

The Pit Bull Placebo

The Media, Myths
and Politics of
Canine Aggression



11TH PENNSYLVANIA
INFANTRY

Karen Delise

The Pit Bull Placebo

**The Media, Myths
and Politics of
Canine Aggression**

by

Karen Delise

Anubis Publishing

The Pit Bull Placebo
The Media, Myths and Politics of Canine Aggression
Copyright © 2007 Karen Delise

Published by Anubis Publishing

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced (except for inclusion in reviews), disseminated or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or in any information storage and retrieval system, or the Internet/World Wide Web without written permission from the author or publisher.

For further information, please contact:
Kaynine3@aol.com
or go to the National Canine Research Council at
www.nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com

Cover photo credit: Jon T. Miller

Book design by
Arbor Books, Inc.
19 Spear Road, Suite 301
Ramsey, NJ 07446
www.arborbooks.com

Printed in the United States

The Pit Bull Placebo
The Media, Myths and Politics of Canine Aggression
Karen Delise

1. The Pit Bull Placebo: The Media, Myths and Politics of Canine
Aggression 2. Karen Delise 3. Pets/Pit Bulls/Human-animal communication

Library of Congress Control Number: 2006910964

ISBN 10: 0-9721914-1-0
ISBN 13: 978-0-9721914-1-8

Dedication

To my wonderful father, Mario Delise,
who taught me about love and respect for all life

and

To Bianca, again and always—
a dog whose courage, loyalty, and devotion
is a testament to the timeless spirit of the dog.

Table of Contents

Foreword.....	vii
Acknowledgements	xiii
Introduction.....	xv
Chapter 1 The Function of Dogs in 19th Century America.....	1
Chapter 2 Imagery and the Media in 19th Century America: The Bloodhound	20
Chapter 3 Creating Dangerous Dogs: The Newfoundland and the Northern Breeds.....	36
Chapter 4 How Popularity and Function Influence Aggression	47
Chapter 5 The Reporting of Dog Attacks in Early 20th Century Media.....	58
Chapter 6 The Use and Misuse of Courage: The Bulldog.....	63
Chapter 7 The Media Re-Shapes an Image: The German Shepherd.....	72
Chapter 8 The Myth of the Super-Predator: The Doberman Pinscher	79
Chapter 9 Setting Dogs Up for Failure: The New Guard Dogs	88
Chapter 10 The Media Attacks a “Breed”: The Pit Bull.....	95
Chapter 11 Pseudoscience and Hysteria Triumph	107
Chapter 12 Fighting Dogs: Branded with the Sins of Their Masters	130
Chapter 13 Sensationalism Replaces Common Sense	139
Chapter 14 The Real Causes for Dog Attacks	154
Chapter 15 The Pit Bull Placebo: Conclusions on Canine Aggression	171
Appendix A Dog Attacks as Reported in Northeastern Newspapers, 1864–1899	175
Appendix B Dog Attacks as Reported in U.S. Newspapers, 1960–1975.....	183
Appendix C Denver, Colorado—“Evidence” Used to Ban Pit Bulls (Breed Specific Legislation).....	191
Appendix D Denver, Colorado—An Ineffective and Uninformed Approach to Dog Attacks	197
Notes	201
Index	207
About the Author	211

Foreword

Placebo: Something of no inherent benefit that is done or said simply to placate or reassure somebody

Emotionally charged news accounts of a dog bite fatality can teach the wrong lesson. The purpose of *THE PIT BULL PLACEBO: THE MEDIA MYTHS AND POLITICS OF CANINE AGGRESSION* is to teach the right lesson.

Karen Delise knows that understanding instances of canine aggression requires going beyond the news stories, to uncover the facts that reporters overlooked. It may take months for all the relevant facts to surface (if they ever do), a delay that a deadline-driven press may not abide. The press will have moved on to new stories long before that. Thus, Delise's analysis of the exceedingly rare cases when human-canine interactions end in tragedy affords an understanding that news outlets may not be patient enough or persistent enough to uncover.

The researchers who studied fatal dog attacks before her relied primarily on news accounts. Delise wanted to know what the news had not reported. She called police investigators, animal control agencies, veterinarians, even coroners familiar with an incident. She uncovered previously unreported facts, as well as facts that contradicted what had been reported in the newspapers and on television. Police investigators may have told her that the dog, which had been described in a news account as a family dog, had in fact been malnourished and uncared for; had a name like "Satan," or no name at all; and had lived his life, without shelter, at the end of a chain.

More than two decades of deliberate, concentrated, determined research has taken Delise beyond the details of the exceedingly rare tragedies in which she is the nation's leading expert, to an understanding of our cultural habits about dogs that is paralleled in the most forward-thinking social science.

THE PIT BULL PLACEBO explains how function, myth, media, and the marginal elements in our society can combine to demonize a group of dogs, however precisely or vaguely defined, and to endanger our bond with all dogs. The first example for which we have detailed records is of the group of dogs called bloodhounds. In the mid-19th century, public attitudes toward these dogs paralleled attitudes toward their most controversial function, pursuing runaway slaves.

Eventually, these bloodhounds fell from view, and we pushed other dogs into the spotlight, including the German Shepherd Dog and the Doberman Pinscher.

By the 1980's, a new dog had swept all the others aside: any dog that was called a "pit bull". But there was more happening than just the substitution of one dog for another. Urbanization and the reach and power of our information technology has intensified the plight of the dogs called pit bull, and made it qualitatively different from that which any other dog had faced.

How did this happen?

Prior to 1959, there had never been a systematic attempt to analyze dog bites using the tools of epidemiology. The first such study was published in 1959. Its authors, a public health doctor and three veterinarians, analyzed the incidents in their data set for a variety of owner, victim, and dog-related factors.¹

More studies appeared in the 1960's and 1970's. And it is easy to understand why. Late in 1974, a study published in the *Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine* stated that the number of reported dog bites in New York City had increased by 37% between 1965 and 1972. The article was titled, "Dog Bites: An Unrecognized Epidemic."² An Associated Press article the following February, carrying a very similar headline ("Dog Bites—Unrecognized Epidemic in the United States"), reported significant increases in dog bites in 10 other American cities besides New York.³

Now comes the bitter irony. The dog bite epidemic announced in the *Academy Bulletin* and by the Associated Press had begun to subside even as the other news coverage of, and research into, dog-related injury grew more intense. Researchers in Baltimore, Maryland, one of the cities included in the AP story, reported that new municipal policies had quickly turned the trend around. From a peak total of 6,922 in 1972, by 1976, dog bites had declined in Baltimore to 4,760.⁴ And this decline only steepened in the years that followed. For all of 2005, Baltimore had reports of fewer than 500 dog bites, according to its Department of Health. Other cities that had been mentioned in the AP story, including New York,⁵ reported similar, dramatic decreases.

Unfortunately for dogs, and for our bond with them, the announcement of the rise in dog bites was not followed up, in the popular press or in academic journals, by reports of the subsequent declines. Rather, the media and the academy, both producers and product of an increasingly risk-obsessed culture, painted an alarming picture of dogs, not as companions, but as sources of injury.

The dog bite theme spawned a subset of research into those exceedingly rare occasions—rare then and rare now, by the way—where a dog kills a human being. The first American to publish on the subject was Centers for Disease Control veterinarian Dr. William Winkler. Newspapers across the country publicized his findings when his report, "Human Deaths Induced by dog Bites, 1974-75," appeared in the *Journal of Public Health* in 1977. A second paper by other researchers, covering a longer period of time, followed within a few

years. Both of these papers reported the breeds of the dogs associated with these tragedies based upon whatever news media accounts were available to them.

Dogs identified as pit bulls did not figure prominently, either in these studies or in the media.

However, there was now circulating in our culture and in the minds of news editors the idea of dogs as sources of injury, punctuated by the image of dogs as causes of human mortality. Dogs were imagined to present more of a risk than they did or ever had.

In 1976, the Congress finally made it a crime to carry a dog across a state line for the purpose of conducting a dog fight. News coverage of the campaign to secure the new law, and of the arrest and prosecution of the criminals who fight dogs, had a consequence that no one intended. The news stories in the late 70's and early 80's included increasingly fantastical images of the dogs. Lurid myths of super-canine powers—locking jaws, extreme bite pressure and imperviousness to pain—frightened people into believing that these dog were different from other dogs. The effect of this mythmaking was to portray the dogs as the criminals, rather than the human felons who forced them to fight.

Now our culture carried the images of dogs as sources of injury; dogs as sources of human fatality; and a particular group of dogs as deviant from all the others, and a special danger.

By the mid-1980's, one canine image made the news wires hum the loudest: pit bull. The witch hunt was on. The fixation with pit bull narrowed the focus to the dog, rather than on the relationship between the dog and the human.

The spotlight on the pit bull also obscured the fact that the epidemiological study of dog bites was barely breaking the surface of the complexity of human-canine interaction. The relationship between a dog and a human being, both sentient creatures who were avid students of gesture, mood and tone, was too complex for an epidemiological analysis to explain.

Even though they did not have the whole picture, the recommendations in most of the published reports, based upon the information they did have, were as applicable today as they were the day they were published: control free-roaming dogs, license dogs, spay and neuter pets, supervise children around dogs, and be responsible for your obligations to your pet and to the community.

While the epidemiology of dog bites consumed the attention of one group of researchers, sociologists and psychologists were analyzing our cultural habits in other spheres and producing theories that are in remarkable accord with Delise's findings about our attitudes toward dogs, and what can cause us to change them.

In 1966, Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, published *THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY*. They defined a social construct as the perception of an individual, a group, or an idea that is 'constructed' through cultural or social practice. It is a phenomenon 'invented' or 'constructed' by the people who participate in it, which

can be said to exist because they agree to behave as if it does: as though it had been there all the time.

Pit bull is not a breed. You will not find pit bull in the breed list of either the American Kennel Club, the United Kennel Club; or in the Wisdom Panel breed library. Yet there is a definite public idea of what is meant by “pit bull.” That public idea was constructed through the process that Burger and Luckmann described.

Then there’s Stanley Cohen, now an Emeritus Professor of Sociology at the London School of Economics. Cohen was fascinated by the process by which society invents demons—folk devils, he called them—as a result of powerful messages that spread through the community. Cohen understood that society’s impressions of a group come through a media filter. (The medium, by the way, has, in other places and times, not been a news outlet. In 17th century Salem, Massachusetts, it was rumors of witches and witchcraft that spread from person to person, culminating in official persecution. In the second half of the 19th century, it was the so-called “Tom Shows,” stage adaptations of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s enormously popular and influential novel *UNCLE TOM’S CABIN*, that toured the English-speaking world.) However it spreads, the yarn is embellished as necessary to give it the meaning its broadcasters consider important.

“I am concerned here with the way the situation was initially interpreted and presented by the mass media,” Cohen wrote, “because it is in this form that most people receive their pictures of both deviance and disasters. Reactions take place on the basis of these processed or coded messages: people become indignant or angry, formulate theories and plans, make speeches, write letters to the newspapers.”

Media stories of deviance and disaster create demands for public action. Cohen described such sequences of events as moral panics. A moral panic needs a folk devil, the imagined source of terrible menace, to whom people assign all the traits that make the folk devil deviant and threatening.⁶ Think of the witches of Salem. Or the bloodhounds of the Tom Shows. Or the dogs called pit bulls. Any dog that is labeled a pit bull lives in the dark shadow of the manufactured villainy of a classic folk devil.

The panic has changed the way the press reports a serious dog attack. If the press has a source that calls the dog a pit bull, a statistically rare tragedy can be portrayed as an act of deliberate canine malice, and the forerunner of impending disaster.

As the panic has spread, the group of dogs that public officials and private panic mongers want to call pit bulls keeps getting bigger. Now it isn’t just two or three breeds of dogs, it is also mixes of those breeds, an increasing group of other breeds, and any dogs that share some physical characteristics in common with those breeds. Interestingly, in the popular imagination, the continual expansion of the group does not cause the folk devils to lose their coherence. It just means there are more of them!

Or does it? A pioneering veterinary behaviorist, Dr. Victoria Lea Voith of Western University, has been surveying animal professionals, asking them to ascribe breed labels to dogs of

unknown origin, dogs whose breed make up has been analyzed using the MARS Wisdom Panel™. How does breed identification based on opinion correspond with DNA analysis of the same dogs? Not very well. Dr. Voith reported to the American Veterinary Medical Association 2009 convention, and in the pages of the *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science*, that in only a quarter of the dogs was at least one of the breeds proposed by the adoption agencies also detected as a predominant breed by DNA analysis. In 87.5% of the dogs, breeds were identified by DNA analyses that were not proposed by the adoption agencies.

Dr. Voith, in her report to the AVMA Convention, pointed to important implications in her findings. If visual breed identification of dogs of unknown origin is an unreliable, disputatious practice, what are we to make of all the data and breed specific public policy that has been enacted since the 1980's, based on the belief that visual identifications were accurate?⁷

The epidemiologists had recognized the limitations of visual breed identification of dogs of unknown origin. In a regularly misrepresented JAVMA paper summarizing an analysis of canine-caused fatalities for the 20-year period that ended in 1998, the authors had expressed concern that the breed identifications they had obtained from news sources might not be accurate. They also reported that in approximately 30% of the fatal attacks they had identified they had been unable to obtain any breed attribution whatsoever.⁸

If, as a former president of the American Veterinary Medical Association has stated, more than half of the dogs in the country are mixed breed dogs,⁹ perhaps the best answer to the question "What kind of dog is it?" is not a breed descriptor. Perhaps the best answer is a descriptor that tells us something about the dog's relationship with human beings. Was it a family dog, and all that "family dog" implies? Or was it merely a resident dog not kept as a family pet, never enjoying positive, humane interactions with people?

In 2007, Dr. Randall Lockwood, one of the researchers who had analyzed dog bites and dog attacks through the lens of epidemiology, submitted an affidavit in Federal court in opposition to Denver, Colorado's pit bull ban. He described the attempt to correlate dog bites and attacks with the single vector of breed as evidence of a 19th century mindset. Dog bite injuries, he said, are a complex societal problem that must deal with a wide range of human behaviors that put people and animals at risk.¹⁰

People and animals at risk. How can we so unreasonably put companion animals in danger? How many dogs have we killed based solely on their appearance?

This book was completed before Dr. Voith published her findings. In light of those findings, how should we think about the breed descriptors that Delise has included? Some of the incidents reported in this book may concern dogs of documented pedigree. Many others concern dogs, whatever the press may have reported, whose breeding was unknown, mixed, or uncertain. The significance of the breed descriptors lies not with their accuracy, but with the fact that they are what was reported. It was based upon these reports that the public formed its impressions of those kinds of dogs.

The mission of the National Canine Research Council, which Delise founded, is the preservation of the human-canine bond. The Council incorporates Delise’s work with the findings of social psychology described above. As new insights from animal professionals and other scholars have been published that add to our knowledge of and appreciation for the human-canine bond, we have incorporated that knowledge into our presentations and published materials. We are always seeking new evidence and new understanding—and are no longer shocked at the absurdity of what we uncover that has led to the moral panic surrounding an incoherent group of folk devils known as “pit bulls”.

Occasionally, someone attending National Canine Research Council presentations will ask if dogs called pit bulls will be the last group of dogs demonized. There is no guarantee, but there is hope. If people understand the relational nature of the human-canine bond, we may be able to break the cycle that Delise traced back to the bloodhound. But that will be up to humans, not to dogs.

This book was informed from the first by Delise’s deep appreciation of the human-canine bond. Since its publication, events have only confirmed what Delise and other researchers have always grasped about that bond: dogs enrich our lives; we are responsible for them; and dogs cannot be characterized apart from us.

—Donald Cleary

Director of Communications and Publications, National Canine Research Council

- 1 Parrish, Henry M. et al. “Epidemiology of Dog Bites,” Public Health Reports, Vol. 74, No. 10, October 1959.
- 2 Harris, David et al. “Dog Bites—An Unrecognized Epidemic,” Bulletin of New York Academy of Medicine, Vol. 50, No. 9, October 1974.
- 3 Weller, W. Robert, “Dog Bites Are Our Unrecognized Epidemic,” Associated Press, reprinted in various newspapers, February, 1975.
- 4 Berzon, David R. “The Animal Bite Epidemic in Baltimore, Maryland: Review and Update,” AJPH, June 1978, Vol. 68, No. 6.
- 5 “What is a dog bite?” at <http://nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com/dog-bites/> (Accessed April 28, 2010).
- 6 S. Cohen, FOLK DEVILS AND MORAL PANICS, 3rd Edition. London: Routledge, 2002.
- 7 V. Voith, “A Comparison of Visual and DNA Identification of Breeds of Dogs,” published in proceedings of annual AVMA Convention, July 11-14, 2009, Seattle WA.
- 8 J. Sacks, L. Sinclair, G. Golab, et al, “Breeds of dogs involved in fatal human attacks in the United States between 1979 and 1998,” JAVMA, Vol 217, No. 6, Sept 15, 2000.
- 9 B. Beaver, “In Opposition to the Ontario Law,” affidavit submitted in *Cochrane v In Right of Ontario*, Ontario Superior Court of Justice, Court File No. 05-CV-295948PDI
- 10 R. Lockwood, affidavit submitted in *Dias et al v City and Count of Denver*, United States District Court for the District of Colorado, Civil Action No. 07-cv-00722-WDM-MJW

Acknowledgements

I wish to express my deep gratitude and thanks to Michael Denny, whose advice and insight were invaluable in the creation of this book. It has been my great fortune and pleasure to have you as my editor.

To Jane Berkey, I am truly indebted for your contribution and support. Your relentless pursuit of perfection, your passion, energy and determination are a great source of inspiration.

To all those at the Animal Farm Foundation, especially Kate Fraser and Don Cleary, thank you for your assistance, ideas, and suggestions.

Much gratitude to Marcy Setter, Sonya Dias, and Ledy VanKavage, for their assistance in searching out the truth and for fighting to overcome the hysteria and myths surrounding dog attacks.

Thanks to Jim Crosby for extraordinary field work and investigations into recent cases of fatal dog attacks.

I wish to express my respect and thanks to Diane Jessup, who is a great source of knowledge about Pit bulls, dog breeds and canine behavior.

Special thanks to my good friend Jennifer Shryock for valuable insight on canine behavior, and for providing education about dog bite prevention and safety.

I am thankful for my two wonderful brothers, Tom and Gary, whose support and dependability are a constant comfort to me.

To my dearest friend, Jane Moreau—thank you the laughs, long talks and entertainment which gave me much needed breaks during this past year. It is rare to find such a true friend and you are much appreciated. (Also thanks for the great idea of the “Pit Bull Paparazzi.”)

To my canine family: Presto, Sandy, Brooks, Hamlet, Pransa, Bianca, Darwin, Java, Inda, Bailey, Skye, Nikko, Tanq, and their canine cousins, Roscoe, Preakness and Blue—you have all taught me invaluable lessons about canine behavior and the giving and forgiving nature of dogs.

Eternal love and special thanks to Tanq, my constant and devoted canine companion, who never left my side during the long days and nights writing this book.

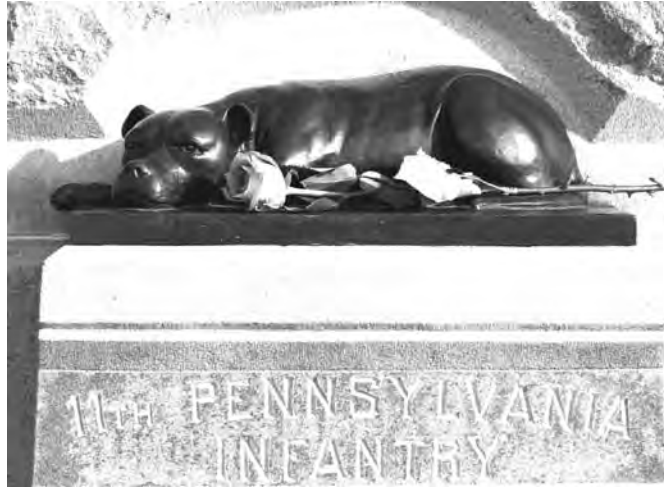


We—the silent, the abused, the forgotten, the exiled, and the forsaken—wish there was a way to express our gratitude to our stalwart defender, Jane Berkey. After decades of abuse

at the hands of those we love most, few have come forth to recognize our continued devotion to “mankind.” Few have stood up and given voice to our suffering—few have fought so passionately in our defense.

To our crusader, Jane Berkey, we, the Pit bulls, thank you.

Introduction



Memorial at Gettysburg: Sallie, Bulldog mascot to the 11th Pennsylvania Infantry.

Soldiers dressed in blue marched true and tall under a cloudy sky. Off to one side, a lanky man stood watching when his gaze momentarily focused on the lead marcher. His eyes showed a hint of amusement and respect, and a faint smile appeared on his gaunt face. It was then that President Abraham Lincoln is reported to have doffed his stove-pipe hat at the 11th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry in tribute to the soldiers and to their regimental mascot, the Bulldog Sallie, proudly prancing at the front of her regiment.

Placing Sallie at the head of their parade when marching in review past the Commander-in-Chief was this regiment's testimony to the honor and respect they had for the little Bulldog who had proved herself a loyal and devoted member of the 11th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry during the Civil War. And the respect and honor this dog earned is still visible today on the battlefield at Gettysburg, in the cast bronze replica of Sallie that rests at the base of the monument to the 11th Pennsylvania Infantry, a lasting tribute to Sallie's contribution to our nation during one of our most difficult times.

This heroic dog has alternately been described as a Staffordshire Terrier, a Bull Terrier, a Bulldog and a Bulldog mixed breed. The story of this brave "Bulldog-type dog" allows for some unsettling comparisons with her ubiquitous "Bulldog" cousins that fill our shelters, homes, streets and yards a century and a half later. Sallie, a recognized canine hero,

would today be classified as simply another Pit bull-type dog and, as such, the possibility that she would be euthanized in a shelter because of her breed or banned from residing in many cities and towns across our nation because of her appearance is a shocking reality at the beginning of the 21st century.

