



ROCKY VIEW COUNTY

WHAT WE HEARD **REPORT**

Animal Control Bylaw Updates

April, 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rocky View County is exploring updates to its Animal Control Bylaw to better address concerns related to uncontrolled pets. In 2023, County Bylaw Officers responded to 1,209 Animal Control Bylaw related complaints, including 472 reports of dogs at large. In response, the County is considering two key bylaw amendments.

- Requiring dogs to be leashed when off their owner's property (except in designated off-leash areas).
- Introducing cat licensing in residential areas.

What We Heard

Residents had mixed opinions on the proposed amendments, highlighting the varied experiences of those living in rural and residential areas. Many rural respondents felt that requirements for dog leashing and cat licensing were unnecessary. In contrast, many respondents from higher-density areas, particularly Langdon, Harmony, and Bragg Creek, supported the proposed amendments.

Dog leashing: 52% of respondents agreed that dogs should be required to be leashed when off their owner's property (except in vehicles or designated off-leash areas).

- Supporters of a leashing bylaw emphasized personal safety as a major concern. Many shared experiences of off-leash dogs approaching or confronting them, their children, or their leashed pets in parks and along public pathways. They felt that a clear and consistently enforced rule would encourage more responsible pet ownership and give the County stronger tools to address recurring issues.
- Opponents felt that a County-wide rule would unfairly impact residents in rural or agricultural areas. This group stressed the importance of preserving rural lifestyles and suggested that enforcement efforts should target irresponsible behaviour, not responsible owners. Some also pointed to a lack of off-leash parks in the County.

Cat Licensing: 52% of respondents agreed that cats should be licensed in residential areas.

- Supporters of licensing pointed to the negative effects of free-roaming cats, such as defecation, property damage, and threats to birds. They believed a licensing system could improve accountability, support lost pet recovery, and align responsibilities for cat owners with those already in place for dog owners.
- Opponents raised concerns about enforceability and effectiveness, especially in rural areas where cats often serve as working animals for pest control. Many doubted whether licensing would influence irresponsible ownership and viewed it as an unnecessary layer of regulation. Some also highlighted the safety risks of requiring outdoor cats to wear collars or tags.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The County conducted public engagement on the proposed revisions to the Animal Control Bylaw from November 15, 2024, to January 22, 2025.

The engagement included two separate online surveys—one focused on dogs and the other on cats—to gather public feedback.

The project received 3,084 views through 1,937 visits. A total of 616 surveys were completed by residents, generating 2,218 comments. Additionally, participants shared 139 comments in a public forum on the project page. Overall, residents spent a combined total of 139 hours providing feedback on the project.

The County promoted the engagement opportunity through various channels, including the County's e-newsletter, Rocky View Weekly advertisements, road signs, and social media posts. Complete information about the engagement activities can be found at engage.rockyview.ca.

2,218

Comments

616

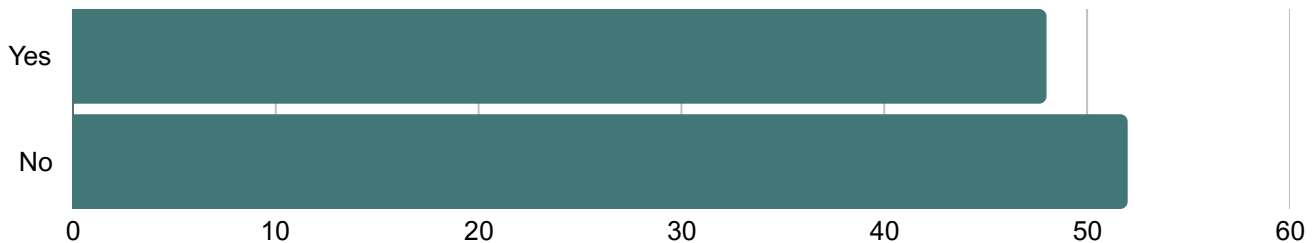
Surveys



KEY FINDINGS: SHOULD DOGS BE REQUIRED TO BE ON-LEASH WHEN NOT ON THEIR OWNER'S PROPERTY OR IN A DESIGNATED OFF-LEASH AREA?

Thank you to the 452 residents who completed this ten-question survey regarding proposed dog leashing in residential areas of Rocky View County. A total of 1,934 comments were received and are summarized below.

Question 1: Do you have concerns with dogs at large in your community?



