

Town of Caledon staff are preparing revised Animal Control Bylaw

By Bill Rea

The Town is planning changes to its Animal Control Bylaw, and is looking for public input.

The Town recently hosted a public information meeting on the matter, but there was only a little in the way of public comment. Christine Finnerty, animal services supervisor for the Town, told the meeting that the municipality passed an Animal Care and Control Bylaw in 2006. Through its practical application, she said staff were able to identify areas of concern, meriting some amendments. The review started in October, and she added staff looked into animal control rules in place in 12 other municipalities. Among the changes that are being proposed, Finnerty cited getting rid of a provision that allows the removal of dog tags during lawful hunting. She pointed out staff does get calls to pick up hunting dogs, and the tags help reunite them with their owners. Finnerty told Councillor Doug Beffort she didn't know why these dogs were allowed to have their tags removed, but she thought it might have something to do with the noise they make.

Beffort also asked about how owners of such dogs are notified. Finnerty told him dogs at the animal shelter are checked for microchips or tattoos. If the dog was found near a municipal boundary, they check to see if the dog came from there.

There is also a proposal to remove a section in the bylaw dealing with noise from dogs. The plan is to let such matters be dealt with under the Town's Noise Bylaw. Finnerty said the plan would still see staff responding to complaints about noisy dogs if called.

The proposed changes also address the number of animals that can be kept. The plan is to remove provisions dealing with standards of care. Finnerty said the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) already has regulations to address such issues. There are also proposed changes to the number of animals that can be kept, although some of those restrictions, such as the number of cats, wouldn't be applicable in agricultural areas. Finnerty added there would be no restrictions on other animals, like birds or fish, provided they're legal.

As well, there is a proposed designation for dangerous dogs, referring to any such animal that has attacked, bitten or caused injury to a person or domestic animal. She said the annual licensing fee of \$1,000 for such a dog is to be removed, although they would be subject to restrictions. Finnerty said they would include making sure the dog is enclosed or on a leash held by an adult.

The section in the bylaw governing kennels is being removed in the proposed changes. Finnerty said these operations will have to comply with the Building Code Act.

There are also proposed changes to the timelines for the Town's provisions for protective care.

Finnerty said boarding and grooming programs that had been offered at the Caledon Animal Shelter have been stopped.

She also said there are no significant changes proposed to provisions regarding leashing, dealing with excrement, animals at large, etc.

She told Councillor Patti Foley there are no plans for restricting the number of dogs one person can have on leash, as long as they are under control.

Finnerty said the hope is to have the proposed new bylaw ready for council sometime this spring.