



## **Animal & Bylaw Services – Information for Australian Parliament (Victoria)**

### **Standing Committee on Economy and Infrastructure:**

#### **Inquiry into the legislative and regulatory framework relating to restricted dog breeds**

***Specifically, “review and compare the effectiveness of other current regulatory frameworks in other Australian and overseas jurisdictions and where relevant, the costs and funding models to support these frameworks.”***

#### **Background:**

Animal & Bylaw Services implemented the Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw (23M2006) in 2006. This legislation enables Animal & Bylaw Services to work with Calgarians to ensure that cats, dogs, their owners and neighbours live together in safety and harmony.

The Responsible Pet Ownership (RPO) Bylaw states that:

- Animals 3 months of age and older require a license.
- Animals are to be on leash at all times when off the property.
- Animals are not to be roaming or at large (if found, will be housed at Animal Services facility to protect the public and ensure the safety of pets). If the animal is licensed, it is driven directly home, eliminating the need to house the animal. (See drive home stats in table 1)
- Aggressive animal behaviour will not be tolerated and pet owners will be held responsible; the RPO calls for escalating fines depending on the degree of aggressiveness.

A Responsible Pet Owner is based on 5 principles:

1. License and provide permanent identification for pets.
2. Spay or neuter pets.
3. Provide training, physical care, socialization and medical attention for companion pets.
4. Do not allow pets to become a threat or nuisance in the community.
5. Procure your pet ethically and from a credible source.

Animal licenses fund programs and services:

- Feed, shelter and provide veterinary care for the cats and dogs impounded and under our protection and care at the Animal Services Centre. See link: [Benefits of Licensing a cat or dog](#)
- Adopt out cats and dogs that have not been claimed by their owners after a wait period as set out by the Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw. Animals are assessed through a Certified Professional Dog Trainer (CPDT) behaviourist prior to adoption.

**Animal Services Centre:** (all costs are in Canadian Dollars)

This facility was built in 2000 for \$3 million; an expansion and clinic was added for an additional \$1.8 million. Operating costs are budgeted at \$5.2M with \$4.9M funded through licensing revenue and \$300K from impound and shelter fees.

The facility was designed specifically to house cats and dogs and facilitates release of impounded animals to owners. Capacity of the facility is 78 cats and 78 dogs at one time; approximately 4,000 animals are housed annually. The shelter has never closed due to disease outbreak; this is attributed to aggressive cleaning methods, operating procedures such as dog isolation practices, ventilation systems,



and hiring of professional staff. The low cost spay and neuter facility was added in the fall of 2010 to provide free spay and neuter services to pets of low income Calgarians. Since the program started 3,226 cats and dogs have been spayed or neutered.

There are 27 positions that are filled with full time, part time and on-call staff. These positions include shelter and administrative staff in the positions listed below:

- Shelter - Veterinarian (1); Animal Health Technologists (6); Shelter Assistants (5); Animal Behaviourist (2); Shelter Lead (1)
- Administrative – Customer Service Lead (1); Customer service staff (5); Superintendent (1); Licensing clerks (5)

Licensing is a one year renewable fee for both cats and dogs.

**License fees:** \$17.00 Kittens / Cats (altered)  
 \$35.00 Cats (unaltered, >6 months of age)  
 \$37.00 Puppy / Dogs (altered)  
 \$60.00 Dogs (unaltered, >6 months of age)

Table 1: impounded animal disposition

<b>CATS</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015 (Jan – Oct 31)</b>
Cats impounded	1,033	985	778 (29 still remain)
% Returned home	49%	51%	56%
% Driven home	6%	8%	7%
% Adopted	28%	26%	24%
% Euthanized	14%	13%	11%
% Other (transferred, vet, etc)	9%	10%	9%
Average length of stay	2 days	2 days	Live release Rate = 89%
<b>DOGS</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015 (Jan – Oct 31)</b>
Dogs impounded	3,322	2,896	2,192
% Returned home	85%	86%	89%
% Driven home	27%	29%	31%
% Adopted	7%	8%	6%
% Euthanized	5%	4%	2%
% Other (transferred, vet, etc)	2%	2%	3%
Average length of stay	1 day	1 day	Live release Rate = 97%

**The Animal Operations and Enforcement Division:**

Enforce the bylaw, educate owners, investigate aggression and bite incidents. Members include 37 staff all of whom are uniformed Peace Officers except the administrative staff as noted:

- Superintendent (1)
- Inspector (3)
- Sergeant (3)
- Animal Control Officers (28)
- Behaviour Specialist (1)
- Administrative staff (2) - civilian, non uniformed

Budget for enforcement is \$4.3M; total budget for shelter and enforcement is \$9.5M.



**Licensed animals:**

In 2015, there are approximately 40,000 licensed cats and 99,000 licensed dogs. Based on 2010 civic census report of number of animals living in Calgary, this relates to 44% compliance in licensing cats and 81% in dogs.

