

Wairoa In Focus

Your Community, Your Future



New team member major step forward

The task of making sure the district is a safe place to be has just been made easier with the addition of another ranger to the Wairoa District Council's by-law and animal control team.

Michael Walker has worked as an animal controller on a casual basis for the past three years, but was recently made a permanent member of the three-strong crew.

Along with colleagues Des Jane and Doug Waugh, Michael will be responsible for ensuring that by-laws in the district are adhered to, including those relating to animal control.

Team leader Des said the addition of Michael was a major step forward that had already yielded positive results.

"Having the extra manpower has allowed us to provide more coverage and really get on top of some of the more difficult areas of compliance," he said.

In just a few short weeks, complaints about dogs had decreased, with less strays roaming the streets due to an increased number of patrols. Although compliance is a big issue for the team, Des said they also aimed to take a proactive approach to educating residents so that problems can be avoided altogether.

To this end, he has already visited holiday programmes to talk to children about pet responsibility, while a series of school visits is also on the cards.

"This is all part of Council's job to create a safer community for us all to live in. We still have problems, but we see our larger team and new focus for 2009 as a positive move towards solving them," he said.

Property inspections are high on the priority list for the coming months to check for animal compliance, including dog registrations, as well as swimming pool fences.



Compliance team members Doug Waugh, Michael Walker and Des Jane.

By-election vote papers out soon

Candidates for the Wairoa District Council by-election have been announced and people will soon have their chance to decide who will become our newest Councillor.

In no particular order, the six candidates vying for the seat are:

- Stuart Birrell
- Garry Cooper
- Dave Evans
- Oha Manuel
- Gordon McIntyre
- Alice Wairau.

Voting papers will arrive in the letterboxes of registered voters between February 9 and 13, and must be returned by post or delivered to the Electoral Officer at Council offices no later than 12 noon on Saturday, February 28. Special votes can be exercised at the Queen Street offices during office hours from February 9 to 28, and people can apply to enrol as either a residential or ratepayer elector right up to and including February 27 – the day before close of voting.

Fire restriction stands despite spells of damp weather

Periodic rainfall has dampened down the district, but not enough to lift the fire restrictions that remain in place.

Permits are still required by anyone wishing to light an open air fire, be it to incinerate rubbish, have a hangi or barbecue, or to burn off vegetation.

Emergency management officer Tim Allan said while the rain was welcome, it only took a couple of hot days to return vegetation and soil to a dry state.

He thanked people for following the guidelines, which had resulted in a relatively quiet fire season, with

only three fires attended by rural fire fighters over the summer period so far.

"The fires we have had this year have varied in intensity, but in the main people have been great about getting permits and controlling their fires" he said.

There is no cost attached to getting a permit, with notice of two working days required for an incinerator, hangi or rubbish fire and three days notice for a burn-off.

Larger fires also require a burn plan to detail the exact location of the fire and how it will be managed should it get out of control.

Mr Allan said he was happy to call in to see people to work out a safe location for any fire, at no cost.

Permits can be obtained from the Council offices on Queen Street within working hours, from Monday to Friday.

The fire restriction applies to all rural areas within the district and is put in place when soil and vegetation reach a certain level of dryness. Monitoring is carried out remotely and is rated using the national Fire Weather Indices ranging from low fire danger to extreme fire danger.

Summer reading programme popular as ever



Superhero reader Annabel Brickell receives another 'report-in' sticker from library assistant Cassie Lewis during the summer reading programme at the library.

Superhero readers swooped in to the Wairoa Public Library over the past seven weeks to take part in the 12th annual summer reading programme.

Around 160 children took part in the junior programme, while 26 were enrolled in the teenage 'iRead' programme.

The 'superhero' theme was incredibly popular with the junior readers, who created their own superhero identities during various craft activities, complete with capes, wristbands and toolbelts.

Storytellers and magicians also attracted a great crowd, but the main emphasis has been on books, books and more books. Those taking part in both the junior and teenage programme were required to report-in at least four times to talk to library staff about what they had been reading.

Children's librarian Kylie Bradley said it was fantastic to see the kids growing in confidence and ability as they discovered new stories and ideas within the books they had read.

"Some kids were quiet during the first few report-ins, but by the end of the seven weeks they were keen to share their reading experiences with staff. It is wonderful to see these young readers develop their enjoyment of books," she said. A highlight for the older group was a visit from a cartoonist, who shared some skills, as well as a mosaic session and quiz night.

Both groups celebrated with separate finale parties this week.

For the diary:

Council meetings (second Tuesday of every month):

February 10
March 10
April 14
May 12
June 9
July 14
August 11
September 8
October 13
November 10
December 8

Full Council meetings are held in the Council Chambers in the Queen Street offices and are open to the public, unless otherwise specified.

Reminder to check rates rebate eligibility

A reminder is once again going out for people to check to see if they are eligible for a rates rebate.

Assistance of up to \$530 may be available if you are on a low income, so it is worth taking the time to meet with the Council rates team to go through the application form and calculate eligibility.

To determine if a rebate is coming your way, ensure that your name is on the rates bill for

the home where you live and that you were living there on July 1, 2008. The main use of the address must be residential, rather than for business, farming or commercial income. If the property is in the name of a family trust or estate, you need to have evidence that you have a legal ownership interest in the property and an obligation to pay the rates.

When all these details are in place, ring the Council and make an appointment.

The ten minute process lets you know straight away if a rebate is due, provided all the documentation is supplied, including proof of all your yearly taxable income for the year ending March 31, 2008 and copies of birth certificates of any dependants living with you. Applications will be accepted until June 30, so call Council on 838 7309 to make an appointment for a Tuesday or Thursday, from 9am to 12noon.

For more information phone 838 7309 or visit www.wairoadc.govt.nz