



te kaunihera ā-rohe o
matamata-piako
district council



Te Kaupapahere o ngā Kurī 2010 (i whakahounga i 2026) | Policy on Dogs 2010 (Amended 2026)

DRAFT – FOR CONSULTATION

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Part 1 Kupu Whakataki | Introduction

1. Background

- 1.1 Dogs are an important part of many households in the Matamata-Piako District, and most *Owners* take their responsibilities seriously. Dogs can provide companionship, security, and opportunities for recreation. However, when dogs are not properly cared for or controlled, they can create safety risks, cause distress, and create nuisance in the community.
- 1.2 *Council* seeks to balance the benefits of dog ownership with the community's right to enjoy *Public Places* safely. This *Policy* sets out *Council's* approach to managing dogs in a way that promotes responsible ownership, and protects people, property, and wildlife.
- 1.3 This *Policy* has been prepared in accordance with section 10 of the *Act*. In adopting this *Policy*, *Council* has had regard to:
 - a) the need to minimise danger, distress, and nuisance to the community generally; and
 - b) the need to avoid the inherent danger in allowing dogs to have uncontrolled access to *Public Places* that are frequented by children, whether or not the children are accompanied by adults; and
 - c) the importance of enabling, to the extent that is practicable, the public (including families) to use streets and public amenities without fear of attack or intimidation by dogs; and
 - d) the exercise and recreational needs of dogs and their *Owners*.

2. Purpose

- 2.1 The *Act* requires all councils to adopt a policy on dogs.
- 2.2 This *Policy* provides the framework for dog management in the *District* and sets out how *Council* will fulfil its statutory duties under the *Act*.

3. Nature and Application of Bylaw

- 3.1 This *Policy* is given effect through the *Council's Bylaw* which establishes enforceable rules for dog management in the *District*.
- 3.2 The *Bylaw* includes provisions that:
 - prohibit dogs from specified *Public Places*;
 - require dogs to be on a *Leash* in identified areas;
 - designate *Dog Exercise Areas* where off-*Leash* activity is permitted.
- 3.3 This *Policy* should be read in conjunction with the *Act* and the *Bylaw*.

4. Scope

- 4.1 This *Policy* applies to:
 - all dogs in the *District* (whether registered or unregistered), their *Owners*, and any person in charge of a dog;
 - all *Public Places* and private ways within the *District* unless otherwise stated.

5. Council's Role

- 5.1 *Council* is responsible for implementing the *Act* and managing dog-related activities in the *District* to promote public safety, support responsible ownership, and reflect community values. This includes maintaining dog registration records, undertaking enforcement, providing education, and regularly reviewing dog control practices.

6. Owner Obligations and Responsibilities

- 6.1 Every *Owner* of a dog must comply with the *Act*, the *Bylaw*, and this *Policy* as well as all other applicable legislation, including the Animal Welfare Act 1999 and any rules applying to specific areas (e.g. including Department of Conservation land).
- 6.2 Responsible dog ownership includes:
- registering dogs annually;
 - keeping dogs under control at all times;
 - preventing nuisance or danger to people, animals or property;
 - removing dog faeces from any location outside the *Owner's* property, including all *Public Places*;
 - respecting *Prohibited Areas* and *Leash* control requirements;
 - ensuring dogs receive appropriate care, including adequate food, water, shelter, exercise, and veterinary attention;
 - meeting identification (e.g., microchipping) and *Neutering* requirements where applicable; and
 - complying with any limits on the number of dogs permitted under the *Council's Bylaw*.

7. Cultural Context

- 7.1 *Council* acknowledges the cultural importance of kurī (dogs) to Māori communities. Kurī have traditionally been companions, guardians, and hunting partners, and are part of Māori stories and traditions.
- 7.2 *Council* will seek to reflect this connection in its approach to dog management, while working with tangata whenua to ensure practices are respectful and consider tikanga (customs) and culturally significant places (wāhi tapu).
- 7.3 *Council* acknowledges that areas of cultural significance to Māori, including wāhi tapu, may have their own tikanga and access protocols. The *Owner* or any person in charge of any dog are expected to comply with any rules and avoid taking dogs into such areas unless expressly permitted.

