



# INFORMATION REPORT

<b>TO:</b>	Chair and Members Planning Committee
<b>COMMITTEE DATE:</b>	February 2, 2016
<b>SUBJECT/REPORT NO:</b>	Animal Services - Dog Licensing Update (PED16024) (City Wide)
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	City Wide
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<b>SIGNATURE:</b>	

## Overview:

The Animal Services Section continues to focus on increasing the compliance rate for Dog Licensing in 2015 and 2016. The goals are to educate the Citizens of Hamilton on responsible dog ownership, to ensure compliance with the By-law with a focus on increasing return rates of lost dogs and to reduce the dependency on the tax levy for the support of animal care. Significant work was completed in 2015 that increased licensing sales, created a unique marketing campaign for licensing awareness and developed efficiencies with the automation of on-line licensing.

## Background:

The licensing of dogs assists the City in reuniting a dog with their owner if the dogs get lost or runs a stray. The program gives the dog a free ride home, helps staff contact the owner in emergency situations and keeps the dog from having to be housed at the Shelter until claimed. Dog licensing encourages responsible dog ownership and supports leash-free parks. The Licensing Fee also supports the City's Animal Services Program, providing for, among other things, the care and feeding of lost or stray dogs and the placement of homeless animals.

Over the past ten years, dog licensing has increased by 60%, from 20,000 tags in 2005 to 35,000 licensed dogs in 2015. Our own local research in the Summer of 2015 determined that the compliance rate for dog licensing in the City of Hamilton is approximately fifty percent (50%), with the potential of additional licensing of 35,000 to 40,000 dogs in our City (See Appendix "A" attached to this Report).

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In 2015, the budgeted revenue target for Animal Services in relation to dog licensing was \$1.2M. Although the actuals are closer to \$1.0M, the goal within the next few years is to double that rate with a target of an 85% to 90% compliance rate. Dog licensing not only helps in controlling stray animals, but also assists in responsible dog ownership ensuring the safety of animals and our community.

To increase our compliance rate, Animal Services hired two university students for the Summer of 2015 to survey and sell dog tags throughout the City. They focused their efforts on education and awareness using official Orders to Comply and later a follow-up by Animal Services Officers to ensure compliance. During their 13 weeks, the students sold 1,000 dog licences and generated revenue which will equate to approximately \$40,000 annually. The work they completed showed that out of the homes canvassed, 18.5% of all homes had unlicensed dogs, while 19% to 26% of homes were multi-dog households.

Coupled with the Student Program, Animal Services launched the new “TAGS” mascot that attended community events and schools educating the community on the importance of licensing their dogs. “TAGS” was first introduced at the Hamilton Bulldogs game and the community was involved in naming our new mascot.



Animal Services has also developed a new Facebook page to feature the Shelter and again to drive home the message of the benefits of dog licensing. A marketing campaign was also developed to educate and promote Responsible Dog Ownership and the value of licensing your dog. Additionally, Animal Services vehicles now have signage on the rear window that promotes the importance of dog licensing.



In a review of the administrative process, Animal Services is no longer sending out a warning letter to advise dog owners that their dog tags are overdue. The License invoice is sent to the dog owner and a courtesy phone call is placed; however, once the renewal is past 60 days, the Officers are sent for investigation and enforcement. Failure to license your dog carries a fine of \$180. Animal Services also uses Fees for Services if an Officer is required to do additional follow-up with the dog owner who refused or fails to follow the By-law and license their dog. These fees can range from \$130 to \$262 per inspection.

Animal Services are also working on completing the “on-line” licensing and renewal procedures to make it user friendly for citizens in the community to license their dogs. A new Permanent Tag Program being implemented in 2016 will save costs in mailing and replacement tags by approximately \$30,000 a year. This will make it more convenient to renew dog licences and will support the new web-based Licensing Program.

**Results:**

Dog licensing helps reunite lost dogs to their owners. Since 2012, Animal Services, through Licensing, has been able to identify 968 lost dogs through dog licensing and have expedited their safe return without having the dogs picked up and brought into the Shelter. Dog licensing gives the lost dog a free ride home. It reunites owners and their dogs without the worry that the dog is in traffic or other dangerous situations.

The licensing of dogs by Hamilton Animal Services helps support one of Public Health Services’ mandates by acting as a community partner educating the dog owner(s) that rabies immunization is a legal requirement for all dogs over three months old. The paperwork for licensing a dog may actually remind the owner that their dog’s rabies immunization is not current, prompting them to get their dog vaccinated and taking a step toward rabies prevention in Hamilton. If dog owners are prompted to vaccinate their dogs due to a new dog licence or renewal, the risk of rabies transmission from dog to person is reduced.

Significant work has also been done to reduce euthanasia rates at the Shelter. The euthanasia rate for dogs in 2015 was 8%, compared to 28% in 2006. Also in 2015, 54% of all dogs were returned home because of licensing, while 36% of dogs in our Shelter were rehomed.

In 2016, Animal Services will be teaming up with Mohawk College for a Co-op Student Program to continue to educate citizens and sell dog licences door-to-door in an effort to increase the compliance rate. The Summer Student Program will be expanded in 2016 to include two teams to build on the success of the 2015 Summer Program.

Upon completion of the on-line registration project in the Spring of 2016, Animal Services intends to host an Amnesty and Educational Program driving new and renewals of dog licensing to the on-line web-based system in our continued effort to increase compliance within the City.

The Licensing Project Final Report prepared by the summer university students identifies the overall success of the Program and the compliance rate within the community and the analysis of Dog-to-Home ratio. With the continued work in Licensing, we can ensure responsible dog ownership while protecting the community.

### **Appendices and Schedules Attached**

Appendix "A" to Report PED16024 – Summer Licensing Project Final Report

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