

Dog control in Europe, identification systems and privatisation

Paul C. Jowsey

ABSTRACT

Mr Tom Hughes, ex-pat Pom and famous cross country skier, is the retired President of the Ontario Humane Society, and now surviving blissfully in Canada, despatching wisdom to the frontiers. Following receipt of the publication, "Dogs in the Urban Environment" (Murray and Penridge), Tom writes ...

"I have read the book. It is very interesting because it shows how people approach the same problems in much the same way. Perhaps to be more correct, I should say people with the same ethnic background, (I hate to mention the Queen in this context), approach the problems in the same way. The Australian experience and solutions are almost identical to those that are developing in Canada."

In this paper, dog control is examined in Europe, in particular the United Kingdom, and compared with practices in Australia. The privatisation of animal welfare and companion animal identification systems are also explored.

THE UNITED STATES OF EUROPE

In November 1990 a Commission of the European Parliament met in Brussels to consider the unification of dog control in the European Community at large. Their agenda addressed disease transmission, pet theft, animal cruelty, pedigree lines, dangerous dogs, accurate identification and data storage. The European Commission hopes to achieve unity in government by the end of 1992. Distinct progress toward unification of dog control in Europe is presently struggling, despite significant research and direction from the EUROGROUP for Animal Welfare.

Italy

The dog population in Italy estimates to 5.5 million. Although registration of dogs in the 13 regions is compulsory under laws established in 1954 requiring local authority annual licensing, variations in administration occur between provinces. A national law proposed in 1988, recommending establishment of a national dog register directed by regional veterinary officers, is still under consideration.

The most influential national body is the Ente Nazionale Protezione Animale, (ENPA), in Rome. I met with the President of ENPA, Dr Antonio Iacoe, in March 1991, and he detailed a pilot registration system under test in the Lazio region, which includes Rome.

Firstly, the owner must take the dog to a veterinary officer of the USL, (Local Health Office), in the district of his residence, together with his identity and tax cards. The vet will release (1) an identity number, which is then tattooed on the dog, and (2), following rabies vaccinations, a health card. Then the owner must go to the Circostrizione Comunale, (Council Office), in the district of his residence to register the dog, showing the dog's health card

At this second stage the Council will provide a numbered collar tag, presently aluminium. A yearly tax is paid to the Council for subsequent annual registration, costing between \$A8 and \$A30, with concessions for neutering. Dr Iacoe informed me that Italians are enterprising individuals, and find delight in replicating aluminium tags for their pets.

Police generally enforce dog control in Italy, with council rangers operating in some regions, and there are fines for non-compliance. It is estimated the number of strays in the country is nearly one million dogs, indicating a serious problem. The general attitude toward dog control in the country region of Frozinoni, 70km south of Rome, was one of complacency. Similar to all European countries visited, the direction in dog control within Italy is viewed by the authorities there as being unique and successful, and definitely worthy of duplication for the entire European Community.

Spain

Dogs in Spain, particularly in Madrid, appear to be owned predominantly for protection. Status apportionment is also very considerable, characteristic of the Mediterranean. Figures on the dog population in Spain are difficult to obtain. The Sociedad Protectorice Animales, (SPA), in Madrid, estimate the figure to be three million, with an additional 1.4 million in Portugal. On visiting veterinary officers of the SPA, I was advised that compliance with surviving legislation was nonexistent. Although new legislation had recently been implemented in Madrid, just previous to my visit in February 1991, SPA officials believed it would be of little use, as the general population had no reason to break from tradition and respect regulations.

Eighty percent of local authorities levy an annual dog tax, enforced by the police. Present cost for annual registration is between \$A20 & \$A90, with ear tattoo ID compulsory in rabies infected areas, and more generally, collar tags issued by the local authorities.

In one week of travel throughout Spain, all dogs I observed were unrestrained and unidentified. Although neutering schemes and rabies control are alleged priorities, there is little evidence of successful dog control, by Australian standards, throughout the country. Animal welfare shelters are severely under funded. Staff operating under extreme pressure concentrate solely on relieving animal distress, and were amused by the suggestion that there was hope for change.

