

Date: 2023-07-26

Subject: **Updates to the Pet Licensing Program**

Contact: Mike Mulick, Manager, Animal Services

Report Number: Legislative Services-2023-643

Recommendations:

1. That the report from Mike Mulick, Manager, Animal Services to the Committee of Council Meeting of September 6, 2023, re: Updates to the Pet Licensing Program, be received;
2. That the expiry date for dog and cat licences be changed from every calendar year to 365 or 730 days from purchase;
3. That amendments to Dog By-law 250-2005 to allow for one-year and two-year licences be approved; and
4. That amendments to User Fee By-law 380-2003, with respect to pet licence fees beginning November 1, 2023, be approved.

Overview:

- That as of November 1, 2023, dog and cat licences can be purchased as a one-year or two-year licence
- That the user fees be updated as of November 1, 2023, to reflect the new costs of purchasing a pet licence
- That dog and cat licences change from expiring each calendar year to expiring either 365 or 730 days from the date of purchase
- That the Dog By-law be amended to reflect updates in the pet licensing program
- That new “smart” pet tags be issued to improve the ability for anyone to reunite a lost pet with their family

Background:

The Animal Control By-law and Dog By-law require all dogs to be licensed each calendar year and all cats to either be licensed each year or their microchip information provided to Animal Services. Currently, licences are valid from Jan 1st until Dec 31st of the current year, regardless of the date on which they are purchased, and the cost is not pro-rated. For this reason, pet owners are often reluctant to purchase their licences in the second half of the year, instead choosing to wait until January of the following year. In 2022, the City of Brampton licensed 4,696 dogs and 973 cats.

Pet licensing allows the municipality to:

- Return and reunite the reported 600 lost cats or dogs each year
- Maintain accurate information in relation to the number of pets within the municipality
- Offset the expense of shelter operations as well as public education and outreach activities (including animal enrichment equipment, microchip and vaccine clinics, elementary school education sessions, work with vulnerable residents, emergency boarding for those in crisis, etc.)

Pet licences can be purchased online, by mail, or in person at the Animal Shelter, any Service Brampton location or directly from Animal Services staff while they are on patrol or at special events. In 2022, 66% of all licences were purchased online. When pet licences are purchased online or by mail, the pet licence tags are subsequently mailed to the pet parent. These metal tags display a unique identification number and the phone number to call Brampton Animal Services via Service Brampton.



Because all pet licences currently expire on December 31st, there is a significant undertaking of work which occurs in December through to March each year to mail all renewing licences in a short timeframe. Further, staff are dedicated in the following months each year to follow up with residents who have not renewed their licence to determine if it is still required.

Current Situation:

Benchmarking

Benchmarking has been completed with the Cities of Mississauga, Vaughan, Oakville, Toronto, Hamilton, Pickering, and Oshawa.

When compared with these seven municipalities, The City of Brampton currently generates the second least amount of revenue from pet licensing on a per-pet basis. The driving factor is the cost of the licence.

Recommended Licence Periods

Animal Services recognizes that the yearly renewal of a pet licence is inconvenient to the public and consumes a significant amount of staff time to process and send pet licences by mail. As a result, it is recommended that a two-year licence option be added.

Further, it is recommended that the licence validity period change from the calendar year to one year or two years from the date of purchase, depending on the pet owner's preference. This change ensures that residents receive the full value of their purchase and, over time, will spread licence renewal dates throughout the year, eliminating the heavy workload that occurs at the beginning of each year to re-licence all pets.

Pet Licence Fee Benchmarking								
	Brampton	Mississauga	Vaughan	Oakville	Toronto	Hamilton	Pickering	Oshawa
Dog Altered & Microchipped	\$20	\$25	\$25	\$30	\$25	\$34	\$25	\$25
Dog Unaltered and/or not Microchipped	\$40	\$50	\$25	\$60	\$60	\$73	\$50	\$50
Senior - Dog Altered & Microchipped	\$10	\$15	\$25	\$30	\$12.50	\$16	\$25	\$25
Senior - Dog Unaltered and/or not Microchipped	\$30	\$25	\$25	\$60	\$30	\$40	\$50	\$50
Cat Altered & Microchipped	\$10	\$20	\$25		\$15		\$25	\$25
Cat Unaltered and/or not Microchipped	\$20	\$45	\$25		\$50		\$50	\$50
Senior - Cat Altered & Microchipped	\$5	\$10	\$25		\$7.50		\$25	\$25
Senior - Cat Unaltered and/or not Microchipped	\$15	\$20	\$25		\$25		\$50	\$50
(Total Revenues if all municipalities licensed the same number of pets as were licensed in Brampton in 2022)								
Total Dog Revenue	\$135,230	\$163,195	\$117,400	\$222,150	\$185,557	\$233,089	\$185,125	\$185,125
Total Cat Revenue	\$10,660	\$21,360	\$24,325	\$0	\$19,550	\$0	\$30,525	\$30,525
Total Licensing Revenue	\$145,890	\$184,555	\$141,725	\$222,150	\$205,107	\$233,089	\$215,650	\$215,650

Recommended Licence Fee Increases

A pet licence is Animal Services' primary means of returning a lost pet to their family, and while the revenues generated from licensing benefit animals in our community, the expense should not be a barrier to obtaining a licence.