General Nuisances: 35%

Respondents who expressed concern about dogs at large shared a range of reasons, such as unwanted interactions with off-leash dogs, dog waste left behind - sometimes on private property - dogs escaping yards, and dogs roaming onto roads. These issues were seen as disruptive to daily life and contributed to a sense of frustration among residents.

Safety: 23%

Some respondents pointed to safety as their main concern. This group shared fears of aggressive behaviour or recounted past experiences of being approached or attacked by off-leash dogs. For some, the unpredictability of these encounters made them feel unsafe in public spaces, especially when walking with children or other pets.

Not Concerned: 36%

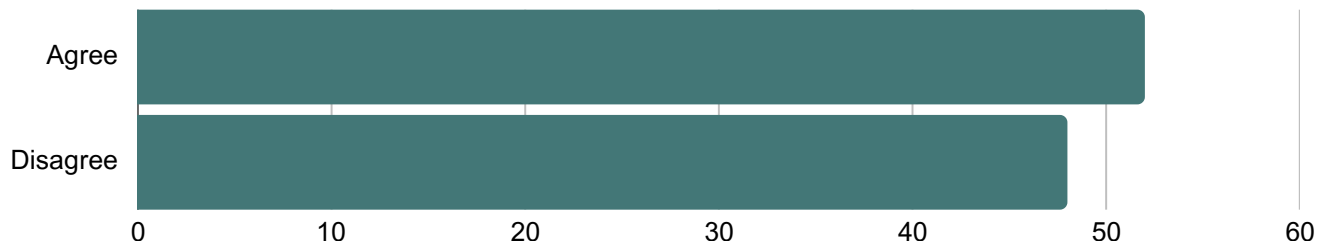
On the other hand, many respondents said they were not concerned about dogs at large in their community. They noted that such incidents were infrequent, most dog owners were responsible, and that there was a strong sense of community when it came to returning lost pets. Many emphasized the importance of focusing on enforcement efforts on irresponsible owners rather than penalizing those who follow the rules.

“

Many times I have been out walking or riding my bike and a dog has run up to me and either tried to jump up at me or has cut me off. I should be able to walk in my community without being concerned about this happening. If I want to visit someone's dog I should have the choice to ask the owner if I can approach their dog to pet them. In the current scenario, I do not have this choice and feel at risk with many large dogs running up to me.

”

Question 2 : The County is considering a bylaw change that would require all dogs to be on-leash when not on their owner's property, contained in a vehicle or at a designated off-leash park. Do you agree or disagree with this proposed bylaw amendment?



Allow Off-Leash Dogs: 39%

Respondents expressed a preference for allowing off-leash freedom outside of designated parks. They highlighted the benefits of off-leash activity for canine socialization, mental stimulation, and exercise, particularly for dogs with good recall and well-developed behaviour. This group also expressed concern over the limited availability of designated off-leash parks across the County. Many felt that rural and semi-rural living should afford more flexibility and that stricter leash rules are better suited to higher-density urban areas.

General Nuisances: 25%

Respondents reported issues such as off-leash dogs entering private yards, failing to have waste picked up, and engaging in disruptive behaviour, for example barking at or agitating other dogs through fences. Some also noted unwelcome or tense interactions between leashed and unleashed dogs in shared public spaces.

Safety: 17%

A portion of respondents shared safety concerns as a primary reason for supporting the proposed change. They cited incidents involving off-leash dogs biting or attacking people and leashed dogs, as well as situations where dogs ran unpredictably toward pedestrians, cyclists, or vehicles. For individuals who are fearful of dogs, off-leash encounters were described as distressing and an infringement on their right to feel safe in public spaces. Many emphasized that even well-trained dogs can behave unpredictably, and that leashing is a simple, effective way to maintain control and reduce risk.

**A small percentage of respondents (3%) noted that dogs escaping yards in the hamlet of Langdon was a separate, but important issue.*

Question 3: Is there anything else you would like the County to consider when updating this bylaw to better support communities?

