



City of Port Moody

Governance and Legislation Committee

Date: January 21, 2025
Submitted by: Community Services Department – Environment Division
Subject: Mobile Live Animal Programs

Purpose

To provide Council with background information and recommendations on Mobile Live Animal Programs (MLAPs).

Recommended Resolution(s)

THAT staff be directed to report back with a draft Corporate Policy to restrict Mobile Live Animal Programs from operating on public and private property as recommended in the report dated January 21, 2025, from the Community Services Department – Environment Division regarding Mobile Live Animal Programs.

Background

Mobile Live Animal Programs (MLAPs) are typically commercial programs where live animals are displayed on-location for public entertainment, and often promoted as an opportunity to raise awareness and support for wildlife conservation. The animals in MLAP presentations and demonstrations are often subjected to petting, touching, photographing, and other forms of interaction. Examples include mobile zoos, petting zoos, and live animal shows. They generally do not include pet shows (e.g., dog or cat shows), agricultural fairs/exhibitions, or horse shows.

In the past, MLAPs have been included in City-supported events, including the Fingerling Festival and the Golden Spike Days. Previously, Golden Spike Days hosted a petting zoo. This sparked concerns surrounding the animals' welfare during hot weather. More recently, the City has received complaints related to an exhibitor at the Port Moody Ecological Society's (PMES) Fingerling Festival. Concerns were raised about the care standards and the supervision of the animals. In 2023 and 2024, the City received letters advocating for a ban on MLAPs from the BC SPCA, the Vancouver Humane Society, and a resident. All three cited concerns about animal welfare. It should be noted that Golden Spike Days has not included a petting zoo for several years now. The Fingerling Festival is the only community event known to include an MLAP activity.

At the Regular Council meeting on May 9, 2023, Council passed a resolution ([RC23/104](#)) that the City prohibit inhumane rodeo events and practices. Subsequently, Council also discussed mobile petting zoos and passed a resolution ([RC23/106](#)) directing staff to prepare a Council

report on proposed resolution *RC23/105* (that the City of Port Moody not allow mobile petting zoos in City facilities). While the work was underway, due to other work priorities, this report was not completed in time for PMES to implement changes to their scheduled exhibitors for the 2024 Fingerling Festival.

On April 12, 2024, PMES submitted a letter to Council regarding the resolution from the May 9, 2023, Council meeting. The letter was in support of Wild Education, an exotic animal rescue centre that was scheduled to attend the May 4, 2024, Fingerling Festival. The letter asserted that Wild Education functions as a rescue organization rather than a typical MLAP. This letter was received for information at the April 23, 2024, Regular Council meeting and Council resolved (*RC24/114*) that Wild Education's participation in the 2024 Fingerling Festival be supported, with a request that animals not be handled without direct supervision. Further, Council moved that prior to staff reporting back on a bylaw banning petting zoos, the BC SPCA be invited to speak to Council regarding best practices for petting zoos.

Discussion

Research indicates that the educational benefits of MLAP programs are generally minimal, and in some cases, the learning can be misleading or even negative, with few long-term conservation benefits. The negative learning results from forming associations with animals outside of their natural context. This promotes the perspective that animals are forms of entertainment, normalizes animals in captivity, and may indirectly promote keeping exotic animals as pets. When positive learning did occur through MLAP programs, there was no significant increase in the number of participants who felt they could make a difference in conservation.

Frequently, the animals used in MLAPs are exotic species, which could include tarantulas, scorpions, lizards, and snakes (including constricting snakes). These types of animals pose potential risks to people, from bites, scratches, stings, pinches, and constriction. Exotic animals also pose an invasive species risk. Port Moody is home to large natural areas that provide habitat for a wide variety of native species of plants and animals. If an exotic animal escaped during an MLAP event, it could put native ecosystems and wildlife at risk and result in significant cost to the City.

Staff also looked for any certifying bodies that would deem an MLAP and their treatment of animals as humane. While no organizations were identified that specifically certify MLAPs, there are relevant organizations and recognitions that MLAPs can apply to, such as Humane Canada and the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries.

A few municipalities have enacted bylaws regulating or prohibiting the use of animals at municipal facilities due to concerns about animal welfare and public safety. Municipalities have implemented various approaches, ranging from standalone bylaws to specific provisions within broader bylaws targeting certain animals, shows, or performances. Table 1 summarizes the approaches taken by the municipalities that have implemented MLAP regulations.

Table 1:

Municipality	Bylaw	Provisions
Chilliwack	Wild or Exotic Animal Performance Bylaw No. 2653	No operation or carrying of a show, circus, exhibition carnival or other performance/display using wild or exotic animals (outlined in a schedule) where animals perform, fight, or participate in a show for amusement or entertainment of an audience.
New Westminster	Animal Control Bylaw No. 7586	No shows, performances, exhibitions, unless using domestic or companion animals.
Burnaby	Animal Control Bylaw No. 9609	No circus or other performance with a predetermined animal list.
District of North Vancouver	Animal Performance Bylaw No. 6423	Prohibits performances, circuses, public shows, exhibitions, carnivals, travelling petting zoos, rodeos, and dog races. Allows performances involving dogs, horses, or farm animals on a farm or show grounds.
City of Vancouver	Business Prohibitions Bylaw No. 5156	Prohibits businesses that involve exotic animals for sale, competition, exhibition, performance, or events, except aquariums, or zoological parks that are accredited by Canadian Association of Zoos and Aquariums or a member of Canadian Association of Science centres.

