
Interim Dog Control Strategies

*First Nation
Veterinary Infrastructure Program*

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Interim Dog Control strategies in Treaty #3: First Nation Veterinary Infrastructure Program
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Christian **A**boriginal **I**nfrasturcture **D**evelopments

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Dog Control Strategies in Treaty #3

First Nation Veterinary Infrastructure Program

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Table of Contents	Page
Overview	2
Introduction	2
Classes of Dogs	3
Problems	3
Wild Dog Populations	3
Dog Overpopulation	4
Pack Aggression	4
Individual Aggressive Dogs	4
Nuisance Dogs	4
Injured or Sick Dogs	5
Tools	5
Bylaw Regulations	5
Veterinary Services	5
Enforcement Services	6
Public Education	6
Enforcement	8
Animal Control Service	8
Bylaw enforcement Service	9
Policing Service	9
Public Health Service	9
Dog Control Strategies	9
Conclusion	11
Acknowledgements	12

Dog Control Strategies in Treaty #3

First Nation Veterinary Infrastructure Program

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Overview:

This brief was written to introduce First Nation communities to dog control problems and solutions to these problems. Strategies presented here are not based on native culture and law. In this regard, they are potentially available interim solutions while nation communities develop tradition-based control strategies for their region. Dr. Herbert has written all solutions without imposing a settler or “humane society” bias into control strategies. As you read, please do not be offended by some of the recommended tools for dog control. These are simply hypothetical interim recommendations with “everything” included for discussion.

Introduction:

Dogs currently in Canada are not indigenous to this continent. They were imported into Canada from around the world. These dogs were selectively bred for specific purposes. For example; Siberian Huskies and Norwegian Elkhounds were bred to pull sleds. When dogs were changed through selective breeding, they also lost their ability to live in the wild and to control their own population. Today’s dogs are a man-made problem imported into First Nation communities. Elder teachings that successfully guide communities with many wildlife issues can be ineffective with these genetically-altered, European-descended dogs. Dog population control is a man-made problem.

The question is not “if” we need dog control in Northwestern Ontario Nation communities, but how do we set up the solution within the diffuse reserve setting. The process to deal with dog control can be simplified to the acquisition of knowledge on the issues to generate choices that can be used within a community. It is all about a healthy, safe, vibrant community. With a thorough understanding of the issues and choices, the solutions for dog control are implemented through public education, veterinary service, community regulations, and regulation enforcement. Understanding issues and choices in dog control is generally dependent on public education through humane societies and private veterinary services. Unfortunately, these two services do not currently exist in Nation communities.

Humane societies may not currently exist in our Treaty #3 communities but they do exist in Ontario. The Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals quotes statistics that one pregnant female dog can give rise to 69,000 dogs within 6 years. (They also give statistics saying one pregnant cat can give 420,000 cats within 7 years.) There is no way a community can win the dog control battle without a battle plan. The battle plan 100 years of humane society work has produced is simple; spay and neuter all dogs not used for breeding, find a home for stray dogs, humanely euthanize unwanted dogs, and teach people how to manage their dogs. In this battle plan both the dog population problem and the community’s dog pack aggression problems are solved. How we develop dog control measures that fulfill this simple battle plan is our choice. However, the battle plan will need animal control infrastructure services. These services include; dog pound, spay/neuter, bylaw enforcement, euthanasia services, and public education services.

Dog Control Strategies in Treaty #3

First Nation Veterinary Infrastructure Program

Dr. Richard Herbert

Dog overpopulation negatively impacts community public health through dog bites, mauling deaths, pack aggression, disease transmission, and animal suffering. It can also have a psychological impact on children and be linked to subsequent violent offences within the community (see the brief, “Animal-related Public Health Crises in Nation Communities” <http://caid.ca/GenPub010108.pdf>). First Nation dog-related public health crises are a direct result of the lack of dog control strategies which in turn need public education services, veterinary services, bylaw regulations, and bylaw enforcement services. Unfortunately, most of these services, and therefore dog control strategies, are nonexistent in most of our Nation communities.

