most animal hoarders are ignoring existing animal control bylaws, including pet licensing and animal care expectations. At this time, we are not aware of any data that would indicate that animal hoarders would be deterred by additional household pet limit bylaws. There may be some benefit to the City in terms of fines which could be levied against those who break the bylaw, but it is likely that enforcement costs would negate any financial gain by the City.

From a public safety point of view, it is important to address any underlying mental health conditions of the hoarders. The citizens who may be engaging in hoarding behavior need to have access to mental health resources to prevent and correct hoarding, and are unlikely to respond to legislated animal limits until they receive such assistance.

Other animal hoarders begin with compassion, seeking to help animals in need. Given lack of financial resources and support, they could find themselves in a position where they are not able to provide the care they had set out to give ("martyr hoarder"). Most rescue organizations and individuals involved in rescue are well aware of this dilemma. Rather than alleviating the desire to hoard animals, a household pet limit would leave these people feeling even more overwhelmed and powerless to help animals in need, which may actually encourage them to take in more animals.

How household pet limits would affect our citizens

Although your intentions with this Notice of Motion are noble, the fear of animal rescue groups and individuals in this city is that the restrictions will not only fail to address their targets, but will actively cause harm to pets owned by responsible pet owners.

Given experience in other municipalities, we anticipate that we would see the following ramifications from household pet limits:

- 1) Calgary has many responsible pet owners. Although many of these people may have multiple pets, they are well cared for (adequate or higher standards of food, water, shelter, socialization, veterinary care, and love), they are legally licensed, and their owners obey City bylaws including removal of faeces and limitation of noise. Such owners may be forced to give up a beloved pet in order to comply with the proposed bylaw. The animals would be surrendered to shelters and rescues in many cases. Shelters and rescues nearly always run at full capacity already. An influx of owner-surrendered animals as a result of this proposed

bylaw would result in the euthanasia of many animals. Responsible, law-abiding citizens would be punished, with their pets potentially paying the ultimate price.

- 2) Calgarians may opt to break the proposed bylaw by keeping their pets. In this case, there is a higher likelihood that animals will not be licensed, decreasing the effectiveness of existing bylaws and making enforcement more difficult. Additionally, animal care may suffer if citizens are afraid to have their extra pets seen by neighbours. E.g. they may reduce their pets' exercise in public spaces. Not only would that reduce the animals' quality of life, but it increases the risk to public safety as the animal would not be as well-socialized and therefore more likely to bite.
- 3) Pet owners may choose to emigrate from the city to a municipality that is more pet-friendly. There could be potential economic impacts to the community as a result.
- 4) As more animals are surrendered to shelters and rescues, the organizations will lose capacity to cope with existing stray animal populations. Such populations would increase and correlated increases in disease and injury from stray animals could occur.
- 5) If Calgarians are able to have a limited number of animals, adoption rates at shelters and rescue organizations would fall, as would the number of available foster homes. Coupled with the anticipated increased intake from surrendered pets, animal welfare organizations could be crippled under the animal care and financial obligations we would be forced to take on.
- 6) As the homeless pet population increases, the number of martyr hoarders would increase. Kind-hearted people might try to take in more animals than they can care for, knowing that the alternative for the pets could be death. Rather than providing the support these people need, we would be enhancing the root cause.

As you can see, household pet limits could have exactly the opposite intended effects and do not appear to be a viable solution or in the best interest of the citizens of the City of Calgary.

Recommendations

Collectively, we are working as individuals and organizations towards the highest standards of animal welfare. Calgary has a proven track record of effective and progressive animal control programs and we would like to make recommendations that would strengthen existing programs.

- 1) If the proposed bylaw were to be implemented, any household pet limit would need to be arbitrarily chosen by legislators, with input from public consultation. In our collective experience in animal welfare, we have seen people who cannot

provide adequate care to one animal. Likewise, we have seen people who have had twenty animals who live better lives than most people. In addition, some animals require different levels of care depending on their age, breed, special needs, etc. We don't feel that arbitrary "one size fits all" limits are appropriate or responsible.

Any consideration to legislated limits should be given on a case-by-case basis with recognition of the individual's ability to provide an adequate standard of care. Rather than legislating a certain number of pets an individual may own, it would be more effective to set out well-defined criteria against which bylaw officers could assess the ability of the individual to provide adequate care and impose household pet limits on an individual basis if required.

- 2) Implement a registry for shelters and rescues to share information about people who have been identified as potentially posing a danger to pets, including concerns of animal hoarding or abuse. Currently, each organization maintains its own records but there is not an effective way for the information to be shared and cross-referenced by all organizations. A centralized database would reduce workload for volunteers and also increase the effectiveness of each organization's efforts to adopt to responsible homes.
- 3) Provide feedback to Provincial and Federal governments which urges harsher penalties for convicted animal abusers. Criminal Code convictions are much more effective punishment tools than municipal bylaws.
- 4) Implement mandatory spay and neuter policies. Intact animals should only be allowed by special permit and should have a veterinarian's endorsement that the animal is:
 - Healthy and free of contagious disease or genetic disorders; and
 - Actively participating in a registered and regulated breeding program; or
 - Unable to be altered due to medical risks and appropriate precautions have been taken to prevent breeding.

Additionally, the veterinarian should have to do a home visit to confirm that the environment is adequate for the animal and that the breeding program is being administered in a socially-responsible manner.

