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Animal Services One Year Review and Project Plan Staff Report to Council

Report Number: 2023-78

Department(s): Legislative Services

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Meeting Date: November 13, 2023

Recommendations

1. That the report entitled Animal Services One Year Review and Project Plan dated November 13, 2023, be received; and,
2. That Council adopt Staff's proposed Animal Services Project Plan as outlined in this Report; and,
3. That Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

Purpose

The purpose of this Report is to present statistics from the first year of the Town's newly established in-house Animal Services Program, outline improvements made to the service, and provide Council with the Animal Services Division's workplan for 2023-2026 for approval.

Background

On February 4, 2022, an [Information Report](#) was circulated to Council, advising of a Staff decision to operate an in-house Animal Services program.

On July 1, 2022, an in-house Animal Services program was launched.

On June 28, 2023, at a [Special Committee of the Whole](#), a Regulatory Services Review was presented to Council. During this Review, concepts were brought forward to Council

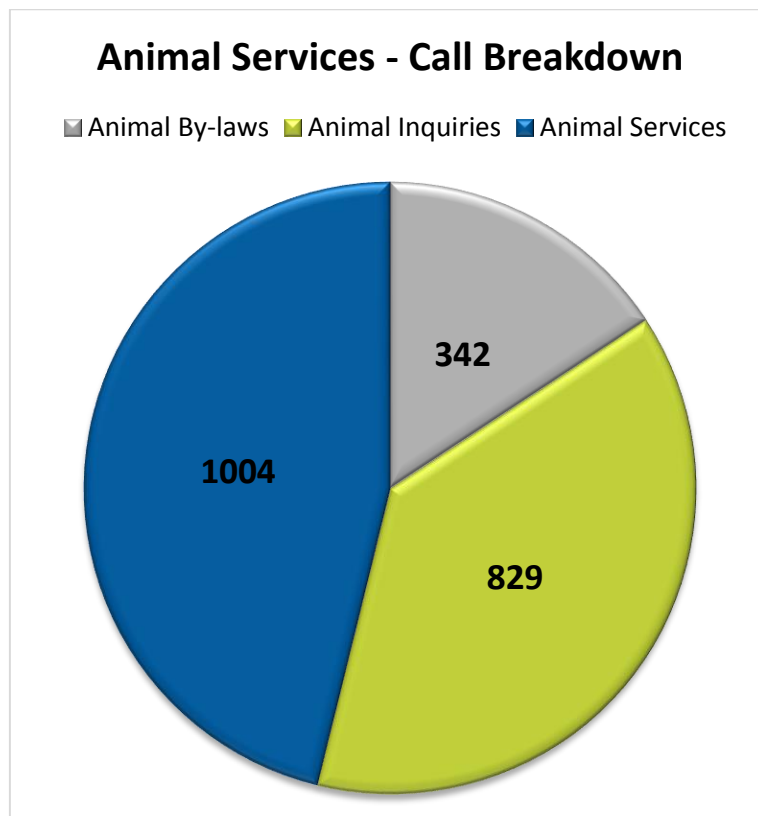
advising of potential projects for the Town's Animal Services Division.

This Report presents statistics from the first year of the Town's in-house Animal Services Program, highlights improvements made to our services, and projects the Animal Services Division's workplan for 2023-2026 for Council approval.

Discussion

Year One, Statistical Summary

On July 1st, 2022, the Town of Newmarket launched its in-house Animal Services Program. From July 1st 2022 – June 30th 2023, Animal Services responded to 2175 calls for service. Calls for this time period can be broken down as follows:

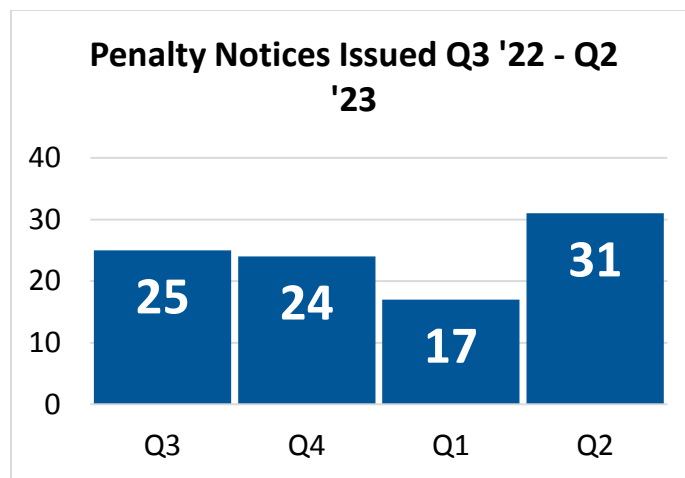


Animal Services calls make up the majority of calls received, and refer to files that require Officer attendance to provide care for either domestic or wild animals. These calls can include sick or injured wildlife, stray animals found at large, or providing Police assistance with animals.

