

Animal Management Committee Meeting



MINUTES

Thursday 3rd March 2016

Meeting Room 2

Meeting Start: 5pm

Apologies: Nil

Present:

Meg Gardiner – Dogs NT; Steven Gatt – Manager of Regulatory Services; Sharon McTaggart – Supervisor Animal Management; Anthony Smith – Animal Education Officer; Julie Schuller – Cats Association NT; Alasdair McGregor; Amy Dobell; Kate Dixon; Alderman Robin Knox; Alderman Justine Glover

Adoption of minutes – 18 February 2016

Moved Steve; Seconded Julie

Business Arising:

General discussion around de-sexing and how it can be promoted.

Steve advised that this could be achieved via education, engagement with vets for subsidised de-sexing, discounted registration fees.

Kate suggested limiting subsidised de-sexing to people with low socioeconomic status and to rescue groups so they can provide lower adoption fees.

Julie was concerned that rescue group adoption fees were not static and that sometimes it was dependent on the breed. She does not agree with rescue groups selling animals as legitimate pedigrees for a higher fee without health checks, papers etc. Robin suggested that Council should look at prohibiting the sale of dogs and cats unless you are a rescue group or registered breeder. It was agreed that there was a need for this issue to be addressed but that it was not within the scope of this committee.

Discussion about responsible pet ownership - what is it? How do we promote it? It was agreed that a compulsory check list when registering a cat or dog would be a good way to inform pet owners of their responsibilities/requirements and Council By-laws.

Discussion about the need for online registrations. Sharon advised that the development of a new website was in progress and perhaps the facility to complete new registrations may be available. Only registration renewals can be done online at this stage.

Discussion about registration fees. Anthony suggested a possible reduction in fees for defence personnel. This was not supported by the committee. Kate stated that the fee structure should not put anyone at a disadvantage and should encourage de-sexing.

From this discussion the following recommendations were put forward:

1. To investigate legislative mechanisms for the purpose of regulating the sale of dogs and cats within the Northern Territory. Moved Kate; Seconded Justine.
2. To include an educative check list as part of the registration process. Moved Kate; Seconded Robin.
3. That fee's be adopted to support and reward socially responsibly ownership incorporating;
 - Discounted fees for de-sexed concession/ pension card holders
 - Increased concessions for pensioners and concession card holders for entire dogs
 - Equity for members of a recognised feline association. Moved Julie; Seconded Steve.
4. That the animal management strategy includes subsidised de-sexing / registration days targeted at low socioeconomic status pet owners and recognised organisations who promote responsible pet ownership. Moved Robin; Seconded Kate.

Correspondence received:

REABL correspondence – submission 4 & 5

Robin expressed her concern about the nuisance barking process and suggested that officers use the phone and email instead of letters to speed up the process.

Steve explained some of the complexities with nuisance barking complaints such as complainants not using the normal channels to lodge complaints, contacting officers directly, often after hours and other factors that may result in slower response times.

Robin asked about the 35 days that was raised in the incoming correspondence. Steve explained the process and timelines. Robin would like to see procedure improved. Steve explained the ramifications of entering someone's property and removing their dog.

Discussion moved on to the definition of nuisance barking. Steve explained that dogs bark on and off for various reasons; there can be no problem for 7 days then a dog barks for one day – is that dog a nuisance? Factors need to be considered such as environmental issues, varying levels of tolerance, is it a community nuisance?

General Discussion:

Agenda Item:

1) Containment of cats/Feral Cats

Kate suggested that Council work with rescue groups and the department of housing to identify where cat colonies exist within Darwin and to target individual colonies one at a time.

Discussion about current trapping process. Robin expressed her concern about the number of stray/feral cats within the municipality and stated that more resources were needed to deal with the problem. From the discussion the following recommendation was put forward:

That Council develop a strategy to address the stray cat population within the Darwin municipality. Moved Robin; Seconded Kate.

Justine asked the committee if they agreed to continue the meeting for an additional 15 minutes. All were in agreeance.

Steve outlined the purpose of the committee and each of the aspects of the animal management plan that were recommended for review, including but not limited to:

- Number of dogs per residence;
- Licences to keep more than 2 animals
- Number of dogs in neighbourhoods
- Definition of 'nuisance'
- Containment of cats

Agenda Item:

2) Recommendations for the report.

- a) That an animal management strategy be developed to replace the animal management plan with a review date every four (4) years
- b) That Council investigate, pursue and act on any identified benefits and efficiencies provided by a tag for life registration system.
- c) That the By-Laws section 71 be amended to clarify the nuisance definitions By-laws (Alisdair asked whether we need 71(2)? – needs to be quantified rather than based on individuals tolerance levels – Kate)
- d) That Improved use of technology in the administrative process for nuisance matters is investigated and adopted.
- e) That an ongoing media and education campaign is developed to ensure residents are aware of councils focus on pet ownership, including the benefits of de-sexing – the rights, responsibilities and penalties.
- f) That no changes to be made to the current policies & By Laws on the permit system for keeping additional animals.
- g) That an amendment to By-Laws Section 63(4) (b) be made to read;
Section 63(4) (b) keeping of a dog or cat by a council approved organisation; and

- h) That no change to off leash areas is required.
- i) To investigate legislative mechanisms for the purpose of regulating the sale of dogs and cats within the Northern Territory.
- j) To include an educative check list as part of the registration process.
- k) That fee's be adopted to support and reward socially responsibly ownership incorporating;
 - i. Discounted fees for de-sexed concession/ pension card holders;
 - ii. Increased concessions for pensioners and concession card holders for entire dogs;
 - iii. Equity for members of a recognised feline association.
- l) That the animal management strategy includes subsidised de-sexing/registration days targeted at low socioeconomic status pet owners and recognised organisations who promote responsible pet ownership.

General Business:

Robin Knox asked if the minutes were supposed to be on the website. Steve explained that advisory committee minutes go to standing committee and are then published on the website via the Corporate and Economic Development Committee.

Justine asked whether we should just suspend committee so we can review the report prior to it going to CEDC. Steve said that there would not be enough time for the report to be reviewed by the committee as it is due for submission next week. He suggested that the committee members meet informally as a working group in the future if the need arises.

Justine thanked everyone for their time and effort.

Meeting Closed: 6.15pm