Exempt Rural Areas: 22%

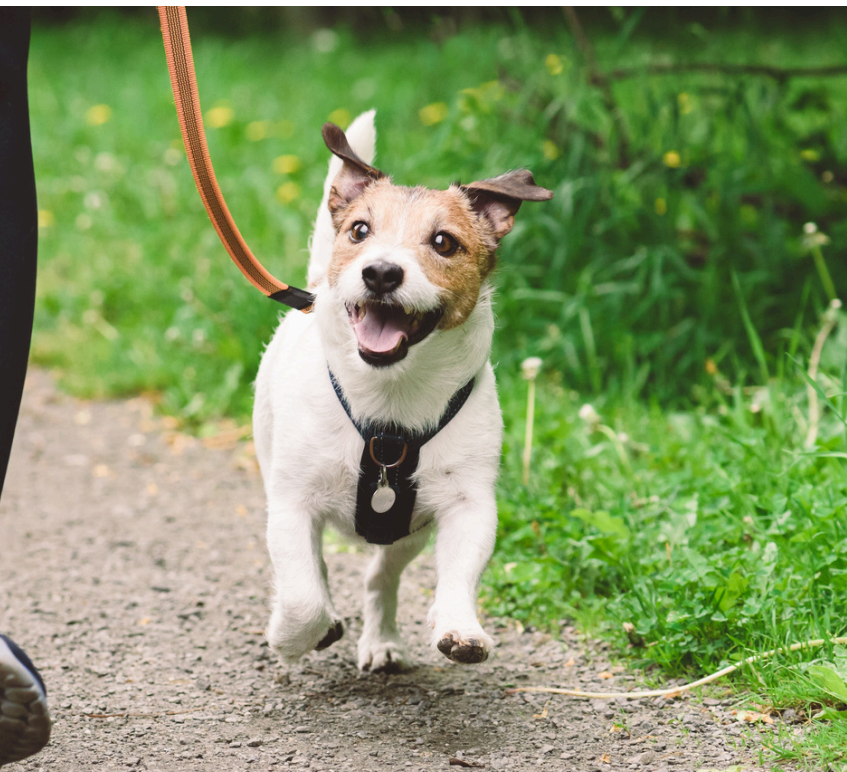
Many participants urged the County to respect and preserve rural lifestyles, suggesting that the bylaw should not apply uniformly across all areas. These respondents shared that in agricultural and rural settings, dogs often accompany their owners freely on large properties or while working outdoors, without causing issues or disturbing neighbours. A further 10% expressed concern that the proposed bylaw could unfairly penalize responsible dog owners and well-trained dogs.

Enforceable Bylaws & Public Safety: 20%

Among those in support of the proposed changes, 20% noted that a clear, enforceable bylaw could improve accountability and help the County more address irresponsible pet ownership. Public safety was also a key theme, with 8% specifically referencing it as a priority that should guide any updates to the bylaw.

Additional Comments

Several respondents also emphasized the importance of communication and education. They recommended that, if the bylaw is amended, the County should ensure residents are well-informed about the changes through clear and accessible communication. Others suggested that before implementing new rules, the County should consider launching an educational campaign focused on responsible pet ownership.



“
Don't change it, as a dog owner living in Rocky view, I've always appreciated being able to walk my dog off leash in the fields behind my house. Never had an issue in 13 years of living here.
”

KEY FINDINGS: PROFESSIONAL DOG WALKERS

As part of the bylaw review process, Rocky View County asked residents a series of questions regarding professional dog walkers—specifically, how many dogs they should be allowed to walk at one time, and what training or qualifications, if any, should be required. More than 350 participants responded to these questions, including six residents who currently use professional dog walking services and two who identified as professional dog walkers.

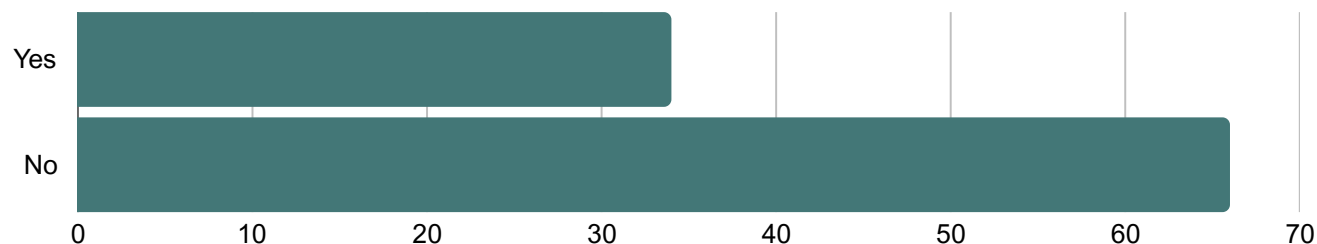
NUMBER OF DOGS

To provide context, the survey informed participants that in many other municipalities, the standard maximum number of dogs a professional walker can handle at one time is eight.

