

CITY OF JOONDALUP MEMORANDUM

TO: URBAN ANIMAL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

FROM: MANAGER LEISURE AND RANGER SERVICES

DATE: 20 SEPTEMBER 2001

FILE REF: 09047

OTHER REFS:

LETTER NO:

SUBJECT: 10TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE - URBAN ANIMAL
MANAGEMENT

The 10th National Conference - Urban Animal Management was held August 2001 in Melbourne and was attended by Cr Carol Mackintosh and the Manager Leisure and Ranger Services. This memorandum reports on the proceedings of the conference and makes recommendations for the Urban Animal Management Committee to consider in relation to the following:

- Community Education Programmes - Dog Attack
- Microchipping of pets
- Cat Legislation

The conference was attended by persons from all states of Australia, with the City of Joondalup providing the only Western Australian representatives. A copy of the papers from the conference is available on request.

There were two major streams to the conference as follows:

- **National Dangerous Dog Policy**
- **Industry Based Animal Management Officer (Amo) Training Package**

NATIONAL DANGEROUS DOG POLICY

The objective of the National Urban Animal Management Dangerous Dog policy is to provide interstate consistency in harm minimisation associated with aggressive dogs. There is a frequent tendency for dangerous dog incidents to draw knee jerk reactions with solutions such as "Ban the Breed" and "Shoot the Dingoes" offered. It was the view of speakers at the conference that such solutions do not solve the problem. Reasons for a national policy are as follows:

- Many dog attacks result in significant media attention and the public reacts to what is reported, not to the facts behind the incident. A nationally agreed set of guidelines would provide some objectivity in the assessment of the attack;
- Nobody really knows the overall facts, statistics or trends for dangerous dog incidents in Australia. If statistics are to be meaningful, there must be consistency in the techniques used for recording, analysing and reporting data;

- Every jurisdiction is seeking a remedy to dangerous dog problems. A national approach can maximise the advantages of having common goals.
- Progress towards best practice is much slower on a national basis as there is no interstate co-ordination and co-operation;
- Dogs and people are basically the same all over the country. Clearly then the solutions are similar if not identical and everyone would benefit by sharing information; and
- People and dogs move around the country. If a dog is dangerous in one jurisdiction, it is unlikely to suddenly change its behaviour simply because it moves to another state. There are obvious advantages in knowing the dog's tendencies before it moves into an area.

The conference worked towards establishing a set of parameters to assist in the definition of a dangerous dog and the development of a national system to control dangerous dogs. These parameters have not been received at the time of writing this report.

The City in the last twelve months received 47 complaints in relation to dog attacks on people. These are generally quickly resolved by the Rangers to the satisfaction of all parties involved. One of the papers presented Delta Dog Safe™ Strategy highlighted an opportunity for the City to enhance its community education programmes in relation to urban animals by targeting pre school and primary school aged children who are most at risk of dog attack to reduce the incidence of dog attack.

Delta Dog Safe™ Strategy

The Delta Dog Safe Programme provides education to children and adults to reduce the incidence of dog bites in local communities. Following recent successful trials on primary school children, Delta Australia has developed a comprehensive package incorporating a training seminar, lesson plan, teachers resource kit, early childhood kit, community brochure and the Delta Dalmatian. The Delta Dog Safe Programme can be structured to meet the needs of regions and may be run by local councils and health professionals.

The Delta Dog Safe Programme targets pre primary and primary school age children who are the age group that is most at risk of dog attack. It aims to teach young children about dog behaviour and how they should behave around dogs to minimise the risk of being attacked.

It is considered that this would be a very worthwhile programme for the City to become involved in. It would assist children to handle dogs better and minimise the risk of dog attack. It would also provide an opportunity for a significant level of positive publicity. It could easily be incorporated into the Community Connections Junior Ranger programme that already works with a large number of primary schools. The estimated cost of the programme is \$3,500 for the Delta Dog Safe package, the training costs to bring an accredited Delta Trainer to Perth to train Council staff to operate the programme would be approximately \$3,000 and there is an ongoing maintenance fee of \$500 per annum.

It is proposed that funds of \$7,000 be listed in the 2002/03 budget to implement this programme.

INDUSTRY BASED ANIMAL MANAGEMENT OFFICER (AMO) TRAINING PACKAGE

The content and structure of useful training packages need to be industry driven and the conference provided an opportunity to gather the ideas and needs of the people who work in the field.

