

ANIMAL BYLAW – PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

WHAT WE HEARD REPORT
September 2022

(Phase 1 & 2)

INTRODUCTION

Between October 2020 and February 2021, we asked residents for their input to help inform a new bylaw – the Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw. Hundreds of Red Deerians told us their top issues related to pet ownership, suggestions about keeping animals in the city, and ideas for solutions to their issues. This report is a summary of what we heard from that public participation, and how the public influenced our the draft Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw.

WHAT WE HEARD

Below is a summary of issues we heard from participants pertaining to keeping animals in the city:

- Cats roaming (268 mentions)
- Dogs roaming Off-Leash (107 mentions)
- Dog feces (93 mentions)
- Dogs barking (60 mentions)
- Want to have chickens (31 mentions)
- Aggressive dogs (26 mentions)
- Costs and process for licensing (23 mentions)
- Too many pets in household (19 mentions)
- Want more/ better off-leash areas (18 mentions)
- Don't want livestock in city (17 mentions)
- Lack of spay/ neuter programs/ incentives (13 mentions)
- More people want bees (9 mentions)
- Skunks causing problems (7 mentions)

Summary of suggestions we heard about keeping animals in the city:

- Increased enforcement of bylaws (180 mentions)
- Implement cat licensing (63 mentions)
- Enhanced public education (38 mentions)
- Provide more cat/ skunk trapping (29 mentions)

Participants were asked to specify, in detail, issues with pets that they experienced. Below is a summary of those concerns:

Cats Roaming (268 mentions):

- Community members are concerned about the large amount of cats that are roaming free in the City. Concerns include property damage (dug up flower beds, and scratched fences and vehicles), predatory behaviour to wild birds, aggravation for pets that are kept within household or property limits, unwanted feces and odor from spraying, and the health risks from exposure to cat feces.

Dogs Roaming Off-leash (107 mentions):

- Community members are concerned about dogs being walked off-leash or roaming free because frequently the owners do not have adequate control over the dog, which can result in rambunctious or aggressive behavior toward people and /or other pets.

Dog Feces (93 mentions):

- Community members are frustrated with dog feces left both in off leash parks and in the community at large.

Dogs Barking (60 mentions):

- City residents are feeling frustrated by the inability to enjoy peace and quiet in their homes and yards and have harmonious relationships with their neighbours, owing to excessively noisy dogs. They report that the current system for having bylaw / animal control deal with this issue is highly onerous and inefficient.

Want to Have Chickens (31 mentions):

- Red Deerians are largely in favor of being able to raise chickens on their properties and would like to see the ability to do so enhanced, so that more families could attain permits and benefit from this activity.

Aggressive Dogs (26 mentions):

- Citizens are concerned that aggressive breeds / dangerous dogs can and have seriously injured or traumatized people and pets and that not enough is being done to prevent this from happening.

Cost and Process for Animal Licenses (23 mentions):

- The majority of pet owners are in favor of licensing both cats and dogs; however, they would like to see the process streamlined. Making the application available online has been beneficial, but they believe that the fees, which are higher than nearby municipalities, may be reduced, along with other adjustments.

Too Many Pets in Some Households (19 mentions):

- A number of community members have concerns around animal welfare and think that it may be beneficial to have smaller limits on the number of pets allowed per household, unless a special kennel / breeder license is acquired.

Want More / Better Off-leash Areas (18 mentions):

- Red Deerians love having off-leash dog parks. However, they would like to see additional, small parks in neighbourhoods to allow for training and less crowding and they are also requesting enhanced safety features such as gates and fencing.

Don't Want Farm Animals in City (17 mentions):

- Some community members are concerned about having “farm” animals (pigs, goats, sheep, fowl, etc.) in the City. Their concerns include noise, odor, attraction of predators, and health / hygiene issues.

Lack of Spay / Neuter Program / Incentives (13 mentions):

- There are residents who feel that there are too many cats and dogs not being cared for and that increased access to and affordability of spay/neuter clinics would be beneficial.

More People Want Bees (9 mentions):

- Some City residents have expressed a desire to keep bees within City limits. They see this endeavor as being an environmental benefit.