When asked their thoughts on this number, 27% of respondents indicated they felt eight was reasonable. However, 19% believed the limit should be reduced to four dogs. The remaining responses varied, with 23% stating that the appropriate number of dogs should depend on the experience and ability of the dog walker, as well as the temperament and training level of the dogs being walked.

TRAINING

Question: If a dog walker receives professional training, do you believe the County should increase the number of dogs allowed to walk at one time?



Some respondents (19%) expressed scepticism about the effectiveness of professional training as a determining factor for increasing group size. They felt that, regardless of training, key variables such as the size and temperament of the dogs and the physical strength or experience of the walker ultimately have a greater impact on safety.

Others were hesitant to provide a clear opinion (7%). At the same time, others (7%) raised questions about what “professional training” would entail, how it would be standardized, and how compliance would be monitored or enforced.

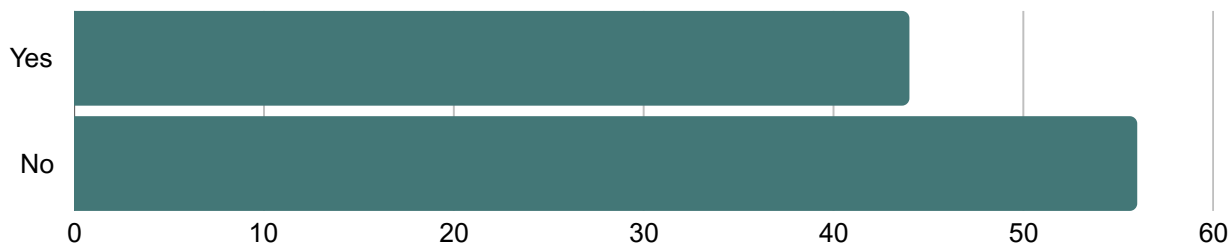
Some participants (6%) consistently emphasized the importance of ensuring that both the dog walker and the dogs remain under control at all times, especially in public settings where interactions with other people and animals are likely.

KEY FINDINGS: SHOULD CATS BE LICENSED IN RESIDENTIAL AREAS IN ROCKY VIEW COUNTY?

**Residential areas may include: Langdon, Cochrane Lake, Conrich, Harmony, Watermark.*

Thank you to the 164 residents who completed this five-question survey regarding proposed cat licensing in residential areas of Rocky View County. A total of 284 comments were received and are summarized below.

Question 1: Do you have concerns with cats at large in your community?



Cats at Large are a Concern: 39%

Many respondents voiced frustration with roaming cats entering private property and causing damage. Common complaints included cats defecating in gardens, damaging plants, scratching outdoor furniture, or otherwise disturbing landscaped areas.

No Concerns: 34%

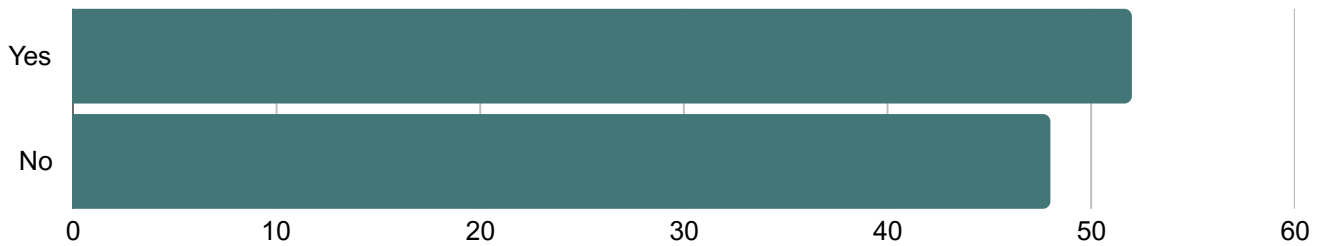
In contrast, many respondents do not see free-roaming cats as a problem. Some noted they rarely notice cats at large, and when they do, they are not disruptive. These respondents often described roaming as natural cat behaviour and expressed no desire for greater restrictions. Additionally, 13% of participants viewed the presence of cats positively, noting that they help manage local rodent populations.