The Republic of France

A spring morning in Paris is pungent with the stench of stale dog urine and excrement. The pavements are smeared and blobbed, with street corners and lampposts growing out of this repulsive bog, grey and dank. Tourist attractions are safer, but parks are scratched, dobbed and so thoroughly contaminated, that frequent re-turfing is required. Councils within Paris have designated doggie-doo bays on streets and within parks. Intriguing signs are erected to advise les chien and their owners of the poop duty, but I was never to witness the affront of a native and Montagne Des Pyrenees at heel on the turd tiptoe in the poobay. Consequently pooper scoopers are on patrol all day, machines of considerable expense, similar to a vacuum cleaning trail bike. The operator executes delicate manoeuvres through arrogant pedestrians and demented drivers, to scoop, scrub and wash. The grandeur of these machines and their operation leaves Australia in the dark ages.

The spirit of the French pet owner is definitely unique. Annually France spends more on dog food and accessories than on education. By right of birth, a French citizen feels very comforted by the canine species. The larger the animal, the stronger one is struck with awe at the affluence of the owner. It is common to see a person walking two or more very large dogs back to an extremely small apartment.

More popular are the poodles. They are carried in shoulder bags, goose down quilted, with appropriate decoration. They are taken everywhere, on all public transport, and into the bars and restaurants, where they are permitted perambulations of the premises whilst patrons delicately dunk the croissant amidst a symphony of nasal whimpers.

The only significant register of French dogs is maintained by the Societe Centrale Canine (SCC), in Paris, appointed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. I had the pleasure of meeting the Director of SCC, Monsieur Herve Thomas. The SCC has absolute monopoly over dog registration within France, with recent Code Rural legislation, (enacted from 1.1.92), requiring mandatory SCC registration of all dogs born or transferring ownership.

Registration entitles the dog to an ear tattoo, recorded with pedigree status, habitat data, and veterinary history on file. The ear tattoos are approximately 8mm in height, up to six numbers, and very readable. Police and local authorities are responsible for collection of strays.

Estimates of the dog population in France are between nine and 10 million. Rabies infection is predominant in the north and south. The greatest concern to dog owners within the Republic of France is pet theft. M Thomas believes that insufficient research has been achieved to date to warrant the use of microchip implants in dogs, and awaits extended research in livestock. He acknowledged the fact that collar tag ID is efficient in visual observation of registration compliance, and a Malaga based Cup to the Dogs in 1992. Copyright © AVA Ltd - Refer to Disclaimer

Germany

The dog population of 3.6 million is the lowest per capita dog ownership rate in Western Europe, and, as with neighbouring Nordic nations, dog control problems are infrequent, compared with southern Europe. The dog tax system is similar to our Australian licensing scheme. Dogs are tattooed for neutering, and sometimes ID. Collar tag licence ID is by annual aluminium disc tag, with additional coloured plastic tags validating rabies inoculation. Germans display a very responsible attitude to animal welfare, the comfortable consequences of which are witnessed throughout the country.

The United Kingdom

The Channel Tunnel is soon to be opened, connecting Britain to France, providing rapid transport and substantially increasing the possible spread of the three European Rabies varieties to the UK. There are approximately eight million dogs in the UK, of which some 3.5 million are pure bred. Many cities in Britain have severe dog control problems, and awful soiling, similar to Paris. It is now four years since compulsory dog registration was abolished by the Thatcher Government in Britain, (Local Government Act 1988). Statute replacing this previously ineffectual licensing scheme simply states that a dog must have a collar tag specifying the name and address of its owner, but this is ignored by pet owners and not enforced by police or local authorities.

The consequences of cost cutting government-funded dog control in the hope the problems would disappear has seen animal welfare in the UK deteriorate substantially. The RSPCA has suffered the most from this political ignorance, altering in their compassion and dedication to a society encumbered with retrieval and destruction of all stray dogs and cats in Britain. The RSPCA are presently destroying an average of 1 000 dogs every day of the year, with many separate animal welfare shelters also involved in this dismal product of political and public ignorance.

The Right Honourable Lord Stanley of Alderley tabled a Bill in the House of Lords for the re-introduction of dog registration, once in 1990, and again in 1991. Subject to political manoeuvres within the Conservative Government approaching a change of leadership and elections in 1992, both of these attempts by Lord Stanley were unsuccessful. During this time there were several hideous, and sometimes fatal, dog attacks in the UK. The response of government to the public outcry following these dog attacks was to introduce the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, which targets four breeds of dog: the Pit Bull Terrier, Japanese Tosa, Fila Brazilia, and Dogo Argentina.

