Issues paper: Review of the Dog Control Act 1996

Consultation feedback form

Thank you for providing feedback on the Issues Paper: Review of the Dog Control Act 1996.

- Please provide responses in the spaces provided (these can be expanded when typing or by dragging the box down). You do not need to answer every question. We welcome feedback on the questions most relevant to your organisation's expertise and experience.
- Where possible, please provide examples, evidence, data, or operational experience to support your views.
- You may attach additional pages or supporting documents if you require more space.
- Please return this form to dogs@mcert.govt.nz by 2 November 2026.
- The Ministry for Cities, Environment, Regions, and Transport may use information provided in submissions to inform policy development relating to the review of the Dog Control Act 1996. Submissions are subject to the Official Information Act 1982 and may be released if requested unless there are grounds for withholding the information under that Act. Please identify any information that you consider commercially sensitive or that should otherwise be treated in confidence.

Confidentiality request

Taituarā requests confidential treatment of the attributed council quotations and any related material identified as confidential. These comments reflect practitioner feedback, not formally adopted council positions. Please consult Taituarā before any proposed release of this material, including in response to an Official Information Act request.

Response form

Please provide your submission details to support our record keeping.

Submission details	
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Consultation questions

- Question numbers correspond to the consultation questions contained in the issues paper.
- Page references are provided to assist navigation.
- References to the DCA mean the Dog Control Act 1996.

Summary of changes proposed in the quoted council feedback

The quotations in the main response propose the changes summarised below. They record practitioner feedback, not formally adopted council positions or sector-wide agreement. Appendix A records subsequent testing, qualifications and differing views.

- **Local rules and processes (Question 3):** Align dog-control reform with wider bylaw reform; allow simpler local notices or regulations where a full bylaw process is disproportionate; remove or combine separate dog control policy and bylaw requirements; and set human-safety rules nationally while retaining local wildlife-access restrictions and enforcement.
- **Earlier intervention and education (Question 4):** Give councils compliance-notice and early-intervention powers directly under the Act, without requiring a bylaw, and develop nationally recognised obedience and owner-training courses for referrals.
- **Repeat roaming (Question 5):** Allow councils to retain dogs with a history of roaming or escaping until owners remedy containment problems.
- **Breeding and desexing (Question 6):** Restrict domestic breeding of menacing-by-breed dogs; improve desexing affordability; and address unintended breeding through national legislation, with councils' role limited to enforcement.
- **Cross-boundary enforcement (Question 7):** Clarify enforcement of classifications when dogs move between districts and consider whether cross-boundary officer warranting needs further formalisation.
- **Higher-risk dogs and owners (Question 8):** Allow councils to disqualify probationary owners following further offending; provide clearer classification criteria, including a proposal for national minimum thresholds and mandatory classification; and extend the owner-admission option to menacing classifications.
- **Infringements (Question 12):** Review Schedule 1 infringement fees, including a suggested range of $750–$1,000, and provide a high-cost infringement option for less severe section 57 attacks.
- **Reporting (Question 17):** Prescribe a national dog-control reporting form in regulations rather than guidance.
- **National Dog Database funding (Question 18):** Fund the database through owner contributions collected through registration fees rather than a council-paid levy.
- **Dog-control funding (Question 21):** Make dog control user-pays, with central government—not council rates—funding any public-benefit share, including enforcement.

Taituarā includes these proposals and supporting quotations to inform the issues-paper stage of the review. They identify practical concerns and possible improvements raised by experienced practitioners operating in different parts of New Zealand. Their inclusion gives the Ministry evidence from frontline practice and identifies ideas for further discussion with the wider local government sector; it does not mean Taituarā endorses each proposal. Taituarā requires sector endorsement or majority sector support before supporting a proposed change. The limited testing recorded in Appendix A does not establish that level of support. Some proposals also concern disputed interpretations of existing law or arrangements, which require clarification before deciding whether changes are needed. These ideas therefore warrant further sector testing to establish their wider support, practical merits and whether legislative or other changes are appropriate.

Part 1: What should dog control in New Zealand achieve?

Question 1	**Page 11**
Are the following proposed outcomes right for a modern dog control system? What, if anything, should be added, removed or given greater priority? 1. Prevent and reduce harm 2. Promote responsible dog ownership 3. Manage the dog population 4. Support shared public spaces 5. Improve public understanding	
Response	
Taituarā supports retaining all five proposed outcomes, with preventing and reducing harm as the main objective. The outcomes should guide councils' work to protect public safety and promote responsible dog ownership and management. Together, they broadly reflect the expectations of communities, dog owners and territorial authorities. We support prioritising the outcomes in the following order: 1. Prevent and reduce harm 2. Promote responsible dog ownership 3. Manage the dog population 4. Support shared public spaces 5. Improve public understanding For territorial authorities, the key question is whether the system helps councils prevent harm and act promptly on risks to public safety. Councils need powers and practical tools to identify and manage higher risks associated with dogs and owners, including dog attacks, threatening behaviour and roaming dogs. Preventing harm should guide both the law and day-to-day dog control work. Both owners and councils have responsibilities for preventing harm. Councils should consider owners' actions as well as dogs' behaviour when assessing risk. Owners must understand and meet their obligations for registration, containment, control in public places, breeding practices and dog	

welfare. The proposed outcomes should guide how owners and councils carry out these responsibilities.

