



Report to: General Committee

Meeting Date: April 3, 2017

SUBJECT: Exemption to Animal Control By-law No. 2005-254
PREPARED BY: Christy Lehman Ext 2131

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1) That the report entitled "*Exemption to Animal Control By-law No. 2005-254*" be received, and;
- 2) That Council approve an exemption to the *Animal Control By-law No. 2005-254* to permit Zita Au to possess a pygmy hedgehog, and;
- 3) That Council waive the exemption fee of \$200.00, and further;
- 4) That Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

PURPOSE:

To grant an exemption to our *Animal Control By-law No. 2005-254, Schedule A, Prohibited Animals*, to allow for Zita Au and family to possess a pygmy hedgehog.

BACKGROUND:

At its February 6th, 2017 General Committee meeting, Committee discussed a recent request made to Councillor Colin Campbell from a 10 year old girl requesting permission to own a pygmy hedgehog. Pygmy hedgehogs are included as a prohibited animal in Markham's *Animal Control By-law No. 2005-254*. Exemptions to the by-law can be made and approved by Council through an application process and payment of the \$200.00 fee. Discussion at the meeting included the notion of removing the animal from the prohibited animals list. Staff was directed to report back on their findings. In preparing this report, staff have consulted the City's Animal Care Committee as well as the OSPCA, and have met with the family to review concerns associated with having a pygmy hedgehog.

OPTIONS/ DISCUSSION:

The current Animal Control By-law has provisions that allow for discretion and exemptions to the by-law with regards to prohibited animals. Council discussed removing the pygmy hedgehog from the prohibited animal list; however, through further research and consultation, staff are recommending that the hedgehog species remain on the prohibited animal list. Although staff have reservations regarding the granting of an exemption in this case, the risks associated with owning the animal are substantially lower in comparison to other prohibited animals. Further, hedgehogs are increasing in popularity for domestic pet ownership and a number of neighbouring municipalities have already removed them from their prohibited animal lists. Staff believe removing animals

from the prohibited list limits the ability for Council to monitor and provide oversight on the regulations related to these animals and opens up the possibility for multiple requests for the removal of additional animals. A more suitable solution is to maintain the current exemption process which allows for residents to possess prohibited animals through Council approval only.

At the February 15th, 2017, Animal Care Committee (ACC) meeting, staff consulted with the ACC on the ownership of pygmy hedgehogs. The Committee passed a motion advising they do not support the removal of the pygmy hedgehog from the by-law (*See Attachment B-Minutes of the Animal Care Committee-February 15th, 2017*). The ACC provided staff with information regarding the nature of caring for a pygmy hedgehog and concluded that due to the high maintenance of caring for the animal, there is an extremely high relinquishment rate. The most notable reasons for relinquishment are as follows:

- They require 5 square feet of living space;
- Their habitat must be constructed from a plastic material, not wire, as their feet get caught easily;
- They defecate as they walk/run, resulting in difficult and frequent clean-up;
- They are susceptible to a neurological disease known as Wobbly Hedgehog Syndrome;
- They are carriers of salmonella, which was linked to an outbreak of the strain in 1995.

The ACC urges Markham City Council to retain control over the ownership of pygmy hedgehogs in Markham. As such, in lieu of removing the animal from the prohibited list at this time, the ACC supports the granting of an exemption in this situation, especially because pygmy hedgehogs are becoming more popular as domestic pets. Ownership should be limited to individuals who are educated on this species and are aware of their requirements in order to ensure the animals are not abandoned in our local shelters and rescue groups. Similar to staff's position, the ACC believes keeping pygmy hedgehogs on the prohibited animal list, while allowing for exemptions, allows the City to maintain control over the regulations and provides for the consideration of exemption requests on a case by case basis. This will help ensure the best interest of the animal, pet owners, and the public are being met.

In addition to consulting with the ACC, staff investigated the breeder the applicant will be adopting the hedgehog from - Hedgehogville. They are members of the International Hedgehog Association, International Hedgehog Registry, Hedgehog Central, and the Hedgehog Breeders Alliance. They require all adopters to undergo substantial screening and if at any time, adopters can no longer care for the animal, they are contractually required to return the animal to their organization.

