



Subject: Dog Tag Review
To: Corporate and Residential Services Committee
Date Prepared: August 15, 2024
Related Motions: C24(250)
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Approved by: Adam Clarkson, Director of Corporate Services
John Woodford, Director of Planning and Development

Summary

Council requested a staff report on the value to continue with the dog tag registration program. This report provides an overview of the program.

Financial Impact Statement

As of November, 2024, 379 tags have been sold for a revenue of \$4,548. The projected budget revenue for dog tag sales for 2024 is \$4,500. There is a small amount of revenue to be realized for 2024. Sales for 2024 has stop on November 30th and 2025 tag sales will begin on December 1st.

Recommendation

Staff recommend maintaining a dog tag registration program. The next year will focus on additional marketing and promotions to purchase a dog registration tag to encourage additional awareness and value of the program.

Staff also recommend that Council review associated fee's and consider implementing an option for a Lifetime Licenses. This would be brought back through a Fee policy amendment staff report.

Recommended Motion

Move that the Corporate and Residential Services Committee recommends to Council that Council continues to maintain a dog tag registration program and that Council consider implementing a lifetime dog registration fee option and instruct staff to bring back draft amendments to the Municipal Fee Policy.

Background

In July 2024 Council discussed the dog tag registration program and requested a report on the value of it.

Presently dog registration fees are collected in three ways:

1. Online through municipal website;
2. In person or mail at the municipal office in Elmsdale;
3. 3rd party vendor sales:
 - Elmsdale Animal Hospital located at 654 Highway 2, Elmsdale
 - Crazy Dog Dehydrated Treats located at 75 Richard John Drive, Mount Uniacke
 - Uniacke Lakes Animal Hospital located at 572 Highway 1, Mount Uniacke (new vendor)
 - East Hants Animal Hospital located at 202 Highway 214, Elmsdale
 - Noel Canada Post located at 4539 Highway 215, Noel
 - SPCA Truro located at 408 Industrial Avenue, Truro

A dog license is valid from January 1 to December 31 of each calendar year. Dog tags are sold for \$12 each. A replacement tag is \$5. Dogs that are acquired after June 1st and purchase a tag are charged a pro-rated fee of \$6. This option rarely occurs.

A kennel license is \$50. Approximately 2 per year are sold. Kennels provide overnight boarding at both locations that have licenses.

Dog tag sales are advertised on our website and social media starting in December to highlighting the various ways to purchase a tag. That message is pushed out again in January as a reminder. Signage is posted at each third-party vendor location indicating East Hants tags are available for purchase. Paper registration forms received from people who come into the office to purchase a tag, or through one of the vendors, are manually entered into a database by staff. There is no metric for the time commitment this takes.

The dog tag sales mostly happen between December and February. After that, sales drop significantly. The Municipal Compliance Officer picks up registration forms from our vendors monthly and brings them back to the office to be processed.

Staff create requests for invoices for the vendors based on the tag sales. The vendors retain \$5.00 for selling these tags. Finance creates these invoices for the vendors and sends them out. These payments are very minimal, based on the number of tags sold.

There is some staff time that is utilized for processing dog tag registrations, but how much is really hard to quantify.

Sales Summary

YEAR	Dog Tags Sold	Kennel Tags Sold
2024	379	2
2023	455	2
2022	615	3
2021	648	4
2020	509	

In 2023, East Hants offered online tag sales. 455 tags were sold for a revenue of \$4,444. There is also a PayPal fee of \$0.65/tag sold that we are charged related to the online sales.

- In 2022, 615 tags were sold for a revenue of \$5,813
- In 2021, 648 tags were sold for a revenue of \$6,102
- In 2020, 509 tags were sold for a revenue of \$5,144

In 2019, we began offering dog tag sales through third party vendors. As part of the agreement, each vendor would retain a portion of the sale. 567 tags were sold that year for a revenue of \$5,936.

Although online sales commenced in 2023, the uptake of the online service has been minimal and to date, it has not shown a significant increase in sales.

It is estimated that only 11% of dogs are registered in East Hants. This relates to national pet ownership estimates and national population (human) counts and working them back to East Hants to predict the number of dogs we have. Stats Canada does not collect pet information so we used data from Statista. Knowing the number of dogs nationally (7,900,000) and the number of residents, an estimate for how many dogs is unregistered in East Hants was used to determine a compliance rate. There should be approximately 4,100 dogs in East Hants and based on 2023 statistics, we have 444 registered. That would be a compliance rate of 11%.