Public education should help owners meet their obligations and help people interact safely with dogs. Work to manage the dog population and rules for shared public spaces should also help prevent harm and encourage responsible ownership. These three outcomes should support the first two, rather than be treated as separate aims.

Taituarā does not propose adding or removing outcomes. We recommend stating clearly that preventing harm comes first. The outcomes should require owners to meet their obligations and enable councils to act when dogs or owners present a higher risk of harm.

Question 2 **Page 12**

Are responsibilities appropriately allocated across dog owners, councils, central government, and other organisations? If not, what should change?

Response

Yes. Taituarā considers the current allocation of responsibilities broadly appropriate and does not propose transferring responsibilities between dog owners, councils, central government and other organisations.

This is consistent with our submission to the Petitions Committee on 9 October 2025: the current system is fit for purpose but could benefit from a wider review, with meaningful sector consultation before legislative changes are made. Taituarā welcomes MCERT's issues paper and consultation with local government before changes to the Act are drafted. This responds to our request for meaningful consultation before substantive legislative change. The priority should be to improve the existing system and give those responsible the powers and resources they need, rather than transfer responsibilities.

Dog owners should retain primary responsibility for the behaviour, control, welfare, registration and containment of their dogs. Owners who fail to meet their obligations should bear the consequences of their non-compliance.

Councils should remain responsible for responding to incidents, investigating complaints, enforcing the Act, and setting local dog control policies and bylaws after consulting their communities. Councils should be able to set rules that reflect local risks and community expectations. We do not support penalties for councils following dog attacks because owners have primary responsibility for their dogs.

Central government should maintain and improve the legislation, coordinate national work and help councils apply the law consistently. This includes oversight of the National Dog Database, better information sharing, national guidance, and support for staff development and training. It should provide effective systems and tools without unnecessary involvement in councils' day-to-day decisions. Other organisations should contribute relevant expertise, education and advice, while owners remain accountable and councils retain their statutory responsibilities.

Retaining these roles does not mean retaining the Act unchanged. Members have suggested improvements to the legislation, which we have included in the responses to the questions that follow. We also acknowledge the 93.75% support at LGNZ's 2026 AGM for the remit "priorities for dog control act reform". It calls for more effective council powers and tools, including greater scope for earlier intervention, stronger consequences for non-compliance, and better ability to set minimum requirements for owners, including desexing and containment. This is consistent with strengthening councils' ability to fulfil their existing responsibilities rather than reallocating those responsibilities.

Local government is experiencing some of the largest reforms in decades, while councils are under severe financial pressure. Before adding duties for councils, the review must identify their costs and how they will be paid for over time. Councils must not be given new obligations without the funding to carry them out.

We welcome further consultation with the sector on how to protect owner rights, meet community expectations and prevent harm. Reform should make responsibilities clearer, improve access to dog control information and help councils carry out their duties without transferring those duties to other agencies.

Question 3 **Page 12**

Which aspects of dog control should be set nationally, and where should councils retain flexibility through local dog control policies and bylaws?

You may wish to consider whether there are areas where current variation between districts creates problems.

Response

As set out in Question 2, Taituarā considers the current allocation of responsibilities broadly appropriate and does not propose transferring responsibilities between dog owners, councils, central government and other organisations. Central government should maintain and improve the legislation and national systems; councils should retain frontline administration, enforcement and local policy and bylaw responsibilities. Who carries out these responsibilities is distinct from which rules are set nationally. Member feedback and testing identify options and differing views, not an agreed sector-wide national/local split.

National requirements and support

Consistent with Question 2, Taituarā supports national oversight of the National Dog Database, information sharing, guidance and training. Waitaki's classification proposals (Question 8) and Taupō's cross-boundary concerns (Question 7) identify matters for national consideration. Appendix A, proposals 8 and 10, records that all four testing councils opposed the combined minimum-criteria and mandatory-classification proposal, while some considered existing cross-boundary powers or relationships adequate. Guidance and better records are distinct from mandatory classifications or new statutory powers.

Questions 12 and 17 record requests to review national infringement settings and prescribe a national reporting form. Appendix A, proposals 2–3 and 19, records support and reservations: fee

levels and an attack threshold are not agreed, and views differ on prescribing reporting in regulations. These remain matters for national consideration with the sector, not changes endorsed by all participating councils.

Local flexibility and policy-making

Taituarā supports councils retaining local policy and bylaw responsibilities, community consultation and rules reflecting local risks and expectations (Question 2). Thames-Coromandel proposes national human-safety rules, local enforcement and habitat-related access restrictions, simpler local instruments, and reconsideration of separate policies and bylaws. Its supporting quotes follow. Appendix A, proposals 15–17, records divided views, including the value of consultation, distinct policy and bylaw functions, and views that existing powers suffice. There is no established agreement to remove either requirement or adopt identical access rules across districts. These differing responses strengthen the case for retaining local flexibility rather than imposing a single approach to local dog-control decisions. Councils should retain scope to respond to local risks and community expectations, with meaningful consultation and case-by-case judgement where appropriate. The testing involved four reference-group practitioners: it does not establish the extent of variation across New Zealand or represent sector-wide agreement. It does, however, caution against assuming that the same reform will address every council's circumstances. National legislation, information systems and guidance should support effective local delivery, while any proposed national requirements should be tested with the wider sector for their practical effects on local decision-making.