In 2006 a Texas couple, Stan and Amy, acquired a malnourished, neglected puppy. Not really planning on getting a dog, they could not ignore this small, needy pup. They named the seven-week-old, 4 lb. dog Sugar and decided the dog would become their traveling companion while they drove across the country for their hauling business. On a cold day in March, Stan and Amy arrived outside Denver to pick up a load, but due to a snow delay, they had to check into a motel for the night. Early the next morning Amy was walking Sugar outside the motel when an Animal Control officer from the city of Denver stopped them. He claimed she was breaking the law and that she needed to hand the small pup over to him. Incredulous, Amy summoned her husband who was also informed of their alleged “illegal” activity. The Animal Control officer stated that if they turned the puppy over to him immediately, he would see to it that she would be killed right away and the couple could avoid the criminal charges and animal control costs that went along with owning an illegal Pit bull in the city of Denver. The couple pleaded with the officer, stating they lived in and operated their business out of Texas and were only in Denver on business, but to no avail. The tiny pup was taken from the couple and delivered to the Denver Municipal Animal Services. Scared and confused, Stan and Amy drove their rig to the animal shelter in hopes of getting their puppy back. Only through good fortune were they able to locate someone who assisted in the difficult process of having the puppy released back to them.

In the past two decades, hundreds of cities and communities have enacted bans or restrictions against certain breeds or types of dogs. Forty-five years ago American novelist John Steinbeck was able to put his dog in the car and travel across the country chronicling his adventure in *Travels with Charley: In Search of America*. Today, if Steinbeck owned a dog that resembled a Pit bull, he could probably not drive a few hundred miles before he came upon a town that refused him and his dog entry. He would spend much of his time trying to avoid towns, cities and counties that have banned or restricted Pit bull-type dogs within their borders.

Yet in 1903 a Bulldog named Bud accompanied Horatio Nelson Jackson on America’s first transcontinental automobile trip. Shortly after leaving California with his co-driver and mechanic Sewall Crocker, Jackson added a light-colored Bulldog to the expedition. After his new masters fitted the Bulldog with goggles to protect his eyes from the road dust and debris, the threesome became a national sensation as they journeyed across America. Jackson would later brag that the Bulldog was “an enthusiast for motoring” and was “the one member of [our] trio who used no profanity on the entire trip.”

How have Bulldog-type dogs, in only a few decades, been transformed from nationally celebrated heroes to “persona non grata” in hundreds of cities across America? How has the



BUD.
PHOTO CREDIT: MARY LOUISE BLANCHARD

Bud: Bulldog companion on the first transcontinental automobile trip. Photo Credit: Mary Louise Blanchard, 1903

landscape of America and the mindset of Americans changed so dramatically in only a few decades?

Is it canine behavior that has changed so drastically? Or have we, with our growing ignorance of dogs, become so unreasonable that any flaw found in an individual dog is taken as ample justification for vilifying all their innocent brethren? Have we, in morbid fascination, concentrated so intensely on emphasizing the bad that some dogs do that we can no longer recognize the myriad of good and positive things that most dogs contribute to our lives?

Or, as some lawmakers and the media would have us believe, are some dog breeds inherently more dangerous and aggressive than others? Are Pit bull-type dogs becoming increasingly more dangerous than they were a century ago? Are most such dogs wonderfully tolerant and manageable or are these dogs unpredictable and untrustworthy, waiting to explode in a fury of aggression against everyone and anyone?

Within the last decade or two, a new phenomenon has not only drastically influenced the public's perception of certain breeds of dogs, but contributed greatly to a generalized ignorance of canine behavior. Technology, vis-à-vis the Internet, has allowed for instant accessibility to highly publicized media accounts of individual cases of dog attacks. Editorial columns about the vicious nature of certain breeds, dog-bite attorneys' websites filled with photos and statistics about dog attacks, quotes from politicians and outraged citizens about the nature and behaviors of certain dogs, and sensationalized headlines of dog attacks all seemingly offer instant and ample "proof" of the vicious nature of certain dogs. To many people these Internet sources are perceived as a reliable and accurate source of information on what they believe to be a recent epidemic of canine aggression.

But does this plethora of information present the public with a balanced, reasonable or accurate portrayal of the frequency of dog attacks, or of the type of dogs involved in such attacks, or of the forces directly responsible for such extreme canine aggression?

Fortunately, the Internet has also provided a more obscure but vital source of information that can provide a much needed perspective on the incidence, severity, and ultimately the causes of dog attacks.

Recently, many newspapers from the 1800s have been scanned in their entirety and placed on the Internet. Although the vast majority of available nineteenth century archived material is comprised primarily of local and major newspapers in the northeast quadrant of the United States, they are nevertheless a valuable source of data for examining individual

cases of dog attacks. This resource provides a unique opportunity to view both the style of media reporting and the prevailing attitudes towards dogs in 19th Century America.

An examination of the last 150 years of severe dog attacks as reported in these newspapers reveals a dramatic shift in the style of reporting and the type of information found describing a dog attack. For those interested in understanding canine behavior and the forces which contribute to severe attacks, modern-day media sources are sorely lacking in vital information surrounding these events. For this reason, in more modern cases, I have, whenever possible, consulted and interviewed law enforcement investigators, animal control personnel and coroners in an effort to obtain for each incident as much relevant information as possible, about the dog, the victim and the owner. Photographs of the dogs involved and autopsy and bite reports are additional important sources of information I have used to present and discuss the cases which have occurred in recent decades.

Seeking out alternate sources of information due to the scarcity of details in modern-day media sources has demonstrated that the very absence of these details has led to a general hysteria about certain breeds, along with wildly inaccurate conclusions about the reasons and causes for canine aggression. Critical events leading some dogs to extreme aggression—from two dogs suffering the agony of ingesting rat poison to dogs near death from malnutrition and dehydration—are shockingly absent in modern media accounts of severe or fatal dog attacks.

Only about half a dozen studies have been conducted on fatal dog attacks in the United States, and these were all conducted in a 25-year period (1977–2001). Unfortunately, most of these studies focused on only two or three aspects surrounding fatal attacks, with the breed of dog being the single most studied aspect. Besides the small database (less than 240 cases), despite the limited time period (a single era when certain breeds were exceedingly popular), despite the use of media reports for identification of breeds, and despite the failure to address the relevant human and canine behaviors which preceded an attack, these studies have often been put forth as the “science of fatal dog attacks.” But the severe limitations and scope of these studies do not allow for their use in any rational or practical approach to the understanding of dog attacks. The “scientific method” cannot be applied to the study of dog bites, as severe and fatal dog attacks on humans occur in the most uncontrolled and unscientific settings and involve dozens of variables and circumstances which cannot be measured accurately.

The best that can be done is to study dog attacks empirically, through practical observation of every possible aspect surrounding these events. In furtherance of these goals the author has researched and conducted investigations on the largest number of dog attacks, over the greatest period of time, along with every available detail relevant to these incidents. This has resulted in a database of over 750 cases of fatal dog attacks and over 1000 cases of severe attacks in the United States, from 1850 to the present.

Empirical analysis of this large amount of data has revealed a pattern of circumstance and behavior seen consistently over the last century which offers tremendous insight into

the reasons and causes of dog attacks. The recent failure, by both experts and laymen, to take this type of comprehensive and practical approach to the problem of dog attacks has allowed for meaningless statistics and pseudoscience to replace rational thought and basic, common-sense knowledge of the canine and human behaviors which have long been recognized to contribute to dog attacks.

Whether our goal is community safety, understanding canine behavior, furtherance of humane treatment towards dogs, or the advancement of the human-dog bond, it is critical that we examine *all* the details available about dog attacks. However, perhaps as important is that we recognize that often times the information disseminated about dog attacks is presented by individuals or organizations whose agenda is the furtherance of goals unrelated to the human-dog bond.

This examination of actual cases of severe dog attacks during the last 150 years—the circumstances, the individual dogs involved, the victims and our interpretations of these events—is presented in an attempt to address these concerns and offer a balanced perspective on the behavior of dogs and the critical role humans play in the management and treatment of our canine companions.

Only by stepping back from the swirl of present-day hysteria surrounding isolated cases of severe canine aggression and examining the problem from a broader and more objective perspective can we hope to understand how some humans come to be victims of a dog attack.

CHAPTER 1

The Function of Dogs in 19th Century America

“Henry Carey, ten years old, who resided at Gloucester, N.J., was attacked by a bloodhound, about a fortnight ago, and was so terribly injured that he died soon after. Accompanying the boy was a small dog, which attacked the savage animal and fought him desperately in defense of the child, but was terribly torn himself...”

Trenton Gazette, December 1864

This historic case of a fatal dog attack in New Jersey is significant because it can help to create a frame of reference by which we can begin to study the causes for dog attacks. Additionally, this 19th century newspaper article can begin an examination into society’s changing attitude towards dogs and how certain forces have come to shape and influence the public’s perceptions of canine aggression over the past 150 years.

From small local newspapers, such as the *Appleton Post-Crescent*, to major publications like the *New York Times*, severe dog attacks on humans have always been reported in the news as they seem to be of both interest and dismay to many people. Maladies, diseases and accidents unrelated to animals cause thousands of deaths daily, many of which go unreported in the newspapers. However, fatal attacks by dogs have always gotten attention in the media, despite—or perhaps because of—their rarity.

Historically and in the present day, dog attacks cause on average only one to two dozen human deaths per year in the United States. Yet millions of people live in close proximity to dogs and have daily interactions with our canine companions. These interactions run the gamut from the most positive and rewarding relationships to cases of abuse and neglect. Yet the number of incidents a year involving a human fatality generates a shock and disbelief which has never been proportionate to the number of dogs, the frequency of exposure to them or the myriad situations in which dogs interact with humans.

While the study and examination of individual cases of fatal dog attacks on humans can provide insight into canine behavior, equally revealing is the examination of human reactions and interpretations of canine behavior after an attack. One remarkable aspect of the human/dog bond is the extreme and often emotional public reaction towards an episode of fatal canine aggression. Another relevant and significant factor is the style of media

reporting of these incidents. How the media presents these cases shapes and influences future public reactions and emotions in subsequent cases of canine aggression. As seen in the case cited above, besides reporting an individual attack, the author of this article also gave recognition to the uniqueness of the human/dog bond. Implied in this account was the understanding that the small dog had a familiar bond with the young boy and hence would exhibit behavior vastly different than the Bloodhound, which was unfamiliar to the boy. This has long been the essence of the human/dog bond: that dogs will exhibit or inhibit natural canine behaviors in service or defense of those with whom they have formed attachments.

In fact, the dog is the only animal in the world which can be expected to attack another being in defense of the humans with whom they have formed a bond. This behavior is one of the cornerstones on which thousands of years of dog ownership and maintenance have been based. And implied in this relationship is the expectation and acceptance of canine aggression in certain circumstances. The Greek philosopher Plato acknowledged this basic principle of canine behavior over two thousand years ago when he wrote:

“The disposition of noble dogs is to be gentle with people they know and the opposite with those they don’t know.”

The Republic, Ch. 2

From ancient Greek culture to newspaper accounts from the 19th century, humans have historically demonstrated a keen understanding of the essence of the familiar bond between dogs and their masters. Only recently have both the media and the public failed to acknowledge or recognize this basic principle of canine behavior and the significance of this bond in the display of canine aggression. For this reason, dog attacks, human perceptions of canine aggression and the role of the media in reporting these events need to be examined, beginning from a historical context.



Throughout recorded history, dogs have been owned and maintained, not for their ability to befriend all, but for their ability and willingness to forge alliances. The appeal of dogs was the natural bonding of dogs with their owners to the exclusion of others. In a time and world fraught with dangers, dogs were often relied on to be a front line of defense against threats by other beings. Dogs readily accepted this role and for centuries have served as guardians and protectors of their master and his possessions. Alliances between men and dogs were often invaluable as travelers huddled by lonely campfires in the wilderness or walked desolate roads and trails. Herdsmen slept more soundly knowing their faithful dogs were protecting their livestock and livelihood from thieves, wolves, bears and mountain lions. History is replete with accounts of dogs saving their masters and mistresses from all types of predatory animals, of both the two-legged and four-legged variety.

All breeds of dogs have the ability to perform the basic natural canine behaviors: hunting, tracking, chasing, fighting, herding, guarding and protecting. But over the centuries humans have manipulated dogs through artificial selection to exhibit specialized natural canine behaviors. Historically, dogs with specialized abilities were grouped or classified by function. Groupings typically included scent hounds, hunting dogs, war or fighting dogs, shepherd or guarding dogs, toy or companion dogs, and mongrels.

Some breeds we know today as a specific phenotype (appearance) previously encompassed a number of different-looking dogs that performed a similar task. The Bloodhound is an example of a type of dog that today is an individual and unique-looking breed, but in the 1800s “Bloodhound” often described a type of dog that was used for scent tracking and did not necessarily denote a particular appearance. While breeding for a specific look began to gain widespread popularity in the late 1800s, for many centuries function was more important than appearance.

The wonder of dogs is that they can be manipulated to excel at performing a particular function and they will then perform this function in service to those with whom they have formed attachments. In service to their masters, dogs track, fight, protect, chase, herd, guard, and hunt everything from large game or predatory animals to small vermin. Dogs often forsake their own kind on command or in defense of their owners. But of all the functions that dogs are required to perform, perhaps the most controversial, and often the most disastrous for dogs and humans alike, is the task of protecting man from his fellow man.

Guard/Protection Dogs

Protection or guarding has been one of the primary functions of dogs throughout their alliance with humans. This function was an important element in the acquisition and maintenance of dogs in the 1800s and early 1900s. To serve in this capacity came quite naturally for dogs. As pack animals with a social hierarchy, dogs seem to easily embrace the concept of friend versus foe or known versus unknown. Dogs were also understood to be territorial and this served well in the guarding of homes and businesses.

As predators, dogs are physically able to serve in defense of their masters, and different breeds were developed to enhance this ability. Just as one would not brandish a sapling to ward off an attacker, small dogs were not routinely maintained as protection or guard dogs. Large, powerful breeds, such as the Mastiff, Newfoundland, Bulldog, and Bloodhound, as well as huge mongrel dogs, were used as guard dogs in the latter part of the 19th century as their size enabled them to excel in the task of guarding and protection.

Less than ideal conditions, and many times seriously abusive conditions, frequently accompanied the ownership of guard dogs in the late 19th century. Newspaper accounts of dog attacks were often brutally honest in their description of the attack and of the treatment and care the dogs received at the hands of their owner and/or victim. It was not uncommon for accounts of dog attacks to state that the dog was beaten or abused by either

his owner or the victim prior to the attack. In a much less litigious society there was less apprehension in revealing unflattering details about individuals and their behaviors than is now permitted in the recounting of events that contributed to a fatal dog attack. Fortunately, this aspect of late 19th century and early 20th century society allows us to have enormous insight into the factors that precipitated and contributed to severe canine aggression.

While accounts of such attacks were always sympathetic and mournful of the injuries to the victim, this did not interfere with the observation of the events that may have contributed to the attack, and so, in many cases, we have a vivid account of the circumstances and/or trigger that set some of these dogs off into a frenzied and unrelenting attack.

Many of the guard dogs in the latter part of the 19th century were kept chained for long periods of time in cellars or sheds until they were needed to patrol factories, slaughterhouses, livery stables, stone yards, warehouses or shops.

In December of 1882, a bookkeeper boiling a kettle of water at a packing house in New Haven, Connecticut, was savagely attacked by a large Bloodhound kept on the premises as a watchdog. The dog lacerated the man's throat, severed an artery in his arm and bit him more than twenty times. While the animal's behavior was not excused (the dog was referred to as "savage" and a "brute"), the attack was not viewed as inexplicable. The article goes on to recount that the dog had previously been punished by the night watchman with a kettle of scalding water. By using the kettle, the unsuspecting bookkeeper triggered the Bloodhound's "recollection of the brutal treatment by the watchman," causing the dog to attack.¹

In February of 1888, a butcher in St. Louis, Missouri, owned a 2-year-old Newfoundland dog that was trained to guard his shop at night. The dog was kept chained during the day and was known and encouraged to be vicious. The butcher entered the yard one evening to release the dog and when the man "claimed the right to rule there and enforced his claim with a kick," the dog responded by furiously attacking him. Four members of the butcher's family rushed to his aid, but the man's chest, neck and arms were so severely lacerated that although not dead at the time of the report, he was not expected to survive his injuries.²

While not directly physically abusive, the owner in the next account placed the dog in circumstances which clearly were abusive and stressful. This 1893 report offers the important details that contributed to the aggressiveness of the dog involved. It describes how a baker found a cur dog on the streets of New York City and chained the dog in his bakery cellar where the temperature reached over 100 degrees much of the time. This newly acquired, chained, heat-stressed dog not surprisingly attacked the baker when he entered the cellar to light the ovens.³

While it was not unusual for guard dogs to rebel violently against their abusive owners, the majority of their victims were usually unsuspecting children or unfortunate adults who happened quite innocently to encounter these fierce animals. A common thread seen in many of the attacks by guard dogs on innocent victims can be found in the account of an attack in the summer of 1874 on a small girl in Brooklyn, New York. A large Newfoundland dog

had been recently obtained by a hair-dealer to guard his shop at night. In the morning before being taken to the basement to be chained for the day, the dog was taken to the backyard of the store to be fed. In the midst of eating, a 3-year-old girl approached the dog. The dog lunged at the child, seizing her by the shoulder. The child's cries brought her father rushing to her aid. After "some determined effort" he got the dog to release the child, but in the process had one of his fingers bitten off. It was determined the child's wounds were "serious and may prove fatal."⁴

The hypocrisy of keeping guard dogs is that when the dog is called upon to fulfill the task of protection by attacking an intruder, the dog is almost always viewed as vicious. Most victims of guard/protection dogs were not burglars, but children or respectable adults who entered the property to visit or conduct business. The inherent problem with guard dogs is that they are expected to assess the legitimacy of the intruder to justify an attack. Of course, this is impossible. Whether a person entering a property has legitimate reasons to be there or whether they are intent on evil-doing is not within the comprehension of dogs. The dog views the intruder as either an unknown or known being, and as either a threatening or non-threatening situation.

Clearly, any attack on a child, even if the child was an intruder or provoked the guard dog in any sense, was unforgivable, dooming the dog to immediate destruction. The fate of guard dogs that attacked an adult allowed for only the slightest chance of redemption, but only if the intruder was clearly intent on criminal activity or if the intruder was considered a social outcast or an unsympathetic figure.

Mentioned frequently in the keeping of guard dogs during the 19th century was the task of chasing away "tramps." There seemed to be a measurable level of aggression allowed guard dogs in chasing off these social outcasts. In June 1879, it was reported that a woman living three miles out of town (Fort Wayne, Ind.) owned a Newfoundland dog that was a "terror to tramps." The recounting of the attack on a tramp entering into the woman's yard is one of the few reports that did not describe the attacking dog as savage or a brute. After describing the owner beating the dog to release his victim, it was noted that the tramp got away "without a second warning."⁵

A Newfoundland protecting his mistress on the outskirts of town seemed to fall into the classification of acceptable canine aggression. The fact that the woman fought furiously to free the tramp from the dog's grip, along with the fact that the victim was viewed as unsympathetic, made this attack more palatable.

A fatal dog attack near Findlay, New Jersey, in 1889 clearly demonstrates that some canine and human behaviors, even against tramps, were not permitted. A brief article noted that authorities were investigating a case where a farmer was reported to have "looked on" as his savage dog killed a tramp. The unfortunate victim was then buried in a field.⁶

A common thread seen in the recounting of dog attacks, both historically and in more modern day cases is the transference of cruel human traits onto dogs. There were no unkind superlatives assigned to the farmer who stood by and looked on as his dog killed a hapless

tramp, yet his dog was described as savage. Time and again, dogs encouraged by their owners to act aggressively and allowed to be dangerous are assigned vicious or treacherous traits, while the owners responsible for the behavior found in their guard dogs appear to escape without noticeable public criticism.

This is not to say that owners in the late 19th century and early 20th century were not at times held responsible for the actions of their dogs. There were cases when owners were arrested, fined or sued civilly for the injuries their dogs inflicted. But public condemnation of guard dog owners usually resulted only when there was extreme negligence or when owners incited or actively encouraged a dog during an attack.

A notable exception to this was a disturbing incident that occurred in the spring of 1884 in Rockaway, New York. The article detailing the events leading up to the attack takes a rather indirect route before finally implicating the owner as the responsible party for the grievous injuries inflicted on the victim. The case involved a woman inspecting the grounds of a hotel on Long Island before taking possession of the property for the season. It was noted that no one informed her of the large Bloodhound kept on the premises to guard the unoccupied hotel. Upon entering the grounds, the woman was almost immediately set on by the dog. A watchman who heard her screams ran to her aid and only with great difficulty succeeded in getting the dog to release the woman from its grasp. The woman was gravely injured and after the amputation of one badly mangled arm, it was pronounced that she was not expected to recover. Early in the newspaper account it was insinuated that, prior to her arrival, this unfortunate woman should have been warned by the owners of the property about the dog. The article concludes in a much more direct fashion, stating:

“The Bloodhound has been the terror of the neighborhood for some time, and the fact that so dangerous an animal was permitted to roam about the hotel grounds has drawn forth the severest condemnation.”

Decatur Daily Republican, April 12, 1884

The position guard dogs found themselves in during the late 1800s and early 1900s was far from enviable. The line between a justified attack and an attack that would cost the dog its life was thin indeed. Guard dogs had no way of distinguishing a burglar from a visiting neighbor, or a tramp from a peddler. Yet this distinction was critical in determining the legal and moral accountability of owners for injuries caused by their dogs. This distinction was also critical in determining the nature and ultimately the fate of the dog. A dog that attacked a tramp was justifiably protecting its owner; a dog that attacked a peddler was ferocious.

