

Key Messages – Policy on Dogs and Dog Management Bylaw Public Consultation

Background:

In 2018, the Regulatory Committee resolved that while the current Auckland Council Policy on Dogs 2012 and Dog Management Bylaw 2012 are effective in managing dogs; some improvements can be made to address existing and emerging problems.

The council has recently completed a review of its policy on dogs and related bylaws, so it can continue to improve the way dogs are managed.

The main aim of the proposed changes is to make existing rules easier to communicate to the public and to ensure that information is presented more consistently, as well as improving dog management in Auckland.

[Public consultation](#) on these changes is open from 1 April to 10 May 2019.

Timeline for decision making

No changes have yet taken effect.

Following public consultation, all feedback received will be presented to the Deliberations Panel before a final decision is made. A final decision on amendments will be made by the Governing Body following feedback from the community consultation period. This is expected to be in June – July 2019.

You can read the full statement of proposal [here](#)

What are the key proposed changes?

Time and season definition

Time and season rules are used in popular places, during busy periods to avoid conflict between dogs and other users.

The decision to apply a time and season rule to a park or beach is made by local boards and is only applied to these specific areas.

The proposed changes standardise the time and season definition to make it easier for the public to know when and where they can take their dogs.

Currently, the policy has a definition of 'time and season' that is 10am–5pm from Labour Weekend until 1 March.

In the last five years, 13 local boards have been granted exemptions to this, meaning we now have 17 different time and season definitions being used across the region. This is a clear indication that the current definition is not fit for purpose.

The proposed new definition of 10am-7pm is for areas that already have the time and season rule. This would be in place from the Saturday of Labour Weekend to the 31 March.

This definition more closely reflects the current situation in most local board areas. About half the local boards already use this definition, while many others are either to 6pm or 6.30pm. Hibiscus and Bays Local Board is the only board that currently uses the original definition of 10am–5pm.

The alternative to having a regionally consistent time and season definition would be to have a default definition in the Policy and enable local boards to introduce variations to this in their areas.

We are also asking Aucklanders to consider this option to allow local boards to make variations to the regional time and season definition.

This would mean local boards would be able to customise the time and season definition to the needs of the community but will also result in ongoing inconsistency throughout the region.

Multiple dog ownership

We want to have a regionally consistent approach for dog owners to obtain a Multiple Dog Ownership License. Currently, some local boards require a licence for more than one dog, while other local board areas require a licence for more than two dogs. We want to standardise the approach and require dog owners living in an urban residential area with more than two dogs to apply for a licence.

This will also create an opportunity for our staff to work with dog owners to ensure that their property is best suited to transitioning to owning more than two dogs.

Menacing dogs

If a dog has been classified as ‘menacing’ due to behaviour, we are proposing that if the dog owner can provide evidence of taking a dog obedience course and has not had any further infringements in a 12-month period, then the owner can request the council to reassess their classification. While not a guarantee, it aims to incentivise responsible dog ownership.

Dog control

Currently, if a dog is found to be not under control more than once in a year, their owner must get them neutered due to the risk of indiscriminate breeding. Feedback from Animal Management has been that this is difficult to enforce. We are limited in what we can do under the law, as the Dog Control Act 1996 does not allow officers to neuter dogs that have been seized.

We are proposing clarifying these rules as part of the review to raise awareness with owners who do not comply with the neutering requirement that they could be fined.

Access rules

There are no proposed changes to local dog access rules (where dogs are allowed under control on leash, off leash or prohibited areas and designated dog exercise areas). Local dog access rules are determined by local boards.

The only access rules that have been specifically reviewed as part of this process are those in regional parks. These rules have not been changed since Auckland Council was formed in 2010. Regional parks rangers, biodiversity staff, mana whenua and local boards have provided advice on required changes.

The statement of proposal includes recommendations for dog access rule changes in the following four regional parks:

- Glenfern Sanctuary
- Muriwai Regional Park
- Long Bay Regional Park
- Waitākere Ranges Regional Park - Whatipu

Communicate dog access rules better

Another proposed change is to the way that dog access rules are presented to the public. We know that dog owners want to know where they can take the dogs. To make this easier, we are proposing to list where dog owners can take their dog off-leash, designated dog exercise areas, where a time and season rule applies, and where dogs are prohibited for the protection of wildlife.

This isn't about changing the status of areas, just the way we present information so that it is consistent and easy to understand. Future decisions about the type of access rules that apply at local parks and beaches will continue to be made by local boards.

Extension to protect fauna

The current policy and bylaw allow temporary changes to be made to dog access rules for the protection of vulnerable wildlife. This is an important lever to ensure that the council can adapt to Auckland's changing natural environment and habitats.

It is now proposed that this should be extended for the protection of flora. This would allow for flexible changes to access rules to protect against concerns that threaten Auckland's environment, such as kauri dieback disease.