Where variation creates practical problems

Waitaki reports differing interpretations of classification thresholds; Taupō reports uncertainty about compliance when classified dogs move districts and about cross-boundary officer warranting (Questions 8 and 7). These accounts support examining how national requirements are applied and how councils obtain relevant records, not assuming every council faces the same problems or needs new powers. Information access, warranting and classification criteria are separate matters. The quoted feedback does not establish confusion among travelling owners about local access rules.

Reform process and supporting council requests

Thames-Coromandel also requests alignment with wider bylaw reform. Its proposals are presented below alongside the council's supporting comments. Appendix A, proposals 15–18, records subsequent testing and differing views; these do not establish sector-wide agreement.

A proposed change is: Align the review with the Government's wider reform of bylaw and regulatory-making powers.

Thames-Coromandel District Council said: "Align the Dog Control Act review with wider bylaw reform. Ensure the review reflects Cabinet's broader work to modernise local-government law-making and regulatory powers. Apply reforms consistently across legislation that gives councils bylaw-making powers."

A proposed change is: Allow simpler local instruments, such as notices or local regulations, where a full bylaw process is out of proportion.

Thames-Coromandel District Council said: “Provide simpler local regulatory instruments
Allow councils to use targeted instruments such as notices or local regulations where a full bylaw process is disproportionate. This is particularly appropriate where primary legislation already contains most substantive rules and councils mainly identify local places or circumstances where activities are permitted or prohibited.”

A proposed change is: Remove the requirement to have both a dog control policy and a dog control bylaw or combine them.

Thames-Coromandel District Council said: “Review the requirement for two separate council documents. Reconsider why councils must maintain both a dog control policy and a dog control bylaw. Explore whether these can be consolidated or simplified to remove duplication and unnecessary process.”

A proposed change is: Set human-safety rules nationally. Councils would keep local powers over dog access to protect wildlife and habitats, plus enforcement.

Thames-Coromandel District Council said: “Local enforcement powers are appropriate, as are probably powers to restrict dog access to areas to protect flora and fauna that are will be subject to local conditions, e.g. habitats of protected species. But anything to do with protecting humans should be able to be regulated nationally and not left to potential local variation, e.g. dog access to children’s playgrounds. Following from comment on 2 above, putting councils in the position of having to navigate tensions and the risks of that impacting on a council’s relationship with its people and communities, along with the cost burden of making bylaws etc, is inappropriate.”

Part 2: Is the current regulatory system fit for purpose?

Question 4 **Page 14**

What changes would most effectively support responsible ownership and prevent non-compliance or harm before it occurs?

You may wish to consider barriers to understanding and meeting owner responsibilities, education, training, or competency requirements, and how to reach owners who are not engaged with the registration system.

Response

Quoted comments are included as evidence of the concerns and proposals raised by members, not as Taituarā’s verification of every legal interpretation, reported cost or predicted effect. Their inclusion does not imply endorsement of every proposed remedy.

A proposed change is: Give councils compliance-notice and early-intervention powers directly under the Act, with no bylaw needed. These would let councils act on early signs that an owner isn't caring for or controlling a dog, before harm happens.

Thames-Coromandel District Council said: “Expand councils' early-intervention and enforcement tools

- Give councils compliance tools that can be used before offending or harm occurs.
- Options could include notices or compliance notices, rather than forcing councils to move directly to infringements or prosecution.
- Provide these powers directly under the Act so councils do not first need to create a bylaw."

These powers would also let councils act on early signs that an owner isn't caring for or controlling a dog, before harm happens.

Thames-Coromandel District Council said: "Enable earlier intervention with poorly controlled or cared-for dogs
- Allow councils to act when there are early signs that an owner is failing to care for or control a dog, rather than only after the dog harms people or animals or becomes a nuisance."

A proposed change is: Develop nationally recognised obedience and owner-training courses that councils can refer offenders to.

Palmerston North City Council said: "Identify/develop nationally recognised obedience and dog owner training courses to standardise the education options for local councils to refer offenders to when needed."

Question 5 **Page 15**

What changes are needed to address repeated roaming and improve containment where a dog repeatedly escapes or is impounded?

You may wish to comment on owner accountability measures, containment requirements, intervention powers, and barriers to compliance.

Response

A proposed change is: Allow councils to keep dogs with a history of roaming or escaping until the owner fixes containment at their property.

Palmerston North City Council said: "Allow councils to retain dogs with a history of roaming and escape from properties until the dog owner mitigates containment issues around the property contributing to the roaming."

Question 6 **Page 18**

What role, if any, should the DCA play in managing unintended breeding and the wider consequences of unwanted dogs?

Response

Palmerston North City Council proposes restricting domestic breeding of menacing-by-breed dogs. The council identifies a perceived gap between import restrictions and domestic breeding controls. Appendix A, proposal 13, records differing views about whether existing requirements already address this issue. The review should clarify the current legal position before determining whether an amendment is needed.