Under the Act these breeds must be neutered, tattooed or transponder implanted, collar tagged, have third party insurance cover, be registered with the National Pet Register, and be muzzled and on a lead under the control of someone over 16 years of age in public. It is also an offence to breed from these dogs, to import them, give them away or sell them. The National Pet Register is appointed by the Home Office, established at The Wood Green Animal Shelters, for registration of all dangerous dogs, and the issuance of exemption certificates.

The Environmental Protection Act 1990, in force from April 1992, places a statutory duty on the local authority to appoint responsible persons to seize and detain stray dogs in its area. With a provision for four sets of regulations, this Act targets the passing of "collar and tag" ID to the local authority or their agent, to keep a register, transferring ID duties from counties to districts, and also transfers noise sections from Control of Pollution Act 1974 regarding public and private action against barking dogs. Present direction indicates a swing toward privatisation of companion animal welfare throughout the European Community.

The Wood Green Animal Shelters and National Pet Register

The Wood Green Animal Shelters have demonstrated effective initiative in rectifying the appalling state of animal welfare in the UK. Founded in North London in 1924, there are now three Shelters operating in London, Heydon, and Godmanchester, servicing the entire British Isles, and beyond. A fourth Shelter is now being established in the UK, with immense interest in the Wood Green concept developing throughout Europe.

The Shelter at Godmanchester in Cambridgeshire is awesome. Here one is impressed by the refreshing vitality and fine dedication from everyone involved. Unhindered by the processes of bureaucracy as we know them in Australia, the staff at Wood Green have progressed with companion animal control from substantial voluntary pet registration to a point where they are now being sought by local authorities nationally and abroad to offer block registrations to all pets within municipalities.

The organisation operates on income derived from charity, a very small registration fee for animals, and other sundry earnings, with no funding from government. Their service to pets and pet owners comprise the following:

- Daily clinics are held to treat animals whose owners cannot afford to pay vets' fees.
- A 24-hour ambulance service is on call to deal with emergencies and assist police and others with road accidents and incidents involving animals.
- Permanent homes are set up at the Shelters for resident pets, sponsored by members of the public who pay toward their keep and visit their "special" pet frequently.
- Modern hospital and surgery facilities are available where sometimes wild animals are treated along with pets before being returned to their homes. Enclosures at the shelters afford ample freedom for pets awaiting adoption.
- An approved training and examination centre for veterinary nurses is situated at the Cambridgeshire Shelter, along with the Animal Welfare College. Founded by Wood Green, this College offers a valuable syllabus of educational programs dealing with a wide range of animal subjects for both the public and those wishing to pursue a career in animal welfare.
- Animal enclosures and kit kennels are built and distributed from the shelters.
- Also at the Cambridgeshire Shelter is the Kings Bush Centre, a huge indoor arena, with conference and education facilities, a large restaurant and a gift and pet accessories shop. Here there is a riding school for disabled people, and the arena provides a venue for cat and dog shows, equestrian events and trade shows. Weekly there are thousands of visitors to the Centre.
- Unwanted, neglected or injured animals arriving at Wood Green Animal Shelters are accepted with dedicated care. They are scanned for transponder implant, checked for tattoo, or identified by tag or the owner parting with them. Following registration they are cleansed, treated for any injuries and then housed in the enclosures to await collection or adoption. Wood Green long ago vowed never to turn any animal away. Adoption procedures include the assessment and education of adoptees, a written agreement detailing owner responsibility, registration and identification by collar tag and transponder implant data based at the Wood Green Animal Shelters. Third Party insurance is compulsory for dangerous dog breeds and optional for other pets, being provided for £5. To ensure compliance with the adoption agreements, and to assist in education, an officer from the shelters will visit adopted pets in their new homes at least twice in the first year, and occasionally thereafter.
- Straying pets found and reported in from anywhere in Great Britain are quickly identified from the IBM database at Wood Green. Software is authored in-house with over 60 million files accommodating every conceivable detail on individual pets. Wood Green work with Pettrac, implanting Avid microchips, cross referenced by collar tags, and occasionally tattoo ID. Local authorities internationally are readily linked directly to the main-frame, accessed by password and modem, for printed-out registration details at the time and place they are required. On finding a stray dog or cat an identification number is relayed from the collar tag to the 24-hour national service desk, or if the dog has no collar, it is transported to one of the shelters for microchip scanning. Not only is pet retrieval proving extremely effective, but also cross reference on human data recorded on file has been of significant assistance in times of crisis.
- Dog warden services to the highest standards, providing all dog control management are also available.