The proposed cost of a two-year licence will maintain the existing per-year pricing for seniors, and those who have spayed or neutered, and microchipped their pet. Dogs and cats that are sterilized are less likely to stray or become aggressive, and microchipping provides an alternate and permanent method of identification should a pet slip out of its collar. Licence costs for non-senior owners who have not taken these steps will increase for both a one-year or two-year licence to incentivize pet families to have their pets fixed and microchipped.

The cost of a one-year pet licence will increase to align with other municipalities. Two-year pet licences will remain more affordable than six out of the seven municipalities benchmarked when compared to their per-year fee.

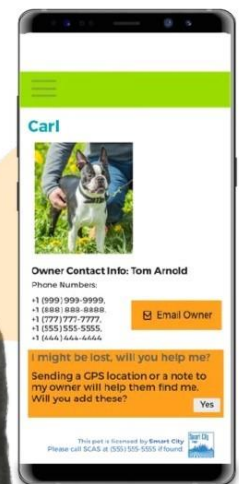
Brampton Pet Licence Fees			
	Current Fee	Proposed Fees	
	Calendar Year	1 Year	2 Year
Dog Altered & Microchipped	\$20	\$25	\$40
Dog Unaltered and/or not Microchipped	\$40	\$60	\$90
Senior - Dog Altered & Microchipped	\$10	\$15	\$20
Senior - Dog Unaltered and/or not Microchipped	\$30	\$40	\$60
Cat Altered & Microchipped	\$10	\$13	\$20
Cat Unaltered and/or not Microchipped	\$20	\$40	\$60
Senior - Cat Altered & Microchipped	\$5	\$6	\$10
Senior - Cat Unaltered and/or not Microchipped	\$15	\$20	\$30
Total Dog Revenue (based on the number of licenses issued in 2022)	\$135,230	\$193,305	\$145,755
Total Cat Revenue (based on the number of licenses issued in 2022)	\$10,660	\$16,135	\$12,340
Total Licensing Revenue (based on the number of licenses issued in 2022)	\$145,890	\$209,440	\$158,095

With the proposed licence fee increases, provided that the number of pet licences issued remains the same, there would be a resulting increase in pet licensing revenue between \$12,200 and \$63,500, depending on the quantity of two-year licences purchased. It is anticipated that most pet owners will purchase a two-year licence making the expected revenue increase closer to the lower end of this range.

Issuance of Licences

It is recommended that the yearly mailing of a pet tag be changed to the issuance of a single pet tag per pet. Lost tags will be replaced for the existing \$5 fee within the first year that they are issued. Tags lost after the first year, and damaged tags at any time will be replaced for free.

Issuing one pet tag per pet will reduce the environmental impact of mailing over 4,000 tags each year, and the subsequent disposal of the previous year's tag. Because the new tags are not specific to a particular year, they can be issued at any time, and will not go to waste. The increased licensing revenue and the savings of eliminating yearly pet tags will allow us to invest in "smart" pet tags, empowering the finder of a lost pet to contact



the pet owner directly through the scanning of a QR code or entering the tag number online. Returning a lost pet directly to their family not only reduces the stress and anxiety of the pet, but it also reduces the amount of time that Animal Control Officers are involved with lost pets, allowing that time to be used for pro-active patrols and public education.

The added cost of the “smart” pet tag is the equivalent of a yearly pet tag being issued for four years. When the QR code is scanned, the pet owner can choose to have any information about their pet displayed, including medical conditions and alternate contacts instead of, or in addition to their own, and update this information online at any time. The pet owner can mark their contact information as private and then release it when they are notified that their pet has been found. Further, the smart tags allow the pet finder to send their GPS location to the pet owner, which is helpful when the pet finder has found a pet in a large park and is waiting for the owner to attend.

In addition to the QR code, each tag contains a unique identification number, which is recorded by Animal Services when issued. Should a pet owner choose not to activate their tag, when a pet finder scans the tag, it will provide them with the information to contact Brampton Animal Services, who will assist in returning the pet to its family in accordance with our existing process.