Palmerston North City Council said (excerpt): "Address breeding of unwanted dogs or dogs of certain breeds/sizes. There is currently a gap with the dogs that are menacing by breed in that although they can't be imported into the country there's no prohibition on breeding those dogs if

they are already here. putting some regulations in place around breeding would also help to make the adoptable dogs more attractive to people rather than a low-cost pup from an unwanted litter."

A proposed change is: Provide support to make desexing more affordable for owners.

Palmerston North City Council said: "Improve desexing support so that more dog owners can afford to get their dogs spayed/neutered."

A proposed change is: Deal with unintended breeding in national legislation, with councils' role limited to enforcement.

Thames-Coromandel District Council said: "this is a nation-wide problem so should be addressed in national legislation, the only local role is possibly enforcement."

Question 7 **Page 19**

To what extent do current arrangements hinder the identification of dogs and owners, particularly those who are unregistered? How can they be improved?

You may wish to comment on registration, microchipping, information accuracy, and dogs moving between districts.

Response

A proposed change is: Clarify how classifications are enforced when classified dogs move between districts, and whether cross-boundary warranting of officers should be formalised.

Taupō District Council said: "Cross boundary compliance can be challenging – when dogs are given a classification in one authority they can be moved and its uncertain if the owner/new owner is complying with the relevant classification. This raises questions about cross boundary warranting of officers and if the process related to that needs extra formalisation or not compared to the current provisions in the act which allow for somewhat ad-hoc arrangements."

Question 8 **Page 21**

How should the dog control system identify and manage dogs or owners presenting an elevated risk of harm?

You may wish to comment on owner-classification thresholds, previous incidents, compliance history, and the types of controls that should apply once elevated risk has been identified.

Response

A proposed change raised by Waitaki District Council is to allow councils to upgrade a probationary owner to disqualified following further offending during probation. Waitaki considers that councils currently have to begin counting three infringements in 24 months again under section 25(1A). Appendix A, proposal 7, records a differing interpretation of those counting rules. The legal position needs confirmation before deciding whether an amendment is required.

Waitaki District Council said: "When considering if we should disqualify a dog owner after receiving 3 or more infringements in the 24 month period, we sometimes find making them a probationary owner is more appropriate. The issue is then any further non compliance during the probationary period. In order to make them disqualified you are required to begin the 3 infringements in a 24

month period again. What may be more appropriate is amending the act to allow Councils to disqualify the owner if they receive an infringement during the probationary period."

A proposal raised by Waitaki District Council is clearer direction and minimum requirements for menacing and dangerous classifications under sections 31 and 33A. The following comment supports examining consistency between councils; it does not itself specify a bite scale or require automatic classification. Waitaki's more specific mandatory-classification proposal is recorded in the next extract. Appendix A, proposal 8, records opposition from all four testing councils to the combined minimum-criteria and mandatory-classification proposal.

Waitaki District Council said: "We would also like to see some definitive direction on what would determine a dog being classified as menacing or dangerous. At the moment it is to open to interpretation. Some Councils may be classifying a dog as menacing when it should actually be dangerous and vice versa. Some minimum requirements would maybe see some conformity and consistency across councils."

A proposed change is: Set national minimum criteria for classifying a dog as menacing or dangerous (s31, s33A), for example using a bite scale such as the Dunbar Bite Scale. Councils would have to classify a dog when the criteria are met, rather than having discretion.

Waitaki District Council said: "The second issue is about setting certain criteria to classify a dog as menacing or dangerous by deed. Different councils interpret the thresholds differently and there is no consistency. An example is the Dunbar Bite Scale. This could be used to set minimum standards for classifying a dog that bites. Sec 31 & 33A are the relevant sections. 33A refers to menacing and the act has the words a Territorial Authority may classify. I believe the act should say must classify as menacing if certain criteria are met. Such as a bite."

A proposed change is: Extend the owner-admission option, which currently applies to dangerous dogs, to menacing classification.

Taupō District Council said: "Classifying dogs as menacing can be more challenging than dangerous classifications due to the lack of an effective owner admission option. Owners of dangerous dogs can via a prescribed form effectively admit the dog is dangerous which then means there is no ability to challenge the classification our team believes that this option should be available for menacing classifications as well."

Question 9 **Page 22**

What role, if any, should breed or type play in identifying dogs that present an elevated risk of harm?

You may wish to comment on behaviours or physical characteristics that are associated with specific breeds and the practicality of applying and enforcing classifications before harm has been observed.

Response

No comment

Question 10 **Page 23**

How should objection and appeal processes balance procedural fairness with timely risk management?

Response

No comment

Question 11 Page 23

Which requirements, if any, should remain in force while an objection or decision is under review?

Response

No comment

Question 12 Page 25

How could the infringement framework provide proportionate and effective responses to different levels of non-compliance and harm?

You may wish to comment on particular offences, fee levels, deterrence, proportionality, and any gaps in the current enforcement pathway.

Response

A proposed change is: Review the infringement fees in Schedule 1 so they deter offending, for example raising them to $750–$1,000. This includes the failure-to-register fee, which is now close to or below the cost of registering.

