

RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERSHIP BY-LAW REVIEW

Phase 2 Public Engagement Summary

April 2022

Background

The Responsible Pet Ownership By-Law regulates the presence of wild and domesticated animals within Winnipeg, their activities, and the activities of their owners. Since the by-law came into force in 2013, opportunities have been identified to strengthen it to improve the safety of both pets and the community. Best practices in animal control and welfare have also evolved since the last review.

Draft recommendations were adopted by Council in January 2022 to strengthen the by-law in terms of adherence to spray/neuter, breeding of dogs and cats, outdoor animal trapping, outdoor dog chaining and housing, wildlife proofing and co-existence techniques, animal safety regarding pets left unattended in vehicles and biking with dogs, and dog daycare standards.

However, the need for additional research and discussion regarding allowable animals and breed-specific regulations was identified at the Council meeting and during Phase 1 public engagement. An extension was granted by Council to allow for additional public engagement and analysis.

Engagement

The City of Winnipeg (City) connected with stakeholder organizations and the public to gather input on potential solutions, issues, and gaps in the current Responsible Pet Ownership By-law in summer 2021 as part of Phase 1 public engagement.

Phase 2 public engagement focused on gaining input regarding the allowable animals list and breed-specific regulations. The engagement centred on five areas: animal well-being and welfare, fish, exotic animals, urban chickens, and dog breed-specific regulations. Five stakeholder meetings were held with organizations with expertise in each of these areas, while the public was invited to share their input through a survey. Follow-up meetings were also held with stakeholders where additional information was required after Phase 1 public engagement.

Details on the Phase 2 public engagement opportunities are available in Table 1.

Promotion

Public engagement opportunities were promoted using the following methods:

- News release – January 20, 2022
- Email invitations to 205 subscribers – January 20, 2022
- Email invitations to 37 organizations – January 20, 2022
- Facebook posts with 31,800 followers – four posts over four weeks, highlighting the survey.
- Twitter posts with 107,000 followers – four posts over four weeks, highlighting the survey.
- City of Winnipeg public engagement newsletter with over 5,300 recipients – included in two newsletters.

Table 1: Phase 2 Public Engagement Opportunities

Date	Activity	Participation
January 20 – February 13, 2022	Webpage	8,800+ unique visits
January 20 – February 13, 2022	Online survey	6,376 responses ¹
February 2, 2022	Stakeholder meeting – Exotic animal industry	8 attendees
February 2, 2022	Stakeholder meeting – Fish industry	2 attendees
February 3, 2022	Stakeholder meeting – Animal welfare	6 attendees
February 4, 2022	Stakeholder meeting – Urban chicken keeping	11 attendees
February 4, 2022	Stakeholder meeting – Breed-specific regulations	7 attendees
January 7 – February 4, 2022	Follow-up meetings ²	8 meetings

¹ Survey responses received from outside of Winnipeg (2,723 responses) are not included in the analysis and report. Those responses are available in Appendix D.

² Follow-up meetings were held with stakeholders where additional information was required after Phase 1 to support Phase 2 research and public engagement.

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What We Heard – Breed-specific Regulations

Survey respondents were asked about the City's current prohibition on certain dog breeds and if they would support a breed-neutral approach that treats dogs based on their individual behavior instead of their breed and appearance.

18% of respondents support the current prohibition

84% of respondents support a breed-neutral approach

During the stakeholder meeting on breed-specific regulations, all seven attendees expressed support for breed-neutral regulations. Reasons included:

- breed-neutral regulations are inclusive of all dogs and owners;
- dangerous behaviour is a result of how a dog is cared for regardless of breed; and
- it will solve issues with rehoming, euthanization, and veterinary care that result from breed-specific by-laws.

Two comments noted that addressing the root issues that lead to dog incidents is more effective and proactive at enhancing community safety than prohibiting certain dog breeds. One attendee noted that the root issues the City needs to address in the Responsible Pet Ownership By-law include improper care, training, and housing.

All seven attendees expressed support for the proposed updates to the dog designations, including prohibition of ownership as a way to address root issues that lead to dog incidents. One attendee noted that dog designations place emphasis on the owner's role as a caregiver and hold owners responsible for their dogs.