Concepts initiated by the Wood Green Animal Shelters not only give us practical operational guidance, but also illustrate to governments a definable scale of privatisation and associated legislation in animal welfare.

Government in Australia would be wise to observe these aspects before implementing national animal control standards.

PRIVATISATION

Nationally, registration compliance rates vary substantially, and can at best be approximated to between 40 and 90%. The concept of privatisation in companion animal control does not necessarily identify incompetence in present systems and staff. Local Authorities will be loath to relinquish income from registrations and fines, but keen to streamline expenditure and efficiency. Some already contract veterinary services, trappers, and recently database facilities; we can expect to see growth in the acceptance of tenders for any or all areas of animal control, on an authority basis, or nationally.

Lou Leather, Environmental Health Officer to the Wood Green Animal Shelters reports that the arguments against privatisation primarily target the poor salary offered to animal wardens from contractors, and the precarious distinction of law enforcement these wardens are allegedly duty bound to exact. Lou further notes that these two problems are very minimal against the advantages of privatisation.

West Australian dog control rangers have recently been approached by councils in Perth to debate the creation of a dog patrol pool, by private contract.

Australian central register

In Catherine Lescuns' April 1990 publication for the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, Cats and Dogs: A community concern?, we are treated to excellent research. Respondents to the surveys indicate support for a state registry, although country folk were not so sure.

NEC

For the past 6 years NEC Information Systems Australia, (together with the NSW Police Department), has developed a database for the recording and reference of forensic information, involving massive and accurate filing and analysis for human identification. Now governed by the National Exchange of Police Information this database is land lined and accessible to police nationally. All hardware is property of the Federal Government, whilst the programs are licensed and serviced by NEC, demonstrating an unusually successful symbiosis between government and the private sector.

NPR and The Lost Dogs Home

The reason we seldom hear from Dr Graeme Smith of the National Pet Register (NPR) in Victoria is because he exerts himself to the limit in clinical duties, researching submissions and lobbying State Government, running The Lost Dogs Home and The Lost Cats Home, belting around the TV chasing feral cats for Hinch, and regularly mopping up where pet owners fail.

Some four years ago the National Pet Register was established by Graeme in North Melbourne, servicing pet welfare from Wyndham to Dover. Now with 47 000 pet files on IBM database, the NPR is rehoming and adopting many pets daily. The dedication and success of the NPR staff is an example of practical animal control in action. Graeme Smith is very pleased with tag ID for both cats and dogs, issuing upwards of 20 000 tags annually. Progress toward linking the NPR to the Trovan microchip multireader is now underway.

Central Animal Records

The call for an Australian Pet Register has also seen the emergence of Central Animal Records (CARE), founded by a dedicated team, and project managed by Rick Walduck of Victoria. CARE have over 550 associated veterinary practices, welfare societies, universities, research establishments, and local and state government departments associated with the network. They have established regional branch managers in each state, based in capital cities, providing 24-hour 008 telephone access back up to the Head Office in Melbourne.

Utilising the Trovan system of microchip implant and multireader, CARE is dedicated to providing this technology to pets and their owners throughout Australia, blending professional animal welfare care with state of the art technology. There are six different brands of microchip in use globally. Two of these are marketed in Australia, the Destron and Trovan. Of major significance is the fact that Trovan provide the only multireader capable of reading all microchips present in Australia.

CARE furnish dog and cat registration data to the Australian Animal Registry based at the Sydney Showgrounds, thus ensuring the availability of a single national register for companion animals. All pets implanted with a Trovan microchip also have provided, free of charge, a collar tag stating they are carrying a microchip, a 24-hour contact number, and associated reference data.

These tags are colour coded by State in the following sequence:

NT & Tas - White
ACT - Purple
NSW - Red
Victoria - Green
SA - Orange
WA - Blue
Queensland - Yellow

Trovan technology is also providing excellent service across the ditch in New Zealand. National Central Animal Registry PL provide a national database and distribution of microchip technology across both the North and South Islands. Their database is unique in being managed by a trust owned by participants to the Registry.

