



# ANIMAL CONTROL SERVICE REVIEW

## REPORT

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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

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Through its Animal Control Service, and in accordance with its *Licensing and Control of Animals Bylaw 1995, No. 4923*, the City of Nanaimo regulates the keeping and control of animals, and provides for the licensing of dogs within the municipality. The service is managed by the Community Development Division of the City's Development Services Department. Delivery of the service, however, is contracted to Nanaimo Animal Control Services Ltd. (NAC), a private company that specializes in animal control. The current *Services Agreement* with NAC was entered into on September 1, 2015, for a period of three years, but was extended in 2018 for an additional two years. The *Agreement* will expire on August 31, 2020.

Over the past several years, a number of amendments have been made to *Bylaw 4923* to address changing needs, challenges, and circumstances in the community. A more holistic review of animal control's purpose, scope, service delivery model, level of service, and other components, however, has not been undertaken. The upcoming expiration of the current *Services Agreement* provides an opportunity for the City to undertake this broader review.

### ANIMAL CONTROL SERVICE REVIEW

Neilson Strategies Inc., a BC-based local government consultancy, was retained by the City to conduct the Animal Control Service Review. The consultant was asked to examine the service, consult with service stakeholders, identify service-related issues to address, conduct research on best practices and experiences in other jurisdictions, and provide recommendations for the City to consider. Two specific issues on which the consultant was asked to provide advice concern:

- the service delivery model through which the City will deliver animal control on an ongoing basis, beginning September, 2020
- the future of the City's Pound & Adoption Centre facility

These two issues, along with six others, are examined in this *Animal Control Service Review Report*.

### Report Format

The report begins by profiling the City's Animal Control Service as it exists today. All major components of the service are documented as part of the profile. The report then identifies and examines eight service-related issues, all of which were identified by the consultant through research and consultation. Changes for the City to consider in addressing these issues are set out in this section. The report ends with a set of recommendations, broken out by issue, that speak to the various changes.

In early June, 2020, an earlier draft version of the report was presented to City Council for review and discussion. Feedback provided by Council has been incorporated into this final version.

### **IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

The chapter on recommendations provides comments on the implementation of the changes put forward. At the time of writing, City officials are dealing with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pressure on municipal finances that the City is experiencing may limit the number of initiatives that Council and staff are able to implement in 2020. The comments on implementation at the end of the report are informed by this possibility.

## CHAPTER 2

### EXISTING ANIMAL CONTROL SERVICE

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This chapter profiles the Animal Control Service as it exists today in the City of Nanaimo. The chapter outlines the purpose and scope of the service, the legislative framework for the service, the service's delivery model, and the City's revenues and expenses related to the service. Statistics on service inputs and outcomes are also presented. Finally, other agencies in and around Nanaimo that have roles to play in animal control are reviewed.

#### PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The City of Nanaimo's existing Animal Control Service exists to regulate the keeping and treatment of animals. As in most centres, the control of dogs in the municipality is the primary focus of the service; in Nanaimo, however, the service is also in place to address the keeping and care of cats, poultry, rabbits, bees, and livestock.

The scope of the Animal Control Service today is broad. The full range of activities undertaken through the service includes:

- the enforcement of the City's *Licensing and Control of Animals Bylaw, 1995, No. 4923*, primarily in response to complaints, but also through proactive patrols
- the sale and tracking of dog licences
- the seizure and impoundment of animals
- the operation of the City's Pound & Adoption Centre on Nanaimo Lakes Road as a shelter facility to hold and care for animals during periods of impoundment
- the placement, through adoption, of impounded and unclaimed animals to suitable households
- emergency assistance to deal with vicious dogs and other animal-related matters
- the provision of support to Nanaimo Fire Rescue and Nanaimo RCMP in situations involving animals in distress, or animals that may pose a risk to first responders
- the removal of animal carcasses from public land, including from public highways, parks, and beaches
- efforts to collect, hold, assess, and care for injured animals
- the provision of (limited) public education and information on responsible pet ownership, animal care, and the Animal Control Service
- the collection of and reporting on service-related statistics

#### LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

The legislative framework for the Nanaimo's Animal Control Service is comprised of

British Columbia's *Community Charter* and a set of municipal bylaws, the most important of which is the City's *Licencing and Control of Animals Bylaw, 1995, No. 4923*.

The *Community Charter* provides the authority, under section 8(2) to provide "any service that the council considers necessary or desirable". Section 8(3) specifies, further, that "council may, by bylaw, regulate, prohibit and impose requirements" in relation to a number of specific matters, including animals. Part 3, Division 6 (Animal Control) of the *Charter* sets out specific powers and limitations for municipalities, including provisions on:

- the seizure of animals that are unlicensed, unlawfully at-large, trespassing on private lands, injured or suffering
- fees and penalties that may be imposed on animal owners
- the control of dangerous dogs — that is, dogs that have killed or seriously injured a person or domestic animal, or that is deemed likely to kill or seriously injure a person

The City's *Licencing and Control of Animals Bylaw, 1995, No. 4923*, is the primary bylaw through which the City exercises the authority granted by the *Charter*. In its current form, the bylaw contains provisions related to:

- the operation of the City's Pound & Adoption Centre, and the impoundment of dogs and other animals
- the control of dogs in public areas
- dangerous dogs and breed-specific restricted dogs
- the licencing of dogs, as well as exemptions to licencing
- the care of dogs by their owners
- the keeping and control of livestock, poultry, bees, and rabbits
- the feeding of wild animals inside the City
- the keeping of diseased cats

The bylaw also sets out dog licence fees, impound fees for dogs and other animals, and penalties and fines for different bylaw violations.

Three other City bylaws are also included in the service's legislative framework. The first is the *Faeces Removal Bylaw 1980, No. 2190*. As its title suggests, the bylaw sets out requirements for dog owners to remove faeces from roadsides, sidewalks, City parks, and other public areas in the City. Fines to impose on violators of the bylaw are identified. The second bylaw is the *Animal Performance Bylaw, 1992, No. 4504*, which exists to prohibit circuses and other shows that use wild animals to entertain audiences. The third bylaw is the *Parks, Recreation and Culture Regulation Bylaw 2008, No. 7073*. This bylaw prohibits animal owners from allowing their pets to be at-large in City parks, to feed on vegetation in parks, to access public beaches from May through September, and to be on the deck of a wading pool or spray pool. Fines for violations of all of these prohibitions are outlined in the bylaw.

## DELIVERY MODEL

The Animal Control Service and the *Licensing and Control of Animals Bylaw, 1995, No. 4923* are administered by the Bylaw Enforcement Division in the City's Community Development Department. The Facilities and Parks Maintenance Division in the City's Parks, Recreation and Culture Department maintains the City's Pound & Adoption Centre and the site on which it sits. The City's Finance Department manages dog licensing.

Delivery of the service, including operation of the Pound & Adoption Centre, is contracted to a for-profit, private company— Nanaimo Animal Control Services Ltd.

### Nanaimo Animal Control

NAC delivers the Animal Control Service pursuant to the terms of its *Animal Control, Enforcement and Administrative Management Services Agreement* with the City. The parties entered into the *Services Agreement* on September 1, 2015, for a period of three years. In 2018, the *Agreement* was extended for an additional two years. The *Agreement* will expire on August 31, 2020; the possibility for additional extensions is not included in the *Agreement*.

Under the terms of the *Services Agreement* NAC undertakes a broad range of animal control activities. In total, NAC:

- enforces the requirements and prohibitions in the City's *Licensing and Control of Animals Bylaw, Faeces Removal Bylaw*, and the relevant sections of the *Parks, Recreation and Culture Regulation Bylaw*
- operates the Pound & Adoption Centre
- provides emergency situations on a call-out basis after hours
- removes animal carcasses from public lands, including highways, parks, beaches, and other high-profile places
- seizes and arranges cares for injured animals
- sells and tracks dog licenses on behalf of the City
- adopts-out animals from the Pound & Adoption Centre to suitable homes
- provides public education on the care of animals, and on the City's Animal Control Service

NAC is responsible for providing most equipment that is necessary to deliver the service, including all vehicles, all radios and communication equipment, and most computers and office equipment. NAC has a separate *Licence to Occupy Agreement* to occupy, use, and maintain in good repair the Pound & Adoption Centre, an adjacent caretaker's dwelling, and associated lands.

### Service Level

The service level provided by NAC is defined in sections of the *Services Agreement* that deal with staffing, patrols, after hours call-out service, and hours of operation at the Pound & Adoption Centre. The key points are as follows:



- *Staffing* — There are two (2) full-time Animal Control Officers (ACOs) to enforce the *Licensing and Control of Animals Bylaw*. These officers are assisted by one (1) part-time ACO who provides additional parks patrol capacity between May and September. The three ACOs provide 2.33 FTE of coverage in total. The head of NAC provides some additional capacity during the two days per week he is on site. There is one (1) full-time Pound & Adoption Coordinator, one (1) full-time Kennel Attendant, and one (1) part-time Kennel Attendant to operate the Pound & Adoption Centre. These three staff combine to provide 2.5 FTE coverage at the facility.

All staff working for NAC are paid at rates set out in the *Collective Agreement between the City of Nanaimo and Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 401*. Article 31 of the *Collective Agreement* puts this requirement in place.

- *Patrols* — NAC is expected to provide 70 hours per week of patrols in the City. During the summer months, the contractor is required to add staggered hours to allow for early morning park patrols and early evening patrols, seven days per week.
- *After Hours Call-Out* — NAC provides 24-hour emergency service, 365 days per year, to deal with vicious dogs, injured animals, and the removal of animal carcasses.
- *Hours of Operation* — The Pound & Adoption Centre is open to the public six days per week for a total of 47 hours of service. Pets may be viewed for adoption during 35 of these hours. The Centre is not open on Sundays or statutory holidays.

The two (2) full-time ACOs work 35 hours per week each during these hours of operation. The one (1) part-time ACO works enables the contractor to provide staggered shifts every day during the summer months.

## EXPENSES AND REVENUES

Figure 2.1 presents the annual expenses and revenues, and annual total net costs, associated with the Animal Control Service for the past three years — 2017, 2018, and 2019. As illustrated in the figure, the principal expense each year is the contractor services, almost all of which is paid to Nanaimo Animal Control Services Ltd. The principal revenue source is dog licence fees, which average close to \$250,000 per year. The three-year average net cost of the service is close to \$244,000 — this amount is paid by City taxpayers.