8. Definitions

8.1 For the purposes of this *Policy*, the following definitions shall apply:

Term	Definition
<i>Act</i>	means the Dog Control Act 1996.
<i>Bylaw</i>	means the Matamata-Piako District Council Dog Control Bylaw 2010 (Amended 2026).
<i>Council</i>	means the governing body of the Matamata-Piako District Council and includes any person delegated to act on its behalf.
<i>Dangerous Dog</i>	means any dog classified as <i>Dangerous</i> under the <i>Act</i> .
<i>District</i>	means the <i>District</i> within the jurisdiction and under the control of the <i>Council</i> .
<i>Dog Exercise Area</i>	means a designated ¹ area identified by <i>Council</i> where dogs may be exercised off- <i>Leash</i> , provided that the <i>Owner</i> or the person in charge remains present and the dog is kept <i>Under Control</i> at all times.
<i>Leash</i>	means a length of cord, chain, or other material that can be attached to a dog at one end and securely held by a person at the other end, and includes retractable <i>Leashes</i> .
<i>Leash Control Area</i>	means an area identified by <i>Council</i> where dogs must be kept on a <i>Leash</i> at all times.
<i>Menacing Dog</i>	means any dog classified as <i>Menacing</i> under the <i>Act</i> .
<i>Neuter/Neutered</i>	means the same as in section 2 of the <i>Act</i> .
<i>Owner</i>	means the same as in section 2 of the <i>Act</i> .
<i>Park</i>	means land owned or controlled by the <i>Council</i> that is acquired or used principally for community, recreational, environmental, cultural, or spiritual purposes that is not held as a <i>Reserve</i> under the Reserves Act 1977.
<i>Policy</i>	means the Matamata-Piako District Council Policy on Dogs 2010 (Amended 2026) (this document).
<i>Prohibited Area</i>	means an area where dogs are not permitted as specified in the <i>Bylaw</i> .
<i>Public Place</i>	means the same as in section 2 of the <i>Act</i> .
<i>Reserve</i>	means the same as in section 2(1) of the Reserves Act 1977.
<i>Under Control</i>	means that the dog is not causing a nuisance, distress, danger, injury, to any person, domestic animal, stock, poultry or protected wildlife, or causing any property damage and; the <i>Owner</i> or the person in charge of a dog has the dog under continuous surveillance and is able to obtain an immediate and desired response from the dog by use of a <i>Leash</i> , voice commands, hand signals, whistles, or other effective means.

¹ For clarity, designate means to formally identify an area via a bylaw as a dog exercise area in which dogs may be exercised at large, in accordance with the Act. Designation under the Bylaw relates solely to the management of dog access and is separate from designations under the Resource Management Act 1991.

Part 2 Ngā Whāinga o te Kaupapahere | Policy Objectives

9. Objectives

- 9.1 The objectives of this *Policy* set out what *Council* seeks to achieve in managing dogs within the *District*. They provide clear direction for promoting public safety, responsible dog ownership, and reducing risks such as attacks, nuisance and hygiene issues. These objectives guide decision-making, enforcement, and education initiatives under this *Policy* and the *Bylaw*.
- 9.2 The following table outlines the objectives – representing the outcomes *Council* seeks to achieve, and the policies that establish the approach for achieving these objectives.

Objective (Outcomes Sought)	Policies (Actions to Achieve the Objectives)	
1. Promote responsible dog ownership across the <i>District</i>.	1.1	Promote available education programmes to enhance responsible dog ownership, improve community awareness, and the prevention of dog attacks.
	1.2	Use media campaigns to raise awareness about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) dog registration requirements; b) <i>Council's</i> Policy on Dogs and Dog Control Bylaw; c) <i>Owner</i> responsibilities under the <i>Act</i>; and d) the use of enforcement tools, including infringement notices.
	1.3	Encourage <i>Owners</i> to attend an approved dog training course where available.
	1.4	Encourage eligible <i>Owners</i> to apply for the <i>Council's</i> Responsible Owner Rebate.
2. Minimise the danger, distress and nuisance caused by dogs to the community.	2.1	Require dogs in <i>Public Places</i> to be kept <i>Under Control</i> at all times.
	2.2	Require dogs in to be on a <i>Leash</i> at all times in specified <i>Leash Control Areas</i> .
	2.3	Prohibit dogs in specified areas under the <i>Bylaw</i> based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the intensity, type and frequency of public use; b) any identified health and safety risks – especially for vulnerable groups including children, older people, and people with disabilities; c) any ecological values identified; d) the expectations, experiences and feedback of <i>Park/Reserve</i> users; and e) consideration of the <i>Reserve</i> status under the Reserves Act 1977.
	2.4	Address noise-related nuisance, including persistent or excessive barking through education and support for <i>Owners</i> , and where necessary, using the enforcement powers provided in the <i>Act</i> (such as barking abatement notices and other compliance actions).
	2.5	Follow an enforcement approach consistent with <i>Council's</i> Enforcement Policy that emphasises compliance with the <i>Act</i> and the <i>Bylaw</i> by prioritising education and support for