Waitaki District Council said: “The cost of prosecution is too prohibitive. We are currently deciding on whether to prosecute a dog owner whose dog attacked and killed a protected penguin. Due to fiscal constraints and community pushback on council spending, we find ourselves leaning more towards issuing a $200 infringement, which really is not adequate in the circumstances. Amending infringement penalties in the act could assist Councils in taking enforcement action other than prosecution that have a significant deterrent value. A $20,000 prosecution that may result in a fine of $1,500 and the destruction of the dog is an issue for councils that are cash strapped. Significantly increased fines may assist.”

Waitaki District Council said: “The infringement thresholds are too low. As an example recently I issued $1050 in infringements to a person who had their dog off lead but refused to provide their details ($750 refusing details and $300 dog off lead). How do we have a $300 infringement for a dog off lead where the dog can cause significant harm to wildlife or other animals or people. Yet not providing a name , address or dog details is a $750 infringement.
Infringement amounts should be a deterrent. We recently issued almost 200 infringements for failing to register a dog at a cost of $300 per infringement, if it were a deterrent then we should see a fraction of that amount issued. Infringement fees set a $750 - $1,000 would be a deterrent and could assist as an alternative to prosecution.”

Palmerston North City Council said: “Addressing the infringement fines so they are more motivating for compliance. Namely, the infringement for failing to register a dog is not keeping pace with the cost for registering; some councils now have fees that are close to or greater than $300 when late registration penalties are added in.”

Palmerston North City Council proposes a high-cost infringement option for less severe section 57 attacks, reporting that these currently require prosecution or reliance on another section of the Act. Waitaki’s protected-penguin example illustrates its concerns about prosecution costs and the

adequacy of the $200 infringement it was considering. The review should confirm the available enforcement pathways and consider whether an additional infringement option is warranted.

Palmerston North City Council said: “Address the gap in offenses that do not have an infringement option. Namely a section 57 attack can only be addressed via prosecution or citing a different section of the act as there is not an infringement option to penalise this offense. Creating a high-cost infringement for this type of offense would give council's another tool for following up on attacks where the impacts were not severe, but the offending dog needs to be addressed.”

Question 13 **Page 26**

What changes are needed to councils' investigation, information-gathering, seizure, or impoundment powers so they can identify and respond to emerging risks while still protecting owners' rights?

Response

No comment

Question 14 **Page 27**

What changes would improve decisions and processes relating to the retention, release, or destruction of impounded dogs?

You may wish to comment on statutory holding periods, applications for release, appeal rights, whether consistent assessment criteria are necessary, owner interests, public safety, animal welfare, and the grounds for destruction.

Response

No comment

Question 15 **Page 28**

What dog control risks arise from imported dogs and what changes would help manage those risks before and after entry into New Zealand?

You may wish to consider breed or type verification, responses to observed aggressive behaviour, the inclusion of additional breeds and information sharing to identify imported dogs after entry.

Response

No comment

Question 16 **Page 30**

What changes would improve the credibility, oversight, accessibility, and operation of the disability assist dog regime without creating additional access barriers for disabled people?

You may wish to comment on statutory versus sector-led standards, verification of certification, identification requirements, monitoring of authorised organisations, arrangements when an organisation is removed, and whether particular issues are more appropriately addressed through the DCA or through wider disability-support, service-delivery or funding settings.

Response

No comment

Part 3: How can information, capability and system stewardship be improved?

Question 17	Page 32
What information is needed to understand dog control activity, risks, and outcomes, and how could its quality, consistency, accessibility, and sharing be improved?	
Response	
A proposed change is: Prescribe a national dog control reporting form in regulations, rather than in guidance. Thames-Coromandel District Council, commenting on the issues paper rather than wider knowledge of the reporting arrangements, said (excerpt): "there should be national consistency in what is reported and how. A 'guideline' is not good enough, a form needs to be prescribed in regulations."	
Question 18	**Page 33**
What aspects of the NDD provide the necessary information to support effective dog control administration and policy development? What improvements could be made to the collection and use of the service and information?	
Response	
A proposed change is: Fund the National Dog Database through dog owners, collected via registration fees, rather than a levy paid by councils. Thames-Coromandel District Council, commenting from its reading of the issues paper and acknowledging no prior knowledge of the NDD, said (excerpt): "dog owners should pay, councils can 'on-invoice' as part of the registration process (similar to building levies on building consent fees), but no rates money should be paying for a national database."	
Question 19	**Page 33**
How can notification of significant dog-related injuries be improved, and what implementation, privacy or workload issues would need to be addressed? You may wish to comment on how notification could function, who would be responsible for notifying and to whom, and how notification could be utilised.	
Response	
No comment	
Question 20	**Page 34**
Where do information-sharing gaps affect the management of dog-related risks, and how could these gaps be addressed?	

You may wish to comment on which organisations need information, the purposes for which it is needed, and appropriate privacy safeguards.

Response

No comment

Question 21 **Page 35**

How should councils balance cost recovery, affordability, compliance incentives, and the wider public benefits of dog control?

Response

A proposed change is: Make dog control user-pays. Any public-benefit share, such as enforcement, would be funded by central government, not rates.