The entries in Figure 2.1 are the direct expenses and revenues associated with the service. There are some additional, indirect costs related to animal care and control in Nanaimo that are not included in Figure 2.1. These costs, many of which are not quantified, include as follows:

**Figure 2.1  
Animal Control Service Expenses and Revenues  
2017-2019**

	2017	2018	2019
<b>Expenses</b>			
Contractor Services	442,473	457,548	483,376
Discounts on Early Licences	30,005	29,275	30,210
Bad Debt Expenses	12,063	16,924	16,981
Materials & Supplies	13,521	6,643	12,783
Pound & Adoption Centre Maintenance	11,343	3,575	9,470
Grant to SPCA*	-	-	12,500
Other Expenses	9,432	9,533	10,132
<b>Total Expenses**</b>	<b>518,837</b>	<b>523,498</b>	<b>575,452</b>
<b>Revenues</b>			
Dog Licences	230,115	269,540	245,208
Animal Impound Fees	24,390	14,433	20,030
Fines	18,682	23,900	33,838
Other Revenues	1,886	1,878	2,626
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>275,073</b>	<b>309,751</b>	<b>301,702</b>
<b>Total Net Cost</b>	<b>243,764</b>	<b>213,747</b>	<b>273,750</b>
<b>Average Annual Net Cost</b>			<b>243,754</b>

\* Since 2009, the City has provided annual or bi-annual grants, in response to requests, to the SPCA for the agency's Spay/Neuter Incentive Program (SNIP). Grants were not requested (and not given) in 2017 or 2018, but were awarded in 2019 and 2020. Annual requests are expected in future years.

\*\* Expenses listed here do not include the value of a permissive tax exemption that has been granted in past years to the SPCA.

- past capital grants to the SPCA Nanaimo & District Branch for its building in Nanaimo (the last grant was in 2016 for \$50,000)
- the value of the time spent by Bylaw Enforcement Officer responding to complaints about dog barking (in Nanaimo, these complaints are handled by the Bylaw Enforcement Officers instead of the Animal Control Officers)
- the time spent by the Manager of Community Safety overseeing the service and the contract with NAC
- other City administrative time spent on the service (e.g., Finance Department's role in processing dog licences)

#### SERVICE STATISTICS

Each month, NAC collects a wide range of service statistics on behalf of the City.

These statistics, combined with data collected by the City itself, provide an overview of the different activities that are undertaken, and give some insight into some of the issues the service may be facing. Figure 2.2 presents select data for the past four full years that NAC has been contracted to deliver the service. Observations on the data are as follows:

**Figure 2.2**  
**Select Data on Service**

Select Measures	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Incidents</b>				
Reported by Public	1,712	1,677	1,760	1,477
Observed by ACOs	689	1,042	1,039	868
<b>ACO Patrols</b>				
Patrols in Parks	1,504	1,845	1,920	1,970
<b>Dog Matters</b>				
Dog Licences Sold*				
Sold by ACO in Field	397	519	392	454
Sold at City Hall & Pound	6,433	7,031	8,568	7,676
Percent Dogs Licenced	46	50	59	52
Dogs at Large	589	612	575	534
Aggressive Dogs	35	48	61	46
Attacks on Animals	54	43	65	51
Attacks on Humans	33	36	45	48
Dogs in Confined Space	38	105	107	111
Dogs Without Leash	129	297	344	203
Dogs Without Licence	484	479	399	524
Deceased Dogs	9	7	3	2
<b>Cat &amp; Other Animal Matters</b>				
Injured Cats	35	43	18	30
Deceased Cats	73	86	90	69
Bylaw Violations Other Animals	46	42	26	37
<b>ACO Actions Taken</b>				
Assist RCMP and Others	41	35	44	59
Dispenses Information Pamphlets	3	4	5	9
Bylaw Offence Notices Issued	142	193	172	287
Bylaw Offence Warnings Issued	872	1,099	1,177	883
Animals Impounded	299	301	241	289
Deceased Animals Taken to Morgue	545	569	916	398
Vicious Dog Caution	48	37	31	34
Vicious Dog Designation	18	15	22	18
Vicious Dog Seizure ( <i>Charter s. 49</i> )	-	-	-	1
Animals Euthanized	7	5	17	18

\* The data on *Dog Licences Sold* shown here were provided for the Draft Report. Subsequent estimates suggest that these numbers may be slightly lower than actual licence sales. In all, the average *Percentage of Dogs Licenced* — which is shown here at 52% over four years — may be as high as 56%.

- *Patrols in Parks* — The number of ACO park patrols is on an upward trend. Some patrols are initiated (i.e., done proactively) by ACOs; others are triggered by requests for service from City Parks, Recreation, and Culture staff. Whether initiated by ACOs or requested by City staff, the patrols are undertaken to address dog-related issues. The potential for dog-related incidents, and the need for enhanced ACO presence and enforcement, increase when dogs and people mix in shared spaces such as parks. As the City's population grows, so too does the population of dogs, as well as the potential for dog-human interaction. This potential peaks during warm months when the numbers of people and dogs in public areas are at their highest points.
- *Dog Licences* — The number of dog licences sold in the City has fluctuated somewhat over the past four years, from a low of 6,830 to a high of 8,960. Based on estimates of the percentage of households with dogs, these licence numbers point to an average licencing rate of approximately 52%. Put differently, only about 52% of dogs in Nanaimo are licenced.<sup>1,2</sup>
- *Dogs Without Licences* — In each of the past four years ACOs have reported an average of 475 incidents of dog owners being stopped for not having licenced their dogs. In many of these cases, ACOs issued warnings in place of tickets to dog owners.
- *Bylaw Violations (Other Animals)* — ACOs deal with a low number of bylaw violations each year related to animals other than dogs. This finding may reflect, in part, the reality that Nanaimo, as a growing urban centre, has declining numbers of livestock, bees, poultry, and other non-pet animals. Alternatively, it may reflect the need to focus limited resources on issues other than those involving other animals.
- *Deceased Animals* — Nanaimo's ACOs spend a considerable amount of time removing animal carcasses from public lands, and disposing of the carcasses (see "deceased animals taken to morgue"). Time spent in 2018 was particularly high because of a hemorrhagic disease that impacted feral rabbits in that year. The low numbers in Figure 2.2 for deceased dogs and deceased cats highlight the fact that the vast majority of deceased animals are wildlife (e.g., deer, rabbits). Nanaimo is somewhat unique in assigning responsibility for all animal carcasses to ACOs. In many centres, responsibility for either all animals, or for animals other than cats and dogs, falls to public works crews or separate contractors.

<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada does not provide data on dogs per household. Estimates are provided, however, by the Canadian Animal Health Institute and the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association.

<sup>2</sup> As noted at the bottom of Figure 2.2, the numbers of licences sold each year may need to be adjusted upward based on estimates provided by the City since the Draft Report. If the new estimates are accurate, the average licencing rate may be as high as 56%.

- *Animals Impounded* — The number of animals impounded each year has remained relatively stable since 2016. At an average value of 283, the number is not considered problematic compared to other centres.
- *Bylaw Offence Notices and Warnings* — The number of tickets (i.e., bylaw offence notices) issued for bylaw violations is considerably lower than the number of warnings given. This difference suggests that the service is focused on compliance primarily through means other than enforcement.
- *Vicious Dogs* — Vicious dogs are a concern in every animal control service. In Nanaimo, the numbers of vicious dog designations and vicious dog seizures compare favourably with those in other best practice municipalities. So, too does the number of vicious dog cautions.
- *Cats* — Nanaimo's existing animal control bylaw contains very few provisions related to the control or care of cats. Not surprisingly, therefore, the data collected on the service do not suggest that cats are an issue in need of attention. As discussed later in the report, however, information learned through interviews undertaken by the consultant points to cats as a significant and growing problem in the community.

#### **OTHER ANIMAL CONTROL AGENCIES**

Within the City of Nanaimo, there are other agencies in addition to the City that are active in some aspect of animal control. Two such agencies are the SPCA Nanaimo & District Branch and the Cat Nap Society.

- *SPCA Nanaimo & District*— British Columbia's Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) is a not-for-profit, volunteer-driven animal welfare organization that exists to "protect and enhance the quality of life for domestic, farm and wild animals" in the province. The organization provides care and shelter for abused and homeless animals, adopts-out animals to suitable homes, provides animal care education, and offers spay and neuter programs for low-income households. The SPCA also has the delegated authority from the province to conduct animal cruelty investigations, and to enforce the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act*.

The Nanaimo & District Branch is one of 36 branches in BC that care for and shelter animals that are abused or homeless. Most of the 1,300 animals that enter the shelter each year are surrendered or abandoned by owners who are unable to care for them; others are rescued from abusive and/or unsafe situations. Some are injured or orphaned wild animals that are taken to the Branch by members of the public. Most if not all animals in the Branch are considered adoptable. An important part of the Branch's mandate is to place animals, once healthy, in suitable homes or on farms.

The SPCA recognizes that spaying and neutering are important measures

that can be taken to improve the health of animals and to reduce pet overpopulation, particularly of cats. The Nanaimo & District Branch provides a Spay/Neuter Incentive Program (SNIP) to subsidize the cost of spay and neuter procedures for low income residents. As identified in Figure 2.1, the City of Nanaimo provides grants to assist with the cost of this program. The bulk of the cost, however, is funded by the Branch itself using revenues raised through its adoption program.

In 2016, the Branch opened its new \$3.4 million Community Animal Centre on Westwood Road. The 7,460 ft<sup>2</sup> facility was designed to conform to current high standards for animal care and welfare. Isolation areas for sick and injured animals are included, as are separate places for behavioural assessment, communal areas to encourage socialization, a special adoption viewing wing, and a multi-purpose space for youth workshops and community events. The Centre sits on an 11.9 acre property that includes two fenced dog parks.

- *Cat Nap Society* — Cat Nap Society is a not-for-profit rescue organization run entirely by volunteers. The agency exists to rescue, care for, spay or neuter, and return to the community, abandoned cats and kittens. Many of the more than 500 cats rescued by Cat Nap each year are feral cats taken in by the agency through its trap, neuter, release (TNR) program.<sup>3</sup> TNR programs are used throughout North America as a measure to improve the health of cats in the community and to address cat overpopulation. In Nanaimo, the measure involves the following steps:
  - Cat Nap volunteers set traps to capture cats in areas of the community where feral cat colonies have been identified, or cat-related nuisances have been reported.
  - Cats are taken to Cat Nap's shelter where they are treated (as necessary) for infections and injuries, assessed as feral or stray (i.e., non-feral), given permanent identification, and spayed or neutered.<sup>4</sup> The shelter is a converted garage that has been fitted with several kennels.
  - Cats in need of attention are placed in Cat Nap's network of foster homes. Those cats that are not feral and that can be adopted-out to forever families are sent to a local pet store for adoption. Cats that are feral are either released to their colonies in the community, or

<sup>3</sup> Feral cats are those that have never had any contact with humans, and those whose contact has diminished over time to the point that they cannot be successfully socialized. Feral cats are not considered to be adoptable.

