

Subject: Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw**APPROVALS:****Annette Antoniak**_____
Director_____
Chief Administrative Officer**Recommended Motion:**

1. THAT Bylaw No. 19/025, being the Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw, be read a first time.
2. THAT Bylaw No.19/026, being a bylaw to amend the Community Standards Appeal Committee Bylaw No.19/001, be read a first time.

Summary:

The Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw has been updated to replace the current Animal Control Bylaw No. 02/031. Administration recommends that the Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw No. 19/025 be read a first time and that Bylaw No. 19/026 to amend the Community Standards Appeal Committee Bylaw be read a first time.

Background:

The proposed Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw will improve the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo's ability to hold animal owners responsible for the nuisance activities of their pets. It will also strengthen the ability of Bylaw Enforcement Officers to protect the community from aggressive dog behavior without having a significant impact on resources. In preparation of updating the bylaw, the Bylaw Services team conducted a survey seeking community input. 796 online surveys were completed and seven face to face public consultations occurred. From the feedback received and a review of best practices in other communities, the following changes are included in the Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw:

- A pet license is valid one year from date of purchase and is renewable annually.
- Fines have increased (Schedule B) and additional specified fines have been included to provide the public with more certainty on the consequences of failing to adhere to the bylaw. The fine increases were determined through benchmarking with other communities.

- A Nuisance Animal definition has been included, allowing for an animal to be declared a nuisance animal where it is involved in 3 or more infractions under the bylaw. This will facilitate enhanced tracking of animals involved in frequent offences enabling bylaw services to respond more quickly to future incidents involving the animal.
- An Appeal process is now available through the Community Standards Appeal Committee, instead of directly to Council, where an animal has been declared vicious or an animal license has been refused or suspended.
- A limit has been imposed on the number of dogs that can be walked by one person at one time.
- Increased regulation of off-leash areas, giving bylaw enforcement officers more tools to address any issues of animal or owner misuse of this public amenity.
- The bylaw will be enforceable in all wards in the region.

During the development of the bylaw, staff made every effort to be cognizant of what others' experiences were and what the role of animal control is. It was determined that licensing is an important part of being a responsible pet owner. Not only does it help connect an owner to a lost pet, but it allows animal control services to:

- Educate the public; and
- Provide emergency shelter after house fires, car accidents, and police incidents that require the removal and care of pets.

Pets can be a wonderful addition to both a household and a neighborhood, as they can help keep people active, provide companionship, and add diversity and vibrancy to the community.

Based on the responses to the survey, feedback from citizens and review of other community's bylaws and best practices, the proposed Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw is being brought forward to Council. Consideration was given to what would be enforceable and what could be put in place without causing a burden on resources or increasing operating budgets significantly, while still holding animal owners responsible.

Rationale for Recommendation:

- The proposed Bylaw reflects research on best practices in other communities in Alberta and incorporates concerns raised by residents through the public engagement process.

Strategic Priorities:

Responsible Government

Attachments:

1. Proposed Bylaw No. 19/025 - Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw

2. Proposed Bylaw No. 19/026 - Amendment to Community Standards Appeal Committee Bylaw

Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw PowerPoint Presentation