Animal Electronic ID Systems

Animal Electronic ID Systems PL (AEIDS), of Kiama NSW, have also recently instituted a database, supplying Destron transponder implants, wands, and ID file access. This approach to servicing animal welfare is unique in its targeting ID only. The Destron readers or wands, (unlike the Trovan multireader), will only excite and read Destron microchips. AEIDS, like CARE, also supplies the Australian Animal Registry with owner, animal and registration details.

A community considering these technological developments, hopeful of confidence in a national database, will maintain animal welfare as the priority. There is no room for short term profiteering. The survival of a company handling public records, the access to, and possession of this information, is of great concern.

Animal Control Services Ltd NZ

Ken Muir, Managing Director of Animal Control Services Ltd in Auckland, New Zealand, is very active in animal management concept development internationally.

Founded 18 years ago to contract only animal control work to individual councils in the northern suburbs of Auckland, this company has developed with accuracy in the privatisation of animal welfare. Currently employing a staff of 26 operating a fleet of 20 vehicles, they now contract to the North Shore City Council, the Auckland City Council, and the Franklin District Council, for all activities associated with dog control and hydatids control.

Some 4 000 strays are impounded annually, with nearly half of these being rehomed. Supplying staff, vehicles and kennels, Animal Control Services are directly responsible for the following dog control activities:

- Attending to all complaints and resolving them
- Impounding stray dogs and associated patrolling
- Registration fee collection, often in the field
- Administration of individual animal records and ID reference

- Property inspections for kennel permits
- Assisting Police and other agencies with dogs in stolen vehicles, dangerous dogs, and property access etc
- Serving notices to register
- Serving infringement notices in respect of the Dog Control Act
- Serving noise abatement notices in respect of barking
- Initiating legal action, and attending court
- Euthanasing and disposing of unclaimed dogs
- Special patrols, such as beaches and reserves in summer
- Adoption programs for strays and unwanted pets.

They are also responsible for all hydatids control work as follows:

- Visiting all dog owners either annually or six-weekly
- Operating treatment points for travelling dog owners
- Serological blood testing of dogs.

Animal Control Services also organises the following activities:

- Educational activities such as visiting schools - 23 900 pupils lectured in 1991.
- Organising and running a month-long educational awareness campaign in each city, incorporating free obedience training, displays in shopping malls, lectures etc.
- Operating the Dog Owner Licence Scheme, an incentive-based educational scheme for dog owners.
- Inspecting all meat retailers, veterinary practices etc.
- Stock ranging duties.
- Supplying monthly statistical reports to each city as well as quarterly and annual reports.
- Reporting to council on a daily basis, submitting recommendations on individual items.

Ken Muir is proving the theories of privatisation. His initiative and research is well respected internationally, and his company is prepared to assist in similar developments here in Australia.

More than one way to skin a killer

The registration of cats is now spearheaded by the Shire of Sherbrooke in Victoria, where the Senior Ranger, John Groves, estimates a 50% compliance rate after six months of by-law implementation. John and the staff at the Shire have endured spirited comment from all quarters, with considerable complaint derived from an alleged love for our feline foe.

The State of Victoria is experiencing change. The years of research and preparation by Peter Penson and John McCrory of the Bureau of Animal Welfare, Dr Graeme Smith and many others, in developing the new Companion Animals Bill, will almost certainly take the back bench in priority. As evidenced in the UK, the tendency for conservative governments to ignore animal welfare invites privatisation with slow and painful progress.

Victorian state legislation permits by-law amendment within municipalities. This is not the case in New South Wales, where the City of Blue Mountains has researched companion animal control and offered the results to the State Government suggesting that new laws be introduced.

Being considered by the NSW Animal Welfare Advisory Council are the following proposals:

- A limit of two dogs per residence, with show and breeding exceptions
- Prohibition on the sale of certain dangerous breeds

- All dogs identified by tag, and microchip or tattoo if desired
- Wider powers to control offending animals
- Night curfews for cats, and compulsory feline desexing
- Increasing registration fees to between \$80 and \$100 for intact dogs
- Increasing penalties to between \$500 and \$1 000, with higher penalties for second and subsequent offences
- Microchipping all cats at owner's expense.

In May 1992 a national workshop on the impact of cats on native wildlife, held by the Australian National Parks and Wildlife in Adelaide, concluded that owner education along with compulsory registration, cat number limits and night curfews, and heavy fines for non-compliance, is desperately needed.