The City of Port Moody’s Animal Control Bylaw No. 3343 is the only City bylaw that includes provisions related to animals, although it is focused on the control and regulation of domestic animals. The bylaw does not explicitly address the use of animals in traveling educational or entertainment programs.

Given the identified animal welfare challenges, human safety risks, ecological concerns, and limited educational benefits, the trade-offs associated with MLAPs do not appear to provide sufficient advantages to justify their potential drawbacks.

Moving forward, there are several options for addressing MLAPs in Port Moody, each having pros and cons, which are outlined below:

1. Develop a City Corporate Policy to prohibit animal programs and performances on public and private land.
 - a. Pros:
 - can be drafted in a short time frame;
 - easy to update;
 - can implement through existing event permitting process; and
 - can include both MLAPs and the ban on rodeos (as supported by Council Resolution RC23/104).
 - b. Cons:
 - will require staff time to educate the public about the policy; and
 - may be difficult to enforce MLAP ban on private property, as there are no existing permit requirements for MLAPs on private property. Alternatively, a permit process could be established, requiring significant staff resources.

2. Update the Parks and Community Facilities Bylaw to include provisions to prohibit MLAPs on public land.
 - a. Pros:
 - straightforward to implement through existing event permitting process;
 - could use the update as an opportunity to add additional elements to the bylaw;
 - provides a regulatory enforcement tool; and
 - could include a ban on rodeos on public land.
 - b. Cons:
 - requires more staff time and potential legal costs to draft a bylaw than a corporate policy; and
 - does not apply to private land.

3. Update the Business Licensing Bylaw No. 3000 to include provisions that prohibit MLAPs on both public and private land.
 - a. Pros:
 - applies to both public and private land;
 - could include other bylaw provisions, such as sales and breeding; and
 - could include a ban on rodeos.
 - b. Cons:
 - requires more staff time to draft a bylaw than a corporate policy;
 - will require staff time to educate the public about the bylaw; and
 - may be difficult to enforce on private property, as there are no existing permit requirements for MLAPs on private property. Alternatively, a permit process could be established, requiring significant staff resources.

While the above options would be targeted at MLAPs that are focused on the commercialization of animals for public entertainment, there is the potential that a corporate policy or bylaw impacts organizations that are focused on animal welfare, like wildlife rescues. The following are possible exemptions or items to consider, to reduce the potential impact the corporate policy or bylaw amendments could have on rescues:

1. Allowing MLAPs which are registered with a reputable organization that establishes them as a legitimate rescue or sanctuary, for example being a member of Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries.
2. Allowing MLAPs which are humane certified through a third-party body such as Humane Canada.
3. Allowing MLAPs that are registered as a non-profit.
4. Allowing MLAPs that are only displaying fish and/or invertebrates.
5. Including a schedule for accepted animals (e.g., domestic animals like ferrets, rescued wildlife like owls, hawks).

Staff recommend the implementation of a private and public lands Corporate Policy (Option 1) rather than a Bylaw update at this time. Given that there are relatively few MLAPs operating in the City, with the only known ones being operated on City property, staff are of the opinion that a Corporate Policy will be effective in achieving the desired outcome while limiting the resources

required to implement this ban. Staff also recommend using the above items (1-5) to limit the impacts such a policy would have on rescues and other similar organizations. It is further recommended that the Council Resolution on banning rodeos be incorporated into this Corporate Policy.

Other Option(s)

1. THAT staff be directed to take no further action regarding Mobile Live Animal Programs.
2. THAT staff be directed to report back with a draft stand-alone bylaw that specifically prohibits Mobile Live Animal Programs and Rodeos from operating within the City of Port Moody.

Financial Implications

No additional funds are required, as the work can be completed within existing department operating budgets.

Communications and Public Engagement Initiatives

If adopted, the Corporate Policy and related information will be made publicly available on the City website. Staff will also reach out to impacted local event organizers to directly share this information.

Council Strategic Plan Goals

The recommendation in this report aligns with the following Council Strategic Plan Goal:

- Strategic Goal 2.1 – Protect, integrate, and enhance our natural assets.

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Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Mobile Live Animal Programs.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Jan 13, 2025

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Tanya Bettles, Manager of Environment - Jan 9, 2025

Erin Embley, Director of Environment and Parks - Jan 9, 2025

Julie Pavey-Tomlinson, General Manager of Community Services - Jan 9, 2025

Stephanie Lam, City Clerk and Manager of Legislative Services - Jan 10, 2025

Lindsay Todd, Manager of Communications and Engagement - Jan 10, 2025

Paul Rockwood, General Manager of Finance and Technology - Jan 12, 2025

Anna Mathewson, City Manager - Jan 13, 2025