

Animal Cruelty Investigations in Saskatoon

ISSUE

Animal cruelty investigation services in Saskatoon are presently provided by Animal Protection Services Saskatchewan (APSS) between the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday to Friday. The Saskatoon Police Service (SPS) is typically a first point of contact and response for after-business hours calls regarding concerns of animal neglect, harm or endangerment. The City of Saskatoon (City) has no direct role in the provision of these services but has always maintained an interest in and historically provided financial support for animal cruelty investigations within Saskatoon. The Administration has been in communication with SPS on the issues they have had to address in responding to animal cruelty calls.

BACKGROUND

For many years the Saskatoon SPCA (SPCA) provided the animal cruelty investigation services in Saskatoon. Prior to April 1, 2022, the City's Agreement with the SPCA, while recognizing it was not a civic responsibility, provided an annual grant to assist with the provision of animal cruelty investigations/protection services. The grant was not intended to reflect the total cost of providing the services, but instead to simply provide support to the SPCA, similar to other grant programs offered by the City.

In the fall of 2021, the SPCA wrote to the City and the Ministry of Agriculture (Ministry), identifying financial difficulties and requesting additional funding to support the animal cruelty investigations/protection work. The SPCA reached out to the Ministry, as it is the Ministry which appoints Animal Protection Officers (APOs) under Section 9 (1) of *The Animal Protection Act, 2018 (the Act)*. The Ministry denied the SPCA's funding request, citing the magnitude of the funding request as the barrier to reaching an agreement. Without additional funding support, the SPCA notified the Province and the City that they would be withdrawing enforcement of *the Act* as of March 31, 2022.

In June 2022, Administration received correspondence from the Ministry indicating APSS would take on the work of APO's and begin enforcing the *Act* in Saskatoon, starting July 1, 2022. APSS is responsible for all animal welfare concerns from residents and operates 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday to Friday. The APSS website also provides the option of reporting animal welfare concerns through an online submission form that will be responded to the next business day. There is no after-hours or emergency APSS response at present, which means after hour calls are made to the SPS to report a concern and a police response is typically provided.

Administration is appreciative the Ministry is now supporting the provision of animal protection services in Saskatoon, where they previously provided no level of service. Following the transition to the new service delivery model, by APSS in July 2022, Administration and SPS reached out to the Ministry to explore options to provide enforcement beyond the current level of service for the *Act*, for after-hours and weekend service. The Ministry strives to provide the same level of service to all Saskatchewan

residents, and confirmed that no expansion to the current level of service for Saskatoon is being considered.

CURRENT STATUS

Animal protection services/cruelty investigations are under *The Act*, which is provincial legislation and responsibility for these investigations has not been delegated to the City under this legislation. As such, the City has no direct role in the provision of these services, but Administration has been working collaboratively with the various parties to ensure the provisions of animal protection services is available within Saskatoon.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

The SPS started to monitor the impact of calls for service, relative to animal welfare or animal protection, and for the period of April 1 to December 31, 2022, 228 calls for service were logged in communications. A summary of the calls is as follows:

- 86 animal protection/welfare calls received outside APSS's operating hours. From these calls, there was a total of two confirmed/suspected cases of animal cruelty received.
- 32 calls received within APSS's operating hours and forwarded to APSS; and
- The remaining 110 calls involved bylaw related issues and were properly referred to Saskatoon Animal Control Agency (SACA). SACA will respond to all bylaw enforcement calls after-hours and on weekends but are not designated APOs.

The Ministry confirmed animal cruelty/protection concerns outside APSS operating hours and any added service required by a city for its residents will be the responsibility of the local government. In all cases of an urgent nature involving animal cruelty, the SPS will respond. However, many of these calls are animals in distress or neglected and although unfortunate and upsetting to community residents, these non-cruelty calls do not meet the threshold for an emergency response by police.

To assist in the continuum of care, Administration negotiated an agreement with the SPCA for 2023 to accept animals, from SPS, that they seized under *the Act*, so the animals can be accepted after-hours and on weekends. If the animal is aggressive towards SPS, Administration is also working on finalizing an agreement with SACA to transport the seized animal to the pound, since SACA's Animal Control Officers have the proper equipment and are properly trained to handle an aggressive animal.

The City has issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the provision of animal services for 2024 and beyond. The RFP includes requests for both pound services and bylaw enforcement. Beginning in 2024, the new Animal Services contract(s) will include the services and costs associated with transporting and accepting seized animals from SPS, regardless of whether the animal is seized in relation to a bylaw or a Provincial offence.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The table below is a summary of the 2023 costs to the City when the SPS drop off a seized animal to the pound under the Provincial legislation.

	Intake Fee	First Day Fee	Daily Fee	Conclusion Fee \$50 Release \$180 Euthanized
Dog	\$100	\$50	\$30	TBD
Cat	\$100	\$30	\$20	TBD

SPS received a total of two confirmed/suspected cases of animal cruelty in 2022. In both cases, cats were seized by SPS and assuming the pound released or adopted the cats after 4 days, first day fee plus three daily fees, the total cost to the City for 2022 would have been \$480.

In 2021, SACA responded to approximately 15 calls from SPS and approximately 20 calls in 2022 to deal with aggressive animals. The potential 2023 financial impact to the City utilizing these volumes is summarized in the following table.

	Number of calls Requesting Assistance	Minimum After Hours Call- Out for Animal Control Officer	Total Annual Financial Impact
2021	15	\$120	\$1,800
2022	20	\$120	\$2,400

Administration has reviewed the historical volumes and costs associated with this service and will absorb the cost for SPS to drop off seized animals to the pound and the cost for SACA to assist the SPS in transporting animals to the pound in the Animal Services operating budget for 2023. The costs will be built into the base Animal Services operating budget for the 2024/2025 Business Plan and Budget process and approval.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no privacy, legal, social or environmental implications identified.

NEXT STEPS

Administration has signed a Renewal and Amending Agreement with the SPCA for 2023 to accept animals seized by SPS on a per fee basis under the Provincial legislation. Administration will be finalizing an agreement with SACA on a per fee basis to assist SPS in transporting to the pound seized animals that are aggressive.

REPORT APPROVAL

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