

Unwanted dogs to be destroyed by lethal injection

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by Joanne Tait

Whangarei dogs will come to a more dignified end once the district council introduces lethal injections later this year.

About 10 dogs a week were shot and left to rot in pits behind the Whangarei dog pound on Kioreroa Rd, Whangarei District Council, group manager for environmental services Paul Dell said.

The public outcry after news of the pits broke in early 2007 forced the council to re-think its euthanasia policy.

"Council undertook a community consultation process two-and-a-half years ago because there were issues surrounding dog control.

Euthanasia was one of the areas raised," he said.

"[Lethal injection] came back as one of the recommendations from the consultation group."

Mr Dell said although shooting the dogs was a "good, clean way of putting a dog down", the change in methods was a "case of being seen as more compassionate".

While initial discussions suggested the increased cost of injection would be covered by increasing the dog registration fee, the council has decided to incorporate the additional costs into its budget.

"Council is very conscious about not passing these costs on to our good dog owners [who register their dogs]."

Another area the public took issue with was the disposal of the dogs' bodies in the pits.

Mr Dell said security around the pits had been improved but the manner in which the bodies were left to decompose would not change.

"We don't have plans for cremation. There has been discussion about it but nothing has been formalised."

Council is inviting tenders from veterinarians who wish to carry out the dog euthanasia. Tenders close on August 28.

The tender documents show up to 500 dogs a year are expected to be euthanased and the successful tenderer is expected to carry up to \$1 million of public liability insurance.