Classes of Dogs:

There are three basic classes, or groups, of dogs. All three classes exist in Nation communities. They are; pre-weaned puppies, weaned puppies, and adults. Each class can be further broken down into owned and not-owned dogs. Not-owned dogs can be further broken down into wild and tame dogs. This results in eight basic dog groups in our reserve communities (see diagram 1). These are:

Dog Groups			
Maturity	Ownership	Behaviour	Group
Pre-weaned Puppies	Not-owned	Tame	I
	Owned	Tame	II
Weaned Puppies	Not-owned	Tame	III
	Not-owned	Wild	IV
	Owned	Tame	V
Adult Dogs	Not-owned	Tame	VI
	Not-owned	Wild	VII
	Owned	Tame	VIII

Problems:

There are 6 basic identified problems with dogs within our Nation that communities want addressed. They are; wild dog populations, dog overpopulation, pack aggression, individual

Dog Control Strategies in Treaty #3

First Nation Veterinary Infrastructure Program

Dr. Richard Herbert

aggressive dogs, nuisance dogs, and injured/sick dogs. These problems, in turn, result in community public health crises through dog bites, mauling deaths, pack aggression, disease transmission, and animal suffering.

1/ Wild Dog Populations:

These are usually mixed breed dogs but they can look purebred. They are wild in that they cannot be handled and they usually have a 20-40 foot flight zone. They cannot survive in the wild on their own and so usually eat from garbage and live close to the dump. They can form dog packs and hunt other pets (or people) depending on the alpha male's behaviour repertoire. Some of these dogs get accustomed enough to people that they will come within 2-5 feet of a person when food is involved. These dogs are a problem due to their continual breeding, nuisance behaviour, disease transmission, and potential to hunt other pets and children when their numbers increase.

2/ Dog Overpopulation:

This problem is straight forward. Every potential nuisance, disease, or aggression problem will increase in frequency due to overpopulation. There also seems to be a threshold population above which the problems increase exponentially.

3/ Pack Aggression:

When two or more dogs run at large together they form a pack. Dog packs are led by the alpha male and function as a hunting group. Unfortunately, dog packs don't usually hunt for food. They hunt for excitement. The alpha male picks out a target and the dogs hunt and attack the target in a frenzy, ripping it to pieces. The target can be anything from a ball to other pets to children. This is the most dangerous of all aggressive behaviours. The problem is straight forward, dogs at large form a pack and dog packs ultimately turn aggressive. The speed and severity that a few dogs running at large can form a dangerous pack depends on the alpha male and learned (from other alpha males) behaviour.

4/ Individual Aggressive Dogs:

There are ten common aggressive behaviours that result in biting, after pack aggression is dealt with. They are; dominance, territory, fear, maternal, prey-catching, inter-male, estrus-related, misdirected, play, and learned aggression. These aggressions are related to breeds, sex, hormones, environment, and genetics. The end problem is the same. These dogs are unsafe with people under certain conditions. The conditions that result in biting are dependent on the type of aggression. For example: Rottweilers are a territorially aggressive guard dog. If let loose, they will attack to protect whatever they perceive as their territory. In this regard, people can be territory.

5/ Nuisance Dogs:

A nuisance is defined as a behaviour causing inconvenience. Dogs can cause an inconvenience by tearing open garbage, digging up vegetable or flower gardens, soiling the environment with faeces, digging holes, chewing personal property, impregnating female dogs, stealing food from

Dog Control Strategies in Treaty #3

First Nation Veterinary Infrastructure Program

Dr. Richard Herbert

children, spreading disease, urine territorial marking, and frightening community members. This is by no means a complete list of nuisance activities dogs find themselves engaged in. The problem with nuisance dogs is literally that they cause problems which lower the quality of life and adversely affect the public health of a community. All dog problems, not just nuisance dogs, lower community social capital.

6/ Injured or Sick Dogs:

Dogs can become injured/sick whether they are owned or not. In either case, the animal suffers. Animal suffering is the actual legal definition for animal cruelty. There exists Federal (Part IX Criminal Code; Health of Animals Act) and Provincial legislation (OSPCA Act, Research for Animals Act, Dog Owner's Liability Act) that deal with animal care, owner responsibility, and, consequently, animal cruelty. Compliance to these, or similar, legislated regulations needs to be incorporated into dog control strategies for dog owners, community governance, animal control officers, and police constables. Currently, Federal regulations are relatively lax. However, tougher Federal animal cruelty laws are coming due to a link between animal cruelty and both family violence and violent crimes. The problem with open animal cruelty in a community is that it is part of the domestic violence circle (child, spousal, and elder abuse).