By requiring a veterinarian's authorization, administration costs would be user-funded and prohibitive to most people who do not intend to legitimately participate in a quality breeding program.

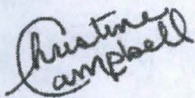
Mandatory spay and neuter is perhaps the important recommendation we can make as it would address most animal welfare issues in Calgary.

- 5) Provide more assistance to citizens by way of free or low-cost spay and neuter programs. Spay and neuter is the most effective way of preventing surplus animal populations, but the high cost of living in Calgary is sometimes a barrier for responsible pet owners to support this simple prevention. Calgary is very lucky to have some assistance programs available already, but the funding needs to be increased for the programs to be fully effective.
- 6) Rather than licensing individual foster animals, which is currently an inefficient and ineffective process due to the high turnover rate, licenses could be issued for each foster home instead. The foster home could be licensed for a particular number of animals appropriate to the environment and caregivers available.
- 7) Provide psychiatric care programs for individuals identified with hoarding tendencies, including ongoing support.
- 8) Provide more public funding to animal welfare agencies to more effectively manage the homeless pet population to help to avoid martyr hoarders.

The signatories of this letter would be interested in facilitating a workshop which could review and evaluate opportunities to address the root causes of animal hoarding and other welfare issues and help the City to find appropriate solutions that will benefit all citizens. We would be happy to provide a proposal for such a workshop for consideration by City Council.

Thank you for your consideration of our position and recommendations. Should you have any questions or require clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me at 403-612-3011 or christine@oopsadazy.com.

Sincerely,



Christine Campbell, Chairperson for Oops-a-Dazy Rescue and Sanctuary Society
On behalf of the undersigned

Organizational Supporters

Bon A-Pet-Treat! Pet Bakery Inc.
Bonerz Advocacy & Rescue Centre
Calgary Basset Rescue Society
DINO Rescue
Fur-Ever Homes Rescue
Little Mutts Rescue
Oops-a-Dazy Rescue and Sanctuary Society
Pound Rescue

Individual Supporters

Adam Vase
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Amy Chomyn, Foster Home, Fur-Ever Homes Rescue
Amy Crowson, Director, Oops-a-Dazy Rescue and Sanctuary Society
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Angie Fidler-Goreham
Ayla Tennant
Bailey Edgar
Benjamin Dupuis
Bethany Brewer, Oops-a-Dazy Rescue and Sanctuary Society
Brandi Quinn, Oops-a-Dazy Rescue and Sanctuary Society
Carma Buchholz
Carmen Zvonik, Fur-Ever Homes Rescue
Carol Goulden, Oops-a-Dazy Rescue and Sanctuary Society
Cassandra Jones-Merline, Oops-a-Dazy Rescue and Sanctuary Society
Catherine Elliott
Chantal Lester, B.A.(Hons.), MSc Counselling Psychology (Candidate)
Chantel Sauve Weber
Cheryl Macdonald, DINO Rescue
Christine Rozada Campbell, B.Sc., BIT, Dipl., Chairperson, Oops-a-Dazy Rescue
Christine Melissa Ness, RDH
Claire Cochemé
Cody Sinfield
Colleen Trumble, Oops-a-Dazy Rescue and Sanctuary Society
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Darcie Young, Oops-a-Dazy Rescue and Sanctuary Society
Dawn Marsh, Oops-a-Dazy Rescue and Sanctuary Society
Debbie Vogel
Denise Myers-Angignon
Diana Rodriguez
Don Bishop

Dr. Gabriele Barrie, President, Pound Rescue
Eileen Bettis, Bon A-Pet-Treat! Pet Bakery Inc.
Eric Battler
Erin McMillan
Gwen Tennant
Heather Forsey, Oops-a-Dazy Rescue and Sanctuary Society
Heaven Rule
Helen Nowlan-Walls, President and Chairperson, Calgary Basset Rescue Society
Ian Campbell, Oops-a-Dazy Rescue and Sanctuary Society
Ila Vargas Will, Oops-a-Dazy Rescue and Sanctuary Society
Isabelle Martin, Vice President, Fur-Ever Homes Rescue
Jaclyn Molnar-Legg, Foster Coordinator, Fur-Ever Homes Rescue
Janine X. Bradford, Oops-a-Dazy Rescue and Sanctuary Society
Jasmine Rule
Jeannette Madarash
Jenna O'Donnell, Oops-a-Dazy Rescue and Sanctuary Society
Jennifer Connolly
Jerrid O'Neil
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Justin McConnell
Kamille Milljour
Kari Fulton
Kasandra Rowe
Katlin Primrose
Kelly M. Leclaire, Oops-a-Dazy Rescue and Sanctuary Society
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Kim Richardson Bendle, Oops-a-Dazy Rescue and Sanctuary Society
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Krista Graf
Laura Lyons
Laura Montoya
Laurence Heinen, Oops-a-Dazy Rescue and Sanctuary Society
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Lisa Cheong-Stevens
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Team Representative
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Patricia Lynn Underhill
Peggy Whyte, Oops-a-Dazy Rescue and Sanctuary Society
Raquel Sherry Rule, Oops-a-Dazy Rescue and Sanctuary Society
Sandra Jones
Shauna DeGraff Fulton, Oops-a-Dazy Rescue and Sanctuary Society
Shauna Sinfield, Oops-a-Dazy Rescue and Sanctuary Society
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Veronica Dean Heinen, Oops-a-Dazy Rescue and Sanctuary Society

Citations:

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