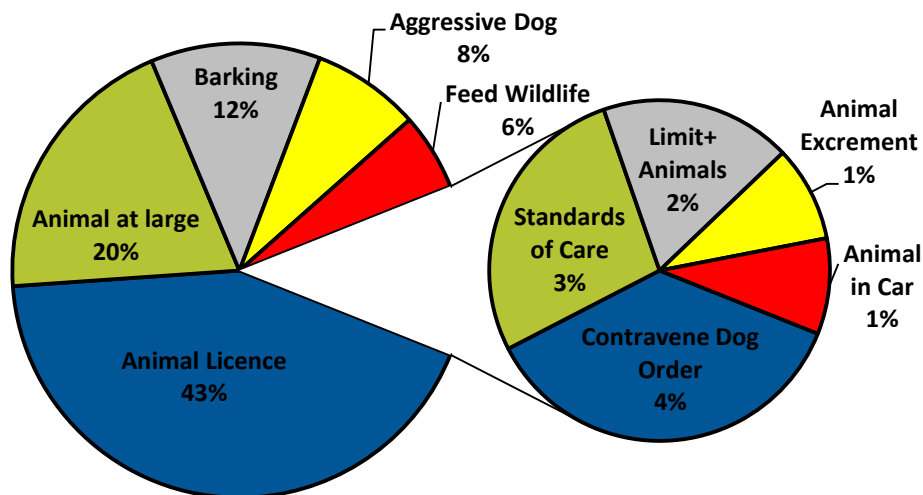
Animal Inquiries are the second most frequent calls received, and include lost pet reports or general inquiries.

Animal By-law calls are the third type of call classification that the Town's Animal Services Division utilizes. These calls represent complaints received regarding violations of the Town's Animal Control By-law, and may include dogs running at large, concerns regarding feeding wildlife, barking dogs, or dog attacks.

As a result of the response to the above noted calls, as well as proactive actions by Officers, 97 Penalty Notices were issued in the first year of operation, resulting in \$31,568 in fines:



Penalty Notice Issued by Violation



In addition to revenue generated through penalty notices, Animal Licensing represents a significant source of revenue for the municipality:

	Pet Licenses Issued	Total Revenue
July '21 – June '22	3569	\$117,747.73
July '22 – June '23	3542	\$117,061.01

Program Improvements

After being operational for a period of one year, the Town's Animal Services Division has taken significant steps towards improving service levels to our community. For the purpose of this report, Staff would like to highlight a number of key improvements made:

Robust In-house Training Program – a wholesome in-house training program has been established to train all newly onboarded Staff on all things Animal Services. Training consists of in class lectures, discussions, and practical training for aggressive dog handling and wildlife handling.

Local Veterinarian Partnership – the Town has entered into a partnership with VCA Canada 404 Emergency Veterinarian Hospital in Newmarket to provide Animal Services sedation and euthanasia drugs.

24/7 On-Call Response to Animal Emergencies – recognizing that animal emergencies can happen anytime, the Town has established a 24/7 on call service for response to animal emergencies. An on-call team of trained animal services specialists are ready to provide emergency response outside of normal working hours for confined stray dogs, public safety risks, and to provide assistance to emergency services.

Transparent Wildlife Care Initiative – the Town's Animal Services Division is dedicated to being transparent with our community while ensuring the best care and compassionate outcomes for every animal that enters our care. In our commitment to animal welfare, the Town has created the Transparent Wildlife Care Initiative. Through this initiative, the Town will track the journey of wildlife that comes into our care and will share it with residents upon request. This initiative provides residents with the peace of mind that animals are well cared for. Additionally, this provides the opportunity for residents to contribute to the animals ongoing care and treatment by donating to the specific wildlife rehabilitation facility providing that care.