Dog Problem by Group and Sex		
Dog Problem	Dog Groups Causing Problem	Predominant Sex
Wild Dog Population	I, III, IV, VI, VII	Both
Dog Overpopulation	VI, VII, VIII	Female
Pack Aggression	VI, VII, VIII	Both
Individual Aggressive Dogs	III, V, VI, VIII	Male
Nuisance Dogs	III, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII	Both
Sick/Injured Dogs	All	Both

Tools:

There are a variety of tools used in non-nation communities to maintain control over dog populations. The tools used for dog control need to be selected depending on which of the eight dog groups are causing problems. Bylaws will never be effective without services that provide choices and enforcement to ensure compliance. Dog control tools fall into 4 basic service groups. They are; bylaw regulation, veterinary, enforcement, and public education services.

Dog Control Strategies in Treaty #3

First Nation Veterinary Infrastructure Program

Dr. Richard Herbert

Bylaw Regulations:

Bylaw regulations that will help control dog public health problems include; licensing for identification (microchipping is best), vaccination requirements (most important is rabies), spay/neuter requirements (female and male), running at large regulations, dangerous breed restrictions, aggressive dog restrictions, dog housing regulations, maximum number of pets per household restrictions, dog breeding restrictions (kennel/breeder licensing), enforcement regulations, fees/fines with a collection system, and regulations preventing injured/sick dogs from suffering.

Veterinary Services:

The services veterinarians provide that can be used in dog control strategies for population and disease control include, spay/neuter (sterilization), vaccination (rabies and others), parasite control, humane euthanasia (by injection), emergency (sick/injured animals), and support services for dog pounds, animal control officers, animal rescue groups and humane societies.

Enforcement Services:

There are two basic enforcement services, bylaw enforcement and animal control. However, Police and Health Officials are also involved in enforcement. Basic tools for bylaw enforcement are bylaw regulations and fines. Basic tools for animal control are stray dog capture and euthanasia/adoption after a defined holding period. Dogs can be caught with bait by hand or live trapped. Dogs can be euthanized by injection (usually with a veterinary service), if they can be handled. If they cannot be handled (feral dogs), they can be euthanized by gun shot at close proximity after live trapping (preferred) or at a distance. Capture by tranquilization gun is generally not a viable alternative for feral dog capture. In select cases, oral tranquilization may facilitate the capture of a timid dog.

Another tool in enforcement is animal rescue and it should not be overlooked. Animal “rescue” groups (shelters and other private groups) exist independently from the humane society (OSPCA). These organizations can help tremendously by providing a humane alternative to euthanasia. Rescue groups and shelters can work with an enforcement service to find homes for adoptable, unwanted strays and occasionally sick or injured animals.

Public Education:

The average community member knows very little about dog population control, transmissible zoonotic disease, or animal cruelty control. This is why the SPCA has been teaching on these subjects for 100 years. As mentioned in the introduction, there are simple goals to follow for population control. They are: Spay and neuter all dogs not used for breeding, find a home for stray dogs, and humanely euthanize unwanted and stray dogs. There are also simple goals to follow for disease transmission from dogs to people. They are: Rabies vaccinate, parasite control, stoop and scoop, prevent garbage eating, have sick dogs examined by a veterinary service, and vaccinate for other routine dog diseases seen within the community. All of these dog disease goals can be further simplified to 1. prevent disease, and 2. seek veterinary care for ill animals. Humane societies also teach on basic animal needs, behaviour, and care to prevent animal

Dog Control Strategies in Treaty #3

First Nation Veterinary Infrastructure Program

Dr. Richard Herbert

suffering, and therefore, animal cruelty. Public education is an essential tool for permanent solutions to dog overpopulation-related public health problems.

Dog Group by Service Group and Tools			
Maturity	Group	Service	Tools
Pre-weaned Puppies (Not-owned Tame)	I	Bylaw	At-large, Breeding/kennel license
		Veterinary	Euthanasia
		Enforcement	Hand caught, Rescue
		Public Education	Disease control, Population control
Pre-weaned Puppies (Owned Tame)	II	Bylaw	Breeding/kennel license
		Veterinary	Euthanasia
		Enforcement	Hand Caught, Disposal Fees, Fines, Rescue
		Public Education	Spay/neuter, Disease control, Population control
Weaned Puppies (Not-owned Tame)	III	Bylaw	At-large
		Veterinary	Euthanasia
		Enforcement	Hand caught, Rescue
		Public Education	Spay/neuter, Disease control, Pack aggression
Weaned Puppies (Not-owned Wild)	IV	Bylaw	At-large
		Veterinary	Euthanasia
		Enforcement	Live trap, Gun shot, Poison
		Public Education	Disease Control, Pack Aggression, Population Control