The interesting aspect of reporting severe/fatal attacks in the late 1800s was the recognition and admission by owners of the potential danger of the guard dog prior to an attack. The owners and persons managing these dogs knew the threat they could pose, as this was ultimately the true function of the dog—to be dangerous and ward off intruders. The problem

was, of course, that with no direction or training by their owners, the dog decided who was an intruder based on its own perceptions.

In 1879, an account is given which perfectly describes all the behaviors, circumstances and events which culminated in one near-fatal attack by a guard dog:

“Judge Fain, living about four miles from this city, has a very large and savage dog which he keeps as a watchdog upon his premises. He had only had the animal about two months and during that time his niece, Miss Mary Hamilton, was the only member of the household who could with some degree of safety, go within reach of the animal, which was kept chained all day and turned loose at night.

“Miss Hamilton fed the animal, and by kind words and gentle treatment managed to control it. On Friday evening, when she went to unfasten the dog, she was accompanied by Miss Fannie. As soon as the animal was given its liberty it at once jumped upon Miss Fannie and after throwing her to the ground began to tear away at her...”

The article goes on to describe the behaviors seen regularly in severe and fatal attacks—an intense focus on and refusal to release one victim, despite the attempts of rescuers. It is then reported that a gun was finally procured and that the first shot into the side of the dog “instead of killing the animal it only seemed to make him more vicious.” The second shot fired into the dog is described even more graphically: “The muzzle of the gun was placed so close to the dog that the flame scorched its shaggy coat.” This was successful in making the dog release the woman, but the article goes on to describe the final act of this enraged animal:

“The second load seemed to stagger the brute, and as he fell Miss Fannie jumped up and ran in the direction of the house. The dog, rallying from the shot, pursued her a distance of twelve steps and then fell dead in his tracks.”

Decatur Daily Review, September 3, 1879

Like most cases of canine aggression, this attack was the culmination of circumstances, events, and human and canine behaviors which provided both the means and opportunity for this dog to engage in an episode of extreme aggression. The events begin with the acquisition of a dog for an intended function as a guard dog and escalate from there:

- Newly acquired dog
- Dog known to be vicious and encouraged to be aggressive
- Dog chained for long periods of time with little human interaction, with the exception of the owner's niece

- Familiar bond beginning to be established between dog and niece (This excluded her from being the object of the dog's aggression, but the bond was not yet strong enough for her to maintain control over the dog.)
- Dog released from chain (Many dogs explode out of kennels, doorways, or off of chains in a rush of excitement. This release could also have been interpreted by the dog as the silent consent of the niece to drive off the intruder.)
- Dog's perception of the unfamiliar woman as intruder
- Dog's intense, focused and unrelenting attack on the intruder

This incident demonstrates that canine behaviors follow the intent of the owner, who in this case had bought a "savage" dog to protect his family from intruders. The fact that the behavior of the dog escalated into completely unacceptable levels of aggression was the result of the original function of the dog, coupled with mismanagement, failure to control the dog and the failure to anticipate the results of allowing the dog to be potentially dangerous.

On the rarest of occasions, a guard dog attack fell within all the parameters of acceptability. A case where three dogs accomplished their protection duties with stunning precision occurred in Indiana in 1902. A wealthy farmer was riding home with three large dogs in the back of his wagon when a highwayman stepped out, grabbed the horse's reins and drew a revolver. Before the highwayman could react the farmer turned the dogs loose on the would-be robber. The dogs attacked the man, knocking him to the ground, biting him and tearing off his clothes. The farmer called the dogs off and rode home. He returned later with a search party and found that the unidentified man had died from his injuries.⁷ The key to this attack being deemed acceptable was that the dogs were acting under the control of their owner, and were directed by human perceptions of what was a valid threat. The owner assessed the situation, perceived it to be a real threat and then permitted his dogs to behave aggressively. The decision to attack came from the owner's interpretation of the situation, not the dogs'.

The problem with guard dogs is that when the owner is not present, the dogs operate solely from a canine perspective as to what constitutes threatening behavior. The child approaching perilously close to the dog's food bowl is a potential robbery, the woman entering a chained dog's space is a home invasion, and a boy retrieving a ball into a fenced yard is a trespasser. The dogs may be taking appropriate actions from a canine point of view but are making serious and often unforgivable errors in judgment from a human perspective.

One century ago, owners of guard dogs knew them to be dangerous, and encouraged this ferocity. Despite the understanding and expectation of guarding behaviors from dogs, these behaviors were rarely excused after the fact (i.e., attack). However, every once in a while a clear mind put aside the emotional aspect of a dog attack and showed a reasonable and genuine understanding of canine behaviors. An incident in 1891 demonstrates that, despite being attacked by his guard dog, one gentleman not only understood the situation

from the dog's perspective, but also allowed for the dog's error in judgment as he, the owner, should have anticipated it:

“A farmer in Salem, New Jersey, purchased a Mastiff dog to guard his residence. A few days after acquiring the dog the farmer entered the yard late in the evening. The dog sprang on the man, knocking him to the ground and biting him on the arms and legs. The farmer stated he had forgotten the dog was in the yard and ‘he blames himself for letting the animal loose before it knew the members of the household.’”

New York Times, August 8, 1891

Tracking or Scent Dogs

While guard dogs were owned by a significant percentage of 19th century Americans, dogs used for tracking and/or law enforcement were not nearly as numerous. Yet the function of these dogs at times required them to have aggressive traits similar to those of the guard/protection dogs.

Ideally, the primary function of tracking/scent hounds was to pursue and locate a quarry. This usually involved following the scent of either a lost child (or adult), a suspected criminal fleeing from authorities or an individual who had escaped confinement. There were extremely varied levels of aggression required or encouraged, depending on the specific tracking requirements. The mildest type of aggression was found in the true scent hounds. The function of these dogs required them to track down a quarry and alert its handler to the location and/or to hold the quarry at bay. Naturally, a scent hound assigned the task of locating a lost child was not encouraged, nor permitted, to display any type of aggression towards the object of pursuit. In this purest form of tracking, no aggression was required or tolerated. Unfortunately, this was not the main function of scent hounds during the 1800s and early 1900s.

The most extreme type of aggression in scent hounds and dogs used in law enforcement was found in the huge Bloodhound-type dogs used to track down fleeing criminals, escaped convicts or runaway slaves. Often these dogs were encouraged to display an increased level of aggression towards humans in the performance of these tasks. While professional and respectable law enforcement agencies trained their scent dogs to limit their aggression to tracking and holding their victim, there was certainly no shortage of cruel or barbaric dog handlers in the 19th century.

There is ample documentation that large Bloodhound-type dogs were used by some individuals and certain authorities to chase down, harass, worry, and inflict wounds on the target of their pursuits. Two popular images that come to mind in association with scent dogs pursuing fleeing humans are runaway slaves being chased down by baying Bloodhounds or escaped convicts desperately running from a pack of hounds on their trail. Undoubtedly,

there were cases in which these images were a reality. But how much of these images was fiction and how much was based on truth was a highly contentious topic even in the era in which these incidents were reportedly taking place.

There was little dispute that reportedly fierce Cuban Bloodhounds were obtained during the Second Seminole War (1835–1842) by the U.S. Army to pursue and worry the Seminole Indians who sought refuge in the swamps of Florida. And as late as 1892, the *Washington Post* reported that Bloodhounds were being used to hunt down Apache Indians in the Southwest:

“The Arizona legislature at its last session passed a bill for the especial benefit of Cochise county, authorizing the equipment of a company of rangers to relieve that section from the depredations of the renegade Apaches. As a preliminary step four bloodhounds have been imported from Mexico and will be used for trailing the murderous savages to their mountain lair.”⁸

It is known that Bloodhound-type dogs were used by both the Union and Confederate armies to hunt down enemy soldiers, as well as in prison camps. And there is little dispute about the fact that Bloodhounds were used to hunt down fleeing suspects. The real dispute at the time was the level of aggression attributed to these dogs. For every media account of a scent dog attacking and inflicting harm on its human quarry, there were long editorials submitted to the newspapers by Bloodhound aficionados explaining the noble and gentle characteristics to be found in this breed. The obvious point that seemed to escape notice was the fact that dogs did indeed perform in both of these fashions, i.e., savagely attacking their quarry at times and at times showing tremendous restraint and gentleness upon reaching their quarry. As the debate swirled about the true nature and behavior of the Bloodhound, the evidence that owners/handlers determined behavior was seldom discussed.

Yet the evidence did present itself, time and again, that dogs mirrored the aggression of their owners/handlers. Perhaps one of the most notable cases of canine abuse by authorities occurred during the Civil War and involved the infamous Confederate prison, Camp Sumter. This prisoner of war camp was widely known as Andersonville Prison and became notable for the abuse and cruel conditions the Union soldiers had to endure under the command of Captain Henry Wirz. The conditions at Camp Sumter were appalling, and Union war prisoners were constantly seeking to escape. The prison was reported to have maintained a pack of “40 part bloodhounds and two monstrous Cuban bloodhounds” used to recapture escapees. These dogs had an additional function: to attack and injure prisoners at the direction of the guards or the Commanding Officers.

After the Civil War, Captain Henry Wirz, Commandant of Andersonville Prison, was arrested for war crimes, and after his court martial was sentenced to death by hanging. In addition to the deaths caused directly by his own hand, Captain Wirz was also found guilty

of murder by inciting the camp dogs to kill Federal soldiers. In his court martial, the findings of the court charge, under Specification #11, that:

“Henry Wirz, an officer in the military service of the so-called Confederate States of America, at Andersonville, in the state of Georgia, on or about the 1st day of July, A.D., 1864, then and there being commandant of a prison there located, by the authority of the said so-called Confederate States, for the confinement of prisoners of war, taken and held as such from the armies of the United States of America, while acting as said commandant, feloniously, and of his malice aforethought, did cause, incite, and urge certain ferocious and bloodthirsty animals, called bloodhounds, to pursue, attack, wound, and tear in pieces a soldier belonging to the Army of the United States, in his, the said Henry Wirz’s custody as a prisoner of war, whose name is unknown; and in consequence thereof the said bloodhounds did then and there, with the knowledge, encouragement [sic], and instigation of him, the said Wirz, maliciously and murderously given by him, attack and mortally wound the said soldier, in consequence which said mortal wound he, the said prisoner, soon thereafter, to wit, on the 6th day of July, A.D. 1864, died.”⁹

This is the most extreme example of the sanctioned use of canine aggression by an authority. Tracking dogs were handled by every conceivable type of owner, from the most inhumane and morally corrupt to humane and serious professionals. Law enforcement departments considered the addition of a Bloodhound a major advancement in their crime fighting abilities. Some departments proudly announced the purchase of what they considered to be quality scent hounds, used exclusively to pursue and locate fleeing suspects. Other law enforcement agencies obtained dogs they considered to be more aggressive and seemed either unconcerned about the negative reputation of the type of Bloodhound they acquired or purposely sought out this particular type of dog because of their reputation.

In February 1903, the city of Perry, Iowa announced the upcoming acquisition of two Bloodhounds, making particular note that these were Southern or Cuban Bloodhounds, known as the “most reliable man-hunting dog on earth...”¹⁰ This variety of Bloodhound was widely believed in the 1800s to be a pugnacious and fierce type of tracking dog. Other towns or cities, when acquiring Bloodhounds for their law enforcement agencies, made special note to declare the dogs they were acquiring were of the “Texas” variety, described as the true descendants of the British Bloodhounds, known for their superb tracking abilities coupled with a noble and gentle character.

So while the functions of all types of scent dogs were based on their natural and specialized ability to excel in tracking quarry, their aggression towards their quarry was often determined by their handlers. Handlers who sought out the allegedly fiercer varieties of Bloodhounds certainly would either directly or indirectly encourage this behavior. Handlers

specifically seeking out gentler, more tractable varieties would almost certainly encourage their dogs to be less aggressive. While certain behavior may be influenced by breed, the function or purpose for which a handler/owner obtained a dog is the controlling factor in any future behavior displayed by the dog.

In addition to the use of tracking dogs by authorities, individuals also at times fancied themselves as “professional” handlers of scent dogs, and anyone with a type of Bloodhound and a scent to follow could consider themselves a tracker. And as is often the case with dog ownership, a lack of humanity and/or intelligence did not prevent the acquisition, training or keeping of dogs. An 1894 article, sarcastically titled “A Lovely Father,” describes how a man recently purchased a Bloodhound and decided to test the tracking abilities of the dog on his fourteen-year-old son. The boy was given a 15-minute head start before the father released the dog to pursue the fleeing lad. Not surprisingly, the dog did indeed catch up with his quarry, and upon reaching the unfortunate boy inflicted numerous wounds before the father could club the dog off his son.¹¹

Fatal dog attacks on humans, while not unheard of or terribly surprising, were considered aberrations in the 1800s and early 1900s. Dogs rarely attack and kill humans, even when incited or encouraged to view humans as prey. There certainly may be undocumented cases in which tracking dogs attacked and killed fleeing individuals (Indians, enemy soldiers, criminals). But, 19th century American society did not condone the killing of persons by dogs, even persons deemed undesirable. So the combination of this being viewed as unacceptable and potentially illegal, along with the fact that dogs rarely exhibit this behavior, explains the few recorded examples of fatal attacks by tracking/scent dogs in the United States.

One of the rare documented cases in which tracking dogs did indeed kill a fleeing suspect was reported in Illinois in 1910. A residence in the town of Carrier Mills was discovered to have been burglarized and tracking dogs were brought to the scene. The article “Bloodhounds Kill a Man” describes the pursuit as follows:

“The trail was taken up immediately and so eager were the hounds to land their quarry they broke loose from the keeper and chased the man they were pursuing to an old barn. There he was pounced upon by the animals and so badly mangled that recognition was impossible...Roberts, the owner of the dogs, was exonerated.”

The Washington Post, December 31, 1910

An interesting observation in the description of this attack is that, unlike most accounts in the 1800s and early 1900s, in which the dogs involved were described as savage or vicious, the dogs in this account were called “eager.” The description and attitude towards these dogs are vastly different from the adjectives used to describe most other fatal attacks.

Hunting Dogs

Unlike guard dogs or tracking dogs, there was no seemingly useful purpose in encouraging or allowing hunting or retrieving dogs to behave aggressively towards humans. The function of hunting dogs was to assist their masters in the pursuit, capture or retrieval of game, so, not surprisingly; there are few documented cases of severe or fatal attacks by dogs used for hunting. While many other types of dogs were expected to perform dual functions as pet and protector, hunting dogs were not usually obtained or encouraged to double as protection dogs. While all dogs will provide some level of protection and guarding, the value or primary function of hunting dogs did not include the encouragement of aggression towards humans.

Aggression was more clearly directed or channeled in the hunting dogs and so there was less confusion as to what was and was not acceptable behavior (at least towards humans) as compared to dogs used for guarding/protection. But hunting or retriever dogs will behave aggressively in the same types of situations seen with all breeds. Hunting dogs are found lashing out in pain, attacking from apparent territorial issues (chained dogs), exhibiting extreme aggression operating as a pack, and resource guarding (possessive aggression), as well as attacking for seemingly no apparent reason.

Exact breed identification was not considered of paramount importance in 19th century accounts describing the events that contributed to severe dog attacks, and so the dogs involved were described in broad terms as “hound,” “retriever,” “bird dog,” “coonhound,” “spaniel” or simply “hunting dog.” While the breed identifications given by the 19th century newspapers were often vague, the circumstances believed to be driving behaviors in dogs were often recorded with precision.

In 1888, a child in Lockport, N.Y., was “fearfully disfigured” by a large hunting dog. The article reports that “there are some hopes for the boy’s recovery.” It is explained that the 5-year-old was attacked after he “approached the brute while he was gnawing a bone and the dog thinking he was going to take it away jumped at this throat.”¹²

A case of pack aggression in an extremely large group of hounds is found in a 1903 account. The unfortunate victim was a 15-year-old boy approaching a kennel in which 25 hunting dogs were kept. The dogs managed to break loose of the kennel and rushed to attack the youth. The boy was quickly overcome and not even the interference of the dogs’ owner could stop the attack by such a large number of dogs. In desperation the owner mounted a horse in the hopes of trampling some of the dogs to save the boy. The frenzied hounds attacked and severely injured both horse and rider. The owner survived, the youth did not.¹³

Even the best of dogs with strong attachments to their owners are capable of lashing out with extreme aggression when in pain. In 1904, a report of a bird dog attacking his owner was published:

“Amos Miller had his face horribly mangled by his bird dog yesterday. It got its foot fast in the wire fence and he attempted to loose it, the dog sprung like a tiger upon him, bit through his right cheek and tore it beyond recognition. It required a desperate effort before the firmly-set jaws of the dog could be removed. His right hand was also badly bitten.”

The Newark Daily Advocate, December 10, 1904

A case of a Water spaniel attack found in 1896 offers no possible explanation for the extremely aggressive behavior found in this dog:

“At Winchester, Ohio, the 3-year-old child of Mrs. Marie Cotty, was attacked by a large Water-spaniel dog belonging to E.A. Cutter, the well-known horseman, and before assistance could be had, was literally chewed to pieces, one hand being almost bitten off...”

The Daily Herald, July 15, 1896

Despite the fact that the function of hunting and retrieving dogs rarely encouraged or permitted aggression towards humans, all dogs regardless of breed or function are capable of displaying aggression towards humans under certain circumstances.

Farm Dogs

One can hardly imagine an idyllic early American farm scene without envisioning a dog somewhere in the landscape. Dogs were an integral part of farm living in America, and for good reason. Besides the basic services all dogs provide (protection and companionship), farm dogs contributed additional and often vital services to their owners.

Raising and managing livestock was costly, arduous, and often times dangerous work. Farm dogs contributed greatly to both the economic and physical welfare of their owners for a miniscule financial investment (cost of feeding). During the course of a long day, dogs worked tirelessly alongside their owners, helping to herd and control sheep, cattle and swine. Long after the day ended, dogs were still working to protect their owners' livestock from nightly predators.

Besides the everyday tasks of farm living that dogs assisted with, they frequently performed a more dramatic service of protecting or saving their owners from charging bulls or aggressive hogs. Cattle caused a significant number of deaths in the late 1800s and early 1900s. There are scores of accounts of farmers being gored, trampled and killed by bulls. In addition to farmers, children, women and elderly persons were also killed when they had the misfortune to encounter an aggressive bull. In one twenty year span, from 1880 to 1899, there were over 150 recorded newspaper accounts of people being attacked and killed by cattle. Clearly, cattle presented a real and constant danger.

An attack by an enraged bull was a predicament few people were able to survive. Aside from the deadly horns and their sheer size, many weighing over 1500 lbs., bulls were often relentless in their attack, goring and trampling their victims unmercifully. In many cases, the arrival of a brave and loyal farm dog was undeniably a live-saving turn of events. All types of farm dogs, from Collies and Shepherds to mongrels and small dogs, could be found attacking massive bulls and hogs in defense of their owners.

In February 1926, *The Washington Post* reported that an old Collie dog saved the life of his 45-year-old owner. A prominent dairy farmer from Glenmont, Maryland, was being gored by an infuriated bull and was only saved from death when the old Collie rushed to his aid, biting the bull in the throat and allowing his master to escape.

On November 11, 1916, the *Lima Times Democrat* reported that a Collie dog in Ohio saved the life of his mistress after she was knocked down and butted by an enraged cow in a corn field.

On September 15, 1928, the *Appleton Post Crescent* reported the life-saving actions of a Shepherd dog in Menominee, Michigan. A widowed farm woman was trying to drive a bull out of the barn when it turned and attacked her. Three times she was battered to the ground by the bull before Flossie, her Shepherd dog, came rushing to her aid. The dog began biting the hind legs of the bull, allowing her mistress to drag herself to a platform, where she collapsed.

On July 30, 1910, the *Coshocton Daily Tribute* tells of an equally heroic Shepherd dog who rescued his master from a vicious bull on a farm near Tiverton, Ohio. The bull had recently gored another man and this farmer was about to experience a similar fate. A number of the man's ribs were broken by the impact of the bull, but the arrival and attack on the bull by the Shepherd dog most assuredly saved his life.

There are also numerous accounts of unidentified breeds or mongrels performing similarly heroic rescues from deadly attacks by cattle. But while Collies, Shepherd dogs, and mongrels are found frequently rushing to the aid of their owners, Bulldogs seemed particularly quick to engage an infuriated bull or vicious hog in defense of their master or mistress. Clearly, these dogs saved more than a few lives and their acts of bravery were frequently recognized and reported in both the local and national newspapers in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

In 1883, a hired hand on a farm in Pennsylvania owed his life to his Bulldog. The man had been attacked and tossed three times by a bull and only managed to escape when his Bulldog attacked the bull. The dog was also thrown by the bull, but was reported to have finally "conquered the bull" and both he and his master survived (*The Messenger*, October 17, 1883).

A father in Illinois reported that his Bulldog saved the life of his daughter after she entered a pasture in which a bull resided. The bull charged the young girl and she made a desperate run to a nearby tree. The family Bulldog jumped the pasture fence, attacking and driving the bull away from the terrified girl (*Decatur Review*, September 13, 1929).

A Bulldog in Moultrie, Georgia, gave his life to prevent a bull from goring his young master. The boy was driving the bull from a field when the bull turned and charged him. The boy's faithful Bulldog rushed in between his master and the charging animal, gripping the bull by the nose. The dog clung to the bull until the boy had reached the safety of a nearby fence, at which point the bull shook the dog loose and gored it to death (*The Havre Daily News*, December 13, 1930).

While bulls frequently killed people, an attack by a hog could also prove fatal. An incident that occurred in Indiana shows that the arrival of a Bulldog could quickly turn a helpless situation into a chance of escape and survival. Two women, the wives of prominent farmers, were attacked by "six maddened brood sows." Their screams brought the resident Bulldog scrambling to their rescue. With one woman knocked to the ground by the sows and the other woman fighting in vain to save her companion, the "arrival of the Bulldog ended the combat, but not without a battle, in which one of the hogs lost part of an ear" (*The Indianapolis Sunday Star*, November 13, 1921).