**Aggressive incidents:**

The City of Calgary measures canine aggression as chase or threaten, bite, attack, severe injury, bite and bark at, damage an animal, and cause death.

Table 2: Dog Aggression Report Changes year over year

Year	Reported Aggression		Confirmed Aggression	
2010	793	NA	418	NA
2011	839	+6%	476	+ 14%
2012	1,022	+ 22%	629	+ 32%
2013	983	-4%	647	+ 3%
2014	825	-16%	641	-2%

Bites are measured from level 1 to level 6 using the Dunbar Scale (see appendix 1 for full table) which describes the action and result of the bite, where level 1 has no teeth contact and level 6 is a bite causing death.

Table 3: Ian Dunbar’s Aggression Scale

Bite Level	Action and Result
Level 1	Dog growls, lunges, snarls-no teeth touch skin. Mostly intimidation / threatening behaviour.
Level 2	Teeth touch skin but no puncture. Minor surface abrasions or lacerations, minor bruising. May also include scratches from paws, nails.
Level 3	Punctures one to three holes, single bite. Victim not shaken side to side. Bruising evident.
Level 3.5	Multiple Level 3 bites.
Level 4	Two to four holes from a single bite, typically contact/punctures from more than canines, considerable bruising.
Level 5	Multiple bites at Level 4 or above. A concerted, repeated attack causing severe injury.
Level 6	Death from bite.

Dogs are seized for any bite level 4 and above on an adult or any level 3.5 and above on a child (or if a repeat offender or for public safety.)

Officers will attend each incident and evaluate 25 variables including:

- Bite Severity
- Dog Breed
- Prior history of aggression/bite
- Circumstance of the incident
- Length of time dog was owned
- Control of dog at the time
- Victim relationship to the dog
- Incident location
- Dog purchase location



Bite and aggression statistics:

Table 4: Dog Bites in Calgary by Population

Year	Confirmed Dog Bites	Population of Calgary
1985	621 (99 per 100,000 pop)	625,143
1990	439 (63 per 100,000 pop)	692,885
1995	366 (49 per 100,000 pop)	749,073
2000	251 (29 per 100,000 pop)	860,749
2001	282 (32 per 100,000 pop)	876,519
2002	224 (25 per 100,000 pop)	904,987
2003	285 (31 per 100,000 pop)	922,315
2004	279 (30 per 100,000 pop)	933,495
2005	253 (26 per 100,000 pop)	956,078
2006	199 (20 per 100,000 pop)	991,759
2007	137 (13 per 100,000 pop)	1,019,942
2008	145 (14 per 100,000 pop)	1,042,892
2009	58 (5.4 per 100,000 pop)	1,065,455
2010	102 (9.5 per 100,000 pop)	1,071,515
2011	127 (12 per 100,000 pop)	1,090,936
2012	203 (18 per 100,000 pop)	1,129,225
2013	198 (17 per 100,000 pop)	1,149,552
2014	252 (20 per 100,000 pop)	1,195,194

Table 5: Bites by Breed Group^

Bites per Breed Group (2012-2014)		
23%	145	Working
23%	145	Terrier
23%	146	Herding
10%	72	Sporting
10%	61	Non-Sporting
7%	48	Toy
4%	23	Hound

^Breed group categories from Canadian Kennel Club (CKC) and / or American Kennel Club (AKC)

Examples of breeds in groups:

Working group includes: Boxer, Mastiff, Rottweiler, Cane Corso, Dogo Argentino, Siberian Husky

Terrier group includes: Pit Bull, American Pit Bull, and American Staffordshire

Herding Group includes: Border Collie, Australian Shepherd, German Shepherd, Australian Cattle Dog

Sporting Group includes: Golden Retriever, Labrador retriever, and Cocker Spaniel



Table 6: Bites by Top Three Breed

Percentage of Bites per Breed (2012-2014)			
Breed:	2012	2013	2014
Pit Bulls	12%	15%	16%
Retrievers	9%	11%	9%
Shepherds	14%	11%	10%

Table 7: Bites occurring where dog was procured from shelters or rescues organization

Bites from	2012	2013	2014
Rescues	18%	25%	24%

For the time period of 2012 – 2014 in Calgary:

- 641 bites (level 3-5)
- 48% of dogs involved in level 4 or 5 bites had a prior history of aggression
- 73% of bites happen with the owner in care and control of the dog
- 39% of bites occur in house of at owner’s property
- 31% were unlicensed
- 44% were unvaccinated
- 31% of victims knew the dog
- 24% of victims were over the age of 50
- 20% of victims were under the age of 12

Additional information:

- In cases of aggressive incidents where further sanctions are sought through the courts, the Court may impose conditions including **mandatory** obedience training, public muzzling, fines up to \$10,000, or euthanasia in the most serious cases.
- The number of dog bites reported has increased the last few years. The increase is attributed to improved reporting by citizens as a result of enhanced public education efforts:
  - In-house bites (family pet or visiting pet) were not historically reported unless a very serious injury occurred.
  - Working closely with partners such as the Calgary Police Service, 911, Alberta Health Services (emergency room doctors and nurses), and EMS has raised awareness of dog bite incidents.
  - Increased use of social media (Facebook, Twitter) where Animal & Bylaw Services follows up on posts that have not been reported.

