



**City of Kingston
Information Report to Council
Report Number 18-002**

To: Mayor and Members of Council
From: Lanie Hurdle, Commissioner, Community Services
Resource Staff: Paige Agnew, Director, Planning, Building & Licensing Services
Date of Meeting: December 19, 2017
Subject: Responsible Pet Ownership Program Status Report

Executive Summary:

The Responsible Pet Ownership Program (RPOP), endorsed by Council in 2013, is in its fourth year of implementation. Staff provided Council with a status report in June 2015 and August 2016. This information report provides data and updates, up to November 2017, on the implementation of the program's recommendations, grouped under the following categories:

- Pet Licensing, Voluntary Pet Registration and Promotion of Pet Tags
- Microchip Requirements
- Unlicensed Backyard Breeders/Regulation of Rabbit Breeders
- Implementation of Pet Store Restrictions
- At Large
- Free Ride Home
- Spay/Neuter Programs
- Service Enhancements and Resource Requirements
- Public Education and Communications

The RPOP continues to show positive results and outcomes, particularly as it relates to compliance with the requirement to license pets. Since the implementation of the online pet registration service, DocuPet, in December 2015, the number of pet licences issued has increased 63%, from 4,252 in 2015 to 6,827 as of November, 2017. This type of growth in less than two (2) years is unprecedented for not only pet licensing but for most city services. This is a result of how effective and customer friendly DocuPet has been by not only providing an easy and simple solution to pet licensing, but also by providing additional services such as the lost and found pet program and pet owner rewards.

December 19, 2017

Page 2 of 8

One of the features of the online registration service is a lost pet service. When an individual finds a pet, they are able to look up the pet's information online using the tag number. If the pet owner has chosen not to make their contact information available to the public, the finder can fill out a found pet report online and their information is emailed directly to the found pet's owner. DocuPet will contact the finder and the pet's owner to facilitate the reuniting of the lost pet with its owner. This process has resulted in the return of 66 lost pets.

DocuPet and the city continue to promote awareness of the need to license pets by advertising online, in mail-outs to pet owners, with signage around the city, and via a door to door awareness campaign. DocuPet's door to door awareness campaign has so far visited 10,000 homes in Kingston, resulting in the issuance of more than 550 new pet licenses.

In 2016, city staff were granted the authority to change the funding distribution within the approved budget between the spay and neuter voucher program and the Trap/Neuter/Vaccinate/Return (TNVR) Program, as required, based on need and demand. This approach has enabled staff to respond quickly to community needs.

As directed in 2016, city staff are also continuing discussions with the Kingston Advocates for Responsible Pet Ownership (KARPO) Committee to explore potential partnerships that would enable the establishment of a community based high volume and low cost spay/neuter clinic.

Recommendation:

This report is for information purposes only.

December 19, 2017

Page 4 of 8

Options/Discussion:

This information report provides data and updates, up to November 2017, on the implementation of the RPOP's recommendations, grouped under the following categories:

1. Pet Licensing, Voluntary Pet Registration and Promotion of Pet Tags

In 2015, the city contracted DocuPet to provide an on-line pet licensing service which included a number of other features such as the lost and found pet service and pet owner rewards program. DocuPet is a small, innovative business that started in Kingston and still has its head office here. It is currently being utilized in 21 communities in Ontario, New Brunswick and British Columbia, and is scheduled to launch in the United States in 2018. DocuPet has created 22 full-time and 6 part-time jobs. Although not directly related to the RPOP, the growth of this Kingston technology based start-up business is part of Council's strategic priority to create a smart economy.

Since the implementation of the online pet registration service, DocuPet, in December 2015, the number of pet licences issued has increased 63 percent, from 4,252 in 2015 to 6,827 as of November, 2017. By comparison, the city issued 4,526 pet tags in 2013; 4,361 pet tags in 2014; and 4,252 in 2015.

In 2016, 4,882 dog and cat licences were issued. Of this total, 2,779 represented first time registrations and 2,103 were renewals. Of the 2,779 first time registrations, 2,117 qualified for a free licence, the pet being under the age of 6 months or over the age of six months but spayed or neutered.

Up to November 2017, 6,827 dog and cat licences were issued. Of this total, 3,208 represented first time registrations and 3,619 were renewals. Of the 3,208 first time registrations, 2,898 qualified for a free licence, the pet being under the age of 6 months (672) or over the age of six months but spayed or neutered (2,226).

