

Report critical of animal care

by Lindy Laird and Annette Lambly

An independent investigation has cleared a dog minder of fault after a dog died while in her care, but has criticised other aspects of the case — including Kaipara District Council's decision to continue with multiple prosecutions relating to the dead dog.

After being impounded at the Whangarei pound, the huntaway dog had been placed in foster care to avoid spending months locked up while authorities waited for a court case to roll around.

The dog that had allegedly killed a neighbour's chickens, slipped his collar and tether, scaled a 2m fence and bolted onto a road where he was fatally struck by a car.

The dog called Jack, belonging to Maungaturoto farmer David Hamblin, had been impounded by Environmental Northland under the authority of the Kaipara council which then laid charges against Mr Hamblin.

The *Northern Advocate* understands the dog spent less than a week at the Whangarei pound before being put into foster care for much of the next seven months.

A report by senior SPCA prosecutor Jim Boyd, on behalf of Farmers of New Zealand, said it appeared all reasonable precautions were taken with Jack's care.

The dog had not escaped through negligence, according to the report tabled at a Kaipara Dis-



David Hamblin (left) and Jim Boyd.

trict Council meeting last week.

But Mr Boyd also expressed concerns about the condition of Whangarei District Council's pound, called for a national code regarding the care of impounded animals, criticised the time it took

courts to deal with animal cases and suggested the Kaipara district should drop its multiple charges against Mr Hamblin.

Whangarei District Council environment manager Paul Dell said it was normal practice for dogs requiring long term impounding to be put into foster care. Mr Dell said he had not seen Mr Boyd's report but was surprised it was critical of the pound. WDC was currently spending \$240,000 on upgrading the facility, he said.

Mr Boyd's report said the Whangarei Pound was an old building that was "barely satisfactory for normal short term impounding . . . Improvements are highly desirable . . . and long overdue."

"[The Whangarei Pound is] . . . barely satisfactory for normal short term impounding. . . Improvements are highly desirable . . . and long overdue."

Jim Boyd

He called for a "Code of Welfare for Impounded Animals" to be established by the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee. That code would ensure quality, care that provided social, mental and physical stimulation for

animals impounded for over one month. Mr Boyd also said one representative charge by Kaipara against Mr Hamblin would have been sufficient.

He did commend proposed new KDC bylaws which provided for an adjudication procedure that could do away with the need for court action.

Mr Boyd recommended the fees for Jack's impounding be waived and suggested an offer of diversion be made due to the case's special circumstances. All charges should be withdrawn if Mr Hamblin made a \$500 donation to a suitable charitable organisation, he said.

Kaipara District Council chief executive Jack McKerchar was unavailable for comment.