<sup>4</sup> Cat Nap works with local veterinarians to perform permanent identification and spay/neuter procedures, and to provide necessary medicines.

placed on farms to assist in rodent control. Care is taken to ensure that cats released into the community have regular access to food and water.

Cat Nap is the only organization in Nanaimo that deals with feral cats. Neither the SPCA nor the City is currently equipped to take-in or care for these animals. Rescue organizations similar to Cat Nap are active in many communities in BC, including in Nanoose Bay and the Cowichan Valley.

Outside of the City, animal control services are provided by the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN). The RDN's *Animal Control Regulatory Bylaw No. 1066, 1996* applies in all of the local government jurisdictions that border the City, including Electoral Areas A, B, and C, and the District of Lantzville. The bylaw and the service are focused solely on the control of dogs. Dog licences are not required under the bylaw. The service is delivered by Coast Animal Control Services of BC Ltd, whose shelter and office are located in Duncan.

## CHAPTER 3

### ISSUES TO ADDRESS

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This chapter identifies and examines a set of eight issues with the existing Animal Control Service that the City may wish to address. The list of issues is as follows:

- Dog Licensing
- Scope of Service
- Service Delivery Model
- Level of Staffing
- Pound & Adoption Centre Facility
- Cats in Nanaimo
- Education
- *Licensing and Control of Animals Bylaw*

Each of these issues is examined separately in the text. Changes for the City to consider are presented for each issue. Recommendations based on the changes are put forward in the report's final chapter.

The list of issues was identified by the consultant based on interviews with local stakeholders (including City and NAC staff), a review of background information on the service, and comparative research on activities in other municipalities. The eight issues in the list do not necessarily represent the definitive set of issues with the service that the City may wish to address. In the view of the consultant, however, the eight issues are the key ones on which to focus current efforts.

#### DOG LICENCING

##### Current Situation

Section 5 of the City's *Licensing and Control of Animals Bylaw, 1995, No. 4923* sets out a series of provisions related to the licencing of dogs. Section 5(2), for example, states clearly that every person who owns or keeps a dog in Nanaimo must obtain a licence for the dog, and renew the licence every calendar year. Failure to licence a dog in Nanaimo is an offence under section 5(1). Section 5(10) provides for exemptions from the licencing requirement for:

- a guide dog used by persons with vision challenges
- a service dog owned and used by Nanaimo RCMP
- a dog under the age of 12 weeks

##### ➤ Importance of Licencing

The City notes prominently on its website that all dogs within the City must be licenced pursuant to the bylaw. The City also presents a number of points to explain why it is important for owners to comply with the requirement. The City advises that:



- owners who do not licence their dogs can be ticketed \$50 per day for non-compliance
- lost dogs with licences can be quickly reunited with their owners if found by, or brought to the attention of, ACOs or staff at the Pound & Adoption Centre
- owners of unlicensed dogs are charged an additional \$100 to retrieve their dogs from the Pound
- a dog licence indicates that a dog is not a stray animal, but rather has a home and family to which it needs to be returned
- dog licences encourage owner accountability
- one hundred percent (100%) of licence fee revenue is used to offset the cost of the service

➤ **Purchasing a Licence**

The cost of a dog licence is listed in Schedule A of the bylaw at \$30 per year. This price is reduced to \$25 if the licence is purchased before the end of February in the current licencing year. Persons who take ownership of a dog during the second half of a calendar year pay only \$20 for that year. The base licence fee of \$30, and the available discounts listed here, apply to all types of dogs in the City. Nanaimo's single-price system does not differentiate between spay/neutered and intact dogs, nor does it apply separate fees for dogs designated as "vicious" under the bylaw.

New dog licences must be purchased in person at either City Hall (Service and Resource Centre) or at the Nanaimo Pound & Adoption Centre on Nanaimo Lakes Road. Licences can be renewed in person at the same locations or online through the City's website.

➤ **Licensing Offences**

Schedule D presents the fine schedule for different offences under the bylaw. The fine for failure to licence a dog, pursuant to section 5(1), is \$50, as is the fine for failure to display a dog licence pursuant to section 5(9). This fine, it is worth noting, is half of the next lowest fine amount (\$100) that applies to offences such as allowing a dog to roam at large, incorrect tethering of dogs, and a number of offences relating to the keeping of poultry, bees, and livestock, and the feeding of deer. A \$100 penalty is imposed in addition to the regular impound fee to retrieve an unlicensed dog from the Pound & Adoption Centre.

**Changes to Consider**

Modern animal control services are based on the concept of responsible pet ownership. This concept recognizes that the potential for pets to play a positive role in the community is dependent, almost entirely, on the attitudes and actions of pet owners. In the case of pet dogs, responsible pet owners are those who take the steps necessary to protect their dogs' health and welfare, and to ensure that their dogs do not become a threat or nuisance in the community.

The annual purchase of a dog licence is the first condition of responsible pet ownership. Owners who purchase dog licences respect the law, want to give their dogs the best chance of being returned home safely if lost or injured, and recognize that the revenue from licences is vital to a service that exists, in large part, because people choose to have dogs. In Nanaimo today only 52% of dog owners licence their dogs. To increase this rate of compliance, there are a number of changes the City may wish to introduce to the service.

➤ **Information**

The information presented on the City's website — noted earlier — outlining the importance of dog licencing is accurate and well-placed. The City supplements this information with an annual press release on the need to renew licences, and an annual reminder notice that is mailed or emailed to existing licence holders. In addition to the City's information, NAC has developed a brochure titled *Dogs in Nanaimo* that is given to visitors to the Pound & Adoption Centre, and that is handed out to dog owners by ACOs in City parks.<sup>5</sup> This brochure highlights the need for licencing, identifies the two locations at which new licences can be purchased, and outlines the cost of licences.

These efforts to draw attention to licencing requirements are helpful, particularly at prompting existing licence holders to renew their licences. The efforts may not be enough, however, to reach owners of unlicensed dogs, or to help them understand the requirement to licence, the importance of licencing, and the consequences of refusing to licence. The City should consider developing a more complete communications strategy targeted at both existing licensed holders and owners who have not purchased a licence before.

Communication methods could include:

- notices in local printed and online media
- radio notices
- social media notices
- roadside signs
- advertisements (posters) in transit stops
- Pet Ambassadors (see later)

➤ **Purchase of New Licences**

Many local governments, including the City of Nanaimo, provide residents the option to renew existing dog licences online. This option is important because it keeps existing licence holders in the system, enables the City to reach owners with notices and reminders, and makes it relatively easy for owners to renew licences each year. An increasing number local governments also allow residents to purchase *new* licences online. Some governments, however, including the City of Nanaimo, continue require people to travel to and buy

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<sup>5</sup> As identified in Figure 2.2, ACOs only handed out nine brochures in City parks in 2019, and even fewer in previous years.

licences in person from public and/or contracted vendors.

The City's approach to the purchase of new licences makes it unnecessarily inconvenient, if not difficult, for some residents to comply. Put differently, the City's current approach creates barriers to compliance that the City may wish to address. Two changes to consider are as follows:

- *Online Purchase* — Changes designed to enable residents to purchase new licences online would make it much easier for residents to comply, and would almost certainly contribute — along with other changes — to a higher licencing rate.<sup>6</sup>
- *Number of Purchase Sites* — If the City is unable to sell new licences online, or is not able to make the service available in the short term, the City should consider increasing the number of locations at which residents can buy new licences in person. The City's existing list of two facilities, both of which have limited hours of operation, is insufficient. Other City facilities (e.g., Beban Park, the Nanaimo Aquatic Centre) could sell licences, as could private locations (e.g., pet stores, veterinary offices) on contract with the City.<sup>7</sup>

The preferred course of action is to allow new licence sales online. This decision would be the most effective at lowering the barrier to licencing compliance. It would also prevent the City from having to train front-counter staff to process licences, and from having to pay non-City vendors for their role.

#### ➤ **Licence Costs**

Nanaimo's single-rate approach to licencing is somewhat unique in the province. Most (if not all) jurisdictions have different prices in place for different types of dogs. In all places, the licence price is lowest for spayed and neutered dogs; the price is considerably higher for intact dogs, and even higher for licences sold to owners of dogs that have been deemed by ACOs as "aggressive".<sup>8</sup>

Licence pricing is an important animal control policy tool that local governments use to:

- encourage certain behaviours, including having dogs licenced, and making sure that dogs are spayed or neutered
- discourage certain choices — namely, the choice to keep dogs intact —

<sup>6</sup> The Regional District of Central Okanagan (RDCO) experienced a significant increase in licencing rates following the introduction of this capability (as part of a package of changes) in 2014.

<sup>7</sup> The City of Victoria makes new licences available for purchase at 13 locations, only three of which are City facilities.

<sup>8</sup> RDCO charges annual licence fees of \$40 for spayed/neutered dogs (discounted to \$20 if purchased early), \$60 (early discount fee) for intact dogs, \$100 (early discount fee) for spayed/neutered "aggressive" dogs, and \$500 (no discount available) for all "dangerous dogs".

- that contribute to problems of pet overpopulation
- address the impacts imposed on the service community by aggressive dogs

Nanaimo's base licence cost of \$30 — which falls to \$25 if bought before the end of February — is in line with that in many other municipalities in the province and on Vancouver Island. The City may wish, however, to create separate higher tiers for intact dogs and aggressive dogs. Suggested rates are:

- \$60 per year, reduced to \$50 if bought before the end of February, for intact dogs
- \$90 per year, reduced to \$75 if bought before the end of February, for dogs deemed aggressive<sup>9</sup>

➤ **Failure to Licence**

In general, local governments prefer compliance-based approaches to animal control over enforcement-based approaches. Efforts to help residents understand and comply with animal control requirements build support for a service in ways that the strict enforcement of rules, and the imposition of financial penalties on people who break the rules, may not. There are cases, however, when enforcement becomes necessary. To handle these cases effectively, local governments need to have sufficient resources in place (i.e., ACOs) to conduct enforcement, and penalties that are significant enough to discourage problematic behaviour.

In an effort to emphasize the importance of licencing as a principle of responsible pet ownership, some local governments have included in their services a policy of zero tolerance for licence-related offences, coupled with high fines for failure to licence. In the case of the RDCO, for example, ACOs must issue a bylaw offence notice (BON) every time they encounter an unlicensed dog.<sup>10</sup> ACOs in the Central Okanagan have the discretion to issue warnings in lieu of BONs for many other types of violations; the officers have no discretion, however, in the case of unlicensed dogs. The failure-to-licence fine that accompanies the BON is \$300, which is reduced to \$150 if paid within 14 days.

