

Animal Management Committee Meeting

MINUTES

Thursday 18 February 2016

Meeting Room 2



Meeting Start: 5pm

Meeting Closed: 5:55pm

Apologies:

Alderman Robin Knox; Sharon McTaggart – Supervisor of Animal Management; Amy Dobell

Present:

Meg Gardiner – Dogs NT; Steven Gatt – Manager of Regulatory Services; Anthony Smith – Animal Education Officer; Julie Schuller – Cats Association NT; Alasdair McGregor; Kate Dixon;

General Discussion:

Julie raised the issue of problem animals identified in the last minutes simply states that they are assessed to be rehomed. It should indicate also what happens if they are not suitable. It was agreed to amend the minutes to include. *Animals at the Pound are kept for four days before being assessed to be re-homed. Animals that are not suitable for rehoming or collect by the owners are euthanised following the mandated time frames.*

This should read “animals are assessed for rehoming on entry to the pound if there is no identified owner. Dogs that are not rehomed to the nominated approved service are euthanized following the mandated timeframe of 4 days”?

Kate asked about rehoming rates and it was discussed that currently the rehoming rate is 90% - 73% being returned to owners and 13% going to adoption agencies like RSPCA and PAWS. Steve advised 90% is an excellent rehoming figure when compared to other pounds he has worked with.

Kate reminded Steve to circulate her email dated 15th February 2016 on fees and desexing levers.

Correspondence Received

REABL 3rd Submission tabled– Terms of Reference

The group discussed submission regarding a departure from the terms of reference for the committee, members were asked to comment. No concerns were raised regarding this, agreement was obtained that the committee were on target.

REABL second submission reply email was discussed - *REABL repeats it's request that AMAC provide the statistics requested in REABL's second submission.*

It was identified that the request for the statistics is not reasonable for commenting on the committee comments and recommendations. Kate enquired about the resources required. It was explained that this formed the basis why detailed financial statistics are not being provided and if they are desired by REABL they can request the information via the appropriate process of RTI.

The points listed on the were spoken about and offered for comment to the group. Several comments were made by Alasdair, Kate and Anthony supporting the following comments from Steve;

Point three – the committees focus has also been on the nuisance issue and a recommendation made

Point four – the committees recommendations will lead to new procedure development and clarity for clients.

Point five – CJC is an available tool and will not be removed from process or the website. The service is supported and recommended to be utilised by the Office of the NT Ombudsman.

Point six – 35 day is not seen as unreasonable.

Point seven – committee recommendation on education will address this point.

Cat association Submission

Some of the issues to be discussed in the agenda item for fees, Question: Publics general education about cats in the Darwin area

Committee discussion on submission

Suggestions:

Breeders to be registered through Council

Fees being reduced for desexed cats

Reduced fees for members of feline associations in line with dog fees

Fees and charges are being discussed at the moment
Changes will be made for cat by-laws

Business Arising:

That no changes to be made to the current policies & By Laws on the permit system for keeping additional animals. 1st Kate 2nd Julie – carried

That an amendment to By-Laws Section 63(4) (b) be made to read;

Section 63(4) (b) the keeping of a dog or cat in a shelter by a council approved organisation; or

1st Steve and 2nd Julie – Carried

General Discussion:

Kate – Submitted some research on other Council policies for desexing animals – Steve forgot to forward to members, will do so prior to next meeting.

Agenda 1) Fees and Payment Plans

Comments:

Large discussion identified that cost issues and options should be looked into

Prices for entire dog to go up in cost and pricing for desexed dog will decrease in cost – encouraging owners to get their animal desexed

Refunds of the entire dog fee for when an animal is desexed as an option

First time offenders of registered animals to be released free of charge

Issues arising: owners moving interstate or to Palmerston – difference in registration policies

Entire Dog with concession card costs are too low – need to revisited

Cat ownership – issue with the number of cats not currently registered with Council
Numbers of cat registrations are very low through Council

Desexing issue with the cat population Problem with the feral cat population in the Darwin area High level of feral cats being put down at the Pound

Steve spoke about payment plans with the Pound Release fees – payment plans do not work as the owners never follow through on the payments and recovery is a problem. Council will always have discretion on this for a case by case basis
Consideration of the owner's current financial situation on whether that individual can or cannot afford to make payment for release fees

Provide alternative arrangements – provide extra time to pay?

Re offending dogs being impounded on multiple occasions consider rehoming the animal rather than releasing them to the owner?

Fees and charges to be looked over

Exploring options and incentives for desexing

Submission to Council – costs and fees for Dogs and Cats

Strategies for desexing

Any control for sale of animal in Pet Stores – Council By-laws?

Recommendation:

That fee's be adopted to support and reward socially responsibly ownership
Increasing costs for pension/concession for entire dogs
discounted fees for desexed concession/ pension card holders

Agenda 2) Recommendations and different incentives

Process on dogs being impounded 3 or more times and still dog isn't desexed – Council takes ownership of dog

Suggestions on if vets could encourage owners to desexed animals – any By-laws on this subject

Hold subsidised desexing events for the community, it was asked what events we currently do hold

Anthony Smith – Animal Education Officer - Advertisement to be done soon

Advertisement at the Darwin Show – Council has a public education table
Public training/ education days
Pet Expo
Suggestions at the Museum

Recommendation:

That the strategy include subsidised registration/desexing days.

That council look to offering free registration for cats for a one year to encourage and improve the take up of feline registration

Agenda 3) Off leash areas – Including dog parks

Annoyances – Dog poo in public areas and along beaches

Bag dispensers were discussed and it was noted that they are prime targets for vandals. .

Council do provide poo bags holders for dog leads on request and at promo events particularly where officers are out patrolling/providing advice.

Recommend signage in public places encouraging owners to pick their dog's poo
Council has bins and signage already in place available for the public to use

Need more education for the public about this issue. Enforcements will be issued for dog poo offences

Dog Park to be introduced – provides an area help people and owners to teach their dog's to interact with other dogs and learn to obey commands while around other animals.

Discussion on lead length, passed 1.5meters is ineffective at controlling a dog

There are Council by-laws on effective control including the length of a dog lead

Recommendation:

That No Change to off leash areas – Agreed (all in agreement)

General Business:

No

Decisions;

1. **That** no changes to be made to the current policies & By Laws on the permit system for keeping additional animals. 1st Kate 2nd Julie – carried

2. **That** an amendment to By-Laws Section 63(4) (b) be made to read;

Section 63(4) (b) keeping a dog or cat in a refuge maintained by a council approved organisation; or

1st Steve and 2nd Julie – Carried

3. **That** no change to off leash areas is required

1st Kate 2nd Meg - Carried

Date of Next Meeting: 3 March 2016

Agenda Items for Next Meeting:

- Feral Cats
- Recommendations