

LGOIMA No. 8140001857
(Please quote this in any correspondence)

04 August 2017

The Matt Maitland Letter



Left: Matt Maitland - Park Ranger - Right: Teddy the Cat - One of the victims

**Letter from Matt Maitland, Senior Ranger, Open Sanctuaries Northern Regional Parks, Dated 4th August 2017.
Released under LGOIMA # 8140001857 - by courtesy of Democracy Services, Auckland Council.**

Kia ora

I am the Auckland Council Senior Ranger responsible for Shakespear Open Sanctuary. Your enquiry regarding this 2015 incident has been directed to me.

Shakespear Open Sanctuary is a well communicated and publicly consulted management activity at Shakespear Regional Park and adjoining public land. I authorised the shooting of this animal in accordance with Auckland Council policy. Cat owners have primary responsibility to ensure the safety of their pets. Safety of these animals beyond the property of the owner is not ensured. Auckland Council is legally entitled to take the action it did provided we do so humanely, which we have. I address your specific queries as below.

*** The report states the Cat had a microchip. Why was the Cat not checked for a microchip prior to him being executed in cold blood?**

Yes the cat had a microchip. A microchip does not confer any additional protection to the animal bearing it. It is a mechanism to assist identification of owner, assuming they take the step to register the chip and cat on the Companion Animal Database. Our policy is clear that any cats (or other invasive pests) found inside the fenced sanctuary will be killed to protect sanctuary values. Those in the buffer zone of parkland between pest proof fence and urban neighbours receive a 'one strike' warning if their pet cat is captured.

*** The report states the Cat had a collar with a magnetic Cat door key. How is it staff did not notice the collar on this Cat?**

Yes the collar was observed by staff involved. As per microchip a collar is an aid to identification of cat and owner and does not confer any additional protection. As this was a cat door activator there were no contact details included. If there were they would have been used to advise the owners of the outcome.

*** What protocols do your staff use to determine if a Cat is a domestic Cat, stray Cat, or 'feral' Cat?**

To manage the biodiversity values of the open sanctuary we do not differentiate between domestic, stray or feral. All pose threat to the native fauna we seek to protect and enhance. In the case of any cat caught as first strike in our buffer zone we apply this only if they have some clear identification feature such as microchip or named collar.

*** What sort of disciplinary measures have been taken against the individual who murdered this Cat?**

Staff involved have not been disciplined as they have operated professionally, compassionately and in accordance with

Auckland Council protocol.

*** Has the individual who murdered this Cat been prosecuted? If not, why not?**

Staff involved have not been prosecuted. To the best of my knowledge no formal complaint has been laid with any prosecuting authority, so no charges or prosecution have ensued. No illegality has occurred, actions taken were legal.

*** What (if any) form of compensation has been offered to the family who has had one of their beloved family members slain in cold blood?**

No compensation has been offered. The cat was returned to the family for burial and efforts were made to clean the cat and present it in a manner to minimise trauma. The family have been involved with me in dialogue regarding public notification procedures and fence modifications Our operational policy includes requirement for staff to use identification tools available (collar tags, microchips) to identify owner so we can inform them of fate of cat. This policy includes holding on to any shot pet to allow it to be claimed by owners for any burial or other 'closure' practices they may wish to undertake. As a courtesy we do our best to present the animal in least traumatic manner possible.

*** What sort of measures have Shakespear Open Sanctuary taken to ensure this does not happen again?**

We identified that some of our community may not be aware of the open sanctuary and that their cat may be at risk if it wanders. Annually we notify by letter drop all households within 1.2km of the Regional Park boundary of the values of the sanctuary and our commitment to protect those values and the implications of this for pet owners (Nov 2016 version attached). The 1.2km mailing coverage is based on the science of peri-urban cat wanderings. The family of the cat in the March 2015 incident were consulted on the nature and content of the flyer before the first mailout occurred in November 2015. Additionally and again in consultation with the family affected we modified one of the pest proof fence ends to further reduce potential for cast to breach this.

*** How many Cats of all classifications (domestic, stray and 'feral' have been killed at Shakespear Open Sanctuary. May we have a copy of the documentation on the Cats your staff have murdered in the name of 'conservation'?**

Eight cats have been killed since the opening of the open sanctuary in 2011. As above, we do not differentiate between domestic, stray or feral. None from my recollection would be truly feral. All by definition of their location have strayed.

This was not a one-off incident and remains part of our operational policy to deliver on our commitment to protect and enhance the native biodiversity of Shakespear Open Sanctuary. We do accept cats are valued companion animals hence our efforts to inform the community so they can keep their own animals safe.

Kind regards

Matt

Matt Maitland, Senior Ranger Open Sanctuaries, Northern Regional Parks, Parks Sports & Recreation