As noted, the City's current fine for failure to licence is \$50. This fine is lower than that in many other mid- and large-size local governments. An increase in this amount to match RDCO's \$300 is not recommended in this review (RDCO's rate was developed as part of a major service overhaul that included considerable consultation and study). It is suggested, however, that:

<sup>9</sup> Nanaimo's current bylaw uses the term "vicious" in place of "aggressive". Suggested changes to the bylaw, including to terminology, are addressed later in the report.

<sup>10</sup> RDCO's service is region-wide, and includes the Cities of Kelowna and West Kelowna, and the Districts of Lake Country and Peachland.

- the current fee be increased to \$125, lowered to \$100 if paid within 14 days<sup>11</sup>
- a zero tolerance approach for failure-to-licence offences be adopted

➤ **Future Changes**

There are additional changes to dog licencing that the City of Nanaimo may wish to consider in the coming years, once initial changes put forward in this report have been addressed. One such future change is the development of an app-based rewards program that connects owners of licenced dogs with businesses that offer financial discounts and other benefits to owners on a variety of purchases. Rewards programs, properly designed, promote the importance of responsible pet ownership by rewarding owners who licence. They also allow owners to fully recover the cost of the licences they purchase. Finally, they provide a way for local governments to reach and communicate with dog owners about a wide range of service matters, in addition to licencing.

There are a number of examples of local governments that have put reward programs in place, including RDCO.<sup>12</sup> Lessons learned and program approaches developed by these local governments are available to Nanaimo.

## SCOPE OF SERVICE

### Current Situation

As noted earlier, the City's current Animal Control Service covers a broad range of responsibilities and activities. Many of these activities are undertaken by NAC pursuant to its contract with the City; others are undertaken by different departments of the City. The full service, as outlined in Chapter 2, includes the following responsibilities and activities:

- administration and enforcement of the requirements and prohibitions in the City's *Licensing and Control of Animals Bylaw*, *Faeces Removal Bylaw*, and the relevant sections of the *Parks, Recreation and Culture Regulation Bylaw*
- patrol of City parks and public areas, both on a proactive basis and in response to complaints
- the sale and tracking of dog licences
- the seizure and impoundment of animals
- the operation of the City's Pound & Adoption Centre as a facility to hold and care for animals during periods of impoundment
- the placement, through adoption, of impounded and unclaimed animals to suitable households
- emergency assistance to deal with dogs deemed "vicious" under the *Control of Animals Bylaw*, and to address other animal-related matters
- the provision of support to Nanaimo Fire Rescue and Nanaimo RCMP in

<sup>11</sup> These prices would bring the service in to alignment with animal control in Victoria, the Capital Regional District, North Cowichan, and several other local governments on Vancouver Island.

<sup>12</sup> RDCO's app-based program is called *My Dog Matters* ([mydogmatters.ca](http://mydogmatters.ca)).

situations involving animals in distress, or animals that may pose a risk to first responders

- the removal of animal carcasses from public land, including from public highways, parks, and beaches
- efforts to collect, hold, assess, and care for injured animals
- the provision of public education and information on responsible pet ownership, animal care, and the Animal Control Service
- the collection of and reporting on service-related statistics

### Changes to Consider

The list of responsibilities and activities identified under Nanaimo's Animal Control Service is not unlike that of most other services in many respects. There are a few important differences, however, that are useful to highlight. These differences point to potential changes the City may wish to make in order to tighten the service scope.

#### ➤ Deceased Animals

Nanaimo expects ACOs to remove and dispose of all deceased animals found on public land, including beaches, parks, and roadways. Most jurisdictions assign responsibility for at least some (e.g., deer, other wildlife) if not all animal carcasses to public works departments or separate contractors that have the equipment and crews to deal with deceased animals.

The assignment of this responsibility to ACOs can have — and has had — a significant impact on Nanaimo's ACOs. The data presented in Figure 2.2 (Chapter 2) show that ACOs in 2019 collected and transported 398 animal carcasses, including 69 cats and two dogs. Given that ACOs typically work alone (there are only 2.3 FTE), it can take several hours to retrieve and move the carcass of a large animal such as a deer. The time spent on this task takes away from time that could be spent conducting proactive patrols, engaging with animal owners, and addressing other needs.

The City should consider transferring responsibility for dealing with all animal carcasses on public land, other than those of cats and dogs, to a group with the equipment, know-how, and personnel to handle the task. There are two options to consider:

- *City of Nanaimo Engineering and Public Works Department* — The City's Public Works crews have the equipment and knowledge required to remove carcasses. Based on discussions with department managers, however, it is clear that the crews at their existing staffing levels are not able to take on the additional responsibility.
- *Contractor* — Through a request for proposals the City could select a qualified contractor for the task. In February, 2020, the District of Saanich decided to contract-out the service under a one-year pilot

project. Saanich was facing the same issues as those in Nanaimo — namely, the need to transfer the task from Animal Control so that ACOs could focus on more important duties; and, the lack of capacity in Public Works to take on new duties. Based on the removal of 300 animal carcasses from public land, Saanich estimates the one-year contract to cost \$50,000.

The contractor option is the preferred course of action for Nanaimo to consider. A request for proposals would need to be issued to determine the level of availability and interest among potential contractors, as well as the proposed cost.

It is suggested that ACOs continue to be responsible for cat and dog carcasses on public land. In cases involving the accidental death of a cat or dog, it is important, whenever possible, to make contact with the pet owners. ACOs are trained and experienced in dealing with pet owners, including during emotional times. It is also worth noting that, as highlighted in Figure 2.2., the number of cat and dog carcasses that must be handled each year is quite small compared to the number of cases involving other animals. Retaining responsibility over cat and dog cases would not overly tax ACO capacity.

► **Noise Complaints**

The City dealt with 192 noise complaints related to barking dogs in 2019; in 2018, the number was 186. Interestingly, these calls are handled by the City's Bylaw Enforcement Officers rather than the ACOs. If ACOs were used to investigate these complaints, they would be present to identify attendant dog-related issues including failures-to-licence, animal welfare concerns (e.g., lengthy tethering), and others that are outlined in the *Licensing and Control of Animals Bylaw* which the ACOs are in place to enforce. Bylaw Enforcement Officers, who spend most of their time investigating security-related issues involving people, may not be as aware of these other issues.

The City should consider transferring responsibility for dealing with dog-related noise complaints to the ACOs, both to enable Bylaw Enforcement Officers to focus on other matters, and to better ensure that attendant dog-related issues are identified and addressed. This change, however, should be considered in conjunction with the suggested reassignment of responsibility over most animal carcasses from the ACOs to public works. The ACOs do not have the capacity to take on additional responsibilities without surrendering others.

**DELIVERY MODEL**

**Current Situation**

In Nanaimo today, delivery of the Animal Control Service is contracted-out to a private, for-profit company (Nanaimo Animal Control Ltd.). As noted in Chapter 2, NAC's contract with the City expires on August 31, 2020; there is no provision for extension. In anticipation of this end date, the City needs to determine whether to



retain the contract delivery model, or bring the service in-house and deliver it using City staff.

### Changes to Consider

In addressing this question, the City may wish to consider the following factors:

- relative cost
- flexibility
- degree of control
- integration with other City services
- approach in other local governments
- City's recent experience

#### ➤ Relative Cost

As shown in Figure 2.1 from Chapter 2, the City paid \$483,000 to contract services (the vast majority of which was paid to NAC) to deliver the service in 2019. Over the past three years, the annual contract payment averaged \$461,000. How does this cost compare to the cost the City would incur if it delivered the service, at the same level of service, using City staff?

This report does not present a detailed cost comparison of the contract and in-house service financial models. A broad estimate was developed, however, of the cost for the City to deliver the service at the 2019 service level as part of the Bylaw Enforcement Division. The estimate considers:

- wages paid to Bylaw Enforcement Officers, Clerk/Receptionists, and kennel workers<sup>13</sup>
- the dollar value of benefits, expressed as a percentage of wages, paid to City staff
- overtime and emergency call-out figures
- a portion of a manager's time to oversee the service and direct staff
- amortized costs for vehicles and equipment required for use by service staff<sup>14</sup>
- other equipment required by officers in the field
- equipment required to operate the Pound & Adoption Centre, including to care for impounded animals
- vehicle fuel, maintenance, and insurance costs
- minor incremental increases to the City's WorkSafe BC and other insurance premiums
- other minor miscellaneous items

<sup>13</sup> Article 31 (Contracts or Sub-Contracts) of the City's *Collective Agreement* with the Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 401, requires all contracted-out work to be paid at the same rate of pay set out for City staff. NAC's contract with the City requires the firm to pay its staff at the City's hourly wage rates. This parity does not extend to other benefits or conditions of work.

<sup>14</sup> Under the current contract model, NAC provides all vehicles and equipment.



Costs that would be common to both delivery models (e.g., maintenance of the Pound & Adoption Centre, discounts on early licences, certain City overhead costs) were not included in the broad estimate. The in-house estimate also does not take into account any transition or start-up costs the City could incur to bring the service in house.

The broad estimate suggests that any difference in cost between the two service delivery models would be minor at best. Based on assumptions made, the in-house model would either be slightly more or slightly less expensive than the contact model. In and of itself, the cost differential would not likely be a strong enough factor on which to determine the preferred delivery model for the service.

➤ **Flexibility**

The need for flexibility is necessary to the effective delivery of animal control. Staff must be flexible in their approach to investigating offences, issuing BONs, and dealing with a range of animals and animal owners. The service must also be able to call on staff, at all hours, to attend to animal-related issues, and to ensure the well-being and proper care of animals.

As examples in other municipalities show, contract and in-house staff are equally capable of delivering the service with flexibility in many situations. It is not clear, however, whether the same degree of flexibility could be achieved in all situations, or at the same cost, under both models. The City faces certain constraints in setting hours of work, scheduling staff, calling staff out for overtime and emergencies, and other matters that many contractors do not face.

It may be the case that an in-house service could draw upon a greater pool of employees to fill vacant ACO positions, and to provide back-up coverage during periods of ACO absence. This possibility, however, assumes that City staff in other departments would be attracted to ACO work, and qualified to provide coverage. These assumptions are not necessarily valid.

It is worth noting that flexibility in the delivery of Nanaimo's current service is enhanced by the presence of the Pound & Adoption Centre Coordinator on site in a caretaker's dwelling, and the regular presence of NAC's Manager in Nanaimo to supervise, and to supplement the patrol efforts of, the ACOs.