Not only are Bulldogs found defending their masters and mistresses from cattle and hogs, but in 1884, we find a Bulldog saving a man from being killed by a horse:

"Thomas Scott, of the vicinity of Sandusky, was being mangled by a stallion, known as the man-eater, when a Bulldog caught the horse by the nose and forced it to release its hold on the man. The dog saved the man's life and several persons will contribute for a collar to present to the dog."

The Ohio Democrat, November 6, 1884

While these accounts all portray fearless dogs, sometimes the true measure of bravery is for a dog (or human) to take on danger while fear is cautioning against action.

An amusingly honest account of a dog, not necessarily fearless but certainly committed and loyal to his mistress, was told in 1907. Near Johnstown, Pennsylvania, a young woman, accompanied by her large, faithful dog, had gone out to the barn to milk the cows. Before reaching the barn she encountered a "maddened" bull. The bull charged her and she desperately tried to protect herself with a milking stool. The bull quickly knocked her down and was attempting to gore her, when her dog began snapping at the bull's hind legs. The article describes how the dog became increasingly bolder, the snaps turning into bites and the bites then beginning to penetrate the flesh. Finally the bull turned his fury on this new enemy and, with a snort of rage, charged the dog. The dog took flight and thus began a wild chase, with the bull pursuing the dog through the farm and into nearby fields. The article reports that the dog returned home unharmed and the young woman survived with only a broken arm and some bruising, thanks to her faithful but not completely fearless dog.¹⁴

There are countless accounts of farmers being killed by livestock and numerous accounts of more fortunate individuals whose dogs saved them from fatal injuries, but there are

exceedingly few accounts of working farm dogs attacking farmers or causing a human fatality. In a few of the rare cases of fatal aggression by farm dogs, the dogs were in or near henhouses, or inside barns, at the time of the attack.

In 1875, a young girl was visiting a farm in Courtland, New York, with her parents. The visiting girl and the farmer's young daughter decided to go out to the chicken coop. On the way they were joined by the large mongrel dog belonging to the farmer. As the girls reached the henhouse, the visiting girl opened the door and upon entering was immediately attacked by the dog. The other girl became so frightened she shut the henhouse door, trapping the poor child inside with the attacking dog. The child died later that night from her injuries.¹⁵

In 1885, an elderly farmer was removing a dead chicken from a henhouse when his dog attacked him. The attack was so relentless that the dog had to be killed before it would release the farmer from its grasp.¹⁶

In 1887, a dog chasing a hen under the henhouse turned and fatally bit his owner in the throat when the man crawled under the building and attempted to interfere.¹⁷

Other than these cases, there are few accounts of working farm dogs involved in severe/fatal attacks on humans. Unlike guard dogs, most working farm dogs were maintained in environments far more conducive to producing a balanced and therefore less aggressive dog. Farm dogs were afforded more opportunities to interact with humans and other animals in positive situations and as a rule were not encouraged or allowed to behave aggressively. Working farm dogs were maintained in an environment which provided healthy exercise and mental stimulation. Additionally, territorial issues would be far less intense with farm dogs than with chained dogs or guard dogs confined in strictly defined areas. In general, the function of farm dogs produced a more social and balanced dog, allowing for more normal and appropriate behaviors towards humans.

Stray or Wild Dogs

Both historically and in the present day, most dogs involved in fatal attacks had identifiable owners. Yet the abandonment of dogs has always been regularly practiced by persons who view dogs as disposable and easily replaced. The sad fate of abandoned dogs is obvious. Dogs cannot survive long or well without human assistance. Besides the difficulties of surviving off the land, the humans that dogs often need to save them from a hard and short life in the wild more often than not became their executioners.

A century ago (and even today), dogs without owners were usually viewed as high liability animals. At best, stray dogs were considered nuisances, at worst they were considered a direct threat to human welfare. Either way, these dogs were usually shot on sight in rural areas, or rounded up and executed in more urban environments. Despite this, stray and abandoned dogs were numerous and could be found around towns and roaming city streets.

As is usually the case with dogs, despite abandonment and starvation, untold millions of stray dogs were not involved in any type of aggressive encounter with humans. While there are numerous cases of abandoned or ownerless dogs attacking or killing livestock, incidents of wild or stray dogs attacking and severely injuring or killing a human were extremely rare.

The fact is, humans often do cruel and dangerous things to dogs and usually escape without injury. However, some acts are so reckless that an attack is almost guaranteed. In 1897, an instance of this occurred near Columbus, Ohio:

“Johnny Ballinger lies at his home suffering intense agony from injuries inflicted by a pack of savage dogs. While passing the dump on the river bank where refuse from the slaughterhouse is thrown, he saw the dogs gnawing a bone. With a stick he struck the nearest dog which leaped upon him followed by a dozen others. He was rescued by some workmen. His legs, arms and head were lacerated in 26 different places and his scalp was torn in a horrible manner.”

Fort Wayne News, July 3, 1897

Whether the dogs in this case had owners who permitted them to wander and be naturally drawn to such a richly stimulating environment, or whether these were truly abandoned dogs that survived off the refuse from the slaughterhouse, will never be known.

Most cases found of a dog pack attacking a human suggest the dogs had owners. Only in the rarest of cases are dogs found to be truly abandoned and functioning independently of humans as a pack. One very notable and rather bizarre case in which there can be no doubt that the dogs were very wild was during the bitter cold winter of 1892. The owners that these dogs may once have had were certainly long forgotten as these dogs struggled to survive in the wilderness. The case involved a bold and particularly desperate attack by a pack of starving wild dogs in Sherman County, Kansas, which caused the death of a father and daughter. This was certainly a newsworthy event and as such the incident was reported by national newspapers (*The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*) as well as the local papers.¹⁸

Prior to this incident, rumors had occasionally emerged out of the harsh landscape of Colorado of wild dogs attacking and killing livestock and humans. At times, travelers reached their destination with tales of being chased through the woods by packs of wild dogs. But these were fireside tales and no one could prove or disprove such exciting yet frightful stories. All that changed in February 1892 when it was reported that a pack of wild dogs entered into the Northwest corner of Kansas from Colorado. There had been a particularly heavy snow that February, and this accounted for the boldness and ferocity of the attack. While there were no witnesses, the scenario that rescuers came upon left no doubt as to the events that took place. A stockman named John Pratt and his daughter had left Leonard, Kansas, on a Saturday evening to return to their house a number of miles away. When they did not

arrive home, a search the next morning found their mangled remains about a mile from their destination. The wagon they had been riding in was overturned and the horses dead and partially devoured. The carcasses of several dogs were also found on the scene, as Mr. Pratt shot a number of them in a fierce battle to save himself and his daughter.



Nineteenth century America had rather rigid expectations of dogs in the performance of their respective functions. Guard dogs were usually disposed of if they attacked the “wrong” person. Likewise, hunting dogs that could not effectively perform their function were discarded or destroyed. There was little tolerance for a farm dog that harassed livestock or had any negative impact on the production of farm goods. Stray or abandoned dogs were considered a nuisance or liability and destroyed in staggering numbers.

But, as seen in the aforementioned examples, the function which provided the greatest potential for error for dogs was their use as protection or guard dogs. Unlike tracking or hunting dogs, more often than not performing their functions in the *presence* of an owner, guard dogs’ functions were rooted in the premise that the dog would act appropriately in the *absence* of their owner.

The unreasonable expectation that dogs could independently assess the intent of intruders by human standards and morals doomed many dogs to failure and resulted in serious injury to innocent people who encountered these dogs.

CHAPTER 2

Imagery and the Media in 19th Century America: The Bloodhound

As it relates to dog breeds, form often defines function. A Jack Russell Terrier could easily be trained to be an attack dog, as a Newfoundland dog could easily be trained to be a guide dog for the blind. Both breeds have the innate canine intelligence and behaviors that would allow them to be trained for these functions. But for obvious reasons, the Jack Russell Terrier would not be taken as seriously, nor could perform the task as efficiently, as some of the larger breeds. The Newfoundland might perform his assigned function with reasonable satisfaction, yet his large size might make some tasks cumbersome, and the long coat might make this breed overheated in situations another breed may tolerate better. This realization—that certain physical traits (form) will assist in certain tasks (function)—has resulted in the creation and maintenance of “breeds” of dogs.

Humans have artificially manipulated dogs to be excessively small or excessively large, to be long-haired or short-haired, as well as a host of other physical traits that are either useful for a particular function or simply because we find them aesthetically appealing. Besides manipulating a particular appearance in a breed to assist in a specialized function, humans have also artificially selected to enhance or subdue some natural canine behaviors to assist in performing a particular function. We have created hundreds of different dog breeds, a fascinating mixture of sizes, colors, shapes, and specialized skills.

While the physical characteristics of a particular breed of dog cannot be changed once it is born, behavioral characteristics can still very much be influenced by humans. In other words, once the Newfoundland puppy is born, little can be done to change the pre-determined breed appearance, but its behavioral traits are still subject to influence, control and the manipulation of humans. So while a dog may come with a set of “breed blueprints” to excel at a particular function, humans are in essence architects, and can either use those blueprints to build on those behaviors or ignore the blueprints and build/train the dog for a different function.

Indeed, dogs rarely perform or are expected to excel at the function for which their individual breed was originally created. Not even in the 1800s and early 1900s, when dogs were used much more as working animals, were most dogs expected to perform the function associated with their breed. Many people owned Bloodhounds in the late 1800s, and most of

these dogs were never used to track a scent. The Newfoundland, a breed developed to aid fishermen and rescue drowning victims, also became very popular in the late 1800s, yet many of these dogs never saw a fisherman or entered a body of water.

Besides not performing the function the breed was developed for, some dogs may excel at a function associated with a completely different breed. In 1907 there was a case of a Newfoundland saving his master from a raging bull, and in 1906, a case of a Bulldog saving a young boy from drowning. Clearly, dogs can and were obtained and used for purposes other than the original breed design. Part of the wonder of dog breeds is this potential to perform specialized tasks along with the ability to function outside of a breed-designed behavior.



During the second half of the 19th century, Bloodhounds were frequently reported as the breed most responsible for severe and fatal attacks on humans. In only a ten-state area, there were at least 38 severe or fatal attacks by Bloodhounds reported in the news media from 1855–1910.

The fact that Bloodhounds figure predominantly in cases of extreme canine aggression in the later part of the 19th century, and the fact that fatalities associated with this breed are virtually non-existent in the 20th century, offers a unique opportunity to examine the critical issues that suggest breed-based aggression. While this presents a unique opportunity to study the factors within a breed that may contribute to canine aggression, it also presents the same type of inherent problems seen in more modern times when attempting to label aggressive behavior as a breed-specific trait.

The first obstacle encountered when trying to determine breed involvement in cases of aggression is in ascertaining the correct breed identification. While this may not seem so difficult a task: in reality, it is hugely problematic and presents a host of possibilities for misidentification and erroneous conclusions. The case of Bloodhounds' involvement in attacks on humans in the 19th century demonstrates that before any conclusions about breed-specific behavior can be drawn, there needs to be an examination of the reliability of breed identification and an understanding of the complexities involved in the relationship between owners and dogs.

In the 1800s, the term “Bloodhound” was applied loosely. Newspaper accounts from the period are found describing dogs involved in severe or fatal attacks as: Cuban Bloodhound, Spanish Bloodhound, Florida Bloodhound, Southern Bloodhound, Negro Bloodhound, Texas Bloodhound, Russian Bloodhound, Siberian Bloodhound, British Bloodhound, St. Hubert's Bloodhound, Bloodhound Mix, True Bloodhound, Valuable Bloodhound, and, simply, Bloodhound. It quickly becomes apparent that all these references to Bloodhounds cannot possibly be describing a single or uniform breed of dog.

For most people today the term Bloodhound easily conjures up an image of a huge, lumbering dog with long ears, a sad countenance, and black and tan markings. This dog is

the breed known as the British or St. Hubert's Bloodhound. The first St. Hubert's Bloodhound was registered in 1885, in the newly formed American Kennel Club. Undoubtedly, the dog we view as a Bloodhound today was also the standard for the breed description a century ago. This type was also referred to as the "true" Bloodhound and the admirers and breeders of these dogs were constantly found defending their breed against a barrage of imposters, myths and bad press.

In the 1800s, "Bloodhound" was still a description more of function than of breed and a number of very dissimilar dogs were all grouped together in this broad category.

The Cuban Bloodhound

The Cuban Bloodhound is also known as the Southern, Spanish, Negro or Florida Bloodhound.

To the true Bloodhound aficionado, no insult to their breed was more objectionable than to attribute the behaviors of a Cuban Bloodhound to those of the "true" or St. Hubert's Bloodhound. And their objections were not without merit, for the breed known as the Cuban Bloodhound was considered a particularly fierce and aggressive animal and the function of these dogs usually involved cruelty and subjugation.

The true origins and parentage of the Cuban Bloodhound was speculative even at the time they existed. An 1888 article in the *Denton Journal* attempted to explain to readers the difference between the types of Bloodhounds, taking great pains to disavow any relationship between the British (St. Hubert's) Bloodhound and the other varieties. The author claimed the Cuban Bloodhound to be a combination of "the Deer Hound, the ferocious Mastiff and Russian (Siberian) Greyhound."¹

Another article in 1891 claimed the Cuban Bloodhound to be "produced by a cross between a Mastiff and a Pointer..."²

The 1913 edition of *Webster's Dictionary* defines Bloodhound as:

"A breed of large and powerful dogs, with long, smooth, and pendulous ears, and remarkable for acuteness of smell. It is employed to recover game or prey which has escaped wounded from a hunter, and for tracking criminals. Formerly it was used for pursuing runaway slaves. Other varieties of dog are often used for the same purpose and go by the same name. The Cuban Bloodhound is said to be a variety of the Mastiff."

The 1945 edition of *The Observer's Book of Dogs* describes the Cuban Bloodhound as a "large and ferocious Dogue de Bordeaux/Bloodhound cross, bred for hunting fugitive slaves in Cuba and Florida."

A modern-day, well-researched description lists the Cuban Bloodhound to be a com-

bination of: “English Mastiffs, Deutsche Doges, French Mastiffs, St. Hubert Bloodhounds, English Greyhounds and a variety of the old British bulldogges.”³

But while there was much dispute about the origins of this breed, there was little dispute about the function of these dogs: They were used not only to track, but also to harass and injure their human quarry. The reputation and origins of aggressive behavior in these animals resulted from their use by the Spanish conquistadors to subjugate and decimate the native populations in the New World. An account from Bartolome de Las Casas (1474–1566), a Spanish missionary and historian,⁴ described some of the atrocities practiced by the Spaniards against the natives in the Caribbean and Central America during early colonial times:

“They entered into towns and villages, sparing neither children nor old men and women. They ripped their bellies and cut them to pieces...They tried to flee from these men. Men who were empty of all pity, behaving like savages. The evil men had even taught their hounds, fierce dogs, to tear natives to pieces at first sight...”⁵

It is interesting to note that five centuries ago, Bartolome de Las Casas recognized that the dogs were “taught” to behave so ferociously. He understood that the savagery shown by these dogs towards the natives was an extension of the savagery of their masters.

In the United States, the purchase and use of Cuban-bred Bloodhounds by the Van Buren administration to assist in the removal of the Seminole Indians from their tribal lands drew bitter criticism from the public and from rival politicians. The war against the Seminoles who refused to be expelled from Florida was becoming longer and more costly with each passing year (1835–1842) and when authorization was given in 1840 to purchase 33 Cuban Bloodhounds, there was a public outcry. Though the government insisted the dogs were to be used only to ferret out the Indians, this was hardly believable, given the reputation and history of cruelty associated with this breed.

The Cuban Bloodhound is also the breed associated with the hunting down of fugitive slaves in the years before the Civil War, and during the Civil War there are references made to both Confederate and Union regiments using Cuban Bloodhounds to hunt down enemy soldiers.

So while there can be debate over which breeds of dog contributed to the genetic makeup of the Cuban Bloodhound, it is really of little significance. The behaviors of these animals had little to do with breed genetics and everything to do with the depravity of their masters.

There is also little doubt that the ferocity and aggressiveness of these dogs was a direct result of human manipulation; many of these dogs were not merely encouraged to behave ferociously but were cruelly forced to behave this way. While the Spanish conquistadors were known to brutalize their dogs in order to force them to attack and devour Indians, this was not a phenomenon exclusive to that era. American history is replete with examples of brutal treatment towards dogs and humans. In a speech given in Taunton, England,

on September 1, 1846, Frederick Douglass, the famed 19th century African-American abolitionist, orator and author, described a process used to train Bloodhounds to pursue Negro slaves:

“Slaves frequently escape from bondage, and live in the woods. Sometimes they are absent eight or nine months without being discovered. They are hunted with dogs, kept for the purpose, and regularly trained. Enmity is instilled into the blood-hounds by these means: A master causes a slave to tie up the dog and beat it unmercifully. He then sends the slave away and bids him climb a tree; after which he unties the dog, puts him upon the track of the man and encourages him to pursue it until he discovers the slave. Sometimes, in hunting negroes, if the owners are not present to call off the dogs, the slaves are torn in pieces...”⁶

Clearly the owners of these dogs understood how this abusive training would foster aggression.

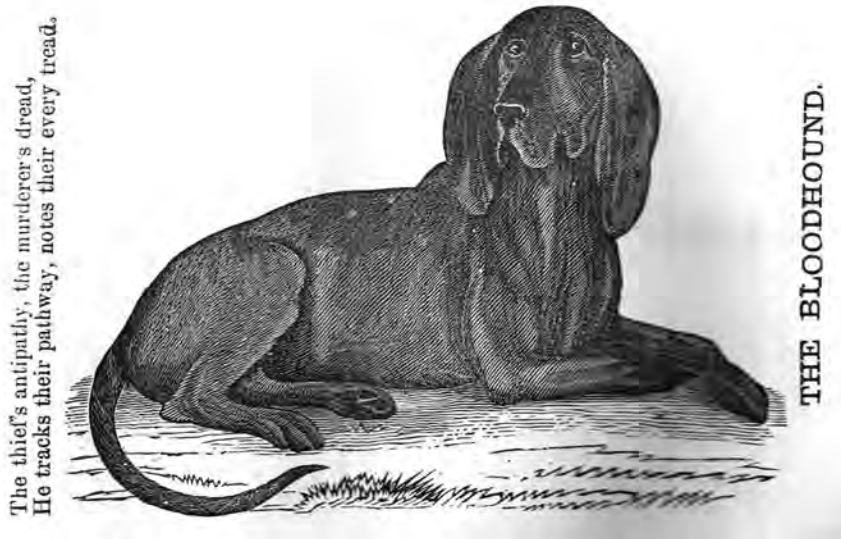
As is often the nature of man, cruelty begets cruelty, as the case of a freed Negro slave beating a Bloodhound demonstrates. Also demonstrated is that consumption of copious amounts of alcohol can inspire some to behave with reckless cruelty towards dogs:

“Moses Spratt, a negro, owns and works a small farm at Fairview. Before the war, Spratt was a slave in Virginia. He came North after emancipation bringing with him a pair of Southern bloodhounds of the kind that were formerly used in hunting fugitive slaves. With these he went into the business of breeding bloodhounds. He always had a large stock of the animals on hand which he keeps chained to kennels in the yard. Wednesday night Spratt had a party of friends at the house and liquor was passed around so liberally that they all got drunk. About midnight Spratt went out to the yard and the dogs began to growl. He spoke to them, but his voice being husky with liquor they failed to recognize it and growled the more. In his drunken recklessness Spratt picked up a stick and struck Pomp, one of the most ferocious of the animals. The dog sprang at him and the chain snapping, the infuriated beast fastened his teeth in Spratt’s throat. In the desperate struggle that ensued he was thrown to the ground, falling near the kennel of another dog. That dog also attacked him. Spratt’s cries brought his companions to his assistance, but before they could rescue him he was almost torn to pieces.”

New York Times, June 12, 1880

This case may also be the closest to an authenticated case of a fatality related to a true Cuban Bloodhound, as the breed, function and origin of these dogs are described.

It is unquestioned that the Cuban Bloodhound bore little resemblance to the British variety of Bloodhound, but this dog was considered a Bloodhound nonetheless since it fit the functional description of Bloodhound (i.e., a dog used to track a quarry by scent, or a “hunter of blood”).



"He is not naturally such a ferocious animal as his name might imply, but he is deservedly dreaded by those, who are unacquainted with him." (Francis Butler, 1860)

St. Hubert's/British Bloodhound or "True" Bloodhounds

This breed was viewed as the "true" Bloodhound in the latter 1800s and is the standard that we recognize today. The history of the breed can be traced back centuries, beginning in Europe and then becoming associated almost exclusively as a British import. This breed is known, first and foremost, for its ability to follow a scent and was used to track everything from stags and boar to sheep rustlers and criminals. The handlers and breeders of these dogs took great pride in declaring their breed to be a gentle and noble dog and were constantly defending the reputation of the Bloodhound from the widely held belief that they were a fierce and savage animal.

No dog involved in a fatality was ever specifically identified as a British or St. Hubert's Bloodhound. Occasionally, there were reports of a "valuable" Bloodhound belonging to a wealthy or prominent individual involved in a serious attack. This is as close as we can come to identifying an attack by a St. Hubert's Bloodhound. Though Bloodhounds were reported to be very popular in the late 1800s, there is little doubt that most of these dogs were not true Bloodhounds, as a St. Hubert's or British Bloodhound was clearly a valuable and expensive animal and not within the financial grasp of most people.