Dog Control Strategies in Treaty #3

First Nation Veterinary Infrastructure Program

Dr. Richard Herbert

Weaned Puppies (Owned Tame)	V	Bylaw	At-large, Vaccination, Licensing, Spay/neuter, Dangerous breeds, Dog Housing, Maximum number of pets, Animal suffering
		Veterinary	Spay/neuter, Vaccination, Parasite control, Euthanasia, Emergency, Support for pound and officers
		Enforcement	Hand caught, Fines, Rescue
		Public Education	Spay/neuter, Disease Control, Pack aggression, Animal care/behaviour, Population control
Adult Dogs (Not-owned Tame)	VI	Bylaw	At-large
		Veterinary	euthanasia
		Enforcement	Hand caught, Rescue
		Public Education	Disease control, Pack aggression, Population Control, Individual dog aggression,
Adult Dogs (Not-owned Wild)	VII	Bylaw	At-large
		Veterinary	
		Enforcement	Live trap, Gun shot, Poison
		Public Education	Hunting aggression, Disease Control, Population Control
Adult Dogs (Owned Tame)	VIII	Bylaw	At-large, Vaccination, Licensing, Spay/neuter, Dangerous breeds, Dog Housing, Maximum number of pets, Animal suffering, Breeding/kennel license, dangerous dog
		Veterinary	Spay/neuter, Vaccination, Parasite control, Euthanasia, Emergency, Support for pound and officers
		Enforcement	Hand caught, fines, Rescue

Dog Control Strategies in Treaty #3

First Nation Veterinary Infrastructure Program

Dr. Richard Herbert

		Public Education	Spay/neuter, Disease Control, Pack aggression, Animal care/behaviour, Population control
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Enforcement:

There are two standard enforcement systems plus policing and public health services. They are; the animal control and bylaw enforcement services. These two services could be consolidated into one. Each of these services needs to be addressed in detail elsewhere. However, a very brief outline of these services follows.

Animal Control Service:

Are involved with at-large dogs in general and can also be involved with nuisance wildlife problems. To support the animal control officer there needs to be a bylaw regulation preventing dogs running at large, a fine for the infraction, a manner in which to collect the fine, dog catching equipment, a mobile unit, a dog pound, pound staff, bylaws regulating impounded dogs, and pound access to veterinary service for examination, euthanasia, and more depending on bylaw regulations. The collected fines are used to financially support the animal control service.

Bylaw Enforcement Service:

The bylaw officer and the animal control officer can be the same person depending on the size of the community and finances. To support the bylaw officer there needs to be bylaw regulations, a fine system within the regulations, a system for receiving payment of fines from bylaw violations, and a method to collect the fines should the perpetrator not pay their fine within a reasonable period of time. The fines collected are used to financially support the bylaw enforcement service and the animal control service.

Policing Service:

Police become involved when nuisance dog situations escalate into dangerous or damaging situations. However, all developed bylaw and service systems in Nation communities must be able to interface with existing appellate, Provincial, and Federal court systems to enforce dog control bylaws. This includes an animal control system with officers and pound services that consistently meet legal standards throughout their jurisdiction. Unfortunately, coordinated Treaty #3 Nation community animal control bylaws and animal control systems do not currently exist. Because of this, Treaty #3 police are currently unable to help with dangerous and damaging dog situations.

Public Health Service:

The public health authority for Nation communities is the First Nation and Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB) of Health Canada. The public health official that directly handles dog-related public health issue for FNIHB is the area Environmental health Officer (EHO). The EHO is the official

Dog Control Strategies in Treaty #3

First Nation Veterinary Infrastructure Program

Dr. Richard Herbert

that will investigate dog bites for rabies transmission potential and order dog quarantines. Unfortunately, FNIHB does not provide for community or regional dog pounds that can be used for rabies-suspect quarantine. For the most part, communities are tying dogs outside or restricting them to rooms within public buildings when rabies quarantine is ordered. Treaty #3 communities have no functional, dog-related, reportable disease control tools, personnel, or facilities.