➤ **Degree of Control**

The use of an outside contractor to deliver a municipality's service removes many day-to-day decisions and the service personnel from the immediate oversight and control of the municipality's administration. The contractor is accountable to the municipality; but accountability under a contract model is exercised through the terms of a service agreement, rather than within an

employer-employee framework.

Municipalities that wish to exercise full control over animal control, including its day-to-day delivery, typically choose to deliver the services in-house using their own staff. Municipalities that are comfortable with exercising control through a service agreement, often choose the contract model.

➤ **Integration with Other City Services**

Animal Control is a specialized service that operates with a considerable amount of independence from other services provided by the City. Animal control is not, however, completely isolated from the City — on the contrary, ACOs and staff at the Pound & Adoption Centre communicate regularly with, and rely on, staff in Bylaw Enforcement, Parks, and Finance. It is possible that the existing level of integration with these other groups could be enhanced if the Animal Control Service were delivered in house. It is not clear, however, that the existing level needs to be enhanced. Put differently, as a contracted service, Animal Control is as integrated as it needs to be with these other groups.

There may be a need for greater contact between Animal Control and the City's Communications Department. As discussed later in the report (see below under *Education*), Communications needs to play a role in the development and implementation of an Animal Control information program, as well as public engagement on key Animal Control topics. To date, integration with Communications has not been difficult; it has simply not been viewed as necessary by the contractor or the City.

➤ **Other Local Governments**

There are several examples across British Columbia of local governments that choose to deliver animal control in-house, and of local governments that prefer to contract delivery of the service to an outside firm. In the Greater Vancouver area, most large municipalities deliver the service in-house, with the exception of places such as the City of Richmond (which uses a hybrid model) and the Township of Langley. In the Capital Region, the City of Victoria and others use the contract model, whereas Saanich provides the service in-house using the Saanich Police Department. North of the Capital Region, many local governments use the contract model, including most mid-size and large centres, and most local governments in the Mid-Island area.

The Regional District of Central Okanagan stands out as the only Regional District in the province that both provides animal control as a region-wide service to all member municipalities and electoral areas, and that delivers the entire service using its own staff.

In all, there is no clear consensus across BC's local governments with respect to the use of in-house versus contract service delivery models.

➤ **Nanaimo's Experience**

The City of Nanaimo has relied on contractors to deliver its Animal Control Service for many years. The City's experience with the contract model has not been without issues in past years. On the whole, however, persons interviewed for this report, including City managers and stakeholder representatives, expressed support for the contract model approach. Support for the model appears to have increased in recent years, in particular, with the current contractor. There may be issues with service scope, service level, and some other factors. The use of an outside firm to deliver the service by contract, however, does not appear to be a concern.

The consultant visited the Pound & Adoption Centre as part of the background research for the assignment. The consultant also obtained information from, and interviewed on a number of occasions, representatives of the current contractor, NAC. In the consultant's view, NAC appears to be fulfilling the terms of its service agreement with the City — a view corroborated by the City. Indeed, in the consultant's view NAC brings a high degree knowledge and expertise to the file, and demonstrates considerable innovation in its approach to delivering the service.

The City could effectively deliver Animal Control in-house using City staff. Based on the factors considered here, however, there does not appear to be a compelling case for the City to abandon the contract service delivery model in favour of in-house delivery. The City should consider retaining the contract model, and issue a request for proposals to ensure that a contractor is in place with a new services agreement effective September 1, 2020.

**LEVEL OF STAFFING**

**Current Situation**

The *Services Agreement* between the City and NAC requires the NAC to provide:

- at least two uniformed ACOs to provide patrols throughout the City for a combined minimum of 70 hours per week
- staff capacity for additional patrols and longer service hours for June, July, and August
- a clerk to lead operation of the Pound & Adoption Centre
- a kennel worker

In order to comply with these requirements, to ensure adequate coverage for key periods, and to allow for periodic staff absences, NAC provides a total of 2.33 ACO FTEs, and 2.5 Pound & Adoption Centre FTEs. Time spent on the function by the NAC Manager (who adds some capacity as a Senior ACO) is in addition to these numbers. The City wishes to understand if this level of staffing is appropriate for Nanaimo given the animal control issues in the community, the City's service expectations, and changing service needs.

### Changes to Consider

City staff report that the number of FTEs dedicated to the Animal Control Service has remained essentially unchanged since 1986, despite a doubling of the City's population in the years since that time. This finding is not necessarily, in and of itself, a valid reason to increase staffing levels. The finding does, however, highlight the need to consider the possibility that additional resources may be warranted. In examining the need for an increase in staffing resources, the following factors should be considered:

#### ► Other Jurisdictions

Staffing level comparisons with other jurisdictions are inherently difficult to make and need to be treated with caution. Staffing levels across jurisdictions may vary for a wide variety of reasons, such as:

- the full list of responsibilities assigned to animal control staff, including responsibilities that may have nothing to do with animal control (e.g., enforcement of other regulatory bylaws not related to animals)
- the number of contracts, in the case of some contractors, that staff are assigned to service
- the ability or inability to rely on staff in other departments to assist after-hours or with specific tasks
- the size of service area that staff are expected to cover
- the degree of urban development in the jurisdiction, and the resulting level of enforcement issues related to animal-human interaction
- the history of animal-related incidents, which may drive demand for a greater or lesser ACO presence
- competing service needs that are treated as higher priorities by decision-makers
- length of shifts, emergency call-out procedures, vacation benefits, and other labour relations matters

A high-level assessment of other jurisdictions' animal control staffing situation illustrates the challenges. The City of Kamloops, for example, has many similarities to Nanaimo, including population, geographic size, level of urban development, and others. Kamloops records fewer incidents of certain types of dog-related offences (e.g., dogs-at-large, dogs-in-parks), but lists comparable levels of others (e.g., dog attacks, unlicensed dogs). On the surface, Kamloops would seem to be a useful jurisdiction for Nanaimo to consider when examining staffing levels. Any comparison is inherently difficult, however, because of the different ways each jurisdiction assigns animal control responsibilities. Whereas Nanaimo (through NAC) has dedicated ACOs, responsibility for investigating and acting on animal control offences in Kamloops is assigned to the City's Bylaw Enforcement group, which has in excess of ten officers.

RDCO is another example. This jurisdiction has dedicated ACOs, similar to Nanaimo. Its seven officers, however, cover a service area that includes four

municipalities and two (small) electoral areas. During the summer months, ACOs are bolstered by student "Dog Ambassadors" who are used to provide a presence in high-traffic parks where they engage with, and provide educational materials to, dog owners. ACOs in RDCO are formally called Dog Control Officers since the service, unlike that in Nanaimo, is focused solely on dogs. The officers also are not responsible, unlike their counterparts in Nanaimo, for dealing with animal carcasses.

Similar difficulties arise when comparing Nanaimo to other jurisdictions on Vancouver Island. Animal control in the City of Victoria, with its four ACOs, has a similar scope as Nanaimo's service (animal carcasses being a key exception); however, Victoria is much more compact and urban than Nanaimo. The District of Saanich, with two ACOs, is more similar to Nanaimo as a community. Animal control issues that occur outside of regular business hours, however, are handled by Saanich Police Patrol Division officers.

In all, staffing level comparisons help to shed light on the different service dynamics that exist across jurisdictions, and the staffing level and organizational decisions made in those jurisdictions to meet local needs. The comparisons do little, however, to help decision-makers in Nanaimo determine whether its own staffing levels are appropriate for the situation in Nanaimo.

➤ **Scope of Service**

The scope of Nanaimo's Animal Control Service, outlined earlier, is comprehensive apart from the absence of responsibility for dog-related noise complaints. At current staffing levels, ACOs are hard-pressed to respond to all calls for service, give attention to all important matters, and provide effective coverage of high-traffic areas of the City, particularly in the summer when incidents of human-dog interactions increase. These difficulties in coverage are exacerbated during periods of staffing absences.

The addition of a seasonal ACO to focus on parks patrols in the summer months helps to provide a stronger ACO presence and higher level of service. Information from Parks managers, however, suggests that issues with dogs in parks persist, even with added attention in the summer months.

The assignment of responsibility to ACOs for collecting and disposing of animal carcasses from public land was noted earlier. This responsibility impacts — significantly at times — the availability of ACOs to address other important animal-related duties. The suggested transfer of responsibility for non-cat and dog carcasses to Public Works or a separate contractor would help to partly redress this impact, even with a parallel transfer of responsibility from Bylaw Enforcement to Animal Control for dog-related noise complaints. To attend to all key matters, however, the City may wish to consider funding an additional ACO position.

In the absence of some additional resources, the City may need to determine which specific activities in its current scope to identify as low priority, or to eliminate altogether. Some duties, such as dealing with aggressive dogs and conducting park patrols, are essential for public safety. Others, such as assisting injured or trapped animals, are important from an animal welfare perspective. Providing support to Nanaimo RCMP and Nanaimo Fire and Rescue are also essential. Even other duties, such as the provision of public education, and efforts to pay greater attention to dog licencing and licence offences, are important to promote responsible pet ownership, generate additional revenues, and prevent negative animal-human interactions. In all, with the exception of responsibility for animal carcasses which has been addressed already in the report, there is no obvious duty in the current service scope that could easily be downplayed or eliminated.

➤ **Growing Urban Community**

Growth in a community's population and an increase in the level of its urban development tend to result in:

- greater numbers of dogs and other household pets (e.g., cats) in the community
- more residents using local parks and public areas, especially in communities that are experiencing disproportionately high increases in multi-family housing relative to single family dwellings
- greater numbers of dogs in local parks and public areas
- more abandoned animals, in particular cats
- more animal-human interactions, including conflicts
- more wildlife in residential areas, along with more conflicts involving wildlife
- a greater need for education on responsible pet ownership
- a greater need to regulate and enforce certain behaviours and rules that are designed to promote public safety, animal welfare, and responsible pet ownership

Nanaimo is one of the fastest growing communities in the province, and is expected to remain so in the coming years. Single family housing continues to make up the majority of housing. The City's *2019 Community Profile*, however makes the following point:

"As the city grows the mix of housing types is changing, with a proportional decline in single family residences and an increase in multi-family housing types."

It can be anticipated that the challenges faced by ACOs to provide adequate coverage, and to address important existing and emerging needs, will persist in the coming years in the absence of some additional resources.