**Litigation costs:**

In 2013, there were three vicious dog hearings (a request to have the dog declared as vicious) while the dog was impounded/seized. The combined costs for the hearings was \$234,561.55 and included all court fees, shelter costs, officer investigation costs, and administrative costs incurred to complete the hearings.



### Key Messages:

#### **Q: Is it time to raise the fines on dog bite incidents?**

A: clearly defined process and the ability to issue a substantial fine is already in place. Under the Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw, we have the discretion to order a mandatory court appearance where a judge can issue a fine of up to \$10,000, place conditions on animals such as muzzling in public and only allowing adults to handle the dogs and in extreme cases, euthanasia.

#### **Q: Do we need to put restrictions on big dogs like these that act aggressively? A breed ban?**

A: The City of Calgary does not believe that breed bans are effective. All dogs can and may bite, what determines the dog's behaviour is the training and leadership provided by the owner.

In jurisdictions where breeds are banned the total number of bites doesn't typically go down. Failure to produce a reduction in dog bite-related injuries in jurisdictions where a breed ban has been imposed has caused the support for BSL to fade in recent years. (National Canine Research Council 2013)

#### EXAMPLES:

1. From January 2012 to May 2013, more than three times as many jurisdictions either repealed BSL or considered and rejected it as enacted it. (NCRC 2013)
2. Vancouver got rid of its breed specific legislation in 2005.
3. 2012, the Town of Cochrane passed a new Animal Bylaw that mirrors our Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw.

#### **Q: When are your busiest months for dog bites?**

A: Typically, we get more incidents in the summer. This is a direct result of people and their pets spending more time outdoors.

#### **Q: How long does it take for ABS to respond to an aggressive animal behaviour call?**

A: ABS responds to all calls through a 3-level system. ALL aggressive animal calls are categorized as Priority 1 calls:

- o Priority 1: Emergency officer is dispatched immediately (i.e. aggressive dog at large, dog bite). NOTE: Priority 1 calls are categorized as Alpha (public safety is at risk) or Bravo (situation is contained and there is no imminent threat).
- o Priority 2: High priority calls 72 hours first response
- o Priority 3: Standard response which typically varies from seven to 30 days.

*Being a mobile resource, ABS has the ability to dispatch the closest officer in vicinity of the call who can generally arrive within minutes to a Priority 1 call.*



Appendix 1

## Dr. IAN DUNBAR'S AGGRESSION SCALE

ASSESSMENT OF THE SEVERITY OF BITING PROBLEMS BASED ON AN OBJECTIVE EVALUATION OF WOUND PATHOLOGY	
Level 1	Dog growls, lunges, snarls-no teeth touch skin. Mostly intimidation / threatening behaviour
Level 2	Teeth touch skin but no puncture. May have red mark/minor bruise from dog's head or snout, may have minor scratches from paws/nails. Minor surface abrasions or lacerations.
Level 3	Punctures one to three holes, single bite. No tearing or slashes. Victim not shaken side to side. Bruising
Level 3.5	Multiple level 3 bites.
Level 4	Two to four holes from a single bite, typically contact/punctures from more than canines, considerable bruising. Black bruising, tears and/or slashing wounds. Dog clamped down and held and /or shook head from side to side.
Level 5	Multiple bites at Level 4 or above. A concerted, repeated attack causing severe injury.
Level 6	Any bite resulting in death of a animal

This Scale is developed by Dr. Ian Dunbar PhD. BVetMed, MRCVS, of Berkeley California. From his studies Dr Dunbar has been able to separate and classify bites into a generalized six level assessment protocol. This Scale is used as a standard throughout the world in canine aggression investigations and behavior assessment. Updated in 2012 for the City of Calgary Animal Services.(iii)

**Bite Inhibition**

"Inhibitions are the mechanisms which compel an animal to interrupt an action in the middle of a sequence."(i)

"Good bite inhibition does not mean that your dog will never snap, lunge, nip, or bite. Good bite inhibition means that should the dog snap and lunge, his teeth will seldom make skin contact and should the dog's teeth ever make skin contact, the inhibited "bite" will cause little, if any, damage."(ii)

**References**

- (i). ABRANTES R. *Dog Language An Encyclopedia of Canine Behavior* 145. Wakan Tanka Publishers 1997
- (ii). DUNBAR.I. PhD, BVetMed, MRCVS *After you Get Your Puppy* 84. James & Kenneth Publishers 2001
- (iii). City of Calgary Animal Services. *Standard Operating Procedure for Peace Officers. City of Calgary, 2012*