Thames-Coromandel District Council said (excerpt): “It should all be user-pays, dog owners benefit so they pay. Maybe some argument for public funding for the public benefits, if so, should be central government funded, not council rates. It is a nation-wide matter and should be funded the same way. All related to the persistent issue of ‘unfunded mandate’. if local government is to provide enforcement, that should be funded by central government.”

Question 22 **Page 35**

Are there dog control functions that should be supported through alternative funding or shared services?

Response

No comment

Question 23 **Page 36**

What workforce and capability challenges have the greatest impact on dog control outcomes and on councils’ ability to enforce the DCA?

Response

No comment

Question 24 **Page 37**

Are current national stewardship arrangements for dog control effective? If not, what changes would improve coordination, oversight, and system performance?

Response

No comment

Question 25 **Page 38**

Which issues identified in this paper should receive the highest priority, and why? What are some necessary transitional provisions to consider?

You may also identify any statutory definitions or terminology that create material uncertainty or practical difficulties.

Response (you may use the table below)
No comment

Please identify the three issues that should be prioritised for future work and briefly explain why.

Priority	Issue

Other - Provide any other relevant comments here
Taituarā reports the feedback received from participating councils for discussion with the wider local government sector. Attributed comments record the practitioners' views and are not presented as formally adopted council positions or sector-wide agreement. The ideas may or may not work in practice. Appendix A records proposed improvements, council feedback, published council evidence and differing views, including individual suggestions. Further discussion could establish whether they resonate across the sector and could work in practice.

Appendix A: Member proposals, council feedback and proposal-testing results and suggested next steps

Taituarā offers these council-raised ideas for discussion with the wider local government sector to establish whether they resonate more widely and could work in practice. Initial direct feedback came from four councils, while published material from Rotorua District Council provided separate information about council practice. Testing then involved circulating all proposed changes to members of the Taituara Regulations and Bylaws reference group (RBRG) to identify which had universal support. Four reference-group members provided feedback; the table records the testing responses associated with four participating councils. No proposal received an explicit Yes from all four. These results describe the participating practitioners' views, not formally adopted council positions or the views of the full membership. Initial feedback and published practice are presented separately from the testing results.

Each testing-results cell shows counts in five response categories, in this order: Yes, No, Unsure, Mixed, Unanswered. The figures refer to four participating councils, not five respondents. For example, proposal 1 records three Yes responses and one Unanswered response; the other categories are zero. Unanswered means that a participating council did not answer that particular proposal and must not be treated as agreement. The qualifications column explains reservations and differing views; support for an objective does not necessarily mean support for every proposed change. Repeated entries from one council are not separate expressions of support. In the first column, the number identifies the proposal, and Q identifies the relevant consultation question.

Proposals and testing results

Proposal reference and relevant question(s)	Proposal received	Initial council feedback and published council evidence	Subsequent testing results	Material qualifications and differing views	Matters for discussion with the wider local government sector
1 · Q4, Q12–14	Compliance notices and early intervention	One direct council sought earlier action on	Yes, No, Unsure, Mixed,	Fencing orders favoured. One Yes comment proposes	Further discussion with the wider local government

Proposal reference and relevant question(s)	Proposal received	Initial council feedback and published council evidence	Subsequent testing results	Material qualifications and differing views	Matters for discussion with the wider local government sector
	directly under the Act, without a bylaw.	poor control or care. Published repeat-breach practice is relevant background.	Unanswered: 3, 0, 0, 0, 1 Councils participating: 4	council-hearing removal/disposal: an individual, untested addition. One council unanswered.	sector could explore when compliance notices would be useful, what they could require and protection of owners' rights. Fencing orders and council-hearing removal or disposal are separate ideas.
2 · Q7, Q12	Review Schedule 1 fees, including registration; suggested $750–$1,000 levels.	Two direct councils questioned deterrence; published material confirms local fee-setting constraints. Repeated case entries count once.	Yes, No, Unsure, Mixed, Unanswered: 3, 0, 1, 0, 0 Councils participating: 4	No fee levels have been agreed. Registration costs with late penalties may approach the infringement fee. One respondent Unsure.	Further discussion with the wider local government sector could explore deterrence, whether fees match offending and affordability. The suggested fee range is not agreed.
3 · Q12	An infringement option for less severe section 57 attacks.	One explicit direct proposal; another council's prosecution-cost example supports the problem, not the exact proposed change.	Yes, No, Unsure, Mixed, Unanswered: 3, 0, 1, 0, 0 Councils participating: 4	One respondent suggests $500 for minor/moderate attacks not warranting classification. Another reports legal costs of $10,000 to over $30,000 and stresses reparation, destruction and disqualification. These are individual reports, not national estimates.	Further discussion with the wider local government sector could explore qualifying attacks and links to prosecution, classification and other decisions, alongside existing conditional warnings and diversion.
4 · Q5, Q14	Hold repeat-roaming dogs until owners fix containment problems.	One council that provided direct feedback wanted dogs held until owners fixed containment problems.	Yes, No, Unsure, Mixed, Unanswered: 3, 0, 0, 1, 0 Councils participating: 4	The Mixed response raises how long owners would have to comply, dog welfare, whether pounds can cope, public reaction and what happens if owners do not comply. One supporter already uses a bylaw.	Further discussion with the wider local government sector could explore existing holding powers, when dogs could be held or released, review rights and alternatives to