As an incentive for owners of more than two dogs or cats, a multi animal discount when registering or renewing a third and subsequent pet of the same species is available. In 2016, 96 pet owners benefitted from this pricing incentive, while 172 were eligible for this discount in 2017.

The city pays a commission to agencies such as the Kingston Humane Society, animal hospitals and pet stores for the issuance of pet tags, including for first time free registrations, to compensate them for providing this service to their customers and clients and to encourage the continuation of this service. In 2016, a total of 1,136 pet licenses were issued by outside agencies, including 546 at the Kingston Humane Society. To date in 2017, 998 pet tags were issued by outside agencies, including 614 tags issued at the Kingston Humane Society.

In 2016, approximately 2,000 pet owners did not renew their pet's annual license. The license renewal compliance rate improved in 2017 to 73 percent, but 1,123 pet owners still have not renewed their pet's annual licence.

December 19, 2017

Page 5 of 8

DocuPet and the city are making the community more aware of the need to license pets by advertising online, in mail-outs to pet owners, with signage around the city and via a door to door awareness campaign.

In 2017, in addition to automated phone calls allowing pet owners to immediately connect with DocuPet customer service representatives and renew their licence over the phone, DocuPet sent pet owners 5,881 email reminders and followed up with 3,651 warning letters.

DocuPet's door to door awareness campaign, which has so far visited 10,000 homes in Kingston, has resulted in the issuance of more than 550 new pet licenses. The campaign involves full-time representatives placing door hangers at each residence along assigned routes. The representatives carry two door hangers with them. One is for residences at which they clearly identify a pet, or that DocuPet's records show to be home to an expired pet licence. This door hanger explains that a pet has been identified at the residence and that this pet must be licensed. A second door hanger simply contains information about the by-law and the requirement that pets must be licensed in Kingston.

The DocuPet representatives are instructed not to knock on doors or ring doorbells, to stay on clearly marked paths, and while they are informed and trained to answer any questions asked of them, they do not seek to interact with pet owners. They cannot take payment for licences and they do not visit homes after 5:30 p.m.

The only ways that DocuPet representatives identify if a pet is located at a residence include:

1. Visible "Beware of Pet" signage or "Save my Pet" sticker;
2. Obvious signs of pet activity in front of the home or on the front step, such as dog dishes;
or
3. Seeing or hearing a pet at the home.

The city received a few complaints from residents through social media related to the door to door campaign which were thoroughly reviewed by staff. City staff were able to determine that the complaints received were not a result of DocuPet door to door campaign employees.

As part of the contract with the City of Kingston, DocuPet also introduced a pet owner rewards program which includes access to discounts for various pet services.

2. Microchip Requirements

In 2016, the number of licensed pets with a microchip represented 26% of all licensed pets. This represents a decrease from previous years in the percentage of licensed pets that were micro-chipped. As of the end of November 2017, the percentage of licensed pets with a microchip has increased to 54%.

3. Unlicensed Backyard Breeders & Regulate Rabbit Breeders

Licensing and Enforcement staff continue to investigate complaints of unlicensed breeding facilities and to pro-actively monitor online sales of dogs, cats and rabbits. In 2016, staff investigated 6 complaints received from the general public and 4 additional investigations were

December 19, 2017

Page 6 of 8

conducted based on pro-active monitoring. The investigations resulted in 10 written warnings issued to persons found to have been breeding without a license. To date in 2017, staff investigated 3 complaints received from the general public and conducted 7 additional investigations based on pro-active monitoring. The investigations resulted in 10 written warnings issued to persons found to have been breeding without a licence.

4. Implementation of Pet Store Restrictions

The restrictions on the sale of dogs, cats and rabbits in pet stores took effect on November 13, 2013. No reports or complaints have been received regarding non-compliance with these restrictions.

5. At Large

Animal Control Officers have been scheduled at times of the day when more off-leash violations are occurring, and are equipped to patrol city parks and trails by bicycle. To date in 2017, 231 written warnings have been issued and 67 charges laid for dogs found at-large.

6. Free Ride Home

If a dog found at large or stray is licensed, the first ride home is being provided at no charge if the pet owner can be contacted and is able to receive the animal prior to the pet being impounded. Officers have returned 10 lost pets to their owners in 2017, thus avoiding a trip to the pound.

