

REAL DOG COMPANY

Central Otago Regional Identity Partner

— A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE —

OUR STORIES / OUR STORIES / REAL DOG COMPANY



Chances are, if you have a "real dog", you've heard of Nigel and Rose Voice and the Real Dog Company. This bustling Maniototo-based business has two aspects: the manufacture and sale of dog equipment and Real Dog Adventures, where visitors enjoy dog sledding through the Naseby Forest.

NIGEL AND ROSE VOICE

Rose and Nigel could work from anywhere. They chose Ranfurly. Why? Because it's dog sledding heaven and they wanted their children to grow up in quintessential New Zealand. Rose grew up in Alexandra, but her career in emergency medicine and anaesthetics bound her to the big cities, while Nigel's 22-year career was in the police. Alaskan Malamutes have been part of Rose's life for more than three decades – and part of Nigel's life the year he met Rose.

Rose: "Like many Kiwis, I grew up around working dogs – dogs that had a job to do. That's why I like the Malamutes. I was importing all my sled dog equipment from Alaska. Then the dollar changed and I thought 'surely if I can operate an anaesthetic machine, I can operate a sewing machine'. The business just grew and grew. Our dream was to share our dogs with people and we were able to make that happen when we moved here. We're with the dogs every day, but for other people, it's pretty special."



OUTSIDE OF THE NORM



INTEGRITY REWARDED TENFOLD

Regional Value: Having integrity

Everything about Central Otago is open and honest: the landscape, the people, even the weather is straightforward. The Real Dog Company was founded on integrity and that core value has not changed from Day Dot.

"People from elsewhere have this belief that, if you live in this area, you're good people. You wouldn't want to let them down. The materials we use are probably way over the top, but we wanted to stand behind the product and say 'this will never break' and know it's true. As we've built up the business, that stance has come back to rewards us, tenfold."



EDUCATION ALONGSIDE BUSINESS

Regional Value: Making a difference

Rose and Nigel are so much a part of the Maniototo now, that their community feels as proud of their business as they do, themselves. They like to think they repay that loyalty in a unique way.

"Locals are always bringing visitors along for a look. It's great. We have play centres and primary schools ringing and asking to visit. We never charge. They bring their lunch and, while they're sitting around, we bring out a dog. They get to touch it and learn about dogs. People ask if we can help with a child that's terrified of dogs. Yes, we can. By the time that child leaves our place, they are no longer afraid and you know you've made a huge difference to that child's life."

Real Dog Company / Hearing Notes.

5 Bypass Road

Report writers Failure

There is no evidence that the planner sought information about our business model, daily operations, or our reliance on amenity values. Without this, the assessment of effects is incomplete and fails to meet the RMA's requirement to consider actual and potential effects on people, business and communities.

The report treats our property as if it were an empty lifestyle block. It ignores that we run an active, established, award winning business that depends on the environment and character of this location.

There has been no investigation into how we operate, how we serve the community, or how these proposals would make us non-viable.

In failing to identify or even acknowledge these issues for the RMA process, the planner has left you, the commissioners without the full facts they need to make a fair decision. That is not just an oversight — it is a serious failure

I wasn't able to find a New Zealand case that perfectly matches our scenario

However, here's a close, relevant precedent , displaying strong legal principles that underscore the planner's duty to investigate and consider effects:

Applicable Case: ***Wallace v Auckland Council [2021] NZHC 3095***

In this **High Court (Auckland)** decision—commonly referred to as the *Ventnor Road* case—the court found that a planning officer had:

- **Failed to identify affected persons** properly under section 95E RMA;
- **Produced a report based on inadequate information**, rendering his assessment of environmental & economic effects legally flawed.
— *"The Council failed to identify the neighbourhood character and residential amenity... and had inadequate information upon which to assess those effects."*
[ojs.victoria.ac.nz/+15CoLab Planning+15Wikipedia+15](https://ojs.victoria.ac.nz/+15CoLab+Planning+15Wikipedia+15)

I **argue** this illustrates judicial expectation that planners must do more than rely on incomplete data—they need to investigate, identify affected parties, and assess actual and potential effects.

Relevant Legal Principles

1. **Duty to Investigate Effects (Section 104 RMA):** Councils must identify and assess actual and potential effects, including social and economic ones on people and businesses. Failure to do so undermines the integrity of the entire resource consent process. [Tompkins Wake Court of Appeal Decision in R J Davidson Family Trust - Tompkins Wake](#)
2. **Affected Persons Test (Section 95E RMA):** This involves considering whether effects

on individuals or entities are more than minor—if so, these persons must be identified and the matter notified. *Wallace* demonstrates that neglecting this leads to legal error. [qualityplanning.org.nz+6CoLab Planning+6Tompkins Wake+6](http://qualityplanning.org.nz+6CoLab+Planning+6Tompkins+Wake+6)

**** Procedural Fairness in Section 42A Reports:** A planner's duty is to present a balanced, informed summary to commissioners.