The case previously discussed of the Bloodhounds killing a burglary suspect they were tracking may be a case of "true Bloodhounds" since these dogs were owned by professionals, worked exclusively as tracking dogs, and were identified by the authorities as Bloodhounds. There is no indication that these dogs were trained to perform any task other than tracking, as it was specifically noted that the dogs were not released to attack the

suspect, but had broken free from their handler. Though it may be speculated that the dogs involved in this fatality were indeed St. Hubert's Bloodhounds, it is far from a factual conclusion. And so we find, despite the numerous reports of Bloodhound related attacks and fatalities, there is no documented case where a St. Hubert's/British or "true" Bloodhound was ever positively identified.

Siberian or Russian Bloodhound

The Siberian or Russian Bloodhound bore little to no resemblance to the St. Hubert's or British variety. The Siberian Bloodhound was reported to be a massive animal and, like the Cuban Bloodhound, along with being a scent hound, these dogs were created, manipulated and encouraged by humans to behave aggressively towards other humans.

It is impossible to expect dogs to behave reasonably when human nature is such that we behave so wantonly, recklessly and cruelly, as the following 1880 account demonstrates. In the winter of 1880, a brutal exhibition was staged in St. Louis, where a professional prize-fighter was matched against a Siberian Bloodhound. In attendance at an old stable where the fight took place were an ex-police chief, an ex-judge, a physician, and three members of the House of Delegates. Though the newspapers that covered this appalling display condemned the event, they nevertheless used a lot of ink in describing it "blow by blow." The fight is finally described as ending when the prize-fighter, Patsy Brennan, "caught the dog by the neck and kicked the life out of him."⁷

The few accounts where we find Siberian Bloodhounds attacking individuals in the United States seem relatively mild and restrained compared to the ferocity that was encouraged and the brutal treatment many of these dogs received. Here again, we find a breed used extensively as guard dogs attacking the "wrong" people because dogs often fail to differentiate between legitimate persons and trespassers.

The following lose-lose situation for a Siberian Bloodhound took place in 1882 in New York City. The son of a policeman was walking a huge Siberian Bloodhound on a "cord" when approached by the owner of a varnishing company. The merchant wished to purchase the dog to guard his factory. The dog was sold for \$5 and promptly put to use. Shortly thereafter, an employee showed up one Sunday night to set up the ovens for the next day. The Bloodhound attacked the man and the dog was shot the next morning for his troubles.⁸

While there was a spate of reported attacks by Siberian Bloodhounds in the 1880s, it is highly doubtful if these dogs were indeed purebred Siberian Bloodhounds. The fact that in the previous account the dog was sold for \$5 indicates that this was probably not a valuable (purebred) dog. In comparison, there was a reported attack by a Bloodhound on a man riding a bicycle in Babylon, New York. The dog was described as a "five-hundred-dollar prize Bloodhound, belonging to Malcolm W. Ford."⁹

There are no documented cases of a genuine Russian or Siberian Bloodhound involved in a fatal attack in the United States. However, in 1906, on the Northwest Russian border

with Europe, there came the report of a peasant killed by Bloodhounds near the border crossing. The border guards kept four large hounds as watchdogs and one night in mid-November the dogs tore away from the guards and ran into the neighboring forest. Minutes later, screams were heard and the guards rushed to find the dogs had killed a man and chased his 13-year-old son into a tree. The boy had been severely bitten also, but explained to the guards that he and his father were not smugglers or attempting to leave the country but were trying to avoid paying tax at the customs by going through the woods and around the border station.¹⁰

Here again, we have dogs that, although prized for aggression towards humans, still functioned as tracking or scent dogs, which makes the designation “Bloodhound” technically correct.

Bloodhound

How is it that the Bloodhound came to have such a fierce and negative public image in the late 1800s and early 1900s? A number of factors coincided to create a public image or perception about the behavior of Bloodhounds that was to last more than half a century. And the perception still lingers a hundred years later, as one today can easily imagine a pack of bay-ing hounds pursuing a frightened and desperate fugitive. The danger implied in this imagery is not foremost from the humans in pursuit, but in being overrun and attacked by the dogs.

How accurate this scenario was hardly mattered. What percentage of Bloodhounds in the 19th century attacked their quarry also mattered little. An image was created in the collective consciousness of the public that would not easily be shaken loose. The factors that combined to create this image are:



Illustration of a Great Siberian Bloodhound, (*Breeding, Training, Diseases of Dogs*, Francis Butler, 1860).

1. A broad-based grouping of dogs listed as one breed/type
2. Breed/type dog used in functions associated with aggression
3. Media portrayal of breed as aggressive
4. Increased popularity of breed and consequent increase in number of substandard owners

The first two factors have been discussed—there was a wide variety of breed/types of dogs that were all grouped under the breed “Bloodhound” and the functions of these dogs often required them to be protection dogs, attack dogs or tracking dogs. Bloodhound-type dogs were also popular at the time but as we shall see, popularity is often spawned by a *negative* media image and so these dogs became even more sought after when their dangerous image increased.

Fatal animal attack stories have a type of macabre appeal and it was not uncommon for newspapers in the mid-19th century to report dog attacks in graphic detail. Dogs involved in attacks were described by breed and temperament and other circumstances considered relevant or of interest were noted. Dogs were very commonly reported as “a savage Bloodhound” or a “fierce Mastiff” or a “valuable Bulldog.” At times, the injuries these dogs inflicted on their victims was reported in shockingly descriptive terms.

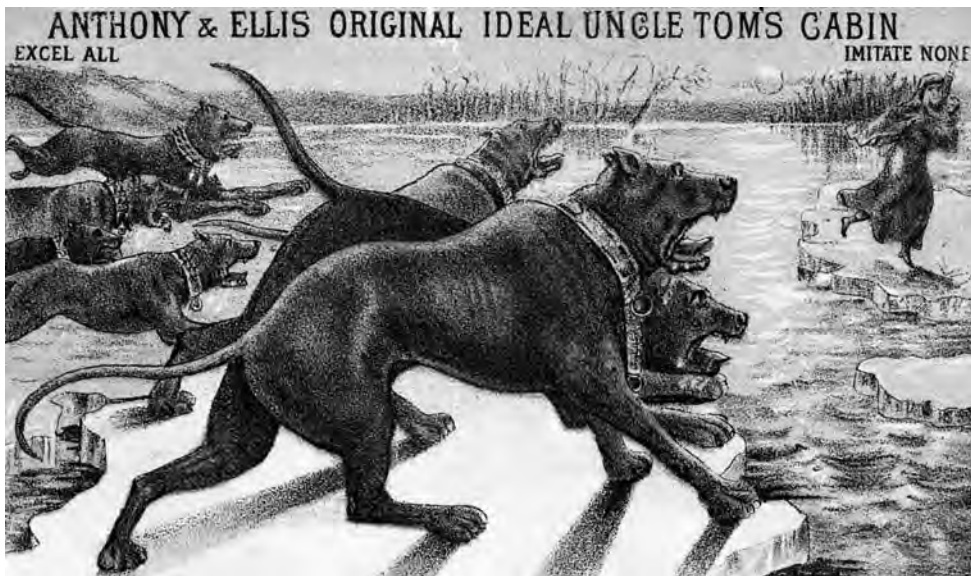
All these circumstances and details were included to add substance and interest to a story. A headline reading, “Child attacked by fierce Siberian Bloodhound” sounds much more menacing and interesting than the headline “Child bitten by dog.” Bloodhounds in the latter part of the 1800s were considered menacing animals, so it is not surprising to find them identified (correctly or incorrectly) in newspaper accounts of dog attacks.

But the overwhelming perception of Bloodhounds as fierce came not from actual reports of attacks, but rather from a fictional visual impression. In 1851, Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* began the first of 40 installments published in the abolitionist periodical, the *National Era*. On March 20, 1852, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was released in book form and was enormously successful, selling over 300,000 copies the first year, becoming the best selling American novel of the 19th century. Before the turn of the century, it is estimated that over 2 million people read this dramatic portrayal of American slavery. Though the references to Bloodhounds in Stowe’s novel were scant and may have contributed only nominally to the negative image of this breed, it was the stage productions or “Tom shows” which most negatively influenced the reputation of the Bloodhound.

Stage dramatizations of fictional works were not properly regulated by copyright laws at the time, and within a year of the publication of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, a number of stage productions based on the novel were already in progress. The success of these productions cannot be overstated; it is estimated that over 3 million people viewed some form of stage production based on the novel.¹¹ In American theaters, one version or another of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was being staged continuously for nearly 79 years (1852–1930).

Some of these plays remained faithful to Stowe's plot, but many of these productions were little more than minstrel shows, loosely based on the novel but with grossly exaggerated caricatures of African-Americans and full of melodrama. Producers of these shows quickly noticed an intense and emotional reaction from the audience to one scene in particular, that of the escaped slave Eliza, baby in arms, fleeing barefoot across the frozen Ohio River from a pack of pursuing Bloodhounds. The dramatic impact this scene had on the audience was not lost on producers, and they quickly capitalized on this imagery. The "Bloodhound pursuit" of Eliza became the dramatic highpoint of many of the "Tom Shows."

By 1880 it was noted that no production of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was complete without a pack of Bloodhounds and even the poorest of wandering troupes kept a pack of dogs to play out this dramatic scene. In addition to the on-stage attention given to this scene, many playbills and posters promoting the stage productions began featuring the "Bloodhound pursuit" with, of course, all the dogs looking suitably menacing and vicious. Many of these playbills touted their dogs to be "fierce Siberian Bloodhounds." The probability of all the troupes touring the country in the 1890s having purebred Russian/Siberian Bloodhounds or any purebred Bloodhound is practically nil. While it is certainly possible that some of these traveling shows may have had true Siberian Bloodhounds, as there were breeding facilities that supplied some of the larger productions with purebred dogs, all evidence indicates that purebred Bloodhounds (of any variety) would have been the exception and not the rule.



Playbill for a stage production of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: Bloodhounds chasing the escaped slave Eliza and her baby across the river.

Photo Credit: Special Collections, University of Virginia Library.

But this ploy was successful in promoting and selling the show, as born out by the reviews and editorials written by newspaper staff and the viewing public. One viewer wrote, “How the barking of these dogs behind the scenes used to make us catch our breath! That alone was worth the price of admission...”

Producers, always looking to expand on a commodity, began to use Bloodhounds as sidewalk props in front of opera houses and theaters to promote and draw attention to the upcoming performance. A review of the Nevada Theater describes the atmosphere that surrounded many of these events:

“As soon as the doors were thrown open the body of the house was soon filled up and at 8 o’clock many went away on account of not being able to hardly find standing room...The street exhibition of the bloodhounds worked people up to the highest pitch, and if some of the people had been compelled to sell some of their already scant wardrobe they would have done so just to see the bloodhounds perform...”

Nevada State Journal, Saturday, April 22, 1882

In addition to sidewalk exhibitions, elaborate parades were often staged on the afternoon of the show. The parades were a popular attraction and included a brass band, actors marching in dress costume and, of course, a pack of Bloodhounds.

The following review of a performance of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* at the Ming Opera House in Helena, Montana, provides us with an invaluable example of how mood, imagery and drama can create an enduring perception or belief that will often become fixed in the public’s mind:

“Perhaps the most interesting scene in the whole piece—or at least the most stirring—is the one in which the bloodhounds (four in number—big and terrible) are in pursuit of Eliza and her child. And where they are seen following the fugitives across the drifting cake ice on the Ohio river and close upon them, the interest becomes intense. Indeed, so far as the brutes are concerned, there is no acting, for true to their own ferocious instincts their thirst for blood is evidenced by their savage baying and eagerness to get at the prey. Sometimes, too, the beasts have been known, in their eagerness, to break loose from the restraining leash and to leap upon the fleeing ones with savage fury. This, however, seldom happens, for great care is exercised to guard against such accidents, for the consequences might be terrible. But, however risky the introduction of bloodhounds on the stage may be to the people in the play, they cannot be dispensed with, for in these days *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* without them would not satisfy the public.”

Daily Helena Independent, August 8, 1882

This review is enlightening on a number of levels. It describes not only the immediate entertainment, but also the formation of lasting impressions. The reviewer describes the use and staging of Bloodhounds to create an image (to sell tickets and dramatize a play). It also shows how the audience and reviewers alike bought rather easily and fervently into an obvious and deliberately manipulated portrayal of Bloodhounds. For a drama to be entertaining it needs villains, monsters or frightening obstacles to overcome. Being chased by a pack of baying, fierce Bloodhounds tapped into a primal fear humans have of predators and was therefore great entertainment.

One can't help but point out that, despite the insistence of the reviewer that Bloodhounds have a "ferocious instinct" and that it was "risky" for the actors to have these dogs on the set, many times the show managers would solicit the young boys of the town to serve as dog walkers at the parade before the show. These boys would then be given free tickets to the show for helping to lead these "ferocious" Bloodhounds in the parade. But reasoning often needs to be suspended for entertainment, and Tom Shows were great entertainment. By 1879, approximately 50 Tom Shows were on the road and by the 1890s there were between four and five hundred Tom Shows touring the country.¹²

There can be no doubt that this type of media hype had a tremendous influence on the public's perception as to the nature and disposition of the Bloodhound. And as is often the case with the perverse nature of humans, for every person who feared a Bloodhound, there seemed to be a person who sought this type of dog out for precisely that reason. An inescapable part of human nature is the need for some people to increase their sense of power or influence by obtaining things that serve to intimidate, frighten, or impress others. And there is no question that dogs can empower their owners by intimidating others.

When the media portrays a particular breed as vicious, there is an immediate increase in the number of substandard owners of that breed. There was a direct correlation between the popularization of Bloodhounds as fierce and an increase in their population among substandard owners, and therefore an increase in Bloodhound attacks in the later part of the 1800s.

Remember, by 1880, it was declared that no Tom Show was complete without a pack of menacing Bloodhounds. No small coincidence that the highest number of severe and fatal attacks by Bloodhounds occurred during the decade to follow (1880–1889), with 18 severe/fatal attacks in this decade in only a ten-state area (See Appendix A).

Three factors are at work here: the media's attention and diligence in reporting and identifying specific breed attacks, the fictional use of Bloodhounds as fierce, and the subsequent effect this had on increasing the popularity of this breed with poor quality or abusive owners.

Evidence of an increase in poor quality owners is found in an increase in the number of reports of cruel acts associated with this breed. Cruelty against animals has never been considered particularly unusual or newsworthy, so to see reports of these incidents in the newspapers during this decade (1880–1889) indicates a change in the degree or amount of

cruelty. A few examples of deliberate acts of cruelty with and against Bloodhounds in this decade include:

- 1880—Two men are arrested for unchaining a large Bloodhound and inciting the dog to attack a homeless youth. The boy was severely bitten and taken to New York Hospital.
- 1880—Owner matches Siberian Bloodhound against prize-fighter for entertainment in St. Louis. After a long battle the dog is finally kicked to death by prize-fighter.
- 1880—Man breeding Bloodhounds in New Jersey is gravely injured by the dogs when in a drunken stupor he starts to beat the chained dogs with a piece of wood.
- 1888—Man arrested for cruelty when walking his Bloodhound in New York City; he allows the dog to attack and terribly injure a small black and tan dog named Gip. Bail was set at \$100 for cruelty to animals, as he made no attempt to stop his dog from mauling the small dog.
- 1889—Man arrested in Milford, Connecticut, for ordering his Bloodhound to attack and kill another man trespassing on this property.

These incidents were newsworthy because they were not the run-of-the-mill type of abuse and violence regularly seen with animals.

Bloodhound attacks became so frequent and so frequently expected that even some in the media could not help but comment on the “art becomes reality” aspect of Bloodhound attacks in the late 1800s. In 1898, a *New York Times* article called a Bloodhound attack on a woman in New York City an “Impromptu Open-Air Uncle Tom’s Cabin Performance.”¹³

While the *New York Times* article was a deliberate mixing of fact and fiction, this was almost certainly the exception, as most people and other media sources had a much more difficult time separating fact from fiction when it came to Bloodhounds. Clearly the media hype influenced the reputation of the Bloodhound among the general public. A few fanciers of the breed understood the dynamics and made attempts to educate the public about the true nature of the Bloodhound.

Perhaps the most insightful summary of the Bloodhound dilemma was given in 1892, when the following editorial was printed:

“I have heard it said that Mrs. Stowe, in her *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, did much toward bringing upon the bloodhound his disrepute. To see if this were so I read over Mrs. Stowe’s book recently and was surprised to find that she only once alluded to bloodhounds in all her highly colored narrative, and never a single time brought them on the scene. She had other objects in view without going out of her way to malign a family of dogs. But those who dramatized Mrs. Stowe’s

story used the bloodhound with great realistic effect, and none of the wandering troupes which have played this drama has been so poor that it has not had a pack of dogs. But I have never known a troupe to have a pack of real bloodhounds. Instead they have mongrels of various kinds, but always mongrels that looked savage and bloodthirsty. The bloodhound is not only not savage, but does not look so. On the contrary, he is amiable in disposition and has a singularly dignified and benevolent expression.”

The Daily News, April 8, 1892

But any reasoning or insight fell on deaf ears, as the public was interested in being entertained, not educated. And these dogs did entertain; so much so that we may venture to say the dogs out-acted all other “Tom Show” performers. The canine “actors” gave such credible performances that a half-century of viewers were thoroughly convinced that Bloodhounds were a fierce and savage breed of dog.



The recognition of any Bloodhound characteristics in a mixed breed dog was usually all the identification needed to label the dog a Bloodhound or “part Bloodhound.” The term Bloodhound was used for dogs that were clearly not purebred, but may have shown any traits that could be attributed to this breed. Once the dog could be recognized as having any Bloodhound characteristic, this appeared to be sufficient identification and there was no further attempt to determine what other breed(s) contributed to the genetic make-up of the dog.

We find an example of this with the previously discussed case of Camp Sumter and the court martial transcript of Commandant Henry Wirz. The United States Government’s (War Department) findings of the court in Specification #11 list the dogs used by the Confederate army at Andersonville Prison as “ferocious and bloodthirsty animals, called bloodhounds...” There is no evidence to indicate that these dogs were the “true” or St. Hubert’s Bloodhound or the breed we now recognize as a Bloodhound. By all accounts the dogs at Andersonville prison were a mixed lot; perhaps part Bloodhound and part unknown. Here also we find that the term Bloodhound was not used so much to identify breed but to identify function (i.e., tracking or hunting down of escaped Union soldiers).

In additional to all the different types or varieties of Bloodhounds, and mixes thereof, there were also outright imposters. An 1855 report of court proceedings in New York City lists the complaints made by two separate individuals for the injuries they received after being attacked by dogs. Along with a recounting of the injuries inflicted on the victims, the following report was given:

“Mr. O’Connor made complaint yesterday before Justice Pearcey, of having been attacked in his yard by a large yellow dog belonging to a baker named

Schaffer...German bakers and rum-sellers are almost without exception, provided with ferocious brutes resembling bloodhounds.”¹⁴

It is obvious that any attempt to sort out which dogs were true Bloodhounds (by either breed or function) or to attempt to classify the behavior of any of these dogs by breed would be an exercise in futility. Not only is it impossible to determine individual breeds, but it is also irrelevant. The behavior of these Bloodhound-type dogs was either the direct result of human encouragement for aggressiveness or the direct result of humans failing to control or use reasonable care with these animals.



Unfortunately, none of the true aficionados of the Bloodhound, who so ardently defended their reputation in the 1800s, lived to witness the vindication of the breed they so admired. During the height of the breed’s popularity, the voices of the true admirers of the Bloodhound were lost in a clamor of rumors and hysteria. The public could not or cared not to see beyond the media hyped image of the breed and recognize that the extreme behaviors of a small number of dogs were the direct result of the cruel use and mismanagement of these dogs by violent and abusive owners.

However, those who defended the “true” Bloodhound so fervently were guilty of the same stereotyping of which they complained so loudly. Their claim was that the behaviors of the Cuban Bloodhounds and other Bloodhound imposters had tarnished the reputation and prejudiced the public against their breed. Their defense of the Bloodhound often became ‘it is not our British hounds that behave so ferociously, it is the fierce Cuban Bloodhound, mistaken for our dogs, that has brought disrepute to the breed.’

After thirty-three Cuban Bloodhounds were shipped to Florida in 1840 to aid in the capture of the Seminole Indians, eleven of them were taken by the Army to Garey’s Ferry on Black Creek, located about thirty miles southwest of Jacksonville. The dogs were being trained to hunt their new quarry (Seminole Indians) and were being worked in field trials.

The arrival of these dogs from Cuba and their subsequent use by the Army was a politically charged and newsworthy event. As such, a correspondent from the *Savannah Georgian* visited Garey’s Ferry in March 1840 to report on the use of the Bloodhounds by the Army and dryly observed:

“Eleven of these Florida bloodhounds, alias Cuba curs, are now at this post, feasting upon their six pounds of fresh beef per day...

“As to their ferocity, it is all humbug—a child may fondle with them. They have been more grossly misrepresented than any set of animals in the world, the army not excepted.”¹⁵

Cuban Bloodhound, Siberian Bloodhound, British Bloodhound—it matters little, for when these breeds left the hands of those looking for a vicious tracking, attack, or guard dog, severe and fatal attacks by these breeds virtually disappeared from newspaper reports.

As owners looking for a new intimidation dog turned their attentions in the early 20th century towards the Bulldog and German Shepherd, the Bloodhound population stabilized and Bloodhound ownership largely returned to the true admirers of the breed. This scenario would repeat itself over the next century; as certain breeds became increasingly popular in negative functions, and subsequently more popular with substandard owners, incidents of aggression within the breed would increase. When breed popularity decreases with substandard owners and returns into the hands of more serious enthusiasts, incidents of aggression decrease.

CHAPTER 3

Creating Dangerous Dogs: The Newfoundland and the Northern Breeds

The Newfoundland

Like the Bloodhound, the Newfoundland is another breed of dog that figured predominantly in fatal and severe attacks in the latter part of the 19th century, yet has ceased to be an issue in fatalities in the 20th century. The Newfoundland dog was commonly found in episodes of canine aggression from the late 1800s into the early 1900s. In just one city, Chicago, there were two fatal attacks by a Newfoundland dog during this time period. However, after the second decade of the 20th century, the Newfoundland dog all but disappears from reported cases of attacks.