Skunks Causing Problems (7 mentions):

- Citizens are expressing concern about the numbers of skunks in various neighbourhoods and the shortage of means to deal with them and their nuisance activities.

RESIDENT SUGGESTIONS TO ADDRESS ISSUES:

Increased Enforcement of Bylaws (180 mentions):

- Overwhelmingly, community members want to see pet owners complying with the laws around off-leash animals, animal feces, and barking, etc. Despite the additional expense, most stated the need for more animal control patrols, hours of service, number of staff, etc.

Implement Cat Licensing (63 mentions):

- Red Deerians strongly voiced their support for licensing of cats. This was largely a matter of equity, with dogs already requiring licenses and also a possible means for reducing roaming and feral cats.

Enhanced Public Education (38 mentions):

- Many residents believe that a campaign and other educational tools aimed at raising public awareness of the animal bylaws and responsibilities of pet ownership would support the efforts of bylaw officers.

Provide More Cat / Skunk Trapping (29 mentions):

- Citizens would like to see animal control services have more involvement in the capture and removal of feral and roaming cats and skunks or have more knowledge of and access to acquiring and using capture mechanisms themselves.

Allow More Chicken Permits (20 mentions):

- A number of survey respondents indicated that they are in favor of allowing more residences to raise chickens. This could be an increased cap on permits allowed or the removal of the cap all together.
- There are over 80 people on the waiting list for an urban chicken licence.

Implement Spay / Neuter Program (19 mentions):

- Incentivizing a spay / neuter program was proposed by many community members as a possible solution to reducing the population of unwanted / uncared for pets in the City of Red Deer and as a means for reducing the fees that pet owners must pay to register / license pets.

Provide More / Better Garbage Receptacles and Poop Bags (15 mentions):

- As a means for helping to address the issue of excessive dog feces in public spaces, several recommendations for additional waste receptacles and containers with “pick-up” bags were received by citizens who participated in the survey. Additionally, suggestions for options to compost the excrement rather than place it in the waste stream were made.

CHANGES MADE TO THE DRAFT BYLAW, BASED ON PUBLIC FEEDBACK

Based on what we heard from the public participation, here is a summary of what has been changed/integrated into the new bylaw (*Responsible Pet Ownership draft bylaw*):

- Cat licensing added to the bylaw
- Dog and Cat ID’s can be a City issued tag, or a registered microchip.
- Combined bylaw including cats, chickens, and dogs in the *Responsible Pet Ownership* bylaw.
 - This would eliminate the need for separate cat, dog and chicken bylaws.
- Nuisance animal provisions were added:
 - A nuisance may include, but not limited to:
 - Excessive noise (barking, howling, or yowling)
 - Running at large
 - Damaging property
 - Accumulation of feces on property
 - Offensive or noxious odours as a result of keeping an Animal on the property.
 - In determining what constitutes excessive noise, consideration may be given, but is not limited to:
 - Proximity of the property where the animal resides
 - Type, volume and duration of the noise or sound
 - Time of day or night and day of the week
 - Nature and use of the surrounding area

- Whether the noise or sound is recurrent or constant
- Any other relevant factor deemed reasonable by the Animal Control Officer

- Clarification and clean up to aggressive dog provisions

- Exploring the possibility of anniversary date renewals for licensing instead of annual

- Animal welfare and the humane treatment of animal provisions added

- Prohibited animals added
 - “Prohibited animal” means:
 - Any mammal that is not a domestic animal or would not typically live indoors
 - Any exotic animal – alien, non-indigenous or non-native species not customarily confined or cultivated by humans
 - Pigeons
 - Poultry (except chickens)
 - Poisonous snakes, reptiles or insects
 - Beehives or any other form of beekeeping
 - Any species listed as endangered or threatened on Environmental Canada’s Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)

For more information, visit reddeer.ca/animalbylaw

Future
**ANIMAL
BYLAW**



What we heard
and what's missing

November 2022
Phase 3
VALIDATION PHASE

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Between September 21 and October 21, 2022, we conducted public participation on a proposed animal bylaw, that encompasses responsible pet ownership.

The draft bylaw was the result of previous public engagement that was done in February 2021.

