

21 Companion Animals

Council recognizes the benefits companion animals present to the community, and that in order for these benefits to be enjoyed by all, some control is required.

The Issues:

While many people have been annoyed by other people's companion animals (this term is used to encompass all types of animals kept on the domestic scene) causing a nuisance in the neighborhood, their presence is generally an accepted part of modern urban life. They are important as companions and security for individuals, families and businesses, as well as the focus of hobbies such as showing and training. The recently established -Pets as Therapy scheme, whereby suitable animals are introduced to health institutions and homes for the companionship they offer as pets, is an example of their social value (Heidelberg City Council, 1989).

Various animals, including fish, birds, cats and dogs, make suitable pets in the urban situation. However it is cats and dogs, which cause the major impact in Townsville due to their numbers;- behavior patterns and the extent to which their owners can control them. The release of exotic species of fish (and aquarium plants), such as Tilapia, can have devastating effects on the natural environment.

A recent study of the dog population of Townsville revealed that 50.1 % of all households (not including families in flats and home units) had at least one dog (Murray, 1989). Of these dogs, 62% were neutered (66% females, 39% males). Townsville was found to be unusual in that 86% of dogs in the city were registered, a high proportion relative to other cities. Another interesting outcome of Murray's survey was that 76% of all respondents and 80% of dog owners thought dogs were a public nuisance. From these figures he concluded that the public is prepared to accept firmer dog control policies. If firmer controls were also coupled with public education about responsible pet ownership, he felt that public tolerance towards urban dog ownership could be increased. The survey found that most dog nuisance was caused by socially intrusive behavior, which could be prevented if the dogs were properly restrained (in fenced yards or on a leash).

Whilst accepting the importance to society of keeping pets, a strategy is needed to encourage responsible pet ownership for the welfare of the animals, other people and the environment.

Townsville should pursue a range of traditional and innovative animal control measures with the aims of promoting responsible pet ownership, and reducing nuisance and injury to people, other pets and wildlife.

Cats are presently not required to be registered in Queensland. There are also no laws regarding restraint of cats. The proportion of cats de-sexed and entire is unknown. De-sexed cats, as well as dogs, lose many of their wilder instincts, and thus inflict less damage on the environment than if left to breed. Cat nuisance is largely unreported as cats are not under Council legislation. The nuisance aspects of cats include over-breeding; stray, wandering and poorly cared for animals; noise, attacks on wildlife; fouling; and as disease vectors. Until relevant State legislation comes into force, these problems will be difficult to control. However Townsville can take action to regulate the cat population by encouraging de-sexing and implementing free registration of all cats to collect baseline population data.

In order to redress some of the problems caused by irresponsible animal control, Council has launched after hours and weekend dog patrols and conducted a responsible pet ownership promotion campaigns during National Pet Week.

The environmental objectives for managing Companion Animals in Townsville are to:

- Register all dogs and cats in Townsville;
- Require all dogs to be restrained on their property or on a leash;
- Encourage the neutering of all non-pedigree dogs and cats; and,
- Promote responsible pet ownership.

Areas for Council Action:

To encourage more responsible pet ownership in Townsville, Council should consider the following actions:

Develop by-laws to require all cats and dogs to be registered, preferably at the point of sale or procurement. (ENV)

Review the present dog registration fees and incentives for cheaper registration. (ENV)

Register all dog and cat breeders. (ENV)

Introduce free cat registration to start a database on cat ownership. (ENV)

Allow selected trained parks staff to issue dog infringement notices. (ENV)

Improve the package of information on responsible pet ownership, which can be sent to new owners upon registration, distributed by vets or given out in the door-to-door registration check calls. (ENV)

Consider the implications of allowing dog owners to run their dogs on the beach at South Townsville and between Rowes Bay channel and Three Mile Creek along the Pallarenda Rowes Bay foreshore while restricting unleashed dogs elsewhere in the City. (ENV: COR)

Liaise with DEH about regulations on dogs on beaches below Mean High Water Level. (ENV)

Investigate the possibility of allowing dogs on leashes in some public places, and enforce the leash rule with heavy penalties, fines increasing with number of infringements. (ENV)

Redesign the format of the dog infringement notices to aid in the efficient ticketing of offenders. (ENV)

Undertake ongoing research into animal behavior in the urban environment, in conjunction with other interested agencies where possible. (ENV:OA)

Support suitable training programs for animal control staff through TAPE and other education agencies. (ENV :OA)

Encourage people to keep cats inside at night. (ENV)



Many people derive immense pleasure and happiness by the company provided by their pets.

Areas for Community Action:

Ensure dogs are registered with Council.

Keep dogs within the property and use a leash when walking them in the street or park.

Neuter your dog and/or cat.

Keep cats locked inside at night, the usual time when most cats hunt.

Areas for Research:

Determining the impact of companion animals on native wildlife in Townsville.

Development of guidelines for responsible ownership of companion animals.