As with Bloodhounds, the question becomes, how is it that this breed was over-represented in aggressive encounters with humans during one era and vastly under-represented during another time period?

Most people today have an image of the Newfoundland dog as a large, black, shaggy dog that has been known to be used by fishermen and to aid drowning victims. While this perception is unchanged from the uses and image that 19th century America had of the Newfoundland, it appears this breed of dog played another important role in the 1800s that accounts for its appearance in severe and fatal attacks on humans. Newspaper accounts indicate that Newfoundlands were used frequently as guard and protection dogs during the late 1800s. This may seem strange to many, as the Newfoundland breed is usually associated with humane service towards man. However, the basis for using the Newfoundland as guard dogs in the 19th century is supported by the description of the breed in the 1911 *Encyclopedia Britannica*: “They are easily taught to retrieve on land or water, and their strength, intelligence and fidelity make them specially suitable as watchdogs or guardians.” Additionally, the Newfoundland is a working breed, originally bred by the early settlers of Newfoundland Island in Canada to pull sleds, hunt and guard.

The Newfoundland dog seems to have been exceedingly popular in the latter part of the 19th century, and like the Bloodhound was one of the first breeds registered by the newly formed American Kennel Club in 1886. Newspapers of the day were filled with tales of

everyday life with Newfoundland dogs. Along with the more mundane events of owners and their dogs there were also numerous reports of Newfoundlands being alternately heroic or vicious. The newspapers at the time seemed to relish a good “dog rescues boy” story as much as a “dog attacks boy” story, and the Newfoundland dog seemed to provide much fodder for both these human-interest stories.

The popularity of the breed, their use as guard dogs, and incidents of physical abuse ensures that a number of Newfoundland dogs would be found in cases of aggression against humans.

Most dogs suffer abuse and provocation without retaliation and this often leads to reckless behavior by some individuals. The forgiving nature of dogs allows most humans to escape unscathed from negligent and cruel acts towards our canine companions, but not always. An 1890 article entitled “A Dog’s Revenge” describes the events preceding a fatal mauling of an infant by a Newfoundland dog. And here again, 19th century accounts were brutally honest in detailing harsh treatment dogs received at the hands of humans and how this was believed to have contributed to an attack by the dog. The Newfoundland in this incident was recently obtained by a family and the mother “had occasion to punish the dog.” How severely or what form of punishment was used on the dog was not described. The rest of the report goes on to tell how the woman then left the dog and infant on the front porch of the cabin and went down to the creek. When she returned she found the dog had killed the child.¹

Human behavior is often even more inexplicable than canine behavior. In 1893, a 14-year-old boy for unknown reasons decided to kick a large Newfoundland dog he encountered on the streets of Cincinnati. It was reported in the newspapers that the dog “resented” the kick and responded by attacking the boy so savagely that he died from his injuries.²

Another case of a boy teasing a dog and the animal attacking an innocent girl occurred in Ohio in 1891. It was reported as follows:

“Yesterday evening, as the little daughter of James Walker was walking along a street, on the West Side, a boy jerked a bone from a Newfoundland dog with which he was playing, and threw it, the bone falling on the pavement near the little girl’s feet. The dog made a rush for it, knocking the girl down. She fell upon the bone, hiding it from view, when the dog planted its teeth in her cheek. He bit her several times, and her face and neck were terribly mangled before the dog could be driven away.”

Weekly News, Mansfield, Ohio, June 4, 1891

Although the history of the Newfoundland was based in guarding, hunting and sledging, it was with the increased use of the breed in the late 19th century as guard dogs and the physical abuse directed towards many of these dogs that explains their appearance in incidents of aggression towards humans.

Rabies (Hydrophobia)

Interestingly there seemed to be a disproportionate number of reported “mad” or “rabid” Newfoundland dogs attacking people. While some of these dogs were described with obvious signs of the disease, it appears that others were suspected of being rabid because the behavior (attack, bite) was not within the expected temperament of the breed.

It is not possible to know whether the scores of reports of “mad” Newfoundland dogs were an aberration, whether the breed was so popular that there would understandably be increased cases of rabies within the breed, or whether the aggressiveness in these dogs seemed so out of character that rabies seemed the only reasonable explanation for attacks on humans. Though there exists a remote possibility of rabies involvement in any of the severe/fatal attacks during the 19th century, undoubtedly most severe dog attacks were due to non-rabies related aggression.

While rabies was greatly, and to some degree legitimately, feared, deaths from the virus were not nearly as common as people believed. More than a few persons of some authority were quoted in the late 1800s and early 1900s as stating that the number of deaths and confirmed cases of rabies did not support the hysteria surrounding the disease. There is little question that the fear of rabies was much greater than the probability of contracting the disease.

While the incidence of rabies may have been limited, the fear of the disease was very real. Reports of individuals committing suicide after being bitten by a suspected rabid dog illustrate the hysteria that could so easily be roused by even the suggestion of a rabid animal. Any abnormal behaviors in a dog could easily be a death sentence for that animal when a wave of rabies hysteria overcame a community. For these reasons it was vitally important for the people in the late 1800s and early 1900s to have been observant of normal versus abnormal canine behaviors. This could be one explanation for the insightful accounts of dog attacks reported in the news. Understanding triggers or provocation that contributed to normal canine aggression would alleviate the fear that the dog was behaving erratically or unpredictably (a sign of rabies). Many dog bite articles paid special attention to differentiating between a “maddened” dog and a “mad” dog. It was common to find the dogs involved in attacks described as “an ill tempered brute, but not mad” or “an enraged, but not mad dog.”

The rabies virus is fascinating in that in order for the disease to transmit from host to host, the virus requires a change in the infected animal’s behavior to cause it to bite another victim. The virus accomplishes this by increasing the aggression in some animals, causing them to bite indiscriminately. This behavior change usually does not occur until the end stages of the disease, when other symptoms of the disease are also visible. Once the virus is transmitted through the saliva of an infected animal, the incubation or latent period of the disease normally lasts 3–12 weeks. During this time the infected animal usually appears healthy and its behavior is not noticeably affected. But once the virus has migrated to the



A dog with late stage rabies: CDC's Public Health Image Library, ID#2626

central nervous system (spinal cord and brain), symptoms begin to appear and the disease spreads rapidly. The first phase of symptoms of rabies tends to be subtle, lasting only two to three days. In the second phase, also known as the “furious” phase, signs of the disease become much more obvious, with dogs displaying erratic behaviors, including episodes of aggression, ingesting inedible objects, disorientation and other abnormal behavior. The third and final stage of symptoms is unmistakable and lasts approximately 2–4 days. Here the animal may appear to be choking; there is a dropping of the lower jaw, and the inability to swallow—leading to the drooling and foaming of saliva (“foaming at the mouth”). Paralysis then occurs and the animal rapidly enters into a coma and dies.

Dogs in the final stages of rabies were seemingly not difficult to diagnose. However, it was the first stage of symptoms when signs were more subtle, where errors would be most often found as to what was driving an attack (i.e., rabies versus normal canine aggression).

An 1889 dog attack in Hoboken, N.J., appears to be a legitimate case of rabies infection. Although no mention is made of physical signs of rabies, the behavior of this dog is clearly not the behavior seen in normal types of canine aggression. The byline to the article, “Men and animals bitten by a dog attacking all in its way,” is a common description of the behavior in reported cases of rabid dogs. The account of this attack begins with a dog running into a stable near the railroad station and biting a man working there. The dog is then reported as running out into the street and attacking a young boy at a fruit stand. On its way down the street, the dog attacks another dog, before running towards the docks. There the dog darts into a group of six men, biting one of them. Before the police catch up with the dog, it had also attacked and bitten a draught horse.³

This type of indiscriminate snapping and random biting appears typical of rabid dogs.

Non-rabid dogs involved in severe/fatal aggression are typically very focused during an attack, choosing one victim and attempting to return to that victim even after being pulled or beaten off.

Rabid dogs were often reported biting multiple types of animals in rapid succession or, as the previous article stated, “attacking all in its way,” whether it be cows, horses, cats, other dogs or humans. This type of attack was greatly distressing, as people feared not necessarily the physical damage done by the dog during an attack, but the transmission of rabies and ultimate death from the disease process of the virus.

An exceedingly rare event was the death of a person due to an apparently rabid dog attacking with such forceful aggression as to cause traumatic wounds resulting in the immediate death of the victim (i.e., loss of blood, shock).

A few cases were found where dogs attacked with such ferocity that it must have seemed to the persons of the time that rabies could be the only explanation. Reviewing some of these suspected cases of rabies reveals dogs exhibiting the same behaviors found in most cases of severe/fatal aggression found in non-rabid dogs—that is, attacking one victim with unrelenting intensity and then not attacking others attempting to interfere. In deference to the subjective beliefs of the witnesses at the time these cases were not included in the listing of attacks.

However, a fatal attack could be found in 1894 which appears to be a legitimate case of a rabid dog. The attack occurred in Dallas, Texas, and involved a St. Bernard reported to be “mad.” The dog had bitten seven people, killed two cats and attacked another dog. One of the seven people attacked was “Albert Adams, a negro boy, who was bitten so badly that he died from his wounds.”⁴

Obviously, since accurate laboratory testing was not available at the time, rabies could only be determined by observation of behavior and by physical signs of the disease, certainly far from a foolproof system. However, since many a person’s life depended on observations of whether the aggression was due to rabies, and the people of the time showed a rather acute understanding of what constituted normal canine aggression, it is within reason to concede to their conclusions as to whether a dog attack was due to rabies infection. If anything, fear, bordering on hysteria, may have made the incidence of rabies over-reported in severe or fatal attacks by dogs.

There was no hope for a cure until the 1880s, when Louis Pasteur, the famed chemist and bacteriologist, began studying the disease. Pasteur was able to isolate the virus and in May 1884 produced the first rabies vaccine for dogs. In July 1885 Pasteur successfully tested the vaccine on a human. In 1887, two years after Pasteur’s treatment for rabies was developed, a rather interesting observation was made:

“It is noticeable that notwithstanding the numerous cases of bites by vicious dogs which have been recorded this summer, hardly a suggestion has been made of hydrophobia. Is it because Pasteur has robbed the disease of its terrors, or is it simply because the good sense of the people is improving?”⁵

This makes sense. Once a cure for an ailment becomes available, the terror associated with the disease decreases.

While rabies was a continuous worry during the 19th century in the United States, the disease was not as feared, and was noted to be less of an issue, in the Northern regions of Canada. However, other issues dealing with “normal” canine aggression could be found in the cold and harsh Northern landscape where dogs performed a function exclusive to these snowbound regions.

The Northern Breeds

Not surprisingly, most of the severe and fatal attacks by the Northern breeds occurred in Alaska, Canada, and the Northern Territories.

If it seemed that separating the Bloodhound breed/types was a difficult task, attempting to make correct breed identifications with the Northern breeds involved in attacks would require supernatural powers. The only information available about the breed or type of dog involved in fatalities in Alaska, Canada and the Northern Territories was that the dogs may have been one of the following breed/types: Husky, Siberian husky, Alaskan husky, Malamute, Alaskan malamute, Eskimo dog, Labrador dog, Newfoundland dog, Arctic sled dog, sled dog, sleigh dog, sledge dog, wolf dog, wolf hybrid and any dog that might have been a mixture of these types/breeds. Many times the victim was described as being killed by a dog team or in a dog lot. Once again, breed identification in cases of aggression is not only impossible to document accurately, but it will be seen that the identification of individual dog breeds is of no relevance in the understanding or recognition of the circumstances which directly contributed to the development of severe aggression in these dogs.

Fatal attacks by the Northern breeds in the late 1800s and early 1900s were not considered terribly unusual or unexpected. The dogs kept in these frigid environs were considered only once removed from their direct ancestor, the wolf. Today, we accept the fact that people will die in automobile crashes as a necessary evil of being able to travel and move goods from place to place. One hundred years ago, sled dogs provided the only means of communication, human transport and exchange of goods during the long winter months in Alaska, Northern Canada and the Northern Territories. Sled dogs were often risky business and the human deaths associated with keeping these dogs, though repugnant, were considered the cost of doing business.

There is no denying the danger posed by some of these animals. A century ago, most sled dogs were semi-wild, poorly socialized, poorly fed, maintained as a pack, and treated harshly. Needless to say, this is the formula to use if one wishes to create a dangerous dog. How many Eskimos or native people were killed by these dogs will never be known. Even when the victims of these dogs were white settlers, there are only scant references to the incident. Most times, cases of fatal dog attacks by sled dogs are only mentioned in stories or reports on related matters. An important factor in the lack of documented cases of fatal

attacks was the remoteness of the areas, poor communication and obvious lack of newspapers and community facilities (clerks, courts, police, medical examiners, etc.).

The following case of a fatal dog attack in Canada demonstrates the remoteness and difficulty in getting both information and persons out of these areas. A letter was received on April 28, 1925, at the Royal Canadian Mounted Police post in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada, announcing the death of a woman at Chesterfield Inlet, in the northwestern extremity of Keewatin, on Hudson Bay near the Arctic. The letter gave news of the circumstances that caused the death of Mrs. S.G. Clay. On Sept. 19, 1924, Mrs. Clay, the wife of a Royal Canadian Mounted Police Sergeant, was walking alone near the police camp when a sled dog attacked her. Immediately every other dog in the pack joined in the attack. She had been severely mauled before help from the mounted police camp arrived. Her leg had been so terribly lacerated that amputation was deemed necessary. The nearest surgeon was 1,000 miles away in Manitoba, so the local missionary and a member of the Mounted Police decided to take on the task. The unfortunate woman died two days later.⁶

The fact that this attack occurred in September of 1924 and news of it was not received until April of 1925 demonstrates the difficulty in getting information out of these desolate areas. No doubt, a special effort was made to relay this news because of the familiar aspect; it was news being sent about one mounted police wife to the wife of another mounted police officer, who, like the victim, was once stationed at this remote Hudson Bay post. It is no small irony that the news of Mrs. Clay's death was sent from Hudson Bay to Saskatchewan by dog team.

Occasionally, an article or report on the viciousness of the Northern breeds would list recent human fatalities caused by the sled dogs of the region. An article entitled "Devil Dogs of Labrador," published in 1908, talks of the sled dogs on the desolate coast of Labrador. This coastal area was reported to be "peopled by 4,000 whites, 1,500 Eskimos, and frequented every summer by 30,000 Newfoundland fisher folk in the quest of cod."⁷ The only means of transportation in this area was by boat in summer and by dog team in winter. The author talks of the violent nature and behavior of the sled dogs in this region and lists the attacks that had occurred recently on the Labrador coast by sled dogs:

"Some years ago, during the summer, at Hebron, dogs killed an Eskimo boy of 13, who was dragging a seal from his father's boat to their tent...At Hopedale an Eskimo boy and girl were killed and devoured...At Nain, dogs dragged a missionary's baby out of its cradle and reduced it to bone before the distracted mother found out...At Dommo, dogs devoured a middle-aged woman before help could arrive...At Bardana, dogs killed a fifteen-year-old girl going to a well for water."

A few years earlier, in 1903, another article about the dogs of Labrador recounted two fatalities that occurred the year before:

“In Cartwright, a child wandered from home and when the distracted mother flew to where a pack of angry dogs were ravaging, she found nothing but the bones of her offspring...A little girl was so badly mangled by them at Punchbowl last year that she never recovered.”⁸

Obviously, none of these attacks are verifiable. But there is more than a ring of truth to these accounts, as locations, victim’s ages and small details of the attack are given. Also lending credibility is the fact that these victims fit the profile of most dogs attack (i.e., infants, children wandering away from parents, and/or vulnerable persons walking alone). The accuracy of these individual attacks is not of paramount importance because there is little doubt that some of these dogs posed a significant danger to humans. Knowing exactly which humans they attacked is not critical in the examination of the forces involved in sled dog aggression.

There was little disagreement that the sled dogs used in the late 1800s and early 1900s were a fierce lot. There is also little disagreement about the fact that these dogs were treated very harshly. An additional, but necessary, danger was the maintaining of sled dogs as an active functioning pack.

While acts of extreme cruelty towards animals are still very prevalent today, it certainly is not the norm. One century ago, extreme cruelty towards sled dogs *was* the norm.

“They may be beaten into submission, but that will not prevent them still snarling their hatred. They may be starved into apparent docility and then die suddenly, with teeth fast locked in a brother’s throat.”

“The Wolf-Dog of the North,” *The New York Times*, July 8, 1900
—From *Harper’s Weekly*

“They are the fiercest of any brutes trained to be of service to mankind; they will attack anything they believe weaker than themselves, and they are only kept in subjection by the unceasing use of the lash.”

“The Dogs of Labrador,” *The Chronicle*, January 29, 1903

Besides the “unceasing use of the lash” and being “beaten into submission,” sled dogs were often in a state of near starvation. Although fed well in the winter months when their energy was needed to pull heavy loads over long distances, in the summer months it was common to let the dogs forage for themselves. Many an attack on a person was recognized to be the result of this hungry pack condition. Unlike most descriptions of dog attacks where the victim was torn, lacerated or bitten by the dog(s), many of the victims of sled dogs were reportedly “devoured.” After reviewing the circumstances and conditions of sled dogs in the early 20th century it is fair to say that this term was meant literally and was not used for dramatization.

In direct contrast to the elaborate recounting of Bloodhound attacks in the big city newspapers in the U.S., details of dog attacks in the remote areas of the North usually contained only a fleeting reference to a death by dogs. There was little sensationalism in these accounts and it is doubtful that the term “devoured” was used to embellish the story, as there was really no story attached to these attacks.

Most dogs found on the mainland United States did not operate and work together in large packs, as did the sled dogs of the North. Dogs in more densely populated and moderate climates, even if not fed, were able to scrounge for food near garbage dumps, homes or farms and usually had a variety of wild or domesticated animals on which to prey. The desolate and harsh Northern regions had much less to offer dogs that needed to fend for themselves. All resources available to sled dogs were limited and so their options for survival were also severely limited. Additionally, these dogs were not only poorly socialized with humans, but often the socialization they did have was decidedly negative. In extreme environments or in conditions with limited choices, extreme behaviors are more apt to occur.

The conditions we find with these dogs are: physically powerful dogs, very poorly socialized with humans, often starving with severely limited food resources, either tethered together as a pack or allowed to roam loose as a pack. Given these circumstances, predation does not seem unreasonable or exaggerated.

Another reason to take the term “devoured” seriously is that throughout the vast expanse of the Northern regions this description is used consistently over three decades (1900–1930). While an argument could be made that most accounts of fatalities and predation by sled dogs a century ago cannot be substantiated, there is a fully documented recent case which duplicates most of the conditions and pack dynamics reported in fatal attacks by sled dogs a century ago.

In August 1998, a family of four, consisting of a husband, wife and two male children, aged 8 and 10, arrived on Zacharias Island, off the Labrador coast. The island was inhabited by a team of eight Labrador/Husky sled dogs. The dogs had been left on the uninhabited island to roam during the summer months. The family was picking berries on the island when the wife became separated from her husband and two children. After hearing his wife scream, the husband found her being attacked by the dogs. Throwing rocks at the dogs managed to disperse them from the woman, but she was already dead. The older child ran back to the boat to get matches, so a fire could be built to keep the dogs away from the woman’s body until help could arrive. The dogs left the area where the woman’s body lay, and circled the shoreline. When the father and younger son arrived at the boat they found the dogs feeding on the body of the older son. Again they threw rocks at the dogs, but this time the dogs did not disperse and they turned on the father and remaining son. Only by running into the water were they able to escape.⁹

This case involved predation and both victims were partially consumed. Although these dogs were not found to be starved, the attack is consistent with behaviors seen in situations where sled dogs function as a pack. The dynamics of group hunting and feeding, dogs operating as a social unit without owner direction, poor socialization with humans, and

territorial aggression all contribute to the likelihood of dogs operating under these conditions having an increased probability of aggressive encounters with humans.

If we subtract a century from the 1998 attack, add in some wolf strain, and consider a hungrier pack of dogs, the accounts of fatalities and predation in the earlier 1900s seem almost understated.

In 1903 the following statement describes the sled dogs and the atmosphere surrounding the settlements:

“The coast folk find them indispensable, yet live in fear of them. No man ventures abroad without his whip, every woman carries a stout club; it is death to a child to get among them.”¹⁰

In more modern times (1961), the Royal Canadian Mounted Police decided to replace the native Huskies with a breed from Siberia after a series of attacks and fatalities by sled dogs. The RCMP commented:

“Natives usually let their dogs run wild in the summer, and the semi-starved animals with a vicious wolf strain not deeply buried often attack humans, especially children. Last year two persons were killed by sled dogs. These native dogs are a menace by instinct. If you happen to fall, they’ll be on you—just for something to eat.”

The Valley Independent, December 12, 1961

Time and again, much of the aggressiveness found in the Northern breeds is blamed on their affinity to the wolf. Breeding the native dogs with wolves was commonly practiced and, considering the condition and treatment these animals received, it is little wonder they would be a danger.

While it is of no significance whether sled dogs were part Husky, Malamute, or any other breed, the crossing of these breeds with wolves is relevant. Although dogs are the direct descendent of the wolf, dogs are nevertheless domesticated, meaning that over the centuries, dogs have developed behaviors that allow for bonding with humans.

Wolves are still very much wild animals. Adding wolf genes to a domesticated dog reduces the ability to bond with humans or the sociability of these animals. One century ago, sled dogs were poorly socialized with humans, treated harshly, and a pack mentality was a major factor in both their social behaviors and in their function as sled dogs. Add wolf genes into this already dangerously diminished bond with people and it is not difficult to see how aggression towards humans developed.