Omitting a business that will clearly be materially affected is a serious procedural failing.

- **This is a** precedent showing that courts expect planners to properly identify all affected parties, including businesses.
- **The RMA obligates assessment of all effects**—social, economic, and environmental—not just those that are obvious or benign.
- **The planner's omission is not a technical oversight**, but is a breach of fundamental duties under RMA sections 95E and 104.

If I can, now that I have the opportunity, wish to briefly give you that information, about what we do.

We bought Real Dog to The Maniototo along with over 20 Alaskan Malamutes & 3 children.

Operating as

- * Real Dog Equipment
- * Real Dog Boarding Kennels
- * Real Dog Adventures

Since operating out of our current location we have won National & Regional awards *

Overall Winner Enterprising Rural Women

Overall Winner Central Otago Business Excellence Award

Overall Winner The David Awards (Heroes in Small Business)

We have on our property a workshop, Retail Area, Visitor Information area & outdoor Dog Boarding Kennel Facility.

Brand

Our brand is heavily seated in the big open honest rural area that is the Maniototo.

Understandably this place has shaped who we are and what we do.

We are proud to be a Regional Identity Partner of "Central Otago World of Difference"

**** Regional Value: Having integrity**

Everything about Central Otago is open and honest: the landscape, the people, even the weather is straightforward. The Real Dog Company was founded on integrity and that core value has not changed from Day Dot.

"People from elsewhere have this belief that, if you live in this area, you're good people. You wouldn't want to let them down. As we've built up the business, that stance has come back to reward us, tenfold."

Real Dog Adventures

Alongside our boarding kennels, we also run **Real Dog Adventures** — an unusual and much-loved part of our business. We regularly host groups, bus tours and school groups who come here to learn about what we do, how we came to develop such a unique business so far from the world, spend time with the dogs, and experience a way of life that is rare in New Zealand.

Visitors often remark that the journey to our place is an experience in itself: Comments like *"Wow — even the drive here through your landscape is breathtaking."*

The setting is an essential part of the story, adding to the sense of discovery and uniqueness.

We believe this makes us an **asset to the area**. Real Dog has been warmly embraced by the community, adding value having something so distinctive, authentic, and connected to our landscape right here in Central Otago.

Real Dog Boarding Kennels.

We have deliberately held back from expanding our boarding kennels for the past two years, despite demand, because if this industrial facility proceeds, we will be forced to close them entirely.

We take the responsibility of looking after other people's dogs incredibly seriously, it is not a job for the faint-hearted. Our role is to provide them with security, exercise, play, affection, and above all, a safe, calm, and stress-free environment.

That level of care cannot be delivered if our kennels are overshadowed by a 660-hectare industrial solar facility.

The constant noise, traffic, glare, and loss of rural outlook will create stress for the animals in our care, undermining the very foundation of our business.

A kennel is not just about fencing and food, it is about providing an environment that promotes wellbeing. Once that environment is destroyed, the kennels cannot operate. This means the proposal does not just affect our family; it removes a much-needed service for dog owners across the region, and renders our business non-viable.

We board many long term dogs some over 12 months, clients recognise our environment as conducive to long term care, and clearly trust us.

We have the ability to walk them safely all across & our property to importantly avoid long term kennel exposure.

Rational

Dog Hearing Sensitivity

- Dogs can hear **frequencies up to 65,000 Hz** and easily detect sounds at volumes as low as **0 dB to -15 dB** (virtually silent to us).
- Humans typically detect only up to 20,000 Hz, and struggle to hear anything below 0-

10 dB.

- They can also detect sounds easily **four times further away than humans with good hearing**.
- Dogs exposed to noise show **clear signs of stress** (elevated cortisol, repetitive pacing, agitation).
- Dogs are particularly sensitive to **sudden, high-pitched, or percussive noises** (like metal striking metal, drilling, or pole-driving).
- **Pile driving** (hammering 2.5–3m metal poles into the ground) produces **sharp percussive bangs and ground vibration**. For dogs, these are perceived as threatening, similar to fireworks or thunder.
- Construction will involve **constant vehicle movements, reversing alarms, generators, and grinding metal**, all of which produce irregular and unpredictable noises that cause canine stress.
- A **two-year (conservatively) construction phase** is effectively permanent in a dog's perception. Chronic exposure means ongoing anxiety, not short-term adjustment.