It was recommended that the bulk of funds sought for cat control be targeted toward baiting, trapping and shooting in areas where cats were a big conservation problem. The CSIRO suggests a feline herpes virus could be used to attack feral cats in isolated areas, and cat flu or distemper viruses could be used where domestic cats can be vaccinated.

With record labour reserves available it appears the Federal Government could rapidly inspire patriotism if only for the pathetic populations of our native birds and smaller wildlife. As national research continually confirms the conclusion that cats must be exterminated in the wild, and controlled in the domestic environment, no further form filling is necessary. Animal control officers Australia-wide will very soon be asked to include the policing of cat registration in their already saturated rosters. Initiative from the private sector is now very welcome.

IDENTIFICATION SYSTEMS

The Alice assay

Initiative from a most eminent dog control connoisseur, Mrs Ali Tabone, General Inspector Animal Control, Alice Springs Town Council, has lead to a tender being accepted by Council for microchip ID and data recording for dogs in the Red Centre. Under legislation simply requiring that a dog must be identified, Ali has begun implementing dog ID for townies and bushies alike, hoping to shelve the shottie.

Dog owners in Alice Springs and surrounding areas have the option of annual tag registration ID, or microchip implant ID. With existing resident compliance tolerable, a constant flow of tourist pets north and south, and the ever-present camp dogs, nomadic, pitiable and cunning cross breeds with no owner in sight, this desert experiment will provide interesting comparisons in the years ahead. In terms of national animal control, Alice Springs is an island. Duplication of this ID trial to large cities requires national cooperation. Table 1 details the schedule of dog registration fees for Alice Springs Town Council, effective August 1 1992.

Table 1. Registration Fees Alice Springs Town Council

		Standard	Pensioner
LIFETIME	Desexed	\$ 45.00	\$ 22.50
	Over 10 yrs	\$ 22.50	\$ 11.25
	Entire	\$135.00	\$ 67.50
	Over 10 yrs	\$ 67.50	\$ 33.75
ANNUAL	Desexed	\$ 15.00	\$7.50
	Entire	\$ 45.00	\$ 22.50
OBEDIENCE TRAINED TO LEVEL THREE (3)			
LIFETIME	Desexed	\$ 40.00	\$ 20.00
	Over 10 yrs	\$ 20.00	\$ 10.00
	Entire	\$140.00	\$ 70.00

	Over 10 yrs	\$ 55.00	\$ 27.50
ANNUAL	Desexed	\$ 15.00	\$7.50
	Entire	\$ 40.00	\$ 20.00
MEMBER OF REGISTERED CANINE ASSOCIATION			
LIFETIME	Desexed	\$ 45.00	\$ 22.50
	Over 10 yrs	\$ 22.50	\$ 11.25
	Entire	\$110.00	\$ 55.00
	Over 10 yrs	\$ 55.00	\$ 27.50
ANNUAL	Desexed	\$ 15.00	\$ 7.50
	Entire	\$ 40.00	\$ 20.00
Guide dogs, Hearing dogs and Therapy dogs - FREE			
AUSTRALIAN ANIMAL REGISTRATION FEE -		\$ 30.00 IN ADDITION TO LOCAL FEE	

Beware the pet owner

Sometimes forgotten in the identification debate is the fact that we want to identify the person to whom the animal belongs. Perhaps a councillor with pet registrations accidentally lapsed, or an old crabber in the mangroves of Cape York with a wintry heeler or two, not real keen on chips of any sort. Bikers own dogs. Not everyone in Australia lives the way the pet food companies portray the healthy dream pet wagging with the you-beaut kids. Identification of humans is ever present, but will never be respected 100%.

No animal ID will ever be permanent. Just as thousands of cars are given a criminal re-birth annually, if a person wishes to remove or disguise existing ID forms on an individual pet, they will succeed. Paw print and photographic recording of pets may be the ultimate in ID and expense, but will not automatically recover lost or stolen pets. Unfortunately, we must concentrate on satisfying the entire population of Australia, and deal with the planet later. Strays are a good starting point, and there's at least one riding your fence today.

