

Responsible Dog Ownership

Much of what we do around dogs is encapsulated in our statutory responsibilities and through our partnership working with a variety of organisation, so this evening I'll give a brief overview of what these are. First our statutory responsibilities:

Cleansing

- Street cleansing remove dog fouling – street sweepers of FIDO;
- People can put dog fouling, bagged, in a litter bin and so there is no need for specialist bins;
- People can report dog fouling to us via Love Lewisham, telephone or web;
- Dog fouling reports – 400 2013-14, 506 2012-13 – reduction of 21%.

Stray Dogs

- Lewisham has a statutory responsibility for stray dogs.

2008/09	390
2009/10	532
2010/11	413
2011/12	305
2012/13	315
2013/14	251

- 2013-14 figures:
 - 251 dogs – 53% reduction on 2009-10.
 - 123 collected by their owner – 49%.
 - Approx 80 of 251 were microchipped – 32% (2009/10 - 10%).
 - 28% dogs in Downham and Catford postcodes.
- Under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 a dog is considered a stray if it is in public place without its owner or if its on private land without the landowners permission.
- Under this act stray dogs can be seized by the council and held for a period of 7 days before they become their property. Owners wishing to claim their dogs must pay a £25 statutory fee and all other costs incurred.
- Gold Stray Dog Footprint Awards.

BARK – Borough Action for Responsible K9's

- Set up about six years ago, the Animal Welfare Dept works with our partners and holds bi-monthly meetings with The Safer Neighbourhood Teams, Enforcement, RSPCA, housing providers, Glendale, Battersea Cats & Dogs Homes and the Status Dogs Unit.
- Aim of BARK
 - To educate the community on dog welfare and the implications of irresponsible ownership.
 - To reduce the levels of anti-social behaviour linked with the misuse of dogs.
 - To reduce the number of incidents where dogs are mistreated.
- BARK provides:
 - Reassurance: BARK will be holding events to promote awareness of current legislation, provide advice and assistance and to inform the

residents of Lewisham that issues regarding dogs are being addressed.

- Intelligence: The sharing of information between partnership organisations to tackle dog related issues and this has included us organising training around pieces of legislation such as the DDA as well as tackling mistreatment, tenancy issues and dog control.
- Prevention: School education programme and community talks and visits to educate members of the public about responsible animal ownership and current animal legislation.
- Enforcement: Mainly broken down into welfare, safety and environmental. Regular multi-patrols across the Borough, proactively intervening where offences or mistreatment of dogs is apparent, making use of legislation where appropriate.

Education & Awareness Raising

General:

- Pavement Stencils, which are a visual reminder to dog owners to pick up after their pets;
- Information on the website, which includes information on choosing a pet and 'Your dog and the law';
- Letters delivered to problem areas, resources permitting, and we have used the Police Cadets in the past;
- We have used national campaigns in the past such as the Dog Poo Fairy, Soft Staffies and Back Street Breeding;
- Awareness raising campaigns including leaflet drops, articles in local housing providers newsletters and articles on our blog and other social networking media;

Community Events:

- 'Dog Days' are organised through our BARK partnership and offer activities such as behaviour and training advice, tag engraving, free micro-chipping, leaflet & information distribution and agility display and dog shows to promote positive side of dog ownership;
- Officers attend community events to promote responsible animal ownership;
- Promote the Green Dog Walkers Scheme, the aim of which is to shift public attitudes towards fouling, so that it becomes unacceptable and to decrease the amount of fouling on our streets. It is aimed at volunteer groups and dog owners who pledge to:
 - Always clean up after their dog;
 - Carry extra doggie bags;
 - Hand out extra doggie bags.

Since April 2013 the partnership has:

- Microchipped 190 dogs;
- Tagged 149.

Schools Education:

- Mainly in partnership with Battersea;
- Clean & Green Schools - Animal Welfare theme included for schools to choose;
- Battersea Cats & Dogs Home talk to local schools about responsible dog ownership including ownership of so called 'status dogs';
- Junior Citizens - Battersea do a session for one of the weeks.

Legislation and Enforcement

There are a number of pieces of legislation relating to irresponsible dog owners and dogs.

Dog Control Orders

- An offence under the Dog Control Order can result in an on-the-spot £75 fine and fines of up to £1,000. Offences include:
 1. Fouling of land by dogs and failing to remove dog faeces
 2. Not keeping a dog on a lead
 3. Not putting, and keeping, a dog on a lead when directed to do so by an authorised officer
 4. Taking more than four dogs onto specified areas
 5. Permitting a dog to enter land from which dogs are excluded
- Our enforcement team can take action against those dog owners who are not complying with the Dog Control Orders. If you are aware of anyone not picking up after their dog and you are prepared to write a witness statement then please let us know. It may be that the person pays the fine in which case this will go no further. However if they don't our enforcement officers will check with you to see if you are happy for the case to be taken further.
- Train partner agencies;
- 9 FPN's and 2 prosecutions (last three years) – difficulties of undertaking enforcement.

Control of Dogs Order 1992

- All dogs in public places must wear a collar with a plate or tag, with the owner's contact details inscribed on it. Failure to do so can result in the dog being picked up as a stray and fines of up to £5000. We recommend you get your dog microchipped as this greatly increases the chances of you being reunited with your dog, should you lose it.
- From May 2016 all dogs must be microchipped.

Animal Welfare Act 2006

- Much of our work around this is in partnership with the RSPCA;
- Under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 owners have a duty of care to their animals, and must ensure:
 - a proper diet, including fresh water
 - somewhere suitable to live
 - the ability for the animal to express normal behaviour
 - protection from and treatment of illness or injury

- that they are housed with or apart from animals as required by their behaviour / breed.
- The minimum age at which a person can buy an animal has risen from 12 to 16.
- It also makes it an offence to:
 - have anything to do with a dog fight, including organising one or attending one
 - mutilate an animal (any procedure that involves interfering with the sensitive tissues or bone structure of an animal) other than for medical purposes
 - dock a dogs tail unless it can be proven that it is a working dog or for medical reasons.
- Anyone who does not provide for an animals welfare or who is cruel to an animal may be banned from owning animals, or fined or up to £20,000 and/or sent to prison.

Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 - Two key pieces to this legislation:

- Under Section 1 of the Dangerous Dogs Act is an offence to own one of four prohibited breeds unless they have been place on the Index of Exempted Dogs. These are the Filo Brasileiro, the Dogo Argentino, and the Pit Bull Type.
- Section 3 of the Dangerous Dogs Act states that it is an offence for any dog to be dangerously out of control in a public place.
- Any dog can be a dangerous dog and if you are in fear of a dog then this is classed as a dangerous dog.
- It should also be noted that last year the law changed and whereas this law only applied to public places it now applies on private property.
- If you wish to report an offence or suspected offence under the Dangerous Dogs Act please contact your local Police Safer Neighbourhood Team.