Effects on Dogs in Kennels

- **Stress behaviours:** barking, pacing, refusal to eat, destructive chewing, self-harm, or aggression.
- **Physiological stress:** increased cortisol levels, elevated heart rate, digestive upset, and compromised immune function.
- **Loss of trust in the environment:** dogs that normally settle in kennels may not relax, meaning they cannot receive the "calm, stress-free" care we promise owners.
- Dust will be a major problem in the kennels also, we are directly down wind from entire solar site.

Kennels as Sensitive Receptors

In planning terms, certain land uses are recognised as "sensitive receptors", places where people are entitled to a higher level of protection from noise, vibration, dust, and industrial effects.

These usually include homes, schools, and hospitals.

Dog boarding facilities are no different.

By their very nature, kennels house animals that are highly sensitive to sound, vibration, and disruption.

If we accept that residents are sensitive receptors, then so too are boarding kennels, not just for our family, but for the wider community who rely on this facility to care for their dogs in a safe and stress-free setting.

Implications for Our Kennel Business

- **Quality of care** is compromised: You cannot guarantee a secure, stress-free environment.

- **Reputation risk:** distressed dogs = unhappy owners, fewer repeat clients, potential complaints.
- **Operational viability:** with noise and vibration continuing for up to 2 years (conservatively) , kennels become effectively unusable.
- **Permanent loss:** even once construction ends, dogs may associate the site with stress , undermining long-term business credibility.
- If a school next door would be unacceptable because children are sensitive receptors, then kennels must also be unacceptable because dogs are equally vulnerable.

**** Impulsive high intensity construction noise is so disruptive that it would be treated as high risk for animal welfare.**

In light of this we would have no choice but to close the Kennels.

It is important to us to be transparent.

Operating a care facility in a sub-par environment does not sit with our past & future business ethos.

Also the ongoing expectation that Lithium batteries will be installed & the current & future fire risk & gas release there is no way we could evacuate large numbers of dogs safely.

This is an existing business, our livelihood.

When eventually the property might be sold in our older years we would have expected to sell Kennels as a major part of an ongoing successful business.

In light of this we would have no choice but to close the Kennels should this project be consented.

For years, families across the region have relied on us to provide a safe, caring environment for their dogs , working dogs, companions, and service animals.

Our rural communities need small businesses to survive, this is real diversity & will be lost.

Closing.

Given the scale of unmitigated effects on amenity, health, business viability and generational security, I respectfully request that :

The application be declined on the grounds that adverse effects on us as an existing business & immediate neighbour are more than minor and cannot be adequately mitigated.

Thank you

References

American Kennel Club

Heffner, H.E. (1983). Hearing in Large and Small Dogs: Absolute Thresholds and Size of the Tympanic Membrane. Behavioral Neuroscience, 97(2), 310–318.

- Strain, G.M. (2011). The Genetics of Deafness in Domestic Animals. *Frontiers in Veterinary Science*, 2(3).
- Sales, G., & Pye, D. (1974). *Ultrasonic Communication by Animals*. Springer.
- Kryter, K. (1994). *The Handbook of Hearing and the Effects of Noise*. Academic Press.
- Hewison, L., & Rowe, E. (2018). Stress in Kennelled Dogs: A Review of Environmental Factors. *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science*, 21(1), 21–35.

Dogs' Hearing Compared to Humans

Dogs have a significantly heightened sense of hearing compared to people. While humans generally hear frequencies from about 20 Hz to 20 kHz, dogs detect a much broader range—up to 45–60 kHz. This means they are not only able to perceive much higher-pitched sounds but also faint noises that are inaudible to us.

Importantly, research confirms that dogs can hear sounds at **approximately four times the distance of humans**. In practical terms, noises that a person may only begin to detect from one block away can often be heard by a dog from four or more blocks away.

This extraordinary auditory sensitivity is why kennels and boarding facilities are especially vulnerable to noise from neighbouring construction, industry, or gunfire. Sounds that humans might describe as “background” can be intense and stressful for dogs, leading to anxiety, behavioural regression, or even health impacts.

References:

1. Wikipedia: Dog anatomy – notes dogs hear sounds at four times the distance of humans.
2. Wikipedia: Hearing range – humans (20 Hz–20 kHz) vs dogs (up to 45–60 kHz).
3. A-Z Animals: Everyday analogy – a truck heard one block away by humans may be heard four to five blocks away by a dog.