Within the feasible boundaries of general public acceptance, the ID forms available to the community are presently four:

- Freeze branding: This is a positively visual ID, very unattractive, and slow to heal with a strong possibility of infection. Scar tissue may cause skin cancer.
- Tattoos: A well proven ID in ear and inner leg. However, this ID can be tattooed over, or removed by laser, surgery or lactic acid.
- Microchip implants: Cross reading is available from the Avid and Trovan wands only. Data is considered by the manufacturers not to be erasable under normal circumstances. Accurate reading is achieved only at close quarters. Pack dogs cannot be identified as registered unless tagged, and must be captured. Operational hardware is expensive. An obligation to continued contributions for database access may be required. Microchips can be removed.
- Collar Tags: Presently in Australia there are seven varying designs available, all requiring attachment to a collar, and all, with the exception of the Wraparound tag, using a split-ring for fixing to the "D" ring. The retention of the collar to the dog, the tag to the collar, and the embossed data to the tag, are all essential considerations, requiring responsible utilization to succeed. The cost and durability of a collar tag are good selling points. Guard dogs, hunting dogs and stock dogs needing to work without a collar require additional permanent bodily ID. Blind people do not want their name and address on their guide dog collar.

Collar tags provide immediate visual recognition of registration compliance, from a distance, by colour and design. Further identification data from the tag is available at closer inspection. Collar tags in conjunction with microchip implants or tattoos, deliver the ideal vehicle for both dog and cat control legislation to succeed.

The market leader in local authority dog registrations is the Wraparound tag supplied by TagMaster PL. TagMaster records covering authorities using Wraparound tags for annual dog registration illustrate substantial compliance increase, due solely to tag retention. These tags cannot be duplicated by counterfeit, and are individually recorded for audit and reference at the time of manufacture.

As evidenced in the UK, and consistently verified by the research of Peter Thompson from the Public and Health Division of the South Australian Health Commission, dangerous dogs must be isolated and identified under separate regulations. Collar tags of a nationally recognised design and colour are undeniably advantageous for immediate recognition of dangerous dogs.

CONCLUSION

The bark ends here

It is true that here in Australia the genes of our forefathers have improved to a point where we are sportsmen and women of unequalled quality. Despite these refinements, and as the United Kingdom sets her political progeny further afloat, dogs in both hemispheres are ambivalent to human innovation and continue to do what they know best, mocking our alleged intelligence in ever increasing numbers. Tom Hughes is sure we here down under in the Clever Country can build on the British experience.

Further in Catherine Lescuns' April 1990 publication we find the conclusion that respondents strongly support educational courses for pet owners, and that the responsibility and funding of this education lies with government. Respondent acceptance to the suggested proposal to license pet owners was approximately equivalent in proportion, for and against, despite no in-depth explanation as to the ramifications of a pet owner licence.

Lou Leather is intrigued with the concept of pet owner education and licensing, but having observed many educational programs directed at the public, he advises that we can lead a horse to water. Incentive based education schemes, such as those run by Animal Control Services in New Zealand, and registration discounts for pet owners who have achieved obedience training with their pets are forms of owner education and licence.

In Australia, over 20 000 dog attacks are reported annually to hospitals alone. Dog rangers are suffocated by complaint counts, inadequate regulations and costs. Action against an owner whose dog has offended is seldom successful, and always ineffectual in cause remedy.

Dog control in Australia operates primarily from complaint, treating the condition at the result rather than the root cause. Cats are a purring pestilence on this nation, beautiful butchers, totally out of control.

To own a pet is an absolute luxury. To enact legislation by municipality, by state or nationally, for the successful control of companion animals, the responsibilities of people who wish to own pets is THE REALITY BASE.

Continuing debates on tags, microchips, databased registers, kennelling regulations, privatisation or animal welfare is the wrong end of the stick. Pet owners must, by law, be well educated on their responsibilities to their pets and the community.

Substantial monetary forfeiture is where the bark ends.

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Some ten years ago, we recognised the need for a dog tag which was cost effective, extremely resilient, and acceptable under international dog control regulations; the Wraparound tag was designed. We drew on a 20-year family history in livestock identification systems to develop a tag by a process of hot foil indent stamping and belt form tag injection moulding. The Wraparound tag is now servicing the majority of Australian local authorities. Cat tags are being further developed. Research and development, both in Australia and overseas, is progressing swiftly. We are testing and supplying varying tag designs, stamped with many language characters. TagMaster PL is dedicated to providing quality components in the extensive field of companion animal identification.

The author is highly respected by many dogs and cats, but as yet, has not been owned by one.

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