

Topic: Animal Control Bylaw 2015-09

Introduction:

Animal Control Bylaw 28-2009 has been under review for three years.

In the fall of 2013 and the early winter of 2014 there was significant public engagement, for which the County received the 2014 International Association of Business Communicators Capital Awards (ABC) – Award of Merit.

Animal Control 2015-09 is a bit of a shift from “animal control” to that of encouraging responsible ownership.

A lot of what the public asked for is dealt with outside of a bylaw. It is the, “what we do” and the “how we do it.” Enforcement Services is looking at how we raise awareness with the public on what we do and how we do it.

Facts (Background Information):

Animal Control Bylaw 28-2009 has been under review since late 2011. A proposed bylaw was first presented to Governance & Priorities Committee March 3, 2012. At different times other drafts have been presented, each time Council has provided Administration with further direction.

In the fall of 2013 Administration held three public meetings at Fallis, County Centre & Graminia Hall. Public feedback from these meetings was used to create a survey which was available to the public until January 31, 2014.

The overall message from the public was the dog was not the issue, rather the owner was. As such Enforcement Services is looking at ways to encourage and promote responsible pet ownership. Public input was taken into account as much as possible, tempered with the realities of court requirements, and staffing resources.

The main issues Administration heard from the public were:

- Excessive Barking
- Dogs at Large
- Responsible Pet Ownership
- Cat Bylaw
- Small Acreage Food Source Farming

Other concerns identified were:

- No at large provision for any animal other than a dog
- No requirement for care, shelter etc. by a person

Analysis:

The main issues heard by Administration will be addressed as follows:

Excessive Barking:

The bylaw has re-worded the definition addressing, the Court's belief this issue is nothing more than a dispute between neighbors.

Definition – "Bark Excessively" means a Dog that barks, howls or makes any other loud noise for a continuous period so as to unreasonably disturb the peace and tranquility of the neighborhood

Operationally:

A complainant will still be required to complete a barking package. Why? This is the evidence the complainant will be providing to the Provincial Court at trial. This is an important part of the officer's investigation to determine if there is sufficient evidence to support a charge. We will look to shorten the current 14 day recording period. The barking package is best practice as our research showed as presented to Governance & Priorities Committee March 3, 2012.

In addition, Officers are conducting neighborhood enquiries to determine if it is a community issue

or a dispute between neighbors.

When applicable, the dog owner is being provided with barking control tips.

Dogs at Large:

There are no changes proposed in this bylaw, as it is adequately addressed in the bylaw.

Operationally:

Bylaw Enforcement Officers have been making proactive patrols in residential subdivision, where concerns have been identified.

This has been occurring since October 2014 as a direct result of staffing changes.

In 2015 this approach now includes officers handing out bags, which include dog leashes, information

on the bylaw and responsible pet ownership.

Responsible Pet Ownership:

The vast majority of respondents felt the dog is not the issue, whether it is running at large or excessive barking, rather the owner is the real issue.

The public want Parkland County to do more to educate and/or mandate responsible pet ownership.

Officers, patrolling areas known for dog at large issues, have started handing out materials to help

People become better owners.

Enforcement Services continues to look for ways to address responsible pet ownership.

It is felt, nothing specific can be added in the bylaw to make an owner, in essence, be a better neighbor, and it is better addressed operationally by staff, rather than by a violation ticket.

Administration believes responsible pet ownership initiatives will continue to be developed and

delivered on an ongoing basis. These may range from brochures, to dog behavior training.

Cat Licensing:

The current Cat Bylaw is restricted to Parkland Village only.

The majority of public felt the County should have a cat bylaw throughout the County.

Without significant capital investment into expanding the current animal shelter facilities and some kind of licensing system this would not be possible.

Administration is not proposing any changes to the bylaw.

Small Acreage Food Source Farming:

Many people supported this idea for chickens only.

It should be noted, many municipalities across Canada, large and small, have started to look at this idea, with mixed results.

Chickens are currently prohibited only on residential parcels less than 0.81 ha, (2 ac), i.e. Hamlets, Parkland Village and a minority of residential acreages.

Should Council wish to pursue this, on residential parcels less than 0.81 ha, (2 ac),

Administration would recommend researching what would be required for a one year pilot program and bring back recommendations to Council in June 2015 for its implementation.

Other issues addressed in Animal Control Bylaw 2015-09:

- Section 10(4)(c) adding swine as an animal unit
 - o Our rationale – to be proactive addressing swine in residential type properties,

- Section 11(1) A prohibition against allowing an animal to be in distress
- Section 11(2) A requirement to provide adequate food, & water, adequate care if ill or injured, reasonable protection from heat or cold and shelter or ventilation.
- Section 11(3) A requirement to ensure an animal is not running at large (not just dogs).

Administration believes Enforcement Services can & will address the majority of the public's concerns through operational best practices.

Alternatives:

1. Direct Administration to conduct more research.

Conclusion/Summary:

Administration supports Council giving Animal Control Bylaw 2015-09 first reading, then bringing it back to Council March 24, 2015 for second, third and final readings.

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