

# A COMMUNITY MODEL FOR RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERSHIP: CALGARY, ALBERTA

The City of Calgary enacted its Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw in 2006, based on five principles that enable cats, dogs, their owners, and neighbors to live together in “safety and harmony.”<sup>1</sup>

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1. License and provide permanent identification for your pets.
2. Spay or neuter your pets.
3. Provide training, socialization, proper diet, and medical care for your pets.
4. Do not allow your pets to become a threat or nuisance in the community.
5. Procure your pet ethically and from a credible source.

The fifth principle completes the responsible pet ownership community: responsible procurement of pets. When a family adds a new pet, Calgary Animal Services wants them to ask where the animal came from and under what conditions it was produced.<sup>3</sup>

## EDUCATION

Calgary has achieved an unparalleled level of compliance with its easy-to understand bylaw, through education that clarifies the responsibility of all pet owners, programs that facilitate pet owner compliance, and rigorous enforcement against violators. Even before the enactment of its Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw, the City of Calgary Animal & Bylaw Services was creating and presenting curriculum-based school programs for students in grades K-8. Animal Services educational programs are available at no cost to schools. Each year, its three certified teachers offer hundreds of presentations to thousands of Calgary students.<sup>4</sup> To further enable responsible pet ownership and facilitate compliance, the City *also* provides bylaw education programs for adults and ESL learners.



“The whole model is about responsible pet ownership . . . In North America, we don’t really have an animal problem: we’ve got a people problem. I think that’s the first realization you’ve got to come to. It’s not about the animal, it’s about the people.”

Bill Bruce  
Director of Animal & Bylaw Services  
(2000-2012), Calgary, Alberta, Canada. NCRC Advisor

When education does not produce the intended outcome, the Bylaw is rigorously enforced.

## CALGARY ANIMAL SERVICES' RECORD OF SUCCESS

### 2011 Results<sup>5, 6</sup>

- Funded entirely by animal-related revenues, primarily licensing. It receives no tax revenue.
- Over 111,000 dogs licensed, out of a total estimated canine population of 122,325.
- 90% (estimated) licensure compliance rate for dogs.<sup>7</sup>
- 4,576 dogs impounded and a 95% live release rate:
  - 87% returned to their owners;
  - 8% adopted to new owners;
  - 5% euthanized.
- Only 123 reported dog bites.<sup>8</sup>

Calgary's exceptional record shows that when a community

- *adopts* responsible pet ownership standards,
- *educates* its citizens on the benefits of those standards,
- *facilitates* compliance with them, and
- *enforces* against the few who will refuse to comply,

citizens can then enjoy the companionship of their dogs, regardless of breed or type.

A responsible pet ownership model enhances community safety and preserves the human-canine bond.

The National Canine Research Council hopes that all communities will implement their own responsible pet ownership models.

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## SOURCES and NOTES:

1. City of Calgary, Alberta, Canada. (2012). [Official Website]. Retrieved from: <http://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/ABS/Pages/home.aspx>
2. Bylaw Number 23M2006: Being a Bylaw of the City of Calgary Respecting the Regulation, Licensing, and Control of Animals in the City of Calgary. (2006). Retrieved from: <http://www.calgary.ca/CA/city-clerks/Documents/Legislative-services/Bylaws/23M2006-ResponsiblePetOwnership.pdf>
3. See also Bill Bruce's Viewpoint, "Animal Services and the Responsible Pet Ownership Model," accessible via the NCRC website at [www.nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com](http://www.nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com).
4. City of Calgary, Alberta, Canada. (2010). [Educational Programs]. Retrieved from: <http://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/ABS/Pages/School-and-educational-programs/School-educational-programs.aspx>
5. City of Calgary Community Services & Protective Services. (2012). Animal & Bylaw Services: Annual Report 2011. [Public Document]. Retrieved from: <http://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/ABS/Documents/ABS-2011-Annual-Report.pdf>
6. City of Calgary, Alberta, Canada. (2010). [Graph illustration of Animal Related Statistics from 1985-2010]. Retrieved from: [www.calgary.ca/CSPS/ABS/Pages/Animal-Services/Animal-statistics.aspx](http://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/ABS/Pages/Animal-Services/Animal-statistics.aspx)
7. In 2011, the City of Calgary reported a total human population of 1,096,833. The City of Calgary's Census periodically reports the total dog and cat population - most recently in 2010. This information appears on the 'Schedule of Additional Questions to Base Census' located at the end of the census. It is not likely that the dog population increased significantly between 2010-2012. In order to calculate the rate of compliance as a percentage (not included in Calgary's 2011 Annual Report), the 2010 total canine population (122,325) was used here. Calgary reported over 111,000 dogs licensed in its 2011 Annual Report.
8. Bruce, Bill. (3 September 2012). [Personal Correspondence].