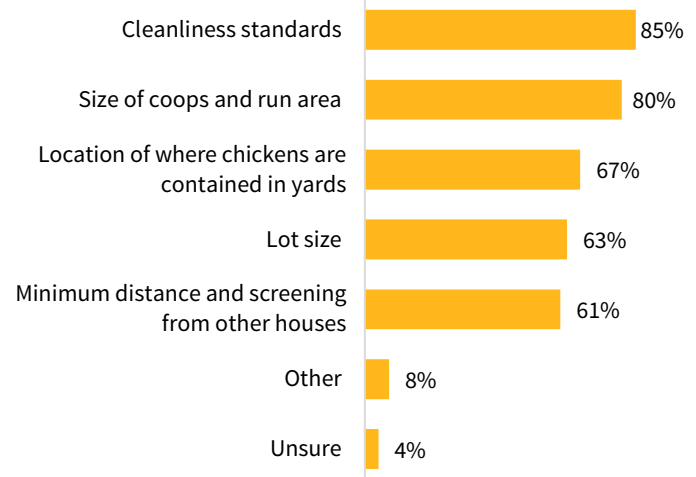
What We Heard – Urban Chicken Keeping

The majority of survey respondents support urban chicken keeping in Winnipeg (65%). Of those who support urban chicken keeping, the top reasons were urban agriculture (4,193 responses), environmentally-friendly lifestyle (3,713 responses), and economic reasons (2,169 responses). Of those who do not support urban chicken keeping, the top concerns were noise (1,305 responses), unsanitary (1,280 responses), and attracts vermin/pest (1,176 responses).

Respondents were then asked about restrictions that should be considered.

If the Responsible Pet Ownership By-law was updated to allow chicken keeping in Winnipeg, what restrictions are important for the City consider?

(6,376 responses)



During the stakeholder meeting on urban chicken keeping, ideas for requirements and restrictions included coop and run size, winterization and temperature moderation, suitable property size, and zoning to allow for coops to be a distance from property lines or other buildings to minimize nuisance. Six comments also noted the importance of a permit process to assess a property to ensure suitability; providing education about flock health and wellbeing; and, offering mentorship and support about care, overwintering, and flock succession planning.

Three attendees expressed a need for the By-law to specify no slaughter and no euthanization of chickens when they stop laying eggs. Proper succession planning needs to occur so chickens are cared for even when they become too old to lay eggs.

One attendee noted that setting a maximum cap of four chickens has been successful in their jurisdiction, while two attendees noted that a maximum of six chickens has been successful in another jurisdiction.

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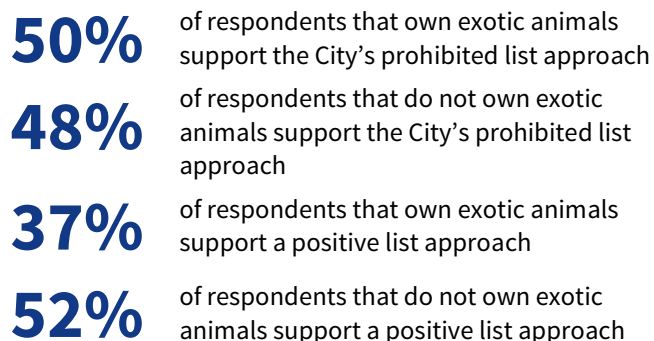
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What We Heard – Exotic Animals

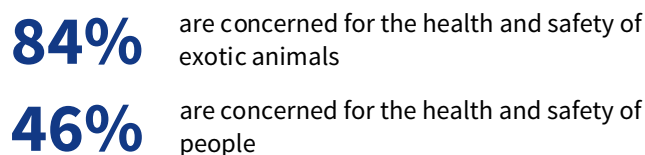
Survey respondents were asked about approaches to regulating exotic animals in Winnipeg. The City currently uses a prohibited list approach, where all animals are allowed as pets unless specified. Another approach is a positive list, where only specified animals are allowed as pets in Winnipeg.



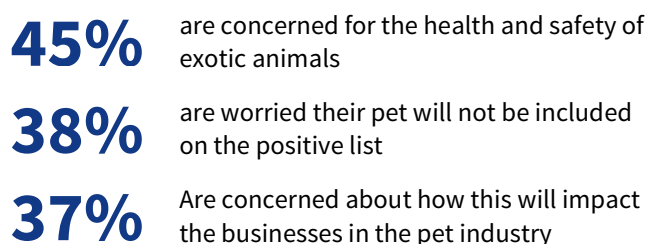
Other respondents were either neutral or unsure.

Survey respondents that own exotic animals support a prohibited list approach slightly more than a positive list approach. Respondents that do not own exotic animals support a positive list approach slightly more than a prohibited list approach. However, there was no strong agreement on any of the presented approaches to regulate exotic animals.