For thousands of years, dogs have been inexorably interwoven into the lives of humans. However, it is extremely rare to find a person who has intimate knowledge or personal dealings with the two most extreme, yet diametrically different, types of canine behaviors, namely fatal aggression against humans versus dogs sacrificing their lives in the service of mankind.

Miss Emily Morgan was a Red Cross nurse serving in Alaska during the 1920s. For 18 months, Miss Morgan braved the fierce cold and blizzards in the Aleutian Islands to provide medical care to the native people. While living there she also worked as a matron at the Methodist Women's Missionary Society for Destitute Waifs. Here she helped nurse back to health a small Aleutian orphan child named Alice Devlin. The child had been brought to the mission after her mother was killed by starving Huskies. Although it is mentioned that the child arrived "with a scar on her sunken cheeks made by the dogs," it was not explained how the child came to survive this attack by the pack of sled dogs which killed her mother.

After serving in the Aleutian Islands, Miss Morgan went to Nome, Alaska. In 1925, Nome was in the midst of a diphtheria epidemic and Miss Morgan was reported to be the only Red Cross nurse in town to minister to those suffering from diphtheria. Her patients came to be the recipients of the serum which was delivered by the famous sled dog relay from Nenana to icebound Nome, a distance of 674 miles which took 20 men and over 200 dogs. More than one sled dog died during this frantic run to deliver life-saving serum. The dogs which perished during this tremendously arduous journey had literally run themselves to death in service to their masters and mankind.

Perhaps Miss Morgan never gave any conscious thought to the fact that she was a first-person witness to the absolute worst canine behaviors towards a human and also the absolute best behaviors that most dogs contribute so freely and frequently towards mankind.



Sled-dog: "They are accustomed to hard work, scanty fare and ill-usage; yet they never desert their post or forsake their master" (Francis Butler, 1860).

CHAPTER 4

How Popularity and Function Influence Aggression

From 1850 until 1899, there were dozens of different descriptions of dogs involved in severe and fatal attacks on humans. Some dogs were identified as a specific breed, others were described by their grouping (i.e., hound or spaniel), others by their function (i.e., sled dog or sheepdog), still others by their size (i.e., large dog) and some, simply by temperament (i.e., vicious dog).

Nearly half of the fatal attacks reported from 1850–1899 did not identify breed at all, describing the dog(s) primarily by temperament. The most popular descriptions were either a “savage” or “vicious” dog. Other times dogs were described simply by their physical condition (“large brown mongrel” or “starving dogs”). In 1888, a dog involved in a fatal attack on a 2-year-old boy in Zanesville, Ohio was identified as a “coal-mine dog.” On the rarest of occasions a dog was very precisely identified, as in a case in 1893 when a woman was attacked and killed by a “black English Mastiff” in Kentucky.

Though the media in the 19th century was more attuned to presenting the triggers or causes for dog attacks, descriptions by breed or temperament were included to add interest or substance to a story. The case where a specific breed was identified in a news report was frequently accompanied by a description of the dog’s immediate function. “Pet Col-lie,” “Mastiff guard dog” and even “tramp Newfoundland” (presumably meaning an abandoned or stray dog) are found as additional clues to the behaviors of the specific dogs. Both the public and the media understood that these were relevant factors in attempting to understand cases of aggression and attacks.

The Mastiff

The Mastiff-type dog is an ancient breed, long used in human warfare, animal fighting, and guarding. The Mastiff-type dog is the progenitor of other giant breeds. Many of the fighting breeds and some of the scent hounds are also descended from the ancient Mastiff-type dogs.

In the Middle Ages, the primary function of the Mastiff became that of guardians of large estates. They were used to ward off intruders, poachers and undesirables from the lands of nobles and even less entitled landholders. Some of these dogs were known as Bandogs, being tied during the day and released in the evening to patrol and protect the homes of

the wealthy. The function of the Mastiff in 19th century America was strikingly similar, except they were kept in much smaller confines, such as warehouses, factories, shops or livery stables. The manner of their keep was little changed, the dogs being chained during the day and then released at night.

It is no surprise that animals kept and prized for their protection and guarding abilities would be found in severe/fatal attacks on humans who trespassed and encountered these animals.

Here also, breed identifications are questionable, as one story of an attack on a little boy was reported to be a Mastiff in one newspaper and the same boy was reported to have been attacked by a Newfoundland in another newspaper covering the same incident. Dogs involved in attacks during the late 1800s are described as Mastiffs, English Mastiffs, or thoroughbred Mastiffs.

In 1891, it was reported that a “monster thoroughbred English Mastiff, kept by the Clark Thread Company as a watchdog” attacked two young boys. One boy was severely injured after the dog, “borne him to the ground and tore his scalp terribly.”¹

In 1893, a boy managed to survive an attack by a Mastiff due to his age and ability to crawl away from the chained animal. The 12-year-old was playing with a friend in a deserted coach and carriage shop in New York City. The owner kept a huge Mastiff dog chained at the shop. For some reason the boy came within reach of the dog and the animal grabbed him, savagely attacking him. The boy survived because “he contrived to crawl beyond the limits of the dog’s tether.”²

In 1878, in Bayonne, New Jersey, a large Mastiff dog escaped from his owner’s yard and attacked a young girl on the street and, before anyone could intervene, killed her.

During the late 1800s there were a fair number of Mastiffs, chained in cellars or in deserted buildings, found in severe and fatal attacks. There is little doubt the harsh and isolated conditions in which they were kept were the forces behind the aggression in these dogs.

The Mastiff was overrepresented in reported attacks during the late 19th century because they were frequently used as guard dogs. When their popularity as guard dogs waned in the early 20th century and they were replaced by other protection breeds, severe and fatal attacks associated with this breed virtually disappeared.



As Bloodhound, Newfoundland, and Mastiff attacks decreased dramatically beginning in the first decade of the 20th century, other breeds of dogs began emerging in reports of attacks as these new breeds caught the fancy of the American public and became popular.

Beginning in the 1900s, temperament descriptions are largely replaced with breed or function descriptions (i.e., Collie dog or police dog). The first half of the 20th century finds new and different breeds involved in fatal/severe attacks. Collies, Boston Terriers, St. Bernards, Airedale Terriers, Great Danes, Chow chows, German police dogs (German Shepherds),

Doberman Pinschers, and Huskies were only some of the new breeds seen in aggressive encounters with humans.

Collies

The Collie was technically a hold-over favorite from the 19th century, but the breed was not to reach the height of its popularity until the 20th century.

The Collie dog was well established in the United States during the 1800s. By the early 1900s this breed was already recognized as a hard-working, loyal farm dog and valuable companion animal. Like the Bloodhound and Newfoundland, the Collie was one of the earliest breeds recognized by the American Kennel Club, with the first dog registered in 1885. And like so many other breeds, there were different types of Collies and different names to describe the breed. Collie, Scotch Collie, Farm Collie, Smooth Collie, Rough Collie, Sheepdog, Shepherd dog and police dog all described a type of Collie dog.

In the first few decades of the 20th century there were numerous accounts of severe attacks by Collies reported in the newspapers of the day. And true to the reporting of the 19th century, early 20th century papers continued to reveal details believed to have contributed to the attack.

In 1915, a report is found of a “Collie Run Amuck.” A large Collie was responsible for attacking two children on a street in Indianapolis. The dog’s owner was not known, so the dog was captured and taken to a veterinary surgeon who declared the dog was not suffering from rabies. The article concludes with the explanation for the dog’s aggressiveness: “It is believed the dog got lost and became frantic.”³

A 10-year-old boy was attacked by a Scotch Collie in 1910. The “flesh and muscles of the boy’s chest and both arms were torn by the teeth of the dog.” This story is interesting because it reveals what would later (in modern-day attacks) become a familiar and common event—that is, persons being less than truthful about their involvement or actions towards a dog prior to an attack. Here the victim claims he was only shouting to his friend and the dog rushed out of the yard and attacked him. However, the constable investigating the incident wrote in his report that witnesses claimed this was not a true account of what transpired and that the dog was on the porch “and the boys were playing around the house and began to annoy the dog with sticks, and that the dog then attacked young Smith who was the leader among his tormenters.”⁴

In 1913, a boy was bitten over 30 times by a Collie before being rescued. The dog was chained near an apartment in Tarrytown, N.Y., and attacked the boy when he attempted to pet it.⁵

In 1916, another account of an attack by a Collie on a young boy provides information which describes the classic triggers and circumstances found in dog attacks. The article reports that a 3-year-old boy was severely bitten in the head and face when he attempted

to pet an old Collie on the head. The article goes on to state that “the dog, which was believed to be harmless, evidently mistook the boy’s intentions in his semi-blindness.”⁶

Fatal attacks on humans in which Collies were involved are found during the early to middle part of the 20th century, making Collies another example of a breed involved in increased severe/fatal attacks during a few decades and then becoming a non-issue in the decades to follow.

In 1922, a 7-year-old girl was killed by a Collie while playing in a friend’s yard in New Bedford, Massachusetts. It was speculated at the time that the child was in possession of a doll which the Collie “wanted to recover.” Apparently the child refused to relinquish the doll and the dog knocked her to the ground and then began attacking her. She died an hour later from dog bites to the head and face.

In Illinois, in 1930, another young girl was gravely injured by “six pedigreed Collie dogs” that escaped from a nearby kennel.

In November 1945, a young boy was killed by two Collies at the farm he was visiting with his parents in Roscoe, Texas.

There were also scattered cases of Collie mixes or Collies packed up with other dogs which resulted in fatalities during the first half of the 20th century. But Collies have never been considered a vicious breed of dog, not even at the time when there was a noticeable increase in severe and fatal attacks, and the reasons for this are not terribly surprising.

The Collie breed appeared to have much credit in the bank of public opinion by the time severe/fatal attacks by Collies began to be reported in the papers (around 1910). Collies had proven to be valuable and loyal working dogs and pets during the previous decades. Additionally, almost all functions associated with the Collie breed were positive (guarding sheep, herding, all-purpose farm dog, police dog and companion animal). Another bonus to the breed was the pages and pages of good press given to these dogs when they performed a service to their masters. As discussed in the chapter on farm dogs, Collies saved many a person from raging bulls and other dangers, and they often received the recognition they deserved for these acts of bravery and loyalty.

No small contribution to the positive image and popularity of the Collie was the 1919 publication of *Lad: A Dog*, a book which introduced the Collie on a much larger scale to the American public. The tales of Lad include rescuing an invalid child from a venomous snake, fighting off burglars, winning ribbons as a show dog and performing other heroic deeds. Eric Knight’s novel *Lassie Come Home*, released first as a short story in 1938 and then in book form in 1940, would further endear the Collie breed in the heart and mind of the public.

The Collie breed had built a strong foundation as one of the “good breeds.” This foundation would be permanently cemented with the release of the 1943 movie *Lassie Come Home* and later with the long-running *Lassie* television series (1954–1974).

It is clear how the Collie image was able to weather a decade or two of increased attacks and an occasional bit of bad press. The breed had so much credit to draw on and was so

overwhelmingly portrayed in the media as a “good” breed that a handful of errant dogs could not tarnish the image of the breed.

Even through times of immense popularity and indiscriminate breeding, the Collie remained a steady and reliable breed. While some may rightly attribute this to overall breed temperament, a vital additional factor is that the Collie was bred, maintained and obtained almost exclusively for humane and positive functions. A person looking for an aggressive watchdog or an attack dog was not about to seek out a Collie. The huge media events surrounding the Collie did increase their popularity with the average American family, but did not substantially increase their popularity amongst substandard or aggressive owners.

St. Bernard

Like the Collie, the St. Bernard’s popularity overlapped from the late 1800s into the early part of the 1900s. The St. Bernard presents a rather unique case of very sporadic episodes of severe/fatal aggression, seemingly unrelated to function. Attacks are found around the turn of the century, then the breed disappears from severe/fatal attack episodes, only reappearing in the 1970s, in which a spate of fatal attacks are found.

In the later part of the 1800s and early 1900s, the St. Bernard was fairly popular and an easily recognizable breed in the United States. Unlike the other breeds seen in fatalities during this time, the St. Bernard’s popularity did not seem based on their use as guard dogs. Not only were the St. Bernard dogs involved in such attacks not defined as guard dogs, but the attacks did not occur in locations usually associated with guard dogs (i.e., factories, stables and business establishments).

An 1894 attack by a St. Bernard demonstrates again the unrelenting nature of some attacks, with the dog intently focused on returning to the primary target of his rage. Here again, we find a frenzied situation where rescuers swing objects madly at the dog and in the process injure other persons.

Mangled by a St. Bernard

“A full grown St. Bernard dog attacked and nearly killed 6-year-old George Barrett. The enraged animal had thrown the child down and was viciously biting it when the child’s father, attracted by the screams of his son, came to the rescue. With a baseball bat he drove the dog away, but when Mrs. Barrett attempted to carry the child into the house the dog returned and again attacked the boy. There ensued a terrible battle between the man and the dog, during which Mr. Barrett in attempting to hit the animal, struck his wife, who was trying to protect the child, knocking her insensible. Finally an officer killed the savage beast. The child is in a precarious condition.”

The News, Frederick, Maryland, July 25, 1894

In 1901, a 10-year-old boy was playing with his friends on a street in Paterson, N.J., when a large St. Bernard dog came rushing at him. The other boys scattered, but the dog seemed intent on this one particular boy, knocking him down and attacking him so savagely he died within minutes.

The breed does not appear again in fatal attacks until 70 years later in 1972, when a St. Bernard killed a young girl playing with him in California. The breed went on to be involved in an increased number of fatalities during the next decade and then only in a few sporadic cases found every decade or so following.

During this seven-decade-long void of reported fatal attacks in the U.S. (although some non-fatal attacks were reported), a few fatalities due to St. Bernard dogs could be found in other parts of the world.

This is interesting on many levels. The St. Bernard has never been associated with negative functions; if anything, the only functions assigned to the breed are extremely positive, namely, companion animal and rescue dog. The St. Bernard has never been considered a vicious breed, however, the St. Bernard demonstrates better than any other breed how sometimes there are no answers or reasonable explanations for some canine behavior and that the behavior of one—or even one hundred dogs—cannot be used to define the temperament of an entire breed.

One case in particular demonstrates the unexplained nature of some attacks, along with how quickly the aberrant behavior of a single dog resulted in the condemnation and demand for the destruction of the entire pack by the outraged father of a victim.

In May of 1937, a French doctor accompanied by his three daughters were on a skiing trip in Switzerland when they decided to visit the famous Monks of the Mount St. Bernard Monastery, the ancestral home of the St. Bernard breed. Since the 12th century the St. Bernard dogs kept by the monks would rush out en masse to greet visitors to the monastery. This day, the pack approached the visitors and one of the dogs lunged at the man's 10-year-old daughter, killing her almost instantly. None of the other St. Bernard dogs in this large pack were involved, nor were the father or other two girls bitten.

The Father Superior in charge of the monastery was grief stricken and at a loss to explain why this occurred. This was the first attack on a human by one of their St. Bernard dogs since the founding of the Hospice of the Great St. Bernard in the 11th century. The father of the victim was very vocal and adamant in demanding the destruction of all the dogs, claiming they were all “wolves in sheep's clothing.”⁷

The completely unblemished image of the breed for the previous eight centuries, the countless lives saved and humane service rendered by this breed all hung in the balance due to the actions of a single dog. It would take a month before the fate of all the St. Bernard dogs at the monastery would be decided. Fortunately, reason prevailed and the commandant of the Swiss gendarmes responded that the dogs would not be destroyed as they were not a public danger and it “must be recognized that the dogs rendered a great service to humanity throughout the ages.”⁸

Sometimes, there is no satisfactory answer to an episode of canine aggression. The condemnation of an entire breed in response to the actions of a few dogs is always found to be based on emotion and not based on the breed's history, temperament or long standing record of cooperation and service to mankind.

Fox Terriers, Boston Terriers and Airedales

While large dogs are physically able to inflict damage on a wider range of victims, small to medium size dogs are able to inflict severe to fatal wounds on smaller victims. Neither Fox Terriers nor Boston Terriers are of sufficient size to show up in significant numbers in severe/fatal attacks. Nor were these breeds used in functions which would predispose them to be in situations where aggression towards humans was encouraged, yet there are rare cases of these breeds involved in severe to fatal attacks against humans.

Fox Terriers

The image of a feisty little Fox Terrier attacking the pant leg of a man passing on the street seems more comical than dangerous. However, when this same level of aggression is directed at a small child, the results are far from humorous.

A severe attack on a child by a Fox Terrier occurred in 1901. A 2-year-old boy was playing on the floor with the dog one evening when the dog began attacking the boy. The father rushed in to find the dog biting the boy on the legs. The little Fox Terrier refused to release the boy, and when the father kicked and pulled at the dog, the dog was separated from the boy along with 3 inches of flesh torn from the boy's leg. The child was taken to the hospital where an operation was performed to close his wounds. As this attack occurred in New York City during the middle of the summer, the excessive heat was noted in the article as a possible reason for the vicious attack by the dog against his "former playmate."⁹

Although there is no documented case of a Fox Terrier-related fatality in the United States, a case of an infant being killed by his grandmother's Fox Terrier is found in the United Kingdom in 1966 and a more recent case of a Fox Terrier killing another infant is found in Australia in 1979.

So while the size of the dog counts, what often counts more is intent or the level of bite inhibition in an individual dog. The same year as the Fox Terrier attack on the boy, another child was attacked by a Bulldog while walking home from school. There is no question that size alone would indicate that a Bulldog attack would be more damaging than a Fox Terrier attack. Yet this girl suffered only bruising on one arm and on the calf of one leg from the attack by this larger and more powerful breed. Clearly, the dogs in these cases had different intents and different degrees of bite inhibition. In many attacks, an individual dog's level of bite inhibition is what determines the severity of the wounds, rather than breed or size of dog.

Boston Terriers

The Boston Terrier is one of the few breeds to originate in the United States. Although the breed was slightly larger in the early part of the 20th century than it is now, the Boston Terrier was still considered one of the smaller breeds. The Boston Terrier was also an American favorite. In the United States, the breed was at the height of its popularity from 1929–1935. It is of little surprise that at the height of this breed's popularity it would be found in cases of attacks against humans.

As seen with the Fox Terrier, what some dogs lack in size can be compensated for in either intensity of attack, size of victim or by increased number of attackers.

A dangerous little Boston Terrier could be found in 1909 near Newburyport, Massachusetts. A 2-year-old boy was visiting his uncle and had wandered out to the backyard. The dog savagely attacked the boy, grabbing him by the neck and shaking him. The uncle rushed into the yard and had “great difficulty in forcing the dog to release the boy.” The child died from a broken spine. Apparently, the dog was known to be aggressive, as the article reports that the little boy was “warned” not to play with the dog.¹⁰

A slighter larger child was overcome and killed in 1934 when two Boston Terriers attacked her in unison. This unfortunate 5-year-old girl was attacked in the street after she followed her father down the road to bid him goodbye on his way to work. As she was walking the short distance home, two Boston Terriers ran out and attacked her. She died a few hours later from her injuries.

Airedale Terriers

The Airedale Terrier breed again demonstrates that when a breed is extremely popular there will be a logical increase in attacks and bites.

This breed is perhaps not as well known as it should be for its service as a sentry and messenger dog during WWI. The Airedale is a medium-sized dog, weighing about 45 pounds. From 1910–1930, the Airedale was extremely popular in the United States. President Warren Harding (1921–23) and President Calvin Coolidge (1923–29) both owned an Airedale Terrier. No doubt the breed was sought out by many Americans. And no doubt there would be situations in which these dogs would be involved in attacks. Although the Airedale is not considered one of the larger or more powerful breeds, fatalities and severe attacks did occur.

In May of 1920, a small girl was killed when an Airedale bit her in the throat. The child was spending the summer with her parents at the home of the dog's owners in upstate New York. In 1923 and 1926, two more children were severely injured by Airedales in New York State.

In 1925, a 12-year-old Colorado boy was credited with saving the life of his sister from an attack by an Airedale. The boy and his baby sister were in a yard when the dog began

attacking the little girl. The boy lifted his sister and held her up in the air as the dog tore at him, trying to reach the girl. The boy was bitten 12 times before help arrived.¹¹

Even adults can suffer severe or near-fatal wounds by an enraged medium-sized dog. In 1921 it was reported that a man hunting in Pennsylvania was attacked and injured by an Airedale Terrier which had been living in the woods. The man's clothes and flesh were torn by the animal. The hunter stated that after finally beating the dog off him, he did not shoot it because he heard the whining of puppies. Nine puppies, about six weeks old, were later found by a posse sent out to search for the over-protective mother Airedale. Another hunter who had previously encountered the dog said the Airedale "was as savage as any wolf he ever saw."¹²

In Las Vegas, in 1931, a 16-year-old girl was credited with saving the life of her mother after an attack by her Airedale Terrier. The woman was reported to be terribly mangled by the dog she had raised from a pup. The woman had attempted to stop a fight between her Airedale and another dog in her backyard. She struck the dog with a stick and the dog turned upon her and knocked her to the ground, biting her viciously about the face. The woman, of slight build, was not able to ward off the prolonged attack. After the dog had bitten her numerous times in the face, she managed to turn facedown to protect her face from further injury. The dog continued his attack and fortunately the daughter returned home from school and was able to pull the dog off of the victim. The dog made no attempt to attack the daughter. The injuries included one ear almost torn off, the nose torn to the bone, her cheek ripped open, and numerous bites to the body.¹³

When a breed is popular there is an increase in all types of events associated with the keeping of dogs. In 1918, in San Francisco, the owner of a Pomeranian dog sued an Airedale owner. The Airedale had killed the valuable Pomeranian and the owner was seeking damages for the loss of his champion show dog. Indeed, the Superior Court jury awarded the Pomeranian owner \$500 dollars. This was a small fortune in 1918 or, as the newspaper reported, \$125 per pound (the Pomeranian weighed 4 lbs.).¹⁴

The examples of attacks by Fox Terriers, Boston Terriers and Airedales are presented not as an indicator of breed temperament, but to demonstrate two points: Small/medium dogs can exhibit occasional acts of extreme and dangerous aggression and the breeds of dogs involved in severe/fatal aggression change from decade to decade.

