

Municipality of Lakeshore – Report to Council

Legal and Legislative Services

Bylaw Services



To: Mayor and Members of Council
From: Rob Sassine, Division Leader – Bylaw Services
Date: September 26, 2024
Subject: Discontinuation of Dog Tag Registration Program

Recommendation

Discontinue the Municipality's Dog Tag program in 2025 and direct Administration to amend the Animal Care and Control By-law effective January 1, 2025 to require that all dogs have a tag affixed to their collar that contains contact information for the owner or be microchipped and to amend the User Fee By-law to reflect the changes, all as presented at the November 5, 2024 Council meeting.

Strategic Objectives

This report does not relate to a Strategic Objective but is brought forward to streamline and modernize the process for the identification of lost dogs.

Background

Currently, the Municipality of Lakeshore's Animal Care and Control Bylaw 27-2022 requires that all dog owners register their dog(s) with the Municipality and purchase a numbered dog tag annually from the Municipality. In 2024, the cost of a dog tag is \$23 if purchased by March 31 or \$33 after March 31. The rationale for the Dog Tag program in the past was that lost dogs could be identified by their unique Municipal dog tag number and reunited with their owners.

Comments

Dog Tag License programs have been in use for many years to identify the owners of dogs in the event they become lost or found at large. More recently, technology and the widespread use of social media has all but eliminated the need for traditional dog tag licensing. Concerned residents who happen to come upon a lost dog or a dog at large will often turn to social media groups to help locate the owners by posting a picture of the dog and the approximate location of where the dog was found. In most cases, the dogs' owners are located and reunited with their dogs within hours. If social media efforts are not successful, the dog is brought to the Lakeshore Dog Pound to be cared

for. Administration has observed over the last several years that dogs that are brought to the Lakeshore Dog Pound are not wearing a Municipal dog tag. If the dog has any form of identification, it is most typically a microchip or a commercially available dog tag that provides the owner's contact information.

According to the Canadian Animal Health Institute, 41% of Canadian households have at least one dog. The Municipality of Lakeshore has approximately 15,000 households, so based on the statistics, the Municipality of Lakeshore should be registering approximately 6,000 dogs annually.

Unfortunately, participation in the Municipality's Dog Tag program has been steadily declining. In 2022, the Municipality of Lakeshore sold 989 dog tags generating \$21,265 in revenue. In 2023, the Municipality of Lakeshore sold 680 dog tags generating \$14,429 in revenue. This represents a decrease of approximately 30% in dog tags sold and revenue generated year over year.

Using the Canadian Animal Health Institute statistics, the number of dog tags sold in 2023 represents a compliance rate of 17% with the Dog Tag program. With the current complement of two Bylaw Officers and the backlog of bylaw complaints, there are insufficient resources to permit follow up with owners who purchased dog tags in previous years to confirm whether they are compliant with the Dog Tag program.

The discontinuation of the Dog Tag program will free up Administrative resources that could be more effectively spent on other tasks and will provide some financial relief to residents. It is recommended, however, that the Dog Tag program continue until the end of 2024 to avoid directing Administrative resources to the processing of partial refunds for the remainder of 2024.

Microchipping and commercially sold dog tags are both widely available and a more convenient option that most responsible dog owners are already utilizing.

In April 2024, the Municipality of Lakeshore partnered with the Windsor Essex County Humane Society to offer a drive-thru microchip clinic. Attendees completed the registration paperwork, made payment and the microchip was placed in their dog without them having to leave their vehicle. The speed and ease with which the process was completed made this a very successful event. The microchips were offered at a discounted rate of \$20 which is a one-time cost to the dog owner and is good for the life of the dog. We are happy to report that over 400 dogs, cats and other pets were processed during the afternoon event. The Municipality of Lakeshore has already begun discussions to host another drive-thru clinic.

The discontinuation of the Dog Tag program would not absolve dog owners of their duty to be a responsible dog owner. Dog owners will be required to affix and maintain their own tag on their dog or ensure that their dog is microchipped. Commercially sold dog tags can be purchased at any pet store or online and must contain the dog's name and a contact number. The more information that is provided on the dog tag will only assist in the efforts to reunite lost dogs with their owners. Alternatively, dog owners can have their dog microchipped by their veterinarian or at the Windsor Essex County Humane

Society. Having either a commercially sold dog tag or microchip are both one-time expenses for the dog owner that will last the life of their dog.

Lakeshore dogs that are brought to the Lakeshore Dog Pound will be scanned for a microchip or commercial dog tag. If no microchip or proper dog tag is found during the assessment, a \$50 administrative fee (new) will be assessed to the dog owner upon pickup plus the \$25 per day Dog Pound Accommodation Fee and the Dog Pound Impound Fee which ranges from \$40 to \$138 (\$40 first visit, \$71 second visit, \$138 third and subsequent visit) as listed in the User Fee By-law.

Should Council approve this recommendation, no dog tags will be sold for the 2025 calendar year. The \$50 administrative fee would be deferred until April 1st, 2025, giving Administration the opportunity to communicate and educate residents of the changes to promote voluntary compliance during the transition period.

It should be noted that the Dangerous Dog Tag program would continue. Owners of dogs that have been deemed dangerous by the Municipality will still be required to purchase a Dangerous Dog Tag and adhere to the requirements of the Animal Care and Control Bylaw (By-law 27-2022).

Financial Impacts

Below is a chart indicating the current cost to administer the dog tag registration program. The staffing resources amount is based on a staff member spending 30 minutes to process each dog tag registration application and distribute the dog tag.

Cost Centre	Amount
Staff Resources (Estimated)	\$17,000
Postage	\$2,000
Cost of Dog Tag	\$1,000
Office Supplies	\$500
Total Cost	\$20,500

Should Council approve this recommendation, staff resources could be directed to other programs to assist with alleviating backlogs to improve response times and increase service levels.

The revenue generated from the sale of dog tags has been directed to the Animal Control Officer budget to help offset the cost of these contracted services. Historically, the budgeted revenue from dog tag sales has been set at \$25,300. In 2023, the actual revenue generated from dog tag sales was \$14,429 resulting in a budget shortfall of \$10,871. Some of the revenue lost from the discontinuation of the Dog Tag program

will be recovered from the new \$50 administrative fee applied to Lakeshore dogs who are found without an identifying tag or microchip.

Discontinuing the Dog Tag program allows Lakeshore to modernize pet ownership regulations, reduce administrative costs, and improve compliance through more effective identification methods such as microchips. This aligns with the Municipality's goals for efficient service delivery and ensures that pet owners can still meet their responsibilities at a minimal cost.

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Discontinuation of Dog Tag Registration Program.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Oct 24, 2024

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

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Submitted by Susan Hirota

Approved by the Corporate Leadership Team