Objective (Outcomes Sought)		Policies (Actions to Achieve the Objectives)	
			<i>Owners</i> , while retaining statutory powers to issue infringement notices and to seize and impound dogs when necessary.
3.	Enable public confidence in <i>Public Places</i>.	3.1	Support safe and accessible <i>Public Places</i> by requiring effective dog control and restricting access where necessary.
		3.2	Ensure <i>Prohibited Areas</i> , <i>Leash Control Areas</i> , and designated <i>Dog Exercise Areas</i> are clearly communicated and identifiable, including (but not limited to) signage, maps, and other appropriate communication tools.
4.	Maintain the amenity and hygiene of <i>Public Places</i>.	4.1	Require the <i>Owner</i> or any person in charge of any dog to remove any faeces deposited by that dog from any location outside their property, including <i>Parks</i> , footpaths, <i>Public Places</i> , and private property.
		4.2	Encourage the <i>Owner</i> or any person in charge of any a dog to carry dog waste bags and dispose of them properly.
5.	Provide <i>Dog Exercise Areas</i> to enable opportunities for dogs and their <i>Owners</i> to meet exercise and recreational needs.	5.1	Designate <i>Dog Exercise Areas</i> where dogs can be exercised off- <i>Leash</i> provided that the <i>Owner</i> or any person in charge of any dog remains present and keeps the dog <i>Under Control</i> .
		5.2	Provide <i>Dog Exercise Areas</i> that are well-maintained, and fenced where appropriate.
6.	Ensure sustainable funding for dog control activities.	6.1	Fees and charges will be reviewed periodically and set by <i>Council</i> resolution, in compliance with <i>Council's</i> Revenue and Financing Policy. <i>Council</i> will consult with the community to enable feedback prior to adoption.
		6.2	Levels of service will be outlined in the Long Term Plan.
		6.3	Dog registration fees, infringements, and any fines imposed will be allocated to the funding of dog control activities.

Part 3 Te pou tarāwaho o te Kaupapahere | Policy Framework

10. Regulation and Control of Dogs

10.1 Control of Dogs

10.1.1 The *Bylaw* outlines the following requirements to support responsible dog management:

- a) Dogs must not roam at large or gain uncontrolled access to private property, *Public Places* or private ways;
- b) Dogs must be kept on a *Leash* in all urban areas (apart from any areas designated as *Dog Exercise Areas*). The person holding the *Leash* must be capable of physically restraining the dog at all times;
- c) The *Owner* or any person in charge of any dog must remove and dispose of any faeces deposited by that dog from any location outside their property, including *Parks*, footpaths, *Public Places*, and private property.

10.2 Dog Access

10.2.1 The areas subject to dog access rules are identified in Schedules 1–3 of the *Bylaw*, which specify:

- **Prohibited Areas** – dogs are not permitted in these areas unless an exemption applies;
- **Leash Control Areas** – dogs must be on-*Leash* at all times, and the *Owner* or any person in charge of any dog must be capable of physically restraining the dog.
- **Dog Exercise Areas** – dogs may be off-*Leash* but must remain *Under Control* at all times. This means the dog is continuously supervised, responds immediately to the *Owner* or any person in charge of any dog, and does not cause nuisance, danger, injury, or damage.

10.2.2 Any *Public Places* not listed as *Prohibited Areas*, *Leash Control Areas*, or *Dog Exercise Areas* are considered general access areas where dogs are permitted, provided they remain *Under Control*.