Of those respondents who **support a positive list** approach:



Of those respondents who **opposed a positive list** approach:



Survey respondents indicated that the top three criteria the City should consider when determining what exotic animals can and can't be kept are:



#1 Safety to local wildlife – Limiting animals that may be invasive or contain illnesses (90%)



#2 Origin – Limiting animals taken from the wild (83%)

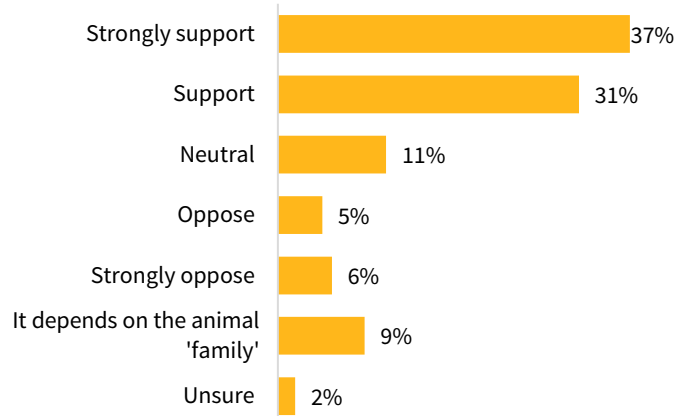


#3 Safety to humans – Limiting animals that may be a risk to humans due to size, aggression, toxicity, etc. (81%)

Currently the City has a limit on the number of dogs and cats that can be kept per household. The majority of survey respondents (68%) support ownership limits for exotic animals such as reptiles, birds, and rabbits.

Do you support animal ownership limits for other animals such as reptiles, birds, and rabbits?

(6,376 responses)



However, the majority of survey respondents (58%) also supported the ability to get an excess animal permit. An excess animal permit would be a process including annual inspections, which would allow a resident to exceed exotic animal limits.

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During the stakeholder meetings, six attendees demonstrated strong support for a positive list. Reasons attendees supported a positive list included:

- concerns about the limited research and knowledge on how to properly care for many animals;
- challenges with meeting the physiological, social, and psychological needs of many animals in captivity;
- easier enforcement; and,
- potential to reduce the illegal trade of wildlife.

Ten attendees expressed opposition to a positive list and preferred the City continue to use a prohibited list. Reasons attendees opposed a positive list included:

- challenges developing objective criteria to create the list;
- challenges assessing over 9,000 species;

- limits the animals that can be sold in pet stores and taken from the wild; and,
- less adaptable than a prohibited list.

One attendee noted that prohibited lists are the standard in Canada and are working well.

Attendees identified a number of criteria for consideration when determining what animals can and can't be kept in Winnipeg. Criteria included access to veterinary care; risk to public health and safety (including disease); risk to environment (invasive species, disease); sourcing; husbandry; and, the ability of the average household to meet animal's needs based on scientific evidence (physical, psychological, and social needs).

The stakeholder meeting notes are available in Appendix B, while the full survey results are available in Appendix C.

How Input Was Considered

What We Heard	How Input was Considered
Participants support a breed-neutral approach that would end the prohibition of American Pit Bull, Staffordshire Bull, and American Staffordshire Terriers as well as other mixes.	The City recommends ending the prohibition of those dog breeds and adopting a breed-neutral approach that treats dogs based on their individual behavior instead of their breed and appearance.
Participants support enhancements to dangerous dog designations including the addition of an 'at risk' category and prohibitions to ownership.	The City recommends updating the 'dangerous dog' and 'exceptionally dangerous dog' designations, adding a new 'at risk pet' designation to proactively reduce pets being placed in at risk scenarios, and prohibitions to ownership.
Participants who support urban chicken keeping note the benefits of urban agriculture, environmentally friendly lifestyles, and economic reasons.	The City will recommend establishing an urban chicken pilot program in Winnipeg to investigate if a city-wide program is feasible.
Participants who do not support urban chicken keeping note noise, sanitation, and attracts vermin/pests as concerns.	The City will recommend a maximum number of chickens allowed per property and explore restrictions and standards to address potential concerns.
There are mixed opinions on how the City should regulate exotic animals in Winnipeg.	The City will ask for an extension to allow for more time to develop recommendations on what animals are and aren't allowed as pets in Winnipeg.
Participants who support a prohibited list note health and safety concerns for animals and people as the primary reasons.	When developing recommendations on what animals are and aren't allowed as pets in Winnipeg, the City will consider health and safety concerns for animals. The City will ask for an extension to allow for more time to develop recommendations on what animals are and aren't allowed as pets in Winnipeg.
Participants who oppose a prohibited list note health and safety concerns for animals, concerns that their pets will not be included, and impacts to businesses and the pet industry.	When developing recommendations on what animals are and aren't, the City will consider health and safety concerns for animals and the pet industry. All existing pets would be grandfathered or could be rehomed inside or outside of Winnipeg. The City will ask for an extension to allow for more time to develop recommendations on what animals are and aren't allowed as pets in Winnipeg.

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Next Steps

Feedback from the public and stakeholder organizations will help the City develop recommendations on exotic animals, urban chicken keeping, and breed-specific regulations. The recommendations will be presented to Council in spring 2022. Any updates to the Responsible Pet Ownership By-law are subject to Council review and approval.

Appendices

Appendix A – List of Stakeholder Organizations
Appendix B – Stakeholder Meeting Notes
Appendix C – Survey Results (Winnipeg-only)
Appendix D – Survey Results (All Responses)
Appendix E – Follow-up Meetings

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