➤ **Financial Resources**

The City of Nanaimo, similar to all other municipalities in BC, has limited financial resources with which to address a broad range of needs that can, at times, seem unlimited. Increases in resources assigned to one service will, unless full offset by new sources of non-tax revenue, result in fewer resources for other services, or higher local taxes. These financial pressures, which are ever-present in municipalities, are particularly acute at present as a result of COVID-19.

To fulfil the important responsibilities under the City's Animal Control Service, now and in the coming years, the City should consider providing resources for one additional ACO FTE. This change, combined with the realignment of responsibilities for most animal carcasses and for dog-related noise complaints, should provide the service with sufficient capacity for the foreseeable term. The extra cost to the City can be partly offset by increased licencing revenues generated not by higher licence prices, but rather by higher numbers of licences sold.

## **POUND & ADOPTION CENTRE**

### **Current Situation**

The City of Nanaimo's Pound & Adoption Centre is a single storey, 3,500 ft<sup>2</sup>, purpose-built animal shelter, built in 1977 to accommodate impounded dogs, cats, and other animals seized by ACOs or abandoned by owners. The facility is operated by NAC as per the terms of its *Services Agreement* with the City. NAC's Coordinator oversees all day-to-day operations, including the care, treatment, and feeding of impounds, and adopting-out of animals that can be placed in the community.

NAC's ACOs are based at the Centre, but spend most of their time in the field conducting patrols and responding to calls for service. All equipment and vehicles used in the Animal Control Service are kept at the facility. The Centre sits on a large, Parks, Recreation and Culture works yard site on Nanaimo Lakes Road in South Nanaimo. Adjacent to the Centre is a caretaker's dwelling that is occupied by NAC's Coordinator.

The issue facing the City in this review of the service is not the operation of the Pound & Adoption Centre, but rather the facility itself. The building is kept meticulously clean, well-stocked, and well-maintained, and is operated to provide the maximum level of animal care and comfort possible under the circumstances. The building does not, however, meet many of the basic requirements set out in the *Canadian Standards of Care in Animal Shelters*.<sup>15,16</sup> The building is 43 years old and has not been improved to any significant degree since its original construction.

<sup>15</sup> This conclusion is clear from a walk through the facility, and is corroborated in a 2017 *Building Condition Assessment* undertaken for the City by Space Craft Design Corp.

<sup>16</sup> The *Canadian Standards* guide was developed in 2013 by the Canadian Advisory Council on National Shelter Standards. It is based on, and adopts much of, the 2010 *Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters*, developed by the Association of Shelter Veterinarians.



In its current form, the Pound & Adoption Centre is less-than-desirable, if not unsuitable, as facility to impound, treat, and care for animals. The City recognizes this situation and wishes to determine the best path forward to address the problem.

### Changes to Consider

There are three options for the City to consider to address the deficiencies of the Pound & Adoption Centre:

- extensively renovate the facility
- construct a new replacement facility
- partner with a different existing shelter to serve as the City's pound

#### ➤ Renovation

In 2017, the City commissioned Space Craft Design Corp. to conduct a *Building Condition Assessment* of the Pound & Adoption Centre. Space Craft was asked, specifically, to:

- provide an assessment of the overall condition of the building
- review deficiencies identified by NAC for the City
- examine accepted industry standards outlined in the *Canadian Standards of Care in Animal Shelters*
- provide an "order of magnitude" renovation cost estimate to address the identified deficiencies, and increase the facility's level of compliance with the *Canadian Standards*

Space Craft broke the building into three different areas for the purpose of the assessment. The 2017 cost to renovate all three areas was estimated at \$214,000. This cost includes all labour and materials, as well as \$72,000 in mechanical upgrades. The cost does not include funding for a set of additional items related to general maintenance, exterior storage, some lighting, the facility's security system, and changes to the laundry and kitchen area. The cost also does not include and funding that would be required to undertake, and to address deficiencies identified through, a seismic review of the facility, and a complete review of the building's electrical systems. Both of these additional reviews are recommended by Space Craft. Finally, the estimate does not include "soft costs" related to consulting/architect fees, permit applications and other items.

The 2017 cost estimate of \$214,000 should be treated as a starting point in any discussion on funding for a renovation. An updated estimate would need to be developed if the City wished to pursue the renovation option.

#### ➤ New Facility

The City could build a new Pound & Adoption Centre on the site of the existing building, or nearby on the same property. This option would result in a modern,



best practice-based facility that allowed the City to provide a high level of animal care and treatment. The facility could be designed to accommodate efforts aimed at achieving other service-related goals, including:

- the promotion of spay and neutering programs
- the delivery of public education programs on responsible pet ownership and animal welfare
- an increase in animal adoptions
- a needed increase in capacity for cats (see later)

The difficulty with this option is cost. While the City has not developed a cost estimate for a new facility, it can be assumed that the cost would be significant. By way of comparison, the new facility for the SPCA Nanaimo Branch — which, it should be noted, is twice the size of the existing Pound & Adoption Centre — was opened in 2016 at a cost of \$3.4 million.

The City of Richmond provides another comparison. A December 11, 2018, Richmond staff report outlined three options for a new animal shelter to replace the City's current facility which was built in 1978.<sup>17</sup> The first option, which envisions a 3,700 ft<sup>2</sup> building (the size of Nanaimo's existing facility), would cost an estimated \$8.0 million (2018 dollars). Option two, at 7,300 ft<sup>2</sup>, would cost an estimated \$10.9 million, whereas option three, at 8,000 ft<sup>2</sup>, would total an estimated \$13.0 million. All three options would be built on the existing facility site, which is owned by the City and is well-located for the use. All three options would provide a high level of animal care and treatment, and conform to the guidelines set out in the *Canadian Standards of Care in Animal Shelters*.

➤ **Partner with Others**

The City could approach another animal welfare agency to host the City's pound, or partner with the City in the development of a new facility. The SPCA Nanaimo & District Branch stands out as an agency that could, at first glance at least, be suitable for this option. The Branch has an existing (new) facility, run by an organization that is large and established enough to be a potential partner.

The Executive Director of the Nanaimo Branch was interviewed for this report. He confirmed that the SPCA at the provincial level has determined that the operation of animal control pounds, through service contracts with local governments, is no longer considered to be consistent with the Society's core mandate. Accordingly, the Society is not interested in pursuing new local government service agreements.<sup>18</sup> He also confirmed that the new SPCA facility

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<sup>17</sup> See *Animal Shelter Guiding Principles, Program Options and Site*, Report to the City of Richmond General Purposes Committee, December 11, 2018.

<sup>18</sup> There are local government pounds in the province that continue to be operated by local SPCA branches — for example, the SPCA Parksville-Qualicum Beach & District Branch continues to

in Nanaimo, irrespective of the BC SPCA's policy decision, would not have the capacity to accommodate the number of animals that are impounded by the City in a typical year.

Efforts to partner with nearby local governments could be a long-term option, but do not seem promising in the short term. All neighbouring local governments use the same private firm — Coastal Animal Control Services of BC Ltd. — to deliver their animal control services. Impounded animals from jurisdictions to the south of Nanaimo are kept at Coastal animal shelter in Duncan. Impounded animals from Lantzville and Electoral Areas C, E, and F are held at the SPCA Parkville-Qualicum Beach facility.<sup>19</sup>

The review of these three options points to the renovation alternative as the most promising. Renovation may not be a permanent solution given the age of the building and the breadth of deficiencies. Some change, however, needs to be made, and renovation would appear to represent the fastest and least expensive change to make.

## CATS IN NANAIMO

### Current Situation

There are three types of cats that must be considered in any discussion on animal control in Nanaimo:

- *Stray Cats* — In simple terms, stray cats are household pets that are lost or that have been abandoned by their owners. They are comfortable around humans and have not been without human contact for an extended period of time. Stray cats that are impounded can be returned to their original homes or adopted out to new homes following a period of observation and treatment.
- *Surrendered Cats* — Surrendered cats are given up to an animal welfare agency (e.g. SPCA) by owners who, for whatever reason, are unable to care for the cats.
- *Feral Cats* — Feral cats are those that have never had any contact with humans, as well as those whose contact has diminished over time to the point that they cannot be successfully socialized. Feral cats are not considered to be adoptable.

Through its current Animal Control Service, the City plays a relatively small role in the management of stray cats, and an even smaller role in the management of

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provide pound service to Parkville and Qualicum Beach. In general, however, new operating agreements are not being pursued.

<sup>19</sup> Similar to Parkville and Qualicum Beach, the RDN (including Lantzville) has a long-standing contract with the SPCA Parkville-Qualicum Beach Branch for kennel services.

surrendered and feral cats. The City's *Licensing and Control of Animals Bylaw* contains only one section dedicated to cats specifically — section 12, which requires pet owners to isolate any cats that are suffering from an infectious or contagious disease. Animal Control Officers' general authority under the bylaw to seize at-large animals is limited in the case of cats to those that are sick or injured.

The City's Pound & Adoption Centre receives and cares for sick or injured cats that are brought in by ACOs and others, as well as stray cats that are referred or transferred to the facility by the SPCA and the Cat Nap Society. All cats that are taken in by the Centre are assessed to determine if they are stray or feral. Stray cats with some form of identification (e.g., microchip, tattoo) are returned to their owners whenever possible. Stray cats that do not have valid identification, that are not claimed, or that cannot be returned to their original home for whatever reason, become the property of the City after 72 hours, and can be made available for adoption. All adoptable cats are microchipped and spayed/neutered prior to being placed in homes. Adoption fees paid to the Centre are used to offset the cost of microchipping, spaying, and neutering.

The Pound & Adoption Centre does not at present have a dedicated area to receive, assess, and care for cats. Stray cats that enter the Centre are placed, instead, in rooms and makeshift kennels spaced throughout the facility. Similar to all modern shelters, the facility operates under a "capacity for care" model, which compels staff to accept only those animals that can be properly managed. Total capacity of the Centre, therefore, is based not on the number of kennels or rooms, but is instead dependent on the number of cats received and, even more so, on the needs of those cats. In 2019, 40 cats were taken in over the course of the year. Staff at the Centre report that the facility is consistently full and not able to respond to demands to receive additional cats.

The Pound & Adoption Centre does not receive cats that are known to be feral. In some instances, cats that are received at the Centre are not deemed to be feral until after an initial period of assessment. In these cases the cats are delivered to Cat Nap Society where they are microchipped and spayed or neutered, treated, fostered (if in need of care), and either returned to the community or placed with a local farmer to assist with rodent control.