Approximately 500 people completed the online engagement survey and ideas wall. Advertising was done in pet stores, vet clinics, social media, traditional media and at dog parks.

In reviewing the draft bylaw, 57% of respondents said we got it right and 43% of respondents said we missed something.

The top thing participants said we got right are:

- The draft bylaw appears to address the issue of roaming cats

Overall, the top concerns that people had with the draft Animal Bylaw include:

- Licensing cats
- Enforcement
- Number of permitted pets

2.0 SURVEY QUESTIONS & RESPONSES:

1. We'd like to learn a little bit more about urban chickens. Do you live near a home that has urban chickens?
YES: 15.5%
NO: 85.5%
 - a. For those who answered yes... do you have concerns with urban chickens in your neighbourhood?
9% YES
91% NO
 - b. Of the 9% who answered yes... half of respondents said **noise** was a concern, and other concerns included **flies, smell, and attracting rodents.**

2. Let's talk about limits on animals. Do you think there should be a limit (cap) on the number of certain animals that each resident can have in a home?

YES: 75%

NO: 25%

- a. What do you think is the right amount of permitted animals per household:

i. Chickens: 8 to 10

ii. Dogs: 2 or 3

iii. Cats: 2 or 3

3. Do you think The City should permit venomous domestic animals?

YES: 25%

NO: 75%

4. Do you own or sell venomous domestic animals?

YES: 0.7%

NO: 99.3%

5. Do you support livestock animals being kept in residential neighbourhoods (goats, mini pigs, ducks, pigeons, etc.)?

YES: 41%

NO: 59%

- a. If yes, why: 85% to support **urban farming**, 54% **choice**, 20% **other**...

i. Other top reasons included: mental health, and these animals are no less disruptive than other permitted pets.

- b. If no, why: 83% **noise/nuisance**, 79% **smell**, 27% **other**:

i. Other top reasons to not included: belief these animals **belong on farms** and not cities, **size of yards/** not enough space for animals, and potential for **disease**.

6. Looking at the What We Heard report and the key items of the draft bylaw – do you think we got it right?

YES: 57%

NO: 43%

7. What did we miss or get wrong?

185 comments about what we missed, top themes were:

- a. **Cats** (260 mentions): Cats were the most polarizing issue in the survey comments, from people believing there should be no outdoor cats allowed, to allowing cats to roam free.
- b. **Dogs** (127 mentions): People looking for definition of excessive barking, desire for more off-leash areas, enforcement for dogs off leash, and lack of support for in-season dogs to be kept indoors.
- c. **Fostering** (63 mentions): Desire to increase the time limit on fostering from 4 weeks to 8 weeks minimum
- d. **Licensing** (56 mentions): Concern that indoor cats shouldn't need a licence. Greater support for a one-time license than annually.
- e. **Limit on number of animals** (39 mentions): Both concern and support for the number of pets. Some want a grandfather period so existing pets don't need to be surrendered.
- f. **Feral animals** (17 mentions): Not in support of clause that prohibits feeding of feral cats.
- g. **Chickens** (20 mentions): General support for increasing number of permitted chickens.
- h. **Bees** (15 mentions): Lack of understanding why bees would be prohibited.

8. Any other feedback about proposed bylaw:

422 additional comments, and the top themes included:

- a. **Cat** (276 mentions): General comments that the proposed bylaw would begin to address roaming cats.
- b. **Dog** (176 mentions): Concerns with dogs barking, enforcement, roaming off leash and feces not being picked up.
- c. **Bylaw/Enforcement** (99 mentions): Respondents want to see increased enforcement overall, and in particular cats roaming and dog feces not being picked up.
- d. **License** (30 mentions): Annual licensing for indoor cats is not preferred, instead in favor of a one-time registration fee. Overall sentiment that cat license is a money-grab. General comments about fees for pets – keep licensing fees affordable.
- e. **Chicken** (19 mentions): Ratio of urban chickens to people seems arbitrary. Increase permits.
- f. **Foster** (19 mentions): Rescues and fostering should be allowed for a period of eight weeks instead of four. Also concern about licensing fostered animals.
- g. **Pet Limit** (18 mentions): Concern with a cap on number of pets per household. Support for no cap, or a grandfather period for existing animals.