



Hamilton

# INFORMATION REPORT

<b>TO:</b>	Chair and Members Planning Committee
<b>COMMITTEE DATE:</b>	June 14, 2016
<b>SUBJECT/REPORT NO:</b>	Rabies Update - Animal Services (PED16137) (City Wide)
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	City Wide
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<b>SIGNATURE:</b>	

## Council Direction:

N/A

## Information:

The outbreak of rabies within the City of Hamilton over the past several months is having an impact on both the staff resources and budget of Animal Services.

In December of 2015, Animal Services responded to two dogs at large in the area of an elementary school. The dogs were impounded and placed in an Animal Services' vehicle for transport back to their owner. While inside the vehicle, one of the dogs escaped it's cage and tore into another cage holding a sick raccoon. The contact between the two animals prompted the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) to test the raccoon and it was found to be infected with rabies. Rabies had not been detected in the Province of Ontario for the past ten years and this test signalled a return of the disease and the need for closer monitoring of the wildlife population.

Working closely with the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR), Animal Services has provided 778 rabies vector species (RVS) samples to date. As of April 22, 2016, 55 raccoons and 29 skunks have tested positive for the disease, which equates to 11% of all animals provided and tested.

The outbreak has changed the deployment of resources for Animal Services, with a response of suspected rabies vector species (RVS) moved to a top priority. In order to ensure public safety, the Officer Assistance Fee, approved by Council on September 23, 2015, to remove cadavers from private property (Item 9 of Planning Committee

Report 15-014), is now suspended in relation to all skunks and raccoons. However, there will be a negative impact on the revenue.

Animal Services has also suspended the pilot program with Public Works for the removal of cadavers on roadways as the potential for rabies infection by untrained staff is a risk. This has added additional workload to the Animal Services front-line staff. In the first four months of 2016, Animal Services has picked up 700 cadavers, which is a 50% increase from the previous year.

The Ministry of Labour (MOL) attended Animal Services in February, 2016 to examine the safety procedures for the handling of animals and cadavers that may be infected with rabies. New protocols have been established at the shelter and for the front line, as well as additional equipment for the protection of staff and to support the monitoring of rabies. The current expenditure for the additional equipment is approximately \$20,000. Two Animal Services' vehicles which were purchased this year required re-designing to better segregate and transport domestic animals and wildlife to ensure the safety of staff and the community. The outfitting of vehicles has increased by \$15,000, but is offset by the reduced cost of purchasing smaller vehicles.

There has been a 22% increase in call volume from 3,242 calls in 2015 to 4,147 in 2016. This is a direct result of the community requesting assistance in response to found or sick wildlife. Animal Services' Officers are also spending more time on calls either educating the public, or tracking down suspected infected animals. The workload has increased to the point that Management has developed an Alternative Response for cadaver pick up using existing staff and a work-accommodated member from another Division. This has relieved some of the workload from the front-line Officers.

Since there has been an increase in euthanasia of sick rabies vector animals by our front-line staff, Management is monitoring the impact on our staff and are currently consulting with Public Health Services and Human Resources staff along with Hamilton Health Sciences to develop a wellness program to assist our team.

Public inquiries about the MNR bait drop, calls of suspected sick animals and general sightings of wildlife has increased the workload as our staff seek to educate the public on the risks and the City's response to rabies.

Since the discovery of rabies in Hamilton, Animal Services, in conjunction with all our partners including OMAFRA, MNR and Public Health Services, have responded to the rabies outbreak to ensure public confidence and safety are paramount. Included as Appendix "A" to this Report is an overview of the rabies outbreak and the impact that it has had, and will continue to have, on Animal Services operations and staff.

Although there have been additional expenditures in relation to equipment, veterinary services and staffing, the Animal Services response to rabies has been maintained within our current Operating Budget due to operational efficiencies and an increase of dog licensing compliance.

**APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED:**

Appendix "A": Overview and Impacts of the Rabies Outbreak

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