



Wairoa In Focus

Your Community, Your Future

At work with council animal control officers

Strong nerves and a love of animals are common factors that draw together the members of the Wairoa District Council's compliance team, which is charged with making the district a safe place for both people and animals alike.

The dedicated crew responsible for enforcing the district's by-laws include team leader Des Jane, supported by compliance officers Dough Waugh, Michael Walker and Harry Te Rangi.

A typical day begins with a team meeting to discuss scheduled jobs, update on-going issues and debrief on any incidents that may have occurred in the previous 24 hours. Then it's action time. On a particular day this month, Michael headed out in response to a report of a calf on the road on the outskirts of town. Even before he got there he had some idea of who it could belong to, so was able to make a few phone calls on his way. "A big advantage of doing this job in a small town is that you know a lot of people and can sort out situations without too much fuss," he said.

Good communication is essential in this work. With the calf safely back in the paddock, attention turns to the next job. Michael spots two pups wandering in another paddock nearby. Rather than immediately breaking out the catch pole and apprehending the young drifters, Michael pulls



Animal Control Officer Michael Walker with two of his charges at the Wairoa District Council pound. The facility is due to be replaced with a bigger, more modern pound this financial year.

up beside them and assesses their response to his presence.

"Nine times out of ten, dogs will take one look at you and head for home. Then I can follow them, see where they live, and go in to talk to the owners. Unless they're obviously aggressive, this is more efficient than picking them up straight away and taking them to the pound."

After following these dogs home and speaking to the owners, Michael heads back to the office to sign the first job off. On the way, he spots another dog, which he recognises as belonging to someone living close by. After

seeing the dog home, he calls in to talk to the owner. This isn't the first time the person has been spoken to about unsecured dogs.

The irresponsible dog owner is issued his last warning – if any of his animals are out roaming again they will be taken away.

Another daily duty that has to be attended to is taking care of the dogs in the pound by letting them have some exercise, as well as feeding them and cleaning out the kennels. The current pound is well past its use-by date. This year's annual plan (not yet adopted time of print) earmarks \$80,000 for a new pound capable of housing up to 21 dogs.

Over the past 11 months, the team has responded to 293 calls from the public related to dogs. These calls include anything from complaints about barking (51 cases) to reporting a dog attack on a person (3 cases). The most common single reason for calls from the public is to report lost or found dogs.

It's not all about dogs for the animal control team. Following up on reports of stock wandering on roads is another responsibility that keeps them busy, with 72 callouts for dead or wandering stock around the district in the past 11 months.

Des Jane says recent efforts to reduce wandering stock through better fencing on State Highway boundaries have resulted in around 40 percent less callouts in those areas.

"The flow on effect is that roads are safer, which is better for all concerned," he said.

Property inspections are another responsibility of the compliance team. Licensed officers have the right to go onto private property and check out animal welfare conditions and dog registrations.

Doug Waugh, who has been on the job for almost 25 years, says the biggest task is getting people to understand their obligations as animal owners.

"You certainly need to be able to communicate with a view to educate," he said.

Dog registration forms are in the process of being sent out and must be returned to council by August 29. Discounts are available during July.

Dog fees not for council profit

Registration fees are used to maintain a safe and healthy environment for residents, dog owners and their pets. The Council does not profit from dog fees.

Fees pay for:

- **Dog control and law enforcement campaigns and education in schools, community groups and businesses**
- **Administering the dog pound**
- **Administering the dog register, application forms and tag distribution**

You must register your dogs by every year by returning the form and fee to the Wairoa District Council. All dogs must be registered and microchipped by three months of age. Owners of unregistered dogs face significant fines.

The current fees are:

Standard \$65
Menacing \$105

(Discounts available during July)

You can obtain registration application forms from the Council office on Queen Street.

Engineering President on staff

High honours have gone to Wairoa District Council engineering manager Neil Cook, who has been elected President of Ingenium – a national organisation charged with upholding and improving the status of engineering and management of public assets in New Zealand.

Neil began his two-year term in the top role with an official welcome at the national conference in Wellington this month.

"It's a great honour and knowing I have the support of the council is fantastic," he said.

Ingenium provides support and advice to Local Government New Zealand, Standards NZ, NZTA and many other government agencies and organisations on such matters as legislation, central government policy and national standards. It also offers training courses and runs seminars to encourage practical opportunities for New Zealand engineers.

Qualmark honours for i-SITE

Wairoa i-SITE Visitor Information Centre has been recognised as one of the country's leading tourism businesses by Qualmark - New Zealand tourism's official quality assurance system.

To earn the prestigious quality mark, the i-SITE underwent a comprehensive on-site assessment to ensure it met quality criteria focused on service, facilities, safety and systems the business has in place.

Manager Sally Simpson says this is the second Qualmark endorsement for the i-SITE, which is a credit to the team.

"A lot of hard work goes into operating the i-SITE to the required standard, so we are pleased to have maintained that quality of work," she said.

Qualmark's endorsement programme offers quality assurance to a full range of tourism businesses, such as adventure activities, transport providers, culture and nature experiences.

Assessment criteria are developed with the tourism industry, based on research into what travellers expect, and specific to the type of business.

Qualmark is jointly owned by Tourism New Zealand and the New Zealand Automobile Association. The programme is run as an industry service, on a not-for-profit basis and is the way the industry directs travellers to quality assured products and services.

For the diary:

Council meetings:

July 12
August 9
September 13
October 11
November 8
December 13

Forum:

July 26
August 23
September 27
October 25
November 22

Maori Standing Committee:

July 1
July 29*
August 26
September 30*
October 28
November 25*

*Meeting will be held on a marae

Meetings are held in the Council Chambers in the Queen Street offices and are open to the public, unless otherwise specified.

For more information phone 838 7309 or visit www.wairoadc.govt.nz