Expanded Rehabilitation Network - Municipal Animal Service departments rely on organizations licensed with the province to offer wildlife rehabilitation for wildlife in need. Our Animal Services Division works with many licensed organizations to transfer wildlife

to specialized animal rescues for care and rehabilitation. Licensed Wildlife Rehabilitation Centres utilized by the Town's Animal Services Program include:

- Bear Creek Exotic Wildlife Sanctuary
- Toronto Wildlife Centre
- Mono Wildlife
- Woodland Acres Wildlife Rescue
- Owl Foundation
- Procyon Wildlife
- Hobbitsee Wildlife Refuge
- Soper Creek Wildlife Rescue
- Wildlife Haven

Animal Services Division, Workplan 2023-2026

After successfully establishing an in-house Animal Services program, Staff are eager to continue to explore improvements to current practices for Council consideration:

1) Animal Control By-law, Part 2 review

Q2 2024

In 2020, Regulatory Services Staff authored [Staff Report 2020-40](#) introducing a new [Animal Control By-law](#). In presenting these new regulations, Staff committed to an ongoing review of the newly adopted regulations and to report back on any improvements required. Town Staff intend to return to Council in Q2 of 2024 with a review of the Town's Animal Control By-law to consider:

- Enhanced enforcement tools for aggressive dog encounters
- Supplementary limits for total animals permitted to be kept
- Review of feeding wildlife regulations
- Additional tethering restrictions
- Review of standards of care (food, water, shelter, grooming, Vet care, crate time limitations)

As part of this review, Staff will present to Council proposed amendments to the existing Animal Control By-law for consideration.

2) Kennel/Cattery Licensing

Q4 2024

In addition to reviewing the newly adopted Animal Control By-law, Staff Report 2020-40 committed to further reviewing regulations related to Kennels/Catteries. In order to ensure residents of our community are sourcing animals from reputable sources, there were considerations for Staff to review Zoning regulations pertaining to Kennels in order to potentially permit them within our community and regulate them through a Business Licensing regime.

The Town's Animal Services Division intends to return to Council in Q4 of 2024 to present an overview of Kennel/Catteries, a summary of consultation completed, and identify to Council potential options for regulation. Once provided a thorough overview of Kennels/Catteries, Council will be able to provide direction to Staff on whether they should be permitted within our community, and discuss the level of regulation that they wish to impose.

3) Animal Licensing Updates

Q2 2025

Staff would like to explore a model of animal licensing that rewards responsible pet ownership, providing discounts for spaying/neutering, up to date rabies vaccines and microchip implantation. Staff would like to explore a percentage-based discount for seniors and those on government financial assistance, and increased fees for dogs that have been designated as dangerous dogs or have muzzle orders.

Additionally, recognizing that there are significant expenses associated with getting a new cat or dog, Staff would like to explore discounted or potentially even a free animal licence for any pets under the age of 6 months.

Lastly, Staff will be providing Council with a comprehensive breakdown of proactive enforcement strategies to encourage pet owners to licence their animals. Council will have the opportunity to provide direction to Staff on which proactive enforcement measures should be implemented.

The Animal Services Division intends to report back to Council in Q2 of 2025 with an overview of proposed changes to animal licensing for Council consideration.

4) Additional Paid Services

Q3 2025

Staff would like to explore the implementation of additional paid services that typically fall outside of the standard services that are provided by a Municipality. These services could provide an enhanced level of service to the community, while also generating revenue. Potential services that Staff would like to consider include:

- wildlife cadaver removal (private property)
- domestic animal cadaver removal
- regular and emergency pet transport
- pet return to owner (before animal is taken to the shelter)
- general officer assistance
- the offering of Animal Services to other municipalities by way of partnership

The Animal Services Division intends to report back to Council in Q3 of 2025 with a detailed overview of proposed additional paid services.

5) Off Leash Dog Park Alternatives

Q1 2026

Staff would like to explore the potential for off-leash alternatives to dog parks. Currently the Town has one fenced in dog park located at George Richardson Park. Staff would like to investigate the potential for single-use fetch locations, and utilizing unoccupied sports fields.

The Animal Services Division intends to return to Council in Q1 of 2026 with a wholesome review of options available to provide off leash dog park alternatives. This review will include a jurisdictional scan of solutions implemented in other municipalities, a summary of consultation done with our community, and options for Council consideration.

Conclusion

Regulatory Services has successfully implemented an in-house Animal Services program. An Animal Services Project Plan has been presented to Council in this Report for Council consideration. Should Council choose to adopt Staff's proposed work plan, the Animal Services Division will immediately begin work to ensure proposed timelines are met.

Business Plan and Strategic Plan Linkages

This report aligns with the Town of Newmarket's vision of being Well Beyond the Ordinary

Consultation

None.

Human Resource Considerations

None.

Budget Impact

None.

Attachments

None.

Approval

Lisa Lyons, Director of Legislative Services

Animal Services, One Year Review and Project Plan

Esther Armchuk, Commissioner of Corporate Services

Contact

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