➤ **Cat Nap Society and SPCA**

Cat Nap Society, as explained in Chapter 2, is a not-for-profit, volunteer-based organization that exists to rescue cats in need, and to address the important issue of cat overpopulation. Cat Nap's primary focus is its TNR program through which cats are trapped, spayed or neutered, and returned to the community.<sup>20</sup> Most of the more than 500 cats rescued by Cat Nap each year are feral cats. Cats that are only semi-feral and capable of being adopted-out are transferred

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<sup>20</sup> TNR programs, as noted earlier, are used throughout North America as a measure to improve the health of cats in the community, and to address cat overpopulation.

to a local pet store where they are placed in suitable homes. Adoption fee revenues flow back to Cat Nap to help pay the veterinary costs incurred by the society (\$98,000 of costs in 2019).

Cat Nap is based in Nanaimo but deals with cats across an area that includes portions of the electoral areas that border the City. Trap data from the society show that in a typical year, 50% of cats trapped and cared for by the organization come from sites outside of the City. Importantly, however, the majority of these non-City sites are on lands on the fringe of the City's boundaries.

Nanaimo & District SPCA receives, cares for, and adopts out cats that are surrendered to the agency's shelter. In a typical year, 700 cats from Nanaimo and its surrounding areas are taken in. Stray cats are transferred whenever possible to the City's Pound & Adoption Centre. Feral cats that arrive at the SPCA are sent to Can Nap (the SPCA does not deal with feral cats).

➤ **Cat Numbers in Nanaimo**

It can be estimated, based on formulas from the Canadian Animal Health Institute and the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, that there are approximately 15,500 household cats (i.e., pets) in the City in a given year. The vast majority of these cats are well cared for and valued by their guardians. Some of the cats, however, will be abandoned or surrendered, and will end up with at City's Pound & Adoption Centre or the SPCA.

Some cats that are abandoned by their owners end up joining the ranks of feral cats in and around the City. Data on the number of feral cats in Nanaimo are imperfect or nonexistent. If estimates from other jurisdictions are indicative of the local situation, however, Cat Nap's 500 cats trapped each year may represent just a small portion of the total feral cat population.<sup>21</sup>

Research on cat-related issues in Nanaimo, on Vancouver Island, in Greater Vancouver, and in communities in other parts of Western Canada was undertaken for this service review. Interviews on cat-related matters were conducted with representatives of the City, NAC, the SPCA, and others. Based on the research and interview findings, it is clear that cat-related issues exist in Nanaimo and are important. Three issues stand out as being particularly important:

- a lack of provisions to promote responsible cat ownership
- a shortage of capacity to deal with stray cats
- feral cat populations and the ability to contain them

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<sup>21</sup> The Okanagan Cat Coalition, a consortium of animal welfare groups that was formed to address cat overpopulation in the Central Okanagan, estimated at feral cat population in Greater Kelowna of 13,000 in 2015. The City of Edmonton reports an estimated 63,000 feral cats in 2020. In East Vancouver and Burnaby, there were an estimated 8,500 feral cats ten years ago.

The City is not the only agency with a role to play in addressing these issues. As the local government with responsibility for animal control, however, the City does have the authority and the ability to make a significant difference. To that end, the City may wish to consider changes to its current approach as it relates to cats.

### Changes to Consider

There are three areas of change the City may wish to consider, including:

- changes to the City's *Licensing and Control of Animals Bylaw*
- changes to the Pound & Adoption Centre
- changes to the City's support for feral cat control efforts

#### ➤ **Bylaw Changes**

Aside from its single reference to cats in section 12, the City's current *Licensing and Control of Animals Bylaw* does little to promote responsible cat ownership, including the need for cat owners to help prevent the problem of cat overpopulation. The City could borrow from bylaws that have been put in place by other local governments — in some cases, only recently — to redress these bylaw concerns. The SPCA's *Model Animal Responsibility Bylaws* guide, updated in 2017, is an additional resource.

The City of Duncan and District of North Cowichan updated their animal control bylaws in 2019 to address a number of issues, including responsible cat ownership and overpopulation. Both bylaws now require cats to have identification that can be used by ACOs, kennel staff, or other persons to return cats that are found at-large, injured, or impounded, to their owners. Based on the experiences of other jurisdictions, this requirement will help to significantly increase the percentage of impounded and found cats that are returned home. In the absence of identification, claim rates tend to be low (e.g., 10%).

The two municipalities' bylaws also now require owners of cats that are allowed to go outdoors to have the cats spayed or neutered. Spaying and neutering are an important principle of responsible pet ownership, and are critical to preventing cat overpopulation. Spayed and neutered cats also cause fewer nuisances in the community than do intact animals.

The requirements introduced by Duncan and North Cowichan speak to some of the recommendations in the SPCA's guide. Additional recommendations in the guide, however, are not reflected in the municipalities' updates. One important recommendation concerns cats at-large. The SPCA model bylaw contains provisions that prohibit cat owners from allowing their pets to be in a public place, or on someone else's private property, unless the pets are under the direct control of a person. These provisions, which are reflected in bylaws of a number of other municipalities (e.g., Victoria, Esquimalt), may be difficult to enforce. They are considered valuable, however, an additional tool for ACOs to use in difficult cases. The provisions also promote responsible pet ownership in

that they place the onus on pet owners to care for their animals, and to prevent their animals from creating nuisances in the community.

The SPCA guide makes an additional recommendation related to cat licencing. Specifically, the guide recommends that municipalities require owners of cats, similar to owners of dogs, to obtain valid licences. The agency notes that cat licencing results in an increase in return-to-owner rates for lost and impounded cats. As well, when combined with differential pricing for spayed/neutered animals, licencing can be used as an effective tool to prevent overpopulation. Finally, as in the case with dogs, cat licencing represents an important revenue tool to assist in funding animal control services and spay/neuter programs.

The City should consider incorporating into its *Licencing and Control of Animals Bylaw* the requirements that have been added to Duncan's and North Cowichan's bylaws related to animal identification and spaying/neutering. The City should also consider the provisions from the Victoria and Esquimalt bylaws regarding cats at-large. Cat licencing has its merits and may be worth considering at some point. For the present, however, it is suggested that the City focus on the other provisions and revisit licencing for cats at a future time. The fact that very few municipalities in BC have embraced cat licencing speaks to the challenges faced in building support for the initiative. Several arguments against cat licencing have been raised, as well, by different animal welfare and advocacy groups.<sup>22</sup>

➤ **Changes to the Pound & Adoption Centre**

The *Building Condition Assessment* of the Pound & Adoption Centre undertaken by Space Craft Design Corp. in late 2017 included in its pricing the repurposing and renovation of the facility's north wing into a special "cat wing". The cat wing would include:

- two impound rooms with a combined capacity for 12 newly-impounded cats that do not show any signs of infectious disease
- a 14-kennel adoption room in which members of the public could meet cats that have been spayed or neutered, have been vaccinated, are healthy, and, in behavioural terms, are deemed to be adoptable
- a room for cats that, upon intake, are believed to be feral, and must be assessed prior to their transfer to Cat Nap (or some other rescue society)

The cat room at the south end of the existing building would be used under the renovation scenario solely as an isolation room for sick and injured cats, far away from healthy cats in the new cat wing.

The key feature of the new cat wing would be its flexibility. Spaces could be repurposed as needed to create additional isolation areas, or to accommodate

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<sup>22</sup> See, for example, "Cat Licencing: A Licence to Kill", by Alley Cat Allies.

large numbers of cats awaiting adoption.

If the City chooses to proceed with the renovation of the Pound & Adoption Centre, the City should consider ensuring that the cat wing is developed as planned. The changes would provide much-needed additional capacity to deal with stray cats. The changes would also provide for a much higher level of animal care and welfare than are currently available at the facility.

➤ **Support for Efforts to Control Feral Cats**

The feral cat population in Nanaimo is cared for and controlled almost entirely by the volunteer-based Cat Nap Society. The agency's TNR program is widely acknowledged among animal welfare and control partners as being an effective and important community service through which:

- feral cats are treated in a humane fashion, rather than euthanized
- feral cats receive necessary veterinary attention, which includes microchipping and sterilization
- cat populations are reduced to and maintained at manageable levels
- feral cats are put to work as "mousers" to help manage rodent populations in local barns

Experiences in many communities show that when feral cats are left on their own without oversight and action by rescue societies such as Cat Nap, populations can increase rapidly and result in corresponding increases in nuisance behaviour (e.g., cat fights, trespassing, cat faeces, cat spraying), infections and communicable diseases, and the number of birds attacked and killed. In some cases, the public health implications for humans are significant. In 1995 in the Capital Regional District, for example, faeces from unmanaged feral cats was found to contribute to the contamination of drinking water in the Humpback Reservoir.<sup>23</sup>

In Nanaimo, Cat Nap serves as a bulwark for the City and community against problems associated with uncontrolled feral cat populations. In the absence of Cat Nap, there would be pressure on the City to take a direct role in feral cat management, if only periodically to deal with spikes that would likely occur in cat colony numbers.<sup>24</sup>

The City should consider providing some level of assistance to support Cat Nap's activities. It is not suggested that the City play a direct role in a TNR program — the City has enough other animal control responsibilities on which to focus. The City could, however, provide a financial contribution in the form of an annual grant-in-aid to support the Society's work, and to help ensure its sustainability.

<sup>23</sup> See Aramini, J.J., *et al*, "Potential Contamination of Drinking Water with *Toxoplasma gondii* Oocysts" in *Epidemiology and Infection*, Vol. 122, No. 2 (April, 1999).

<sup>24</sup> The City of Edmonton has had to take on a direct role in TNR, and in accommodating feral cats.



## EDUCATION

### Current Situation

As set out in section 3.21 of its *Services Agreement* with the City, NAC is expected to conduct a public education program "to further the care, feeding, and well-being of animals, and to publicize animal control within the City." In keeping with this requirement, NAC staff provide information and guidance to residents who visit the Pound & Adoption Centre. As well, in the course of their normal duties, ACOs engage with pet owners to help them understand bylaw requirements, and to raise awareness of animal issues and animal care. Staff also distribute — albeit infrequently and in small numbers — the information brochure titled *Dogs in Nanaimo* to dog owners who visit the Pound & Adoption Centre, and who use the City's parks.

The City understands that public education — a term that encompasses engagement, communication, and information — is an important component of every municipal service, Animal Control included. Indeed, in the case of Animal Control, education is critical to efforts to promote responsible pet ownership, build awareness of cat- and other animal-related issues, and ensure that pet owners understand and comply with the bylaw requirements, including those related to licencing. NAC's officers and staff share this view, and are strong advocates for animal welfare and responsible pet ownership. NAC staff do what they are able to do given resources available. Staff are limited, however, in the amount of time and attention they can devote to the development and delivery of a robust education program.