22 Extractive Industries

Council recognizes the need for environmental responsibility in extractive industries and supports the need for ongoing monitoring during the course of operations, followed by appropriate rehabilitation.

The Issues:

Mining is a necessary but short-term industry with adequate controls and post-mining rehabilitation, other land-uses may be possible. Without controls, the effects of mining may continue to be felt long after mining has ceased (e.g. leach ate contamination of ground and surface waters, alteration of drainage patterns etc.). Mining activities can present noise, light and dust problems, which can conflict with adjoining land uses. Conversely, the development of urban land uses within buffer zones required for extractive industry may inhibit its continued operation. Mining inevitably causes some environmental impact, ranging from minor to irreversible change and often limiting future options for use of the area.

Extractive industries presently operating in the City of Townsville are rock quarrying, sand and gravel mining, and clay extraction. Most sand and gravel is dredged from the Bohle and Ross Rivers or excavated from remnant sand dunes in the area to the south of the Ross River. Rock is mainly mined from the Rosemead quarries on the east and west side of the Flinders Highway at Stuart, although there are several other minor sites, some of which are possibly unauthorized. Gravel and clay is obtained from a variety of locations, including also the sand dunes and clay pans on the south bank of the Ross River.

Many of these sites are not under the jurisdiction of the Council as they are on road reserves, in river courses or on vacant crown land (VCL), unless there is some lease arrangement over the land. For sites on VCL or road reserves, the authority of the Department of Lands is needed, as well as Forestry Department approval and royalty payments. Council's approval as a referral authority for extractive industry applications is required, and it may also provide comment with respect to zoning requirements, proximity to urban areas, road access, public visibility, rehabilitation, and environmental monitoring.

If the Quarry site is in a watercourse, this falls under the Water resources Commission (WRC) jurisdiction. Applications (usually for gravel and sand) are sent to the Dept of Environment and Heritage (DEH), which set conditions upon the operation. The WRC inspects the site to check if conditions are followed. .

Permits are renewed annually in the Townsville region. Local authorities presently have little say in watercourse extraction operations.

The local authority does not control environmental or rehabilitation conditions on many extractive industries other than to stipulate if screening or buffering from adjoining land uses is necessary. The Forestry Department inspects each non-watercourse extractive industry site on application and usually requires topsoil to be stockpiled for use later in rehabilitation. Once the operation ends, the slopes or edges of the pit are benched and the site is then grassed or treed over with local species depending on the subsequent land-user.

In the case of river sand extraction, the WRC has, in the last 12 months, introduced the requirement that some local rivers (e.g.. Black River) are profiled at initial (and maybe annual) application to show volumes of material present. Extraction at some sites is limited to the low flow channel if volumes of material are low (i.e.. take out the high points until the level reaches the lowest natural part of the river bed). However, while profiling monitors the physical integrity of the watercourse at that point, there is no assessment of impact to the integrity of the biological system due to extractive operations (Queensland Water Resources Commission, 199Gb). Likewise, the new Act has enabled non-boundary waterways to be monitored for physical degradation, but there is no provision for biological monitoring of these private waterways. Additionally, the sand budgets for beaches nourished by the river's sand outputs have not been considered, and long term monitoring is not in place to determine whether sand extraction is adversely affecting beach nourishment.

A paper outlining the extractive industries in the Townsville region written by Martin in 1979 (although somewhat dated) is worth perusing for an overview of the local situation. The Queensland Premier's Department is currently reviewing the entire situation with respect to extractive industry approvals and development processes.

The environmental objectives for managing Extractive Industry in Townsville are to:

- Limit the environmental and social impact of extractive activities in Townsville; and,

- Ensure adequate rehabilitation of abandoned quarry sites.

Areas for Council Action:

To ensure that mining operations do not lead to significant or long-term environmental degradation, Council should consider the following actions:

Liaise with WRC to ensure annual profiling of all local rivers (e.g.: Ross River, Bohle River) is carried out after each major flood event as well as before and after the operation. (PD)

Lobby WRC to require an environmental impact statement for extractive industry applications (PD: ENV)

Investigate legality of putting time limit on extractive industry permits. (OA)

Lobby State Government for greater Local Authority input to mining on public land to ensure environmentally sensitive areas are not disturbed and adequate rehabilitation is performed. (PD)

Council Environmental Services and Planning and Development personnel should inspect each permit application and site to determine rehabilitation conditions where such conditions are not specifically excluded by other authorities. (ENV: PD)

Council should maintain register of extractive industries for both private and commercial operations. (PD)

Investigate the establishment of a properly managed quarry on Magnetic Island to control illegal quarrying. (ENG: ENV: PD)

Council to draft an Extractive Industries policy. (PD: ENV)

Areas for Community Action:

If living close to an extractive industry, understand the conditions under which it is to operate and report breaches to the authorities.

Don't set up an illegal quarry or sand extraction plant.

Areas for Research:

The physical and ecological effects on waterways of extractive industries, especially where river sediment is important for beach stability.

Development of rehabilitation programs which embrace the concept of ecological restorations.