OTHER PAPERS

Getting Microchips Right

The challenge for urban animal management has always been to find a system that effectively links together scanners, registries, implanting and microchips into an "open" national system. The requirements of such a system must principally accommodate backward compatibility, national "open use" perspective, device performance criteria and registry control. The difficulty apparently has been to create a system that reliably links a microchipped animal to its owner ie to identify pet animals by microchip.

There has only been limited success with microchipping and microchip registration systems because of the failure to link all the elements together. People shift around Australia all the time from one state to the next. The place where the microchipping is done and where the data is logged in the first place is frequently not going to be the same place that has to track an owner by the electronic tag, if and when the need arises.

Unless all States and all municipalities are microchipping animals in a fully integrated manner, microchipping will continue to fail to reliably link animals and owners.

At the 9th National Urban Animal Conference it was agreed that the South Australian microchipping model provided a system standard that would be effective on a national basis. In summary, this model requires the following:

- Scanner must be ISO multi-readers conforming to ISO 11785 that can read both ISO compliant FDX-B and all types of FDX-A microchips used in Australia.
- A network of scanners must be established in pounds and shelters, animal welfare agencies, veterinary clinics, local authorities and other agencies where lost, stray or injured dogs and cats are handled and where microchips are implanted.
- Microchips should be FDX-B transponders complying with ISO 11784. Existing FDX-A technologies should continue to be used until the network is upgraded to ISO capability.
- Microchip Centres should be accredited only if they meet the standards of the Australian Veterinary Association guidelines.
- Registries must comply with Domestic Animal Registries Inc. (DAR) protocols. Microchip suppliers must provide an audit trail of their products to the registry.
- Microchips and scanners must meet the performance standards developed by the Dog and Cat Management Board.

It is considered that microchipping pets to aid in their tracking and management would be beneficial to the City. For this to be successful, it would be necessary, at least for the Perth metropolitan Local Governments, to all participate in the scheme. It is proposed therefore that a further report will be prepared for the Committee to consider how best to encourage other metropolitan local governments to participate in microchipping and the potential costs that may be involved if a microchipping programme is commenced.

Pet Populations in Australia

The pet population in Australia is dynamic and changing. Australia has amongst the highest levels of pet ownership in the world. The major trends in pet populations are as follows:

- The owned cat population has been in steady decline since 1989 from 3.2 million to 2.6 million in 2000;

- The dog population has grown from 3.6 million in 1994 to 4 million in 2000;
- The dog population has tended to keep pace with the human population, but the percentage of households with dogs and the average number of dogs kept has remained roughly the same; and
- Australia is unique with its declining cat population. Virtually every other westernised nation has seen cat populations increase over the last decade.

The reasons for the declining population are as follows:

- Society is changing, there is an ageing society and higher density living;
- Society is less tolerant and there is tougher legislation in place making it harder to own a pet; and
- Market research indicates that the main reason for people not owning a cat is that they dislike cats.

Cat Legislation

In 1996 the Victorian State Government introduced the Domestic (Feral and Nuisance) Animals Act. The aim of this Act is to promote animal welfare, the responsible ownership of dogs and cats and the protection of the environment. This legislation requires local governments to administer the registration and identification of cats which recognises and promotes responsible ownership and also to protect the community and the environment from feral and nuisance cats.

Under this Act, Councils can make local laws regarding cats as follows:

- Cats are to be registered over the age of six months;
- To serve a notice on a cat's owner if the cat has been present on private property, more than once, without permission;
- To make an order of the hours that a cat must be securely confined or not allowed to wander at large;
- To prohibit the presence of cats in any public place; and
- To prohibit the keeping of cats in a specified area where threatening native animals are at risk of attack.

This Act ensures that all local governments in Victoria must control cats. In Western Australia, there is no such legislation. Should the Committee want to introduce local laws to control cats in the City, it would be much more effective and have less chance of a public backlash if the WA State Government introduced similar laws. This would be a consistent approach to that for dogs and provide uniformity across the State.

If the Committee wishes to pursue this matter, then a further report will be submitted to the Urban Animal Management Committee outlining a plan to engender support from other local authorities and other interested stakeholders to encourage the State Government to introduce appropriate legislation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Urban Animal Management Committee:

- 1 recommends to Council that it PARTICIPATES in the Delta Dog Safe[™] Programme and LISTS funds of \$7,000 in the 2002/03 draft budget to implement this programme;

- 2 requests a report be prepared to consider how best to encourage other metropolitan local governments to participate in microchipping and detail the potential costs that may be involved if a microchipping programme is commenced by the City; and
- 3 requests a report be prepared on a plan to engender support from other local authorities and other interested stakeholders to encourage the State Government to introduce appropriate Cat Legislation.

MARK STANTON
Manager Leisure and Ranger Services

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