10.2.3 *Prohibited Areas*, *Leash Control Areas* and designated *Dog Exercise Areas* will be clearly communicated and identifiable, including (but not limited to) signage, maps, and other appropriate communication tools.

10.3 Controlled Dog Areas and Open Dog Areas

10.3.1 There is no land within the *District* that is included in a controlled dog area or open dog area under section 26ZS of the Conservation Act 1987, nor any land that is a national park constituted under the National Parks Act 1980; or part of Te Urewera, as defined in section 7 of the Te Urewera Act 2014.

11. Dangerous and Menacing Dogs

11.1 Under the *Act*, the *Council* may classify dogs as *Dangerous* or *Menacing*, either by mandatory designation (e.g., specific breeds) or at the *Council's* discretion.

11.2 Dogs may be classified based on reasons such as attacking a person or animal, rushing or behaving in a threatening manner, showing repeated uncontrolled or aggressive behaviour, or where the *Owner* has been convicted of an offence involving the dog. These classifications are behaviour-based and support public safety and responsible dog ownership.

11.3 Once a dog is classified, *Owners* must strictly comply with additional obligations (e.g. confinement, muzzling requirements).

- 11.4 All dogs classified as a *Dangerous Dog* must be *Neutered*, including those previously classified by another territorial authority and later registered in the Matamata-Piako District.
- 11.5 Dogs registered within the *District* and classified as *Menacing* must be *Neutered*. *Council* may grant an exemption in limited circumstances. In considering whether an exemption is appropriate, *Council* may take into account factors such as:
- the seriousness and circumstances of the incident that resulted in the *Menacing* classification;
 - the *Owner's* willingness to take proactive steps to reduce risk (such as voluntarily *Neutering* the dog);
 - the availability of support to enable compliance (for example, access to *Neutering* vouchers or financial assistance); and
 - whether adequate measures are in place to prevent the dog from causing further harm, such as secure fencing, containment, use of a run, proof of prior *Neutering*, or owner-initiated surrender where appropriate.
- 11.6 Where a dog has been classified as *Menacing* by another territorial authority, the same *Neutering* requirements and exemption criteria set out in this *Policy* apply when the dog is registered within the *District*.

12. Owner Classification

- 12.1 The *Act* allows *Council* to classify *Owners* as probationary *Owners* or disqualify people from owning a dog where an offence has been committed against the *Act* or any other dog-related *Act*. These classifications will be applied at the discretion of *Council*, except where classification is mandatory under the *Act*.

13. Disqualified Owners

- 13.1 *Owners* will be disqualified from owning a dog if they have been convicted of an offence against the *Act* or any other dog-related *Act*, or if they have committed three or more infringement offences within a continuous period of two years.
- 13.2 Unless there are unusual circumstances in any particular case, the disqualified *Owner* classification will apply for a period of five years.
- 13.3 *Council* may decide not to disqualify an *Owner* if it is satisfied that the circumstances of the offence mean disqualification is not justified, in which case it will classify the person as a probationary *Owner*.

14. Probationary Owners

- 14.1 A person may be classified as a probationary *Owner* if they have been convicted of an offence against the *Act* or any other dog-related *Act*, or if they have committed three or more infringement offences within a continuous period of two years.
- 14.2 *Council* may classify a person as a probationary *Owner* if it is satisfied that the circumstances of the offence so not warrant disqualification as an *Owner*.
- 14.3 Unless there are unusual circumstances in any particular case, the probationary *Owner* classification will apply for a period of two years.

15. Destruction of Dogs

- 15.1 Under the *Act*, destruction of a dog may be ordered by the District Court following serious incidents such as attacks, rushing, or worrying stock.
- 15.2 Council may destroy a dog only in situations where a dog is impounded, remains unclaimed after the statutory period, or is surrendered. Where a dog is impounded, Council will take reasonable steps to return the dog to its *Owner* or identify appropriate re-homing options.