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				Individual additions not separately tested are 14-day holding and a proposed hybrid repeat-roaming classification.	long holding periods.
5 · Q5–6, Q8	Targeted compulsory desexing after repeated control breaches; example threshold of two or more in 12 months.	Published local practice describes repeat-breach desexing; it is not direct support for a national requirement.	Yes, No, Unsure, Mixed, Unanswered: 3, 1, 0, 0, 0 Councils participating: 4	Opposition says desexing will not resolve all roaming causes, including separation anxiety; fencing is preferred. A supporter suggests hybrid repeat-roaming powers.	Further discussion with the wider local government sector could explore whether desexing would work suitable thresholds and alternatives. Reducing breeding is distinct from preventing escapes; the example threshold is not agreed.
6 · Q4, Q24	Nationally recognised obedience and owner-training referral courses.	One direct council sought consistent education options.	Yes, No, Unsure, Mixed, Unanswered: 2, 1, 1, 0, 0 Councils participating: 4	Support includes diversion. Opposition concerns endorsing providers in a self-regulating industry; uncertainty concerns standards and the Act's scope.	Further discussion with the wider local government sector could explore course providers, quality standards, referral protections and diversion, separately from whether changes to the law are needed.
7 · Q8, Q25	Disqualify probationary owners following further offending.	One direct council raised the proposal twice; one council, not two expressions of support.	Yes, No, Unsure, Mixed, Unanswered: 3, 0, 0, 1, 0 Councils participating: 4	One Yes respondent disputes whether infringement counts reset. The Mixed response raises the seriousness of offending, whether pounds can cope and what happens to dogs that owners do not reclaim.	Further discussion with the wider local government sector could explore disputed counting rules, whether disqualification changes are needed, consequences for offending, fair procedures and

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					whether pounds could cope.
8 · Q3, Q8, Q24	National minimum classification criteria, including a bite scale, with mandatory classification instead of discretion.	One direct council sought consistency and later mandatory classification thresholds; repeated entries are not separate expressions of support.	Yes, No, Unsure, Mixed, Unanswered: 0, 4, 0, 0, 0 Councils participating: 4	All four oppose the proposal combining these mandatory requirements. Concerns include repeated minor attacks and the particular circumstances of each incident. This does not mean they oppose all guidance.	Further discussion with the wider local government sector could explore clearer assessment guidance while retaining case-by-case judgement. Guidance is a separate option from automatic classification.
9 · Q8, Q10	Extend owner admission to menacing classifications.	One direct council identified a perceived gap compared with dangerous-dog admissions.	Yes, No, Unsure, Mixed, Unanswered: 1, 2, 1, 0, 0 Councils participating: 4	One opposing respondent considers existing evidence and statements sufficient for menacing-by-deed classification. The effects on owners' rights have not been established.	Further discussion with the wider local government sector could explore whether existing admission processes are insufficient and any effects on informed consent, fair treatment and objection and appeal rights.
10 · Q7, Q13, Q18, Q20	Clarify cross-boundary classification enforcement and officer warranting.	One direct council reported compliance uncertainty and ad hoc warranting.	Yes, No, Unsure, Mixed, Unanswered: 1, 2, 1, 0, 0 Councils participating: 4	Some consider the Act or existing relationships adequate. Unsure response favours continuity without new paperwork. Individual suggestion not separately tested: NDD statuses such as awaiting desexing/desexed.	Further discussion with the wider local government sector could explore whether problems arise from the law, its application or records, and whether improved database records would help. Officer warranting is a separate question.
11 · Q13	Clear statutory powers to gather evidence, including DNA to establish or rule out a dog's involvement.	Published local DNA sampling is information about council practice, not proof that new statutory	Yes, No, Unsure, Mixed, Unanswered: 3, 1, 0, 0, 0 Councils participating: 4	Opposition cites sufficient existing powers and DNA expense. Support includes multi-dog incidents and a respondent-reported	Further discussion with the wider local government sector could explore any gaps in evidence-gathering powers, when DNA