Lastly, staff met with the family to review the above information, including the issues relating to hedgehog maintenance and behaviour. The family has undertaken research on these animals. Staff are satisfied that they are educated on the health, maintenance, and risks associated with caring for a pygmy hedgehog, and as such, recommend the exemption be granted.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Given that the request is being made on behalf of a minor child, Staff support waiving the \$200 fee relating to the exemption in this specific case.

HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS

Not Applicable

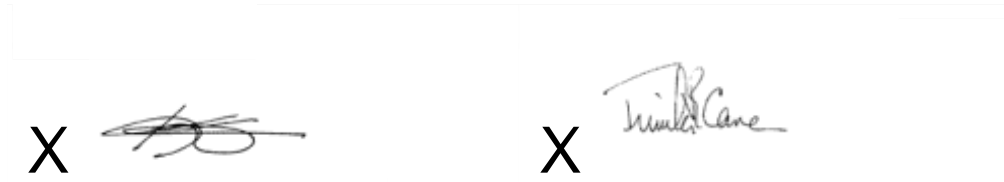
ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

No Applicable

BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:

Not Applicable

RECOMMENDED BY:

A large rectangular box containing two handwritten signatures. The signature on the left is for Kimberley Kitteringham, and the signature on the right is for Trinela Cane. Each signature is preceded by a large 'X' mark.

Kimberley Kitteringham
City Clerk

Trinela Cane
Commissioner, Corporate Services

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A-Prohibited Animal Licence Application

Attachment B-Animal Care Committee Meeting Minutes-February 15th, 2017

Attachment C-Animal Care Committee Letter of Support

March 23rd, 2017

Re: Pygmy Hedgehog Exemption

Dear City of Markham Mayor and Members of Council,

This letter is to support the issuance of an exemption to the City's *Animal Control By-law No. 2005-254* for the possession of a pygmy hedgehog to a City resident.

Members do not support the removal of the animal from the prohibited animal list under the by-law, as per the reasons attached.

Kind Regards,

Denielle Duncan
Chair, Animal Care Committee
City of Markham

African Pygmy Hedgehogs (APHs) are prohibited in Markham and this is supported by the Markham Animal Care Committee for the following reasons:

1. Exotic pets are potential sources of zoonotic disease. APHs were identified as the cause of cases of human *Salmonella* serotype Tilene, a rare and first identified phenomenon in Canada in 1995. The S. Tilene cases also suggest that exotic pets are able to introduce novel serotypes, and possibly novel human pathogens, into Canada.
2. The ethics of the exotic pet industry are minimal at best. The welfare of the animals is secondary to expected profits. Animals are sold for high prices initially and then once the market is saturated, the price drops dramatically, the profits dry up and breeders move on to a "new" exotic animal species. In Canada the first APHs sold for \$1000.00 a pair in 1992 and by 1996 were being sold for \$10.00 - \$20.00 a pair.
3. Many APHs will bite
4. AHPs defecate as they walk/run, so require a lot of maintenance
5. AHP's require a large cage space despite their small size - 5 sq ft
6. Veterinary care for exotic pets is usually more expensive than for cats and dogs
7. Exotic pets have a high rate of relinquishment
8. If the desire to keep the animal as a pet is gone, the animal cannot be released into the wild since the animal is not adapted to Canadian climate.
9. Requires strict environment temperature control: has to be above 21 C. They are also excellent climbers, so they can get stuck in hard to reach places easily if not careful.
10. Vulnerable to a neurological disease, Wobbly Hedgehog Syndrome, where the animal slowly become paralyzed. This is potentially due to over-breeding in captivity as wild populations are not affected.
11. Increased chance of contracting *Salmonella*. 26 people were infected with a strain of *Salmonella* Typhimurium, most reported contact with hedgehog. Kids are over represented, where the median age is 15. 35% were hospitalized, higher than the average outbreak, with one death attributed to the infection. 8/11 people had purchased the pet in the past 1-5 weeks. 3/6 of the hedgehog had diarrhea before the person's illness. High risk behaviours, such as bathing hedgehogs in the family bathtub, were identified. No point of source of the hedgehogs can be identified, which makes controlling difficult. Hedgehogs should be considered high risk pets and be kept away from high risk people (>5 years of age).