The implementation of the various changes put forward in this report, and the overall efficacy of the service, will be strengthened by additional public education and information on responsible pet ownership, animal-related issues, and animal control regulations. The City should consider developing an enhanced education capacity.

### Changes to Consider

To address the need for additional, more robust education, the City may wish to:

- increase the amount of animal control information available to the public, as well as the methods through which information is provided
- develop a modest "Pet Ambassador" program for direct engagement with pet owners in public areas (including parks) during the summer months

#### ➤ Information Program

There are many information resources on responsible pet ownership, animal care, the benefits of purchasing dog licences, tips on safe dog handling, guidance on interacting with strays, requirements of pet owners under the *Licensing and Control of Animals Bylaw*, and a variety of other topics that have been developed by local governments and animal welfare organizations, and that can be customized for use in Nanaimo. Once packaged, these resources can be



made available online under the Animal Control service at nanaimo.ca, with a link to the resource from the contractor's website.<sup>25</sup> Excerpts from the materials could be made available in hard copy for distribution at City recreation facilities, City Hall, the Pound & Adoption Centre, the SPCA Nanaimo & District Branch, branches of the Vancouver Island Regional Library, and other facilities.

The City's Communications Department has an important role to play in the development of an information program for the Animal Control Service, the provision of information materials, and the engagement of the public on key Animal Control topics. The Animal Control contractor (currently NAC) has a role to play, as well, as noted earlier. Only the City's own Communications staff, however, can ensure that the branding, messaging, and standards used in an information program are consistent with those used for other City services.

➤ **Pet Ambassadors**

In 2014, following a comprehensive review and overhaul of its animal control service, the Regional District of Central Okanagan created a Dog Ambassador program.

Under this program, RDCO hires two post-secondary students every summer (May to August), using funding from the Canada Summer Jobs Program, to proactively interact with dog owners in high-traffic parks and public areas of the Central Okanagan, primarily in the Cities of Kelowna and West Kelowna.<sup>26</sup> The Ambassadors are not authorized to issue bylaw offence notices, nor are they directed to issue warnings for violations — the issuing of tickets and warnings is the job of ACOs. Instead, the Ambassadors work to:

- remind owners of unlicensed dogs of the need to purchase licenses<sup>27</sup>
- provide information to dog owners — including owners with dogs that are off-leash — on the location of off-leash dog parks and dog beaches
- reward (with promotional items) dog owners who are demonstrating responsible pet ownership

By all accounts, RDCO's Dog Ambassador Program is well-received in the broader community, provides great public relations value to the service, and is an overall success. It balances and complements the enforcement arm of the service, which is performed by the ACOs. It represents a highly cost-effective way to spread, in a positive manner, information and materials on importance of responsible dog ownership, and on the requirements of the animal control service.

<sup>25</sup> The City of Edmonton and RDCO are two (of many) examples of local governments that provide useful education and information resources online.

<sup>26</sup> All four municipalities and two electoral areas of RDCO participate in the regional district's animal control service.

<sup>27</sup> Ambassadors have the ability to sell licenses in the field using hand-held payment machines.

Nanaimo should consider developing a similar Pet Ambassador program to operate in City parks and public areas. The program could be run out of the Bylaw Enforcement Division; students working in the program, however, would interact regularly with the City's Animal Control contractor.

## LICENCING AND CONTROL OF ANIMALS BYLAW

### Current Situation

The City has begun to review and modernize its current *Licensing and Control of Animals Bylaw*. As part of that effort, it will be important to ensure that any service changes from this report that are endorsed by the City are reflected in the bylaw updates. It will also be important to ensure that sections in the current bylaw that no longer reflect best practices in animal control are eliminated or revised.

### Changes to Consider

This report does not examine the current bylaw in detail, and does not provide a definitive list of changes to for the city to consider. Figure 3.1 does, however, identify and comment on some specific sections that the City may wish to include in its revisions.

**Figure 3.1**  
**Bylaw Changes to Consider**

Section	Topic	Comment
Preamble	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– sets out statutory authority for service</li> <li>– speaks to purpose of service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– opportunity to introduce and emphasize importance of responsible pet ownership</li> <li>– need to update statutory references</li> </ul>
Title	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– provides working title with emphasis on licencing and control</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– opportunity to emphasize responsible pet ownership by including in working title</li> </ul>
Interpretation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– identifies and defines key terms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– opportunity to modernize</li> <li>– consider removing reference to "Restricted Dogs", since no longer best practice (and not practicable) to target</li> <li>– consider changing "Vicious Dog" to "Aggressive Dog"</li> </ul>
Licensing of Dogs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– sets out requirement for dogs to be licenced</li> <li>– makes reference to pricing in Schedule A</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– need to restructure licence fees in Schedule A to differentiate between fixed and intact dogs, and to separate Aggressive Dogs</li> <li>– clarify that service dogs require licence, but at no cost</li> <li>– consider replacing permanent tag with annual coloured tags (different colour</li> </ul>

Section	Topic	Comment
		each year) to facilitate easy detection of current licences
Care and Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– section sets out restrictions on dogs in hot vehicles, tethering of dogs, and transportation of dogs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– opportunity to modernize section to reflect current best practices on tethering, and to add additional standards of care (e.g., prohibitions against forcing dogs to run, while leashed, beside bicycles)</li> </ul>
Cats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– sets out requirements for cat owners to follow</li> <li>– only one single section in current bylaw</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– opportunity to include provisions on identification, spaying and neutering, and cats at-large</li> <li>– need to include provisions on impoundment of cats</li> <li>– need to change impoundment fee schedule (Schedule B) to include impoundment fees and maintenance (boarding) fees, as well as ability to recover veterinary costs</li> <li>– impoundment fees should be tiered to reward and encourage sterilization</li> </ul>

## CHAPTER 4 RECOMMENDATIONS

This report has profiled the existing Animal Control Service at the City of Nanaimo, has identified a series of service-related issues for the City to address, and has outlined various changes for the City to consider. This final chapter of the report presents a set of recommendations that speak to the changes outlined. The chapter also provides comments on implementation.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Figure 4.1 sets out recommendations for each of the issues examined in Chapter 3.

**Figure 4.1  
Recommendations by Issue**

Issue	Recommendations
<b>Dog Licencing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="656 877 1382 1010">– THAT the City develop a communications strategy on the importance of licencing, and on licencing requirements, targeted at pet owners who need new licences, and at owners who must renew their existing licences</li> <li data-bbox="656 1056 1382 1115">– THAT the City enable new dog licences to be sold online at nanaimo.ca</li> <li data-bbox="656 1161 1382 1262">– THAT the City expand the number of sites at which new licences can be purchased in person, but only in the event that new licences cannot be offered for sale online</li> <li data-bbox="656 1308 1382 1409">– THAT the City develop a tiered approach to dog licence pricing with higher prices for intact dogs and aggressive dogs</li> <li data-bbox="656 1455 1382 1514">– THAT the City adopt a zero tolerance approach for failure-to-licence offences</li> <li data-bbox="656 1560 1382 1619">– THAT the City increase the failure-to-licence fee to <u>\$125</u> (<u>\$100</u> if paid within 14 days)</li> </ul>
<b>Scope of Service</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="656 1682 1382 1782">– THAT the City issue a request for proposals to select a contractor to deal with animal carcasses, other than those of cats and dogs, on public land</li> <li data-bbox="656 1829 1382 1887">– THAT the City transfer responsibility for dealing with dog-related noise complaints to the Animal Control Officers</li> </ul>

Issue	Recommendations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; This recommendation should be contingent on, and be implemented in conjunction with, a decision to transfer responsibility for dealing with animal carcasses, other than those of cats and dogs, to a contractor</li> </ul>
<p><b>Delivery Model</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– THAT the City retain the contract-based service delivery model for the Animal Control Service</li> <li>– THAT the City issue a request for proposals to select a contractor to deliver the Animal Control Service under a new services agreement, which will take effect on September 1, 2020</li> </ul>
<p><b>Level of Service</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– THAT the City provide the funding required to increase the number of Animal Control Officers by one full time equivalent (FTE) position</li> </ul>
<p><b>Pound &amp; Adoption Centre</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– THAT the City renovate the Pound &amp; Adoption Centre facility</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cats in Nanaimo</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– THAT the City require every owner of a cat to provide the cat with identification, such as a traceable tattoo or microchip, to enable the cat to be returned to the owner by Animal Control Service staff or another person</li> <li>– THAT the City require every owner of a cat that is permitted to go outside to have the cat spayed or neutered</li> <li>– THAT the City prohibit every owner of a cat from allowing the cat to be at large in a public place, or on another person's property, unless it is under the immediate charge and control of the owner or other person responsible for the animal</li> <li>– THAT the City, as part of any renovation of the Pound &amp; Adoption Centre, repurpose the north wing of the facility to serve as a "cat wing" for the proper intake, care, and impoundment of stray cats</li> <li>– THAT the City provide an appropriate, annual financial contribution in the form of a grant-in-aid to the not-for-profit Cat Nap Society to support the organization's work,</li> </ul>

Issue	Recommendations
	and to help ensure the sustainability of the Society as an agency focused on the control of feral cat populations
<b>Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– THAT the City develop information resources on responsible pet ownership, animal care, and the Animal Control Service, that can be made available to pet owners online and in hard copy at various locations</li> <li>– THAT the City develop a Pet Ambassador program, using funding from the Canada Summer Jobs Program, to engage with pet owners in high traffic public areas, and to educate the owners on the importance of responsible pet ownership, and the City's Animal Control Service</li> </ul>
<b>Licencing and Control of Animals Bylaw</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– THAT the City, as part of its efforts to update the <i>Licencing and Control of Animals Bylaw</i>, incorporate the provisions identified in Figure 3.1 of the <i>Animal Control Services Review Report</i></li> </ul>

### IMPLEMENTATION

At the time of writing, City officials are dealing with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pressure on municipal finances that the City is experiencing, and is expected to continue to experience, may limit the number of initiatives that Council and staff are able to implement in 2020.

It is anticipated that the City may need to postpone implementation — or possibly even consideration — of some of the recommendations presented in Figure 4.1 until 2021. The need to postpone action may affect, in particular, recommendations such as those related to level of service that call on the City to provide additional financial resources to the Animal Control Service.

COVID-19 notwithstanding, it may be possible to proceed with several of the recommendations in 2020, if the City chooses to endorse them. Recommendations related to dog licencing, scope of service, service delivery model, and the *Licencing and Control of Animals Bylaw*, may be able to be implemented in 2020, along with several of the recommendations related to cats in Nanaimo. The recommendation to issue a request for proposals for a contractor to begin service on September 1, 2020, must be acted on in the immediate future.