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		powers are required.		successful DNA conviction.	sampling is necessary, sample handling, owners' rights, evidential value and costs. Routine sampling is not assumed.
12 · Q6, Q2	National legislation on unintended breeding, with councils limited to enforcement.	One direct council expressly sought this allocation. Another sought breeding controls, not necessarily an enforcement-only role.	Yes, No, Unsure, Mixed, Unanswered: 1, 2, 1, 0, 0 Councils participating: 4	Opposition identifies animal-welfare/SPCA responsibilities. One Yes comment focuses on puppy farming; one council Unsure.	Further discussion with the wider local government sector could explore council and animal-welfare responsibilities, possible breeding controls, ability to enforce them and who pays.
13 · Q6, Q9	Restrict domestic breeding of menacing-by-breed dogs despite import restrictions.	One direct council identified an alleged domestic-breeding gap and unwanted-litter concerns.	Yes, No, Unsure, Mixed, Unanswered: 2, 2, 0, 0, 0 Councils participating: 4	One Yes respondent says existing desexing requirements already address the problem. Opponents question how widespread it is and whether current breed requirements are adequate. These responses do not establish whether breed predicts risk.	Further discussion with the wider local government sector could explore existing requirements, the extent of the reported breeding problem and enforcement barriers. Whether breed predicts risk needs separate evidence.
14 · Q6, Q21–22	Improve desexing affordability.	One direct council sought more support; published targeted desexing practice is relevant background.	Yes, No, Unsure, Mixed, Unanswered: 1, 2, 1, 0, 0 Councils participating: 4	One No favours SPCA provision; another No supports targeted vouchers. Unsure supports the objective but questions Act scope. Yes, suggests registration discounts/higher entire-dog fees.	Further discussion with the wider local government sector could compare vouchers, partnerships and registration incentives, including eligibility, costs and agency responsibilities. No single option is agreed.

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15 · Q2–3	National rules to protect people, with councils retaining powers to control dog access to wildlife habitats and enforce those rules locally.	One council that provided direct feedback proposed stronger national requirements.	Yes, No, Unsure, Mixed, Unanswered: 2, 2, 0, 0, 0 Councils participating: 4	One No seeks more context; another cites existing powers. A Yes comment emphasises existing local wildlife powers rather than expressly supporting all proposed national requirements.	Further discussion with the wider local government sector could explore which requirements are best set nationally and which decisions are best left locally. This is a member proposal, not an agreed Taituarā position on responsibilities.
16 · Q3	Simpler local notices or regulations where a full bylaw is disproportionate.	One council that provided direct feedback wanted simpler legal tools for specific purposes and fewer procedural requirements.	Yes, No, Unsure, Mixed, Unanswered: 2, 2, 0, 0, 0 Councils participating: 4	Opposition cites existing powers and the value of community consultation. Support notes workload and council size; individual qualification seeks consistent playground signage.	Further discussion with the wider local government sector could explore existing powers and simpler processes, while retaining meaningful community consultation, clear signs and protections for affected people.
17 · Q3	Combine or remove separate dog control policy and bylaw requirements.	One direct council sought less duplication and administration.	Yes, No, Unsure, Mixed, Unanswered: 2, 1, 1, 0, 0 Councils participating: 4	Opposition values distinct policy/bylaw functions; supporters see efficiency and public-understanding benefits. One respondent Unsure.	Further discussion with the wider local government sector could compare ways to reduce duplication while retaining the legal purposes of policies and bylaws and community consultation. Abolishing either requirement is not agreed.
18 · Q25	Align dog-control reform with wider bylaw/regulatory reform.	One direct council sought cross-government consistency.	Yes, No, Unsure, Mixed, Unanswered: 3, 0, 1, 0, 0 Councils	One supporter warns wider alignment could delay dog-control improvements. One respondent Unsure.	Further discussion with the wider local government sector could explore coordination with

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			participating: 4		wider regulatory reform to avoid conflicting requirements and duplicate work, without delaying necessary dog-control improvements.
19 · Q17–18, Q20, Q24	Prescribe national reporting in regulations rather than guidance.	One direct council proposed a prescribed form, acknowledging limited knowledge beyond the issues paper.	Yes, No, Unsure, Mixed, Unanswered: 1, 2, 1, 0, 0 Councils participating: 4	Some No/Unsure comments request context. Supporter reports having to approach multiple councils for comprehensive histories; history access is not a separately tested feature.	Further discussion with the wider local government sector could explore information needs and compare regulations, guidance and database changes for accuracy, usefulness and collection workload.
20 · Q21–22; Q18 related	Fund NDD through owners/registration rather than a council-paid levy.	One council that provided direct feedback proposed collecting owners' contributions through registration fees, while acknowledging limited knowledge of the NDD.	Yes, No, Unsure, Mixed, Unanswered: 1, 2, 1, 0, 0 Councils participating: 4	Some No/Unsure replies say registration already funds the expense. Another objects to additional registration cost for limited direct benefit to owners.	Further discussion with the wider local government sector could explore existing NDD funding and collection arrangements, affordability and benefits to owners and the public before any changes to charges.
21 · Q21–22; Q2 related	Dog owners pay for dog control, with central government funding work that benefits the wider public.	One council that provided direct feedback wanted owners to pay, with central government contributing to enforcement and work that	Yes, No, Unsure, Mixed, Unanswered: 0, 3, 1, 0, 0 Councils participating: 4	Some opposition says practice already operates; another favours registration funding for all activity.	Further discussion with the wider local government sector could explore each funding idea separately.

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		benefits the wider public.			
22 · Q21–22	Recover reasonable DNA/desexing and other enforcement costs through impoundment/release fees.	Published council material proposed owner cost recovery; not a direct reply.	Yes, No, Unsure, Mixed, Unanswered: 2, 2, 0, 0, 0 Councils participating: 4	Supporters seek clearer fee/invoicing authority. Opposition cites litigation, DNA cost and SPCA desexing provision.	Further discussion with the wider local government sector could explore chargeable activities, legal authority, whether costs can be collected, affordability and fair processes for challenging charges.