Dog Control Strategies:

Interim strategies used by a community for dog control will depend on which of the six problems the community is experiencing and which of the eight groups of dogs are involved in the problems. However, most communities within Treaty #3 will have a similar need to “catch-up” on dog control. This need is a consequence of minimal developed bylaw regulations, minimal bylaw enforcement, minimal veterinary service, and no dog-related public education services.

We must also keep in mind that there are Federal and Provincial regulations regarding animal suffering, biting, property damage, aggression, and liability that will involve Police and Environmental Health Officer in dog control to some extent.

Please remember, each community should, in an informed manner, decide on their own strategy for dog control. However, we will need to develop permanent, traditional law-based solutions to ultimately coordinate dog control services and regulations across the Nation so we can harmonize to other jurisdictional institutions; including policing and justice institutions. With this in mind, basic possible **initial** strategies that can provide the quickest solutions to each of the six problems are as follows:

Dog Problem Initial Control Strategies by Service Group and Tools		
Problem	Enforcement Service	Tools
Wild Dogs	Animal Control	1/ Search for and euthanize pre-weaned puppies 2/ Poison or gun shot remove wild dogs that cannot be caught by hand (live trap and shoot preferred) 3/ Hand-catch (if possible) strays, hold for 3 days and euthanize unclaimed strays 4/ Adopt strays locally or with rescue groups
	Bylaw Enforcement	

Dog Control Strategies in Treaty #3

First Nation Veterinary Infrastructure Program

Dr. Richard Herbert

	Police	
	EHO	
Dog Overpopulation	Animal Control	
	Bylaw Enforcement	1/ Enforce spay/neuter bylaw 2/ Enforce maximum number of pets per household bylaw 3/ Enforce breeding/kennel license bylaw 4/ Enforce licensing bylaws
	Police	
	EHO	
Pack Aggression	Animal Control	
	Bylaw Enforcement	1/ Enforce at-large bylaws 2/ Enforce dangerous dog bylaws
	Police	3/ Involved with biting or aggression
	EHO	4/ Involved with biting
Individual Aggressive Dogs	Animal Control	
	Bylaw enforcement	1/ Enforce dangerous dog bylaws 2/ Enforce dangerous breeds bylaws 3/ Enforce dog housing bylaws
	Police	4/ Involved with biting or aggression
	EHO	5/ Involved with biting
Nuisance Dogs	Animal Control	1/ Hand-catch strays, hold for 3 days, vet euthanize unclaimed strays; or, adopt locally and with rescue groups
	Bylaw Enforcement	2/ Enforce at-large bylaws 3/ Enforce Dog housing bylaws 4/ Enforce licensing bylaws

Dog Control Strategies in Treaty #3

First Nation Veterinary Infrastructure Program

Dr. Richard Herbert

	Police	5/ Involved with property damage
	EHO	
Sick/Injured Dogs	Animal control	1/ Hand-catch sick/injured dogs, examine and euthanize if necessary or hold for 3 days if not severe then euthanize if unclaimed or surrender to humane society/animal rescue group
	Bylaw Enforcement	2/ Enforce disease control bylaws 3/ Enforce rabies bylaws 4/ Enforce animal suffering bylaws
	Police	5/ Involved with animal cruelty
	EHO	6/ Involved with reportable disease

Conclusion:

Dog control strategies vary to solve a particular community's problem. Strategies vary depending on which group of dogs are responsible for a problem. There can also be multiple dog groups causing a particular problem. Still further, strategies to clean-up a problem will not necessarily be the same as those used to maintain control of the same problem.

Nation communities within Treaty #3 are asking for dog control solutions. This discussion paper defines problems, dogs, tools, services, and gives a basic description of settler-developed services that can be used to implement interim dog control strategies. While basic clean-up strategies are presented for each of six identified community dog problems, they have not been filtered through Elders or band councils. This means that all solutions presented in this brief are considered "potential" interim solutions until we develop "model" permanent, Elder-based, solutions that are adopted by nation communities. There is much work to be done, but we can make a significant difference wherever we start, very quickly. Communities, tribal councils, and policing officials simply need to commit to solving our Nation's dog problems.

This work is part of a developing First Nation veterinary infrastructure program being developed. This program has, and will, continue to develop and provide the tools and expertise needed to solve community dog problems.

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Dog Control Strategies in Treaty #3

First Nation Veterinary Infrastructure Program

Dr. Richard Herbert

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