Additional Comments

A smaller but notable group raised environmental and pet-related concerns. 10% of respondents highlighted the impact of roaming cats on local wildlife, particularly bird populations. Another 8% expressed concern about conflicts between free-roaming cats and other pets, such as dogs or indoor-outdoor cats, citing territorial behaviour and occasional fights.



Question 2: Do you agree cats should be licensed in residential areas within Rocky View County?



Not a Concern: 33%

Many respondents opposed cat licensing, stating that cats at large are not a significant issue in their communities. These residents often viewed licensing as an example of excessive government regulation and expressed concern about the potential costs to pet owners. Additionally, 12% felt that licensing would be difficult to enforce and questioned its effectiveness in helping return lost cats to their owners.

Responsible Pet Ownership: 31%

In contrast, other respondents supported cat licensing as a way to encourage more responsible pet ownership. Many in this group were frustrated with roaming cats on their property and hoped that a licensing requirement would prompt owners to better contain or monitor their pets. Another 16% believed licensing would improve the likelihood of lost cats being returned home. In comparison, 5% felt it would provide a useful tool for better oversight and regulation of pet ownership in the County.

“
I guess it doesn't really matter to me since I don't live in one of the residential areas. But if it ever becomes a topic for RVC in general I would strongly disagree. Cats keep rodent population down, that's why many of us have them (in addition to being cute pets).
”



Question: Is there anything else you would like the County to consider when updating this bylaw to better support communities?

Regulation not Needed: 38%

Participants opposed to licensing urged the County to consider whether such regulation is necessary. Many expressed concerns about overregulation and what they saw as unnecessary government intervention in matters that have not posed significant problems. Others (9%) raised concerns about enforceability, noting that tracking and licensing cats would be difficult. Several (8%) also emphasized that future requirements should not apply to rural areas, where cats often live more independently and are less likely to cause issues for neighbours.

Align Cat Regulations with Dog Regulations: 23%

Some residents encouraged the County to approach cats in the same way it does dogs. They argued that the same accountability standards should apply to cat owners because dog owners are required to license and manage their pets.

Additional Comments

Some respondents (6%) also raised concerns about nuisance behaviours, such as digging, defecating, or damaging gardens, that affect neighbours, while others (5%) were concerned about the impact of free-roaming cats on local wildlife and the environment.



I do not think that cats should be able to run freely in residential areas.

KEY FINDINGS: WHAT DO YOU WANT THE COUNTY TO CONSIDER WHEN UPDATING THE ANIMAL CONTROL BYLAW?

An open discussion forum was held on the project page, allowing residents to share their views on the proposed Animal Control Bylaw updates. This platform encouraged participants to post thoughts and respond to others, fostering community dialogue. It generated diverse perspectives.



Dog Leashing

Forum participants were divided in their views on dog leashing, with some expressing strong support for a more formal bylaw and others voicing opposition.

Those in support of dog leashing emphasized public safety as a primary concern. Several participants shared personal experiences to highlight the risks posed by off-leash dogs in public spaces. They felt that a clear bylaw would promote more responsible pet ownership and create greater accountability for dog-related incidents.

Participants who opposed a blanket leashing requirement raised several concerns. A common theme was the importance of maintaining flexibility in rural areas, where off-leash dogs are seen as part of daily life and generally do not pose a problem. Others felt that the existing bylaws are already sufficient and that introducing new rules would unfairly penalize responsible owners who are managing their pets appropriately.

Cat Licensing

Forum participants expressed a wide range of views on cat licensing, with no clear consensus. Some supported the idea, while others strongly opposed it.

Those in support of cat licensing felt that it could lead to more responsible pet ownership and reduce nuisance behaviour associated with free-roaming cats, such as property damage and defecation in gardens. Many also believed that licensing would help increase the likelihood of lost cats being returned to their owners, particularly in more densely populated residential areas.

Participants opposed to cat licensing raised a number of concerns. Some noted that cats often serve a functional role—such as helping control rodent populations—particularly in rural settings. Others expressed skepticism about the effectiveness of licensing in curbing irresponsible behaviour, and some raised concerns about the safety of collars for cats, particularly those that roam freely.



THANK YOU

Thank you to all who participated in public engagement on proposed updates to the Animal Control Bylaw in Rocky View County.

Please visit the project page at engage.rockyview.ca for updates, or subscribe to Rocky View County's e-newsletter at rockyview.ca/email-newsletter.