16. Funding

- 16.1 Dog registration fees will be set to reflect the actual costs associated with the management of dogs and in compliance with *Council's* Revenue and Financing Policy.
- 16.2 Fines and infringement fees for dog control offences will be credited to the dog control account.
- 16.3 *Council* operates a voluntary Responsible Owner's Rebate scheme that incentivises responsible dog ownership by offering reduced registration fees to eligible *Owners*.
- 16.4 *Owners* are automatically eligible for reduced dog registration fees if:
 - a) they have not been the subject of justified complaints and have not been prosecuted for dog control offences within the previous registration year; and
 - b) they have not had dogs impounded within the previous registration year; and
 - c) they have not kept an unregistered dog within the previous registration year.
- 16.5 Dog registration fees paid by *Owners* of *Dangerous Dogs* will be 50% above the normal rate.

Part 4 Te Whakahaere i te Kaupapahere | Administration of Policy

17. Enforcement

- 17.1 The *Act* and the *Bylaw* provides for the enforcement of matters outlined in this *Policy*.
- 17.2 *Council* will enforce the provisions of the *Act* and the *Bylaw* to protect public safety, maintain amenity, and promote responsible dog ownership.
- 17.3 *Council* will apply a fair, proportionate, and risk-based enforcement approach consistent with its Enforcement Policy that prioritises education and voluntary compliance, escalating to formal enforcement where necessary to address serious or repeated breaches.
- 17.4 Education will be the first step in achieving compliance where appropriate, but immediate action will be taken where there is risk to public safety, animals, or property.
- 17.5 Unless immediate action is required for safety reasons or continuous non-compliance, enforcement will generally follow a staged process: education and advice, warning, infringement notice, impounding or seizure, and prosecution for serious or persistent non-compliance.
- 17.6 Infringement notices will be issued under the *Act* at the discretion of *Council* for offences listed in Schedule 1 of the *Act*.
- 17.7 Unless there are unusual circumstances in any particular case, infringement notices will not be waived.
- 17.8 *Council* retains all statutory powers under the *Act* and may issue warnings, infringement notices, seize and impound dogs, classify dogs as *Menacing* or *Dangerous*, classify *Owners* as probationary or disqualified, and prosecute for serious offences.
- 17.9 The *Act* and the *Bylaw* will generally be enforced by *Council's* Animal Control Officers.

18. Monitoring and Review

- 18.1 *Council* will monitor this *Policy* annually using data from the section 10A annual report as required by the *Act* (e.g., number of complaints by category and location, enforcement activity, and registration trends). The section 10A report will be publicly notified and published each year and used to identify trends and operational improvements.
- 18.2 *Council* will formally review this *Policy* at least once every 10 years consistent with the *Bylaw*. An interim review may be initiated where annual monitoring identifies a material adverse trend (e.g., a sustained increase in complaints in a specific location).

Rārangi 1 - Ngā Aratohu o te kōmakatanga Kurī | Schedule 1 – Dog Classification Guidelines²

Scale	Attack Circumstances	Injury	Victim Impact	Action Taken
1.	Victim ³ rushed at, no physical contact made. Dog aggressive and menacing.	No injury to victim.	Low	Verbal/written warning
			High	Written warning
2.	Victim rushed at, physical contact made. Dog aggressive and menacing.	Minor or no bite marks to victim, bruising, minor laceration. There may be bite marks and swelling to bite area.	Low	Written warning
			High	Written warning Menacing dog classification
3.	Victim rushed at, physical contact made. Dog aggressive and dangerous.	Injury to victim, bite marks, laceration and swelling to bite area.	Low	Dangerous Dog classification
			High	Dangerous dog classification Possible prosecution
4.	Victim attacked, physical contact made. Dog very aggressive and dangerous.	Limited injury to victim that required medical care.	High	Dangerous dog classification Possible prosecution
5.	Victim attacked, physical contact made. Dog very aggressive and dangerous.	Limited injury to victim that required surgery, serious lacerations requiring medical intervention.	High	Dangerous dog classification Prosecution
6.	Victim attacked, physical contact made. Dog very aggressive and dangerous.	Severe injury to victim that required hospitalisation.	High	Prosecution

² The above table shows examples of the types of attack possible. Not all factors may or need to be present or observed for a classification to be achieved. An Attack Rating Report may be used to assist animal control staff with determining the above classifications and the action required to be taken.

³ Victim refers to any individual - human or animal - who is the target of the dog's aggressive or menacing behaviour. This may include:

- a person;
- another dog;
- livestock or other domestic animals;
- wildlife.