

Draft animal control bylaw is progressive

By Mark Pavilons

King Township is taking a proactive, progressive approach to animal control.

Staff presented the draft animal control bylaw to council recently, noting this proactive, progressive bylaw will provide enhanced enforcement tools.

The animal control bylaw is the latest effort to revamp outdated bylaws. All bylaws related to animals in King are being consolidated to create a single, all-encompassing document which contains clear, concise provisions.

"Throughout this process, it became clear to staff that while re-enforcing responsible pet ownership, tools were required for officers to be able to address matters promptly, rather than passing the issue at hand off to other agencies, if at all possible," said the report by deputy clerk Nancy Cronsberry.

In preparing the draft bylaw, staff reviewed operations of a dozen other municipalities to look at best practices and see what works. From responsible pet ownership to fees and prohibitions, a number of provisions have been included in the new bylaw. A stand-alone bylaw, consistent with Vaughan's bylaws, is deemed necessary. Vaughan is contracted by King to carry out animal control services and they just recently updated their animal control bylaw.

As residential development continues in King, there are more concerns and conflicts with wildlife.

"The provisions contained in the proposed bylaw reflect these evolving trends and emerging cultural/lifestyle conflicts being realized within the Township," the report stated.

If approved, fines will be set in the \$300 to \$800 range, but admittedly these apply to the more difficult offenders.

In the bylaw, the list of prohibited or "exotic"?animals has been expanded.

The dog bylaw is being revamped, since it's largely reactive. Staff hope to mitigate dog bites and attacks through preventive restrictions. The Township follows the Dog Owners' Liability Act of Ontario, which allows them to issue muzzling orders of what's deemed a "menacing dog." They can commence legal proceedings as people want to know [how much can i sue for a dog bite](#), but staff admitted these are often lengthy, costly affairs.

The draft bylaw will allow for "an effective and proactive approach to deal with aggressive dog behaviours by providing the officers authority to issue orders where there are reasonable grounds to believe that a dog may or is likely to bite in the future."

Of course, dog bites are very serious so anything that can be done to reduce the frequency of them is a good thing. If you've been bitten by a dog then you might need to go to a lawyer like [Udall Shumway](#) so you can get compensation for your injuries.

Cats are a bit of a problem in King, since there is no registration process like there is for dogs. Staff impounded 88 cats in 2015 and only one was claimed. At this time, when staff receives cat complaints, their only tool is to provide cages and capture the animals. The new bylaw is asking owners to ensure their cats are not at large and there are provisions for identification.

Staff is recommending that cats be limited to four per household, with certain exclusions.

This generated a bit of discussion, with councillors noting farm properties have many cats for rodent control.

Currently, King has no rules governing wildlife. The new bylaw proposes to ban feeding wild animals such as coyotes, given the public concern in recent years.

Staff pointed out that residents often feed them unintentionally, by encouraging other wildlife (birds, squirrels, etc.).

Cronsberry noted staff are hoping the new fines will provide for cost recovery of their services.

The bylaw will return to council for approval Aug. 29.

"Staff will work with animal control to seek opportunities to educate youth and the overall public on the importance of responsible pet ownership and bite prevention."