These “smart” pet tags bridge the gap between a municipal pet licence and a personal pet identification tag. As a result, they are more likely to be used, as the pet parent will know they will be contacted directly should their pet become lost. For pet finders who are not familiar with QR codes, the tag also displays a phone number to a 24-hour pet reunification call taker who will facilitate the return of the pet to their family. For convenience’s sake, we offer the tag in two sizes to accommodate various sizes of dogs and cats.

Should the recommendations be implemented, there will be an initial increased cost in the purchase of “smart” pet identification tags. Our existing stamped metal tags cost \$0.35 per tag, while the new smart tags will cost \$1.33 per tag. The increased cost will be fully offset by higher pet licensing revenue in the first year. Further, with the elimination of yearly pet tag issuance, this program will become cost-saving after a pet has been licensed for four years or fewer when administrative costs are considered.

Other Considerations

Lifetime Licences:

Almost all municipalities have stopped the issuance of lifetime licences, including the City of Brampton. The issuance of lifetime licences prevents the municipality from being aware of how many pets are currently residing in the City, and because there is no need for renewal, pet owners rarely update their contact information with Animal Services after they move or change their phone number, preventing Animal Services from reuniting lost pets with their families. **For these reasons, lifetime pet licences are not recommended.**

Microchipping:

The process of implanting a microchip in a dog or cat does not eliminate the need for a valid licence. An implanted microchip allows Animal Services or a veterinary clinic to read an identification number. From there, one of several microchip vendors must be contacted to obtain

the owner's contact information. The microchip is usually implanted early in the pet's life, and in many cases, the pet parents' never register their contact information with the microchip vendor, or their contact information has changed and is not updated. Alternatively, a breeder registered the microchip to their name before selling the pet, and the new owner's name isn't updated afterwards. In these cases, trying to find the pet's family through microchip tracing leads to a dead end. While microchips can be helpful, regular pet licensing is the best method to return a lost pet to its family.

Designated Dog Licenses:

Residents who own dogs that have been designated as "Potentially Dangerous" or "Dangerous" are required to purchase a different licence, with an accompanying tag that visually indicates the potential for danger. These tags will not change, and continue to be required yearly; however, the licence expiry date will be updated to be valid for 365 days from the date of purchase.

There are currently 150 dogs in Brampton that require these types of licences.

Donations:

Animal Services receives financial donations from the public that are collected and used for the sole purpose of surgeries for shelter animals. Approximately \$7,500, or 7% of these donations are made while the public is renewing their pet licence online. Should two-year licences be implemented, it can be expected that donations made during licensing renewal will decline. Despite this, Animal Services see the two-year licence as an overall benefit.

Corporate Implications:

Financial Implications:

Pending Council approval, the recommendations in this report will result in anticipated revenue growth between \$12,200 and \$63,500 (excluding the impact of volume growth), depending on the quantity of two-year licenses purchased.

The increased cost of smart tags is expected to be fully offset by higher pet licensing revenue.

A minimal reduction in donations revenue is anticipated due to fewer online license renewal payments.

Staff will continue to monitor the impacts and adjust future budgets if necessary.

Other Implications:

Legal Implications – The entering of pet owners' personal information in conjunction with the "smart" tag is optional, done so voluntarily and at the residents' discretion. Their information will be stored by a third-party vendor for the purposes of pet reunification without the need for Animal Services staff to intervene. Their personal information can be marked as "private" until their pet has become lost, or they receive a notification that their pet has been found.

Communications Implications – The successful implementation of these changes will require an in-depth communications plan to advise residents of the program’s benefits with respect to:

- The option of two-year licences
- That pet licences will now be valid for one or two full years from the date of purchase
- How to use the new “smart” pet tags

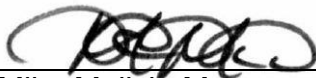
Strategic Focus Area:

This report supports the strategic focus of Government & Leadership by increasing efficiencies in the pet licensing process and providing better value to our residents through innovative practices and products. This report also supports the focus on Environmental Resilience & Sustainability by reducing waste and the environmental impact of the pet licensing program.

Conclusion:

The addition of a two-year pet licence will reduce the frequency that residents have to renew their pet licenses, thereby reducing the inconvenience to residents and the number of resources required to operate the program. Further, the introduction of new “smart” pet tags will reduce the resources required to reunite lost pets and assist Animal Services in its goal of keeping animals out of the shelter and in their homes by allowing pet finders to connect directly with pet owners.

Authored by:



Mike Mulick, Manager, Animal
Services, Legislative Services

Approved by:

Paul Morrison, Acting Commissioner,
Legislative Services

Approved by:

Marlon Kallideen, CAO

Attachments:

- Attachment 1 – Amendments to the Dog By-law and User Fee By-law