Savage, Vicious, Ferocious Dogs and Mongrel Dogs

Dog attack stories were of interest to the public one century ago and identifying the breed added another element of interest. It is not unreasonable to assume that in many, if not most, cases when a dog was simply identified as "vicious" or "savage," it was the result of not being able to identify the breed.

Most of these generic temperament descriptions undoubtedly were cases of mongrel or cur dogs.

This is demonstrated in cases when a dog attack story was carried in multiple newspapers. Some incidences of dog attacks were reported in a number of regional newspapers and the breed of dog was always referred to if known. For example, a fatal attack in Chicago on a young boy in 1885 was covered in at least six different newspapers from Chicago to New York. All accounts identified the dog as a Newfoundland or “a vicious Newfoundland.” None of the reports neglected to identify the specific breed.

Mixed breed dogs have always made up a significant percentage of the dog population, so their appearance in severe/fatal attacks is a certainty. That these mixed breed dogs should be listed as “a ferocious dog, savage dog, large brown dog, or starving dogs” was only a matter of journalistic interpretation of what was a more valid description of the forces behind aggression than the simple term “cur” or “mongrel.” Especially in large pack attacks, it can almost be guaranteed the dogs were a mixed lot of crossbred and cur dogs. Had the pack been five Newfoundland dogs or four Collies, this assuredly would have been reported as such.

In 1884, a 9-year-old boy had taken a bow and arrow for the purpose of hunting in the woods near his home. When he did not return for some time, his parents and neighbors began to search for him. He was found, barely alive, at the edge of a field. Looking at one of the neighbor’s bent over him, he was able to say, “Your dogs bit me.” No mention was made of how many or what kind of dogs the neighbor owned. The unfortunate boy was gravely injured and died soon after.¹⁵

An 1892 account tells of a fatal attack on a boy, Fred Ulrich, in Illinois. The boy was first attacked by one “savage brute” (presumably mongrel/cur dog) and, when a second dog joined the attack, the boy was overcome:

“He was passing the residence of Mrs. H. H. Mitchell, when a savage brute kept by that woman attacked him. Ulrich made a good fight, and would have come out all right had not another dog, owned by William Walrod, also attacked him.”

The Hamilton Daily Republican, October 24, 1892

There are a number of stories such as these, with no identifiable breeds. These incidents were very shocking and distressing to the people of the time, and the level of shock was not dependent on the breed or type of dog involved. However, during the early 20th century a number of cases are found where the newspapers did identify the dog involved in an attack as a mongrel, cur, mixed or cross breed. Here again, the media is found providing information which helps define the behaviors of the dog(s).

In 1910, it was reported that an invalid woman who kept “a large mongrel for protection” was attacked and killed by the dog in her home.¹⁶

In 1917, a well-publicized report of a 9-year-old boy in New York City dying from a dog attack told of the boy trying to break up a dog fight between two mixed breed neighborhood dogs, when both dogs turned their fury on him, attacking and killing the unfortunate boy.¹⁷

In 1926, a news report tells of “starving mongrels” attacking and killing a man in Yonkers, New York.¹⁸

Stories about children and adults attacked by mixed breed dogs were reported with as much vigor and shock as found in accounts of the purebred dog attacks. The style and intensity of reporting found in unidentified breed attacks and identified breed attacks are virtually identical, with triggers, circumstances, relationship to victim and function of the dog reported if known.

CHAPTER 5

The Reporting of Dog Attacks in Early 20th Century Media

A fascinating aspect of 19th and early 20th century newspaper articles about dog attacks is the perception and portrayal of dogs as emotional beings. Dogs were described as jealous, treacherous, lonely, depressed, enraged, frustrated, angry, brave, heroic and noble. Although 19th century media reports could be dismissed by some as being anthropomorphic, doing so would be narrow-minded and counterproductive. Indeed, modern-day science is just coming to prove what has been obvious to dog lovers for centuries—that dogs are indeed emotional beings.

The media of the day understood the complexities of canine behavior and used emotional terms in an attempt to understand the motivations and reasons for dog attacks. At times, dogs involved in attacks on humans were simply described as savage or vicious, but other times the media in the late 1800s showed great insight and understanding of canine behavior. This apparent desire to understand the cause and effects of dog attacks led the media to reveal details of dog attacks not seen in more modern, sterile accounts.

While some accounts may have been a bit dramatized, nonetheless the underlying cause of the dog attack was clearly presented and appears to be a reasonable explanation of the forces contributing to the attack. An example of a keen understanding of dogs and their relationships with immediate family members versus more unfamiliar persons is given in the 1910 account of a dog attack in New York City:

“Solomon Ziskind, who has a wholesale leather store at Second Avenue keeps a big brindle English Bulldog called Rough, for his methods with undesirable intruders. Last evening ten-year-old Solomon Ziskind Jr., with his ten-year-old cousin, Bernard Romm was playing tag among the crates and boxes that littered the yard. The dog lay huddled in the shadow in the corner. He knew the Ziskind boy and didn’t mind him, but his eyes followed the Romm boy wherever he went. Suddenly, the boy, dodging to escape his cousin, stumbled over the dog and fell. In another moment Rough leaped growling upon the little fellow...”

New York Times, March 22, 1910

The article goes on to describe the grievous injuries inflicted on the boy and the subsequent destruction of the dog. This account provides information understood to contribute towards canine aggression. Function (guard dog), wariness of strangers (cousin) and provocation (being tripped over) were recognized as factors that added motivation for this dog to attack. The dog was not in any way excused, nor the attack deemed any more acceptable because of these factors. The circumstances leading up to the attack were presented to show cause and effect.

Another case in 1897 describes an attack by a Newfoundland that “was a pet and not at all vicious.” The dog was lying on the floor in the parlor of the house. The dog resided in the home with the owner and his 17-year-old daughter. The young lady was sitting in a rocking chair when “she brought one of the rockers down on one of the animal’s paws. The animal sprang up with a yelp of pain and dashed about the room.” The young woman called to the dog, and the dog responded by attacking her, biting her in the face, chest and arms.¹

Another report clearly shows that dogs often have limits to the amount of roughhousing they will tolerate. The following case also shows how quickly one dog’s actions can trigger a pack attack. In 1886, a 6-year-old boy was playing with four dogs belonging to his neighbors. Two of the dogs were Collies, one a Newfoundland, and the other an unidentified dog. The human and canine behaviors at work are clearly presented in this accounting of the attack:

“The Landers boy had often played with these dogs, as they have always been considered harmless. Taking for granted the gentle disposition of the dogs the child harnessed one of them, and, as he expressed it, began to ‘play horse’. In chasing the dogs he fell and one of the Collies bit his wrist...and when the child attempted to rise they turned upon him and began to tear him in a fearful manner. A man who was passing was attracted by the boy’s outcry, and after some difficulty succeeded in driving the dogs away, but not until they had literally stripped the child of his clothing and almost killed him.”

Mitchell Daily Republican, November 7, 1886

The article concludes with the hope that attending physicians would be able to save the boy’s life.

A newspaper article entitled “Attacked by Starving dogs” is clear in presenting the condition of the dogs and the behavior of the victim which clearly contributed to this attack. The attack occurred in Philadelphia in 1885. A 12-year-old girl was returning home from the butcher’s shop carrying a package of meat when a pack of approximately 12 dogs began to follow and harass her. When the dogs began jumping and snapping at the meat she was holding, the girl became frightened and started to run. The dogs followed, quickly knocking her down. In the ensuing frenzy, not only was the meat consumed, but the girl was severely bitten about face, arms and legs with her clothes shredded and stripped off.²

A fair number of dog attack reports state clearly that the dog was teased or provoked by children. While girls seemed to do inadvertent things to cause a dog to attack, such as pushing the dog away or going near a dog with food or a bone, boys on the other hand seemed to provoke dogs quite regularly and intentionally.

In 1891, a group of boys were playing on a street in Wheeling, West Virginia. A yard off the street contained a kennel with six huge English Mastiffs inside. One nine-year-old boy approached the kennel and began teasing the dogs. It can only be assumed the fence made the boy feel secure enough to continue his tormenting to a dangerous level. The Mastiffs were huge, numerous and “became fearfully enraged.” The dogs broke down the fencing and killed the boy.³

Some particularly sad cases involved boys teasing a dog and the dog taking its frustration out on an innocent girl who happened on the scene. In 1905, two boys were inciting a large dog to attack a smaller dog. When the little mistress of the small dog rode up on her bicycle, the large dog attacked the unfortunate girl. She was severely bitten, but survived her injuries.⁴

Dogs turning their frustration on innocent victims was not uncommon. Nor was it uncommon for humans to unreasonably expect dogs to tolerate all types of torment and still behave amicably. This article about a fatal dog attack in 1905 thoroughly vilified the dog, yet at the same time presented the details that drove this dog into a frenzy:

“The owner of a yard with a number of fruit trees purchased a large Bulldog to guard against the stealing of the fruit which are an attraction to the boys of the neighborhood. On an early May morning, Jack, the heavy headed Bulldog, lay crouched beneath a cherry tree, a stout chain limiting the circle of his movement. Boys of the neighborhood saw a chance to get at some half-ripe cherries in a tree near the fence, but found the dog menacing them. They then teased the animal until it was nearly frantic. Nearby, the little daughter of the owner was playing with a rubber ball. The baby’s thoughts were busy on the ball, she did not notice how the wicked little eyes, red with rage, watched her. The child toddled in pursuit of a rubber ball that rolled into the bare spot which marked the limits of the dog’s chain. The baby stooped for the ball, but, before she could pick it up, the dog had seized her by the head.”

Perry Daily Chief, May 27, 1905

The account goes on to portray the dog as disloyal and vicious. So while all parties (the boys that teased the dog and the individuals recounting the story) recognized the factors that triggered this dog to attack, nevertheless the implication is that dogs should have no limit to their tolerance of human provocation.

This scenario is typical of fatal dog attacks. The older boys were able to read and understand the potential danger this dog had become. The 18-month-old girl was not capable of reading or understanding the danger of entering the chained space of this agitated animal.

Since most homes and businesses in the late 1800s were not enclosed by fencing, chaining a dog was often considered less dangerous than letting a potentially aggressive dog roam free. Even though it was a better option, it was also understood to increase aggressiveness. In an article describing the attack on a man by a Bloodhound, it was explained that the dog had been chained all five years it was owned. It was noted that the dog “was secured in his front yard by a strong boat chain, and being chained would naturally be cross.”⁵

The article “Entirely Too Many Dogs/Many Children Bitten” printed in January 1901, shows that while the author is angry with dogs, he also understands that the problem is very much a human one:

“A number of complaints have been received by the police lately about children being bitten by dogs. There seems to be no probability that there will be a cessation of these complaints until the authorities again tackle this dog problem in earnest...Of recent years various breeds of large dogs, such as St. Bernards and Mastiffs, have been introduced into Anaconda and they have flourished in such a way that there are now hundreds and hundreds of them. They are so large that an attack by one of them on a little boy or girl is a serious matter. Owing to their enormous size they cannot be beaten off and when once angered they are said to be very ferocious. It is not always, however, that it is these large dogs that spring upon people. The smaller ones are equally as bad.

“Often times it is as much the fault of the children themselves as the dogs. The boys tease the animals by throwing snowballs and stones at them and by striking them over the nose and in other ways tantalizing them until the brutes become furious.”

The Anaconda Standard, January 13, 1901

The author goes on to discuss the frustration of the parents whose child has been bitten and the attempt of dog owners to hide the dog in cellars when police arrive to kill it. It is no small irony that these owners did not contain their dogs to protect them and the public to begin with; only after a child was bitten and the dog was in immediate danger of being shot by police did they think to contain the animal.

Clearly the media and the public of the late 1800s and early 1900s had a grasp on the causes and reasons for dog attacks. Obvious factors, such as excessive heat, teasing, chaining, and abuse, were included in news reports of dog attacks to explain behavior. However, not all cases involved provocation; some dogs attacked due to territorial or dominance issues, and there are always cases when a dog attack cannot be attributed to any motivations that can be understood by humans.

The reasons why dogs attack are often complex, but the answer to preventing dog attacks is relatively simple: Humane care and control of dogs is often all that is needed to prevent most dog attacks. Perhaps one reader summed up the dog problem best in 1905:

“At this season of the year dogs that are suffering from the heat and the attacks of pestiferous insects, are ill humored and cross. That they should snap at children passing by or bite tormentors of more mature years is not surprising...Perhaps, (the dog), is not to blame for all the assaults which he commits. More blameworthy, possibly, is his owner. The dog owner’s duty to the animal and the public does not end with the payment of the tax. If he does right he will protect the animal from the torments of the heated season and by keeping him off the streets, safeguard innocent people from the animal’s hot weather temper. There are two sides to the vicious dog stories.”

Fort Wayne Daily News, July 21, 1905

CHAPTER 6

The Use and Misuse of Courage: The Bulldog

“The greatest pup in Mongaup today is a brindled Bulldog as brave as he is hideous. Every woman who meets the brindle pats it, seems disposed to kiss its ugly mug, and says: ‘Good dog! Good dog!’”¹

This is an excerpt from a *Washington Post* news story, in 1907, about a Bulldog that saved the lives of 20 women huckleberry-picking in a field in New Jersey. The women wandered near a fenced pasture in which a bull grazed. The bull became enraged at this perceived intrusion, breaking down the fence and charging the soon frantic women. One of the women had a Bulldog which had accompanied the ladies on their berry-picking adventure. Upon seeing the women running from the maddened bull, the Bulldog rushed into the fray. The dog intercepted and attacked the bull before it was able to reach the fleeing women.

As seen in the chapter on farm dogs, it was not uncommon for livestock to attack humans, or for faithful dogs to rush to their aid. Neither was it uncommon for dogs to be heralded or recognized publicly in the media for these deeds.

Dogs referred to as “Bulldogs” were extremely popular in the late 1800s and early 1900s. These all-purpose dogs appealed to a wide variety of owners. Bulldogs functioned as guard dogs, farm dogs, hunting dogs, police dogs, traveling companions, and house pets, as well as in such inhumane pursuits as dog-fighting, attack dogs, and/or as an object to give their owners a sense of power.

As seen with the Bloodhounds and the Northern breeds, more often than not, attempting to distinguish between similar yet distinct breeds is nearly impossible. During the 19th century the term “Bulldog” was a generic term used to identify a type of dog used for a host of functions. Even though there were separate breeds recognized as the Bulldog, American Pit Bull Terrier, and Bull Terrier, all these dogs were regularly referred to by many people and the media as simply “Bulldogs.” Although each of these breeds has a common origin in a type of old English Bull-dogge used for bull baiting and/or pit fighting, each has their own separate history of breeding for a specific trait, appearance or function.



Bull Terrier: "Is a cross from the Bull-dog and Terrier, and is one of the most useful guard-dogs now in use. In the woods he is an overmatch for the Badger, Fox, Skunk and Coon and none can excel him in activity, vigilance or sagacity. No animal is more abused, or less deserving of it" (Francis Butler, 1860).

Then, as today, there was much confusion, debate and misinformation as to the history and identification of the individual Bull-dog and Bull-terrier breeds. Less confusing and more revealing was the immediate function of the dog, and in the realization of that, the public and the media are found referring to dogs as either "Bulldog guard dog," "pet Bulldog," "Bulldog used in the pit," or "farm Bulldog." These identifications were far superior to "Pit bull," "Bull Terrier" or "Bulldog" in explaining the behavior of dogs found in attacks or in the performance of heroic deeds.

The Bulldog had proven itself a valuable and dependable companion to the American people throughout the 19th century. Like most dogs, Bulldogs often endured hardship and abuse, yet were steadfast in their loyalty and devotion to their masters. Bulldogs were highly respected for these qualities, along with their fierceness. Fierceness was not considered a negative attribute a century ago, and many Bulldogs were praised for this particular trait. Fierceness was associated with courage and fortitude, and these characteristics were needed on farms, in the wildness and even in cities. Fierceness was not the same as ferociousness, and was not used to imply aggression towards humans.

Like any breed of dog that is popular and used in multiple functions, the Bulldog was involved in a wide spectrum of incidents and events, most advantageous to men, but some not so. Far too frequently in the human/dog relationship, humans place dogs in situations or environments where dogs have little option but to behave badly, and Bulldogs, because of their courageous nature, found themselves often in these lose-lose type of situations.

A strange kind of depravity is found a number of times in the late 1800s—that of men initiating a fight with a dog. This was seen in the staged match between a Siberian Bloodhound

and a prize fighter in 1889. It was also seen a number of times with those who fancied themselves to be prize fighters. In another incident in 1889, two men were walking home one evening in Indianapolis. The men were discussing a boxing match which recently occurred. They passed by a house with a Bulldog in the yard. The less bright of the two claimed he could “knock the dog out in one round.” The article goes on to say that “the brute accepted the challenge, and a fierce fight ensued, in which the man was terribly bitten about the neck and head. One eye was torn out and one ear bit off, and he would have been torn to pieces had not the owner of the dog come to his rescue.” The article makes special note to describe the man as “perfectly sober” at the time.²

As bizarre as this case is, this man showed far more bravery than any of the traditional “dog fighters.” Dog fighters flatter themselves that they are sporting men. But unlike a true sport which requires intelligence, stamina, or athletic prowess on the part of the human participants, only the dogs display any of these abilities in this “sport.” The human agitators stand safely off to the side, needing no sportsman-like qualities other than being able to bend over and pick up the body of the animal which entrusted its life to this man.

As is the case with most breeds of dogs, few Bulldogs, American Pit Bull Terriers or Bull Terriers were expected to perform the original function associated with the breed. In the late 19th century most of the Bulldogs, Bull Terriers and American Pit Bull Terriers were *not* used for bull baiting or dog fighting, but were used to assist and accompany their masters in the daily tasks of living.



Early 1900s etching of a pet Bulldog and his two young masters. The caption reads: “*Black and White—the dog loves irrespective of colour or caste* (Photo credit: Kate Fraser).

From the Bulldog used for hunting to the Bulldog kept as a house pet, the breed's courage and steady temperament proved itself on a daily basis and in almost every circumstance. An incident which reveals much about the true nature of Bulldogs, even those dogs chained and deprived of adequate human attention, is found in the following 1882 account:

A Dog Steals a Negro Baby

“Yesterday morning a Negro woman in East Selma laid a very young child on a small pallet placed in the sun, where the wind would not strike it, and went to another part of the yard to commence her week's washing. Returning in a short while great was her distress and agony to find the child gone. A diligent search about the premises resulted vainly, and the mother was on the point of distraction when a faint cry was heard from the large dog house that stood by, a peep into which disclosed the baby stretched on the dog's bed—all right with the exception of a few scratches caused by being dragged over the ground, while the mischievous author of the excitement, an over-grown Bulldog pup, looked calmly on wagging his tail in an unconcerned way.”

Selma Times, March 23, 1882

In 1903 a newspaper article tells of Bum the police Bull Terrier chasing crooks in New York City and leading his partner, Officer Shields, to the East River, where the dog began tugging at a man floating facedown in the river. The man was blind and had stumbled into the river. The Bull Terrier was credited with saving the man's life.

In 1906 an article entitled “Faithful Bulldog Copper Patrols Georgetown Beat” describes how “Jim, a handsome Bulldog” was rescued by a police officer from a burning building. The story goes on to explain how the Bulldog then became a member of the police force, patrolling a beat with his human partner and assisting in arrests. True to the Bulldog character, the canine police officer was reported to “love the excitement and dangers of police work.”³

It was also not unusual to find “*fierce*” Bulldogs or Bull Terriers saving their masters/mistresses from “*ferocious*” dogs of other breeds. In 1905 an article entitled “Woman's Battle with Dog” has the subheading, “Pulled Down by Vicious Setter, Pet Bull Terrier Saved Her.” The rest of the article goes on to explain how the Setter jumped at the woman, knocking her down, attacking and biting, before the woman's Bull Terrier rushed in and attacked the Setter dog.⁴

On the front page of the *Davenport Democrat* in 1924 is a photograph of two small boys sitting on a bench. One of the boys has his arm across the shoulders of a little Bulldog, while the dog sits half on the bench and half draped over the boy's tiny leg. Another small boy sits beside them, his head swathed in bandages. The title of the article is “Pet Bulldog Saves Two Children from Mad Dog's Attack.” The lengthy article goes on to describe in great detail the severe injuries inflicted in an attack by a mad Airedale Terrier

on the two boys playing in the street. Queen, the little Bulldog, rushed out of the house when one of the children's mothers opened the screen door after hearing the boys' cries. The dog was credited with saving the lives of both children.⁵

Unfortunately, as we see time and again, there never seems to be a shortage of persons using dogs as an extension of their violent tendencies, and so Bulldogs, ever ready to please their masters, are found in situations of human initiated aggression. In 1871, there was a case reported of an Edwardsville man sentenced to six months imprisonment for inciting his Bulldog to attack his wife. The report reads:

“The man having some grudge against his wife, locked the doors of the house so she could not escape, and then deliberately incited a large bull dog to worry the unfortunate woman. The details of her frantic struggle with the brute, which were given in evidence before a magistrate were unspeakably horrible. She was savagely bitten in many places by the dog, her husband doing his best to shut out all means of escape.”

Edwardsville Intelligencer, November 23, 1871

There are numerous other cases found of men inciting, encouraging or “setting their dogs” onto the unfortunate victims of their anger.

In 1905 we find an article about Bulldogs in which the author states; “A man is known by the Bulldog he keeps.”⁶ Indeed, the reverse is probably even truer: the temperament and behavior of many a Bulldog is known by the owner who keeps it.

The Bulldog's image experienced a rather sudden turn in the early 1900s when they left