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**COMHAIRLE CONTAE ÁTHA CLIATH THEAS
SOUTH DUBLIN COUNTY COUNCIL**



**MEETING OF SOUTH DUBLIN COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Monday, February 12, 2018**

**QUESTION NO.18**

**QUESTION: Councillor C. O'Connor**

To ask the Chief Executive if he shares the concern of many about the abuse of horses, and other animals, throughout the County, noting recent media reports highlighting the situation; will he detail actions proposed by the Council to deal with the matter and will he make a statement.

**REPLY:**

The Council engages a competent contractor for the provision and operation of the horse seizure service and horse pound facility, and as such all seized horses are taken to the horse pound facility where (if not already) they are microchipped on arrival, and examined by a veterinary practitioner.  The Council also works in very close collaboration with the DSPCA and is in constant contact with the DSPCA Inspectors who monitor the welfare of horses reported to us.

Details of all horses seized and impounded are published in efforts to identify the owners so that, where possible, horses may be reclaimed. Horses seized and not reclaimed by their owners within a period of five days from the date of seizure and detention the Council (or Garda Superintendent) may be disposed of by way of sale,  or re-homing. Horses which are unsuitable for re-homing are euthanised.

Applications for reclaim are considered carefully and equines may be released to the owner or keeper of the horse only upon provision of a suite of relevant documentation to the Council, including proof of ownership, horse licence, passport, and detail on suitability of location where the horse is to be kept etc.

The Council also engage with private landowners where it comes to attention that horse/ horses are present on such lands and for which concern is raised about the animal welfare.  This engagement advises landowners of the provisions of Section 18(5) of the Control of Horses Act 1996 (the Act) which states – ‘the occupier of any premises within a control area where a horse is found who is not the owner of that horse shall be deemed to be the person who keeps or has charge or control of the horse’.   Landowners are therefore required to arrange for the removal of all/any horses kept on private lands where horses are not licenced to the landowner.   Similarly, landowners are also advised that all efforts should be made to ensure that the lands are secured to prevent any further illegal trespass

The Council's [**(Control of Horses) Bye-Laws 2014**](http://www.sdcc.ie/2014-control-of-horses-bye-laws) were adopted on 10th February 2014 and implemented with effect from 12th March 2014. These Byelaws are actively enforced and provide the Council with stronger tools to deal with issues which impact negatively on communities and animals alike, and we also administer the  [**Control of Horses Act 1996.**](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1996/act/37/enacted/en/html)The provisions of the Act and the Bye-Laws are fully utilised to reduce the number of horses that are being kept unlawfully (without licence / passport) in unsuitable conditions, or in areas where their presence has an adverse effect on the community.

It is acknowledged that this Council is particularly proactive in the management of, and promotion of responsible urban horse ownership.

The Council has developed a state of the art equine facility at Ballyowen Park for the stabling of up to 20 horses, with significant assistance from Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.  This facility is being managed by the Clondalkin Equine Club under a management licence subject to strict conditions relative to oversight / governance, application of equality legislation, membership / use of the facility, and application of strict animal welfare protection.  Animal welfare remains a priority and ongoing education and awareness forms part of the urban horse project programme.

In 2017, SDCC also was instrumental, in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture Food & the Marine, Dublin City Council, Fingal County Council, An Garda Siochana and DSPCA in the establishment of the Dublin Region Horse Welfare Task Force.   Membership of this task force also includes Fettercairn Youth Horse Project, Clondalkin Equine Club, Traveller Development Group, Voluntary groups/rescue centres and Veterinary Services and the primary objective is to develop a concerted collaborative programme aimed at promoting responsible horse ownership across the Dublin region with a particular focus on the following issues:

* Indiscriminate breeding,
* Animal welfare,
* Education and awareness,
* Legislation and regulation (acts and Byelaws) pertaining to animal welfare and control of horses

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