

Masterton District Council
161 Queen Street
Masterton 5810
New Zealand

13 November 2024

By Email

Submission on behalf of the New Zealand Veterinary Association Te Pae Kīrehe regarding the review of Masterton District Council's Dog Policy and Control of Dogs Bylaw

The New Zealand Veterinary Association Te Pae Kīrehe (NZVA) is the largest membership organisation representing veterinarians in Aotearoa New Zealand. We support members through leadership, education, guidance and advocacy.

In compiling feedback for this response, the NZVA has sought input from the Companion Animal Veterinarians Branch of the NZVA.

Masterton District Council's proposed bylaw aligns well with NZVA's principles of responsible dog ownership, which emphasise that, to prevent negative impacts on people, animals and the environment, dog owners should:

- remove dog faeces from public places
- manage nuisance behaviors like excessive barking
- prevent dogs from straying
- keep dogs on a leash in public areas
- prevent dogs from preying on other animals or birds
- ensure dogs are safe to be in the community.

Recommendations

The rationale for the Policy is clear, however we offer the following points for consideration.

Purpose (P1)

- Consider adding the following wording to bullet point 5:

Allows for an enriched and positive life (or positive welfare outcomes) for both dogs and their owners, where the critical role exercise and recreation play in the welfare (overall health) of both dogs and humans.

This wording factors in the broader role that exercise and recreation play in the welfare of dogs (and humans) outside of the physical health benefits alone.

Purpose (P2)

- Consider including the prevention of potential risks to dogs from the public or natural environments as a valuable addition to the bylaw's purpose.

Responsible Dog Owner Status (P4)

- One criterion for Responsible Dog Owner Status is that the dog must be desexed. It may be helpful to clarify what qualifies as ‘desexed’, given that sterilisation methods vary (for example, gonad removal, chemical sterilisation, or hormone-preserving procedures such as hysterectomy or vasectomy). Including these options within the bylaw would provide clearer guidance.
- Additionally, DNA testing could be considered for dogs under Responsible Dog Owner Status. As a reliable form of identification, DNA genotyping would help identify dogs involved in incidents like livestock attacks.

Desexing of Menacing Dogs (P5)

- If alternative sterilisation methods are acknowledged in the bylaw, we recommend specifying that menacing dogs should be surgically desexed to ensure consistency.

Health of Dogs

- Clause 8.2(a) notes an exemption for working dogs in season. We request clarification on whether this exemption also applies to disability assistance dogs.
- Additionally, the Policy states that if a dog cannot be rehomed after reasonable efforts, it may be euthanised. The term ‘humanely’ may be unnecessary here, as euthanasia inherently implies humane practice.

Definitions (P8)

- Under ‘Desexed’, the bylaw states that a dog is spayed or castrated but does not include vasectomised dogs. We recommend vasectomised dogs are considered desexed if the goal is reproductive control. This would also apply to female dogs that have undergone gonadal-sparing surgery or a hysterectomy.

Shelter (P15)

- The bylaw requires adequate shelter for dogs. We recommend including specific minimum sizes for kennels and kennels with runs, as outlined in the Code of Welfare for Dogs 2018:

Table 2 Recommended minimum sizes for kennels and kennels with runs attached.

Size of dog	Kennel only	Kennel plus run
Small (<7kg)	900mm x 700mm	500mm x 500mm plus 600mm x 1m
Medium (7-20kg)	1.2m x 800mm	600mm x 700mm plus 800mm x 1m
Large (21-40kg)	1m x 1.5m	800mm x 800mm plus 1m x 800mm
Extra large (>40kg)	1m x 2m	1.2m x 1.2m plus 1.2m x 2.4m

Please note this is guidance only and expert advice should be sought where there is any uncertainty.

Dogs Becoming a Nuisance or Injurious to Health (P16)

- In clause 9.1, we suggest that the purpose should specify preventing dogs from becoming a nuisance or injurious to human health.

Limitation on the Number of Dogs Allowed (P17)

- Consider adding 'breeder limits' for active dog breeders, who may own more than three dogs due to the nature of their work.

Information on early neutering

The NZVA has also been asked to provide information on early neutering, a topic evolving rapidly. The latest evidence-based guidance can be found in the 2024 World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA) guidelines on reproductive control for dogs and cats.

Early-age desexing (EAD) or pediatric spaying/neutering is practiced to varying degrees globally. Although some veterinary organisations endorse EAD for specific situations and age groups, it is crucial to carefully weigh the evidence-based associated risks and benefits. In most cases, pediatric EAD for both male and female dogs is discouraged due to potential adverse health effects, with growing evidence advising against it in certain dog populations. However, exceptions often apply in shelter environments, where permanent sterilisation before homing is prioritised. In giant breed dogs, all attempts should be made to delay desexing until after puberty.

For some groups of privately owned dogs, factors such as breed, genetic predisposition and lifestyle indicate that delaying desexing until after puberty offers health benefits. Veterinarians and owners should discuss these risks and benefits in detail to determine the most appropriate age for desexing, as it is no longer a 'one size fits all' situation.

Thank you for considering our feedback and recommendations.

Nāku iti noa, nā,



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