

Summary Table of Bylaw Amendments – Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw 47M2021

Topic	Current Bylaw	Proposed Amendment	Rationale
Reintroduction of Provincial Court Hearing	Vicious animal determinations are made through an administrative process led by the Director, with no defined Provincial Court hearing process within the bylaw. Orders such as conditions or animal outcome decisions may require separate court applications.	Reintroduce a defined hearing process (Part 6.1) allowing a Justice to determine whether an animal is vicious and impose orders, including conditions under Section 57 within a single proceeding alongside a prosecution.	Responds to implementation experience where separate court applications may be required to address outcomes such as vicious designation, conditions, or animal outcome decisions. In some cases, these matters are currently pursued through processes outside the Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw, including the Dangerous Dogs Act. The amendment allows these decisions to be addressed within the same proceeding as a prosecution
Offence wording	Section 22 includes offences for threatening and aggressive behaviour, including broad wording such as “bark at” and provisions that require an “attack” to establish severe injury.	Remove “bark at” from subsection 22(1) and remove “attack” from subsection 22(9), so the offence focuses on whether severe injury occurred, including injuries caused by a single bite. Other provisions are unchanged.	Clarifies wording so it better reflects what occurred during an incident. Removing “bark at” avoids capturing low-level behaviour, and removing “attack” allows incidents involving severe injury from a bite to be addressed.
Nuisance Designations	Sets out four grounds for the Director to decide to designate an animal as a Nuisance animal including that the animal has engaged in repeated threatening or aggressive behaviour.	Amendments enable earlier intervention by removing the requirement for “repeated” behaviour (Section 44(a)).	Allows early intervention for animals showing a tendency towards threatening or aggressive behaviour in attempt to prevent more serious offences.

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Vicious animal designation (harm to animals)	Section 51(c) considers harm caused to a person when determining whether an animal meets the criteria for a vicious designation.	Amend Section 51(c) to include harm caused to animals in addition to persons when determining whether an animal meets the criteria for a vicious designation.	Allows the City to address repeated animal-to-animal aggression that creates a safety concern for people and pets, even where the conduct does not meet the threshold for severe injury or death. This supports earlier intervention where behaviour indicates an ongoing risk.
Holding authority	Section 62 allows animals to be seized and held in defined circumstances, including where an animal meets impound criteria or is alleged to be a vicious animal.	Amend Section 62 to add “nuisance animal” and to allow holding during proceedings under Part 6.1 or section 86, so animals may be held while a designation is being considered.	Clarifies that existing holding authority applies in situations where a nuisance or vicious designation is being considered, including during court proceedings.
Transfer accountability	Requires notification of vicious designation to any new owner (sold, gifted or transferred).	Updates to Section 58 require the owner to provide the Director with the name and contact information of any new owner.	Allows The City to identify and contact the new owner of a designated animal, supporting enforcement of ongoing requirements and ensuring conditions continue to apply after ownership changes.
Proving running at large offences	Prohibits an owner from letting their animal run-at-large in the city (a precursor behaviour to many incidents of aggression such as bites and attacks).	Adds a reverse onus as Section 11(1.1) - where an animal is left in the care of an Officer or the Animal Services Centre by a third party (vet clinic or good Samaritan) then the owner of that animal is required to demonstrate the animal was not running at large prior to being taken into care.	Helps address situations where it is difficult to gather direct evidence that an animal was running at large, supporting enforcement and prosecution of Owners whose animals end up at vet clinics and the Animal Services Centre as “strays”.

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False information and obstruction	Section 71 lists offences that constitute obstructing an officer in the course of the officer's duties such as obstructing the capture, seizing and impounding of animals or providing false name or licence number for an animal.	Update Section 71 to prohibit an owner from providing a false name or other false information about themselves or the animal and add a general prohibition against obstructing or interfering with an officer performing lawful duties.	Provides a clearer enforcement tool when a person interferes with an officer's lawful duties or provides false information. This helps ensure investigations are not delayed, responsibility can be established, and appropriate enforcement action can be taken to address animal-related incidents.
Removal of Early Payment Options for Penalties	Schedules to the Bylaw set out early payment options as well as specific penalties for offences.	Removes early payment options and related Tag process and replaces it with minimum penalties.	Early payment options and tag process introduced to the bylaw in 2021 in anticipation of municipal tribunal project and removal of access to provincial court. These changes did not materialize, and the tag process and early payment options are now obsolete.
Penalties	The maximum penalty is \$10,000 or six months' imprisonment (Section 79(2)). Fines are set out in Schedule C and Schedule D.	Updates Section 79 to increase the maximum penalties to \$10,000 and/or one year of imprisonment which is the maximum in the MGA. Update Schedule C and D fine amounts and amend Sections 80(2) and 81(2)-(#) to introduce minimum specific penalties.	Provides courts with sentencing options for offences involving severe injury, death, or other court-determined egregious behaviour. This introduces minimum penalties for specified offences, ensuring fines that are set out in Schedule C and D are applied.
Modernizing language	The current bylaw uses the term "destroy" throughout in reference to animal outcomes decisions.	Update wording throughout the bylaw to substitute "humanely euthanize" in place of "destroy" and update the definition of "court" to "Alberta Court of Justice".	Updates to terminology to reflect current usage of "humanely euthanize" in preference to "destroy".

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	The definition of Court is "Provincial Court of Alberta".		The province changed the name of the Provincial Court of Alberta to Alberta Court of Justice in 2023.
Leash requirements	The definition of leash does not clearly exclude electronic leashes, which can create uncertainty in for owners.	Updates the definition of "leash" in Section 2 to clarify that electronic leashes do not fulfil the bylaw rules around leashes.	Clarifies what constitutes a leash.
Service of notices and documents	Service of notices and documents is conducted in person or by physical delivery.	Updates Section 75 to allow service by electronic means, such as email, where the recipient has provided consent.	Allows notices and documents to be delivered more efficiently by enabling electronic service where consent has been provided.
Secure fence definition	Section 49 defines "secure fence" with specific construction requirements, including minimum height, full enclosure to the ground, and self-closing, lockable gates.	Updates the definition of "secure fence" in Section 49(b) to retain the core containment requirements and add an option for a fence built in a manner approved by the Director.	Provides flexibility to recognize alternative enclosure designs that achieve the same containment outcome, where the standard prescriptive requirements may not be appropriate in all situations.