Other Jurisdictions

All other municipalities within NS register their dogs through many venues. However, most are also experiencing a low percentage of registration.

All dogs in Halifax Regional Municipality require a license. You can either purchase a license for your dog every year, or buy a lifetime license (as long as your dog has a microchip). Not having a license may result in a fine of \$237.50 or more.

Other municipalities that offer lifetime dog registrations are Colchester (\$25.00, 3 or more dogs \$75.00), Pictou (spayed/neutered \$10.00 and non-neutered \$15.00 with a \$7.50 replacement), West Hants (\$15.00) and Truro (\$25.00).

Consideration may be given to an outside agency taking on 100% of managing and controlling the collection and registration of dog tags within the Municipality, such as Docupet, which is an online registration service. A cursory review of their website shows they work with many municipalities across the country. Staff would need to explore this service further and evaluate it against our own online and in person service.

Discussion

The purpose of a dog tag registration program is to support the enforcement of the municipality’s bylaw. It provides the municipality a way to track repeat offenders and enforce the regulations around at-risk/potentially dangerous/dangerous dogs. It tells animal control officers that a dog or cat has an owner, helping to reunite the pet with his family. Licenses also help municipalities keep track of how many dogs a person owns.

The MGA gives the authority to municipalities to manage this bylaw by using the term “can” and not shall.

There are pros and cons to the registration of dogs within the Municipality:

PROS	CONS
If your dog goes missing, if they are wearing a tag returning the dog is much easier and faster	Time committed for Municipality to process vendor and walk-in sales
Tracks number of dogs within the Municipality	
Enforceable upon investigation	

The identification of missing or lost dogs has evolved over the years and is now done via other methods, such a micro-chip, social media, etc.

East Hants does not have roaming Special Constables or SPCA members in the area doing compliance checks on dog tags. Therefore, there is no incentive, education or enforcement to ensure dog owners abide by Bylaw P-1000. That being said, the dog registration process and enforcement is an integral part of the bylaw and enforcement. It is a ‘tool’ in the tool box. Should Council wish to remove the dog tag registration program they would need to re-think and overhaul the bylaw.

This dog control service has recently transitioned to Corporate Services in July 2024. The administration of the dog tag registration and marketing remains with the Planning & Development Department.

Staff recommend focusing for the next year on additional marketing and promotions to purchase a dog registration tag to see if additional uptake occurs. After a year, the program may be re-evaluated.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Periodic review and evaluation of this program supports the municipality's corporate excellence strategy. We want to be sure the services we offer and the things we require our residents to do provide value.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Bylaw P-1000 includes dog tag registration requirements and enforcement provisions. This bylaw is a tool for enforcement purposes. If Council decides to remove the requirement of a dog tag, the bylaw would need to be amended. The areas to be revised would be:

- The definition of license and tag
- Section 3, Registration would need to be removed, as it applies to having a dog tag
- Section 8, Impoundment would need to be removed

Municipal Government Act section 175 (1) A council may make bylaws

(b) imposing a registration fee upon the owner of every dog, the amount to be set by policy, for such length of time as is specified in the bylaw with the power to impose a larger fee for female dogs than for male dogs, or for unspayed or unneutered dogs than for spayed or neutered dogs;

(c) requiring tags for the identification of dogs registered under the bylaw.

Many municipalities are still continuing to have dogs registered through dog tag programs within their jurisdiction.

As mentioned previously, the identification of lost dogs has evolved to other means. The SPCA enforces Bylaw P-1000 when dogs are encountered without a dog registration during their investigations within Municipality of East Hants.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Municipality entered into a 3-year contract with the SPCA at a cost of \$40,000/YR (\$3,333/Month) to provide full dog control coverage. The current contract expires March 31, 2026. The agreement may also be renewed for an additional 2 years, up to March 31, 2028.

Alternatives

1. Council removes dog tag registration requirements and updates the associated bylaw.
2. Another agency takes on the purchasing and compliance of dog tags. (i.e. SPCA).
3. Use a 3rd party for all dog tag registration sales (i.e. [Docupet](#)).

Attachments
Bylaw P-1000