Even in instances where a subsequent at-large violation has occurred, Animal Control Officers may still return the dog to its owner rather than deliver it to the pound, but the owner could also be fined.

7. Spay/Neutering Programs

\$25,000 of the funding for spay/neuter programs is directed annually towards reducing the feral cat population. A feral cat is a cat that is not owned and is not sufficiently socialized to humans to be adopted (unlike stray cats which may have been owned at one point). Spay Neuter Kingston Initiative's Trap/Neuter/Vaccinate/Return (TNVR) Program targets identified cat colonies with the goal of stabilizing each colony, ultimately resulting in the natural dying out of the colony.

In 2016, the Spay Neuter Kingston Initiative (SNKI) utilized \$14,394.18 of the \$25,000 allocated funding to successfully trap, neuter, vaccinate and return 105 feral cats and to stabilize 25 colonies, including 4 large colonies (containing more than 10 cats) and 21 small colonies (containing less than 10 cats), at an average cost of \$137.09 per cat.

In 2017, to the end of October, \$11,296.99 of the \$25,000 has been spent on this program, resulting in the trap, neuter, vaccinate and return of 74 feral cats and the stabilization of 26 colonies, including 3 large colonies and 23 small colonies, at an average cost of \$152.67 per cat.

In August 2016, Council granted staff the authority to change the funding distribution within the approved budget between the spay and neuter voucher program and the TNVR program, as

December 19, 2017

Page 7 of 8

required, based on need and demand. Later in 2016, and again in October 2017, unspent funds originally allocated to the TNVR program were re-allocated to the voucher program.

In 2016, a total of 114 vouchers were redeemed (of a total of 126 issued – 26 additional vouchers issued from funds re-allocated from the TNVR program).

In 2017, 85 vouchers have been redeemed to date, while 20 vouchers, including 5 additional vouchers issued from reallocated funds, have not yet been redeemed.

In 2016, Council directed staff to continue to explore potential partnerships to enable the establishment of a community based high volume and low cost spay/neuter clinic. A clinic of this type would be intended to provide spay and neuter services to pet owners who may not be able to afford the total cost of these procedures, even after redeeming a \$250 voucher. Discussions regarding this initiative have taken place at periodic meetings of the KARPO Committee. In 2016, Council approved the appointment of a city Councillor to this community based Committee. The Committee is hoping to have a business proposal to establish a high volume and low cost spay/neuter clinic ready to submit to city staff early in the new year. City staff will work with KARPO to present something to Council later in the year.

8. Service Enhancements and Resource Requirements

In December, 2015, the city's online pet registration service, DocuPet, was launched, providing for the provision of an online pet license registration service. The online licensing service includes a rewards program and an interactive online forum for lost and found pets.

One of the features of the online registration service is a lost pet service. Each pet tag has a unique code on it. This code is associated with an online profile that the pet owner controls. If a pet becomes lost, the pet owner can send out a Lost Pet Report notifying DocuPet, the local shelter, the city and any other pet owners in the community who have agreed to be part of the Lost Pet Brigade. Nearly 20% of pet owners in the system opt to help find lost pets when they are alerted.

When an individual finds a pet, they are able to look up the pet's information online using the pet's tag number. If the pet owner has chosen not to make their contact information available to the public, the finder can fill out a found pet report online and their information is emailed directly to the found pet's owner. DocuPet contacts the finder and the pet's owner to facilitate the reuniting of the lost pet with its owner. This process has resulted in the return of 66 lost pets.

9. Education and Communications

Licensing and Enforcement staff actively promote the RPOP with customers at the Licensing Office service counter and in the community. In an effort to communicate with children about the program, a presentation of the RPOP was provided to Grade 5 and Grade 6 students participating in the Beyond Classrooms program.

The city and DocuPet continue to promote pet licensing at various community events including DocuPet's attendance at the "Big Paws" and "Doggie Dip" events and city staff's attendance at

December 19, 2017

Page 8 of 8

the Kingston and Frontenac Housing Corporation's summer BBQ, Queen's sidewalk sale and the University District Housing Fair.

Existing Policy/By-Law:

By-Law Number 2004-144 A By-Law to Regulate Animals

Notice Provisions:

Not applicable

Accessibility Considerations:

Not applicable

Financial Considerations:

The funds for these initiatives have been allocated and approved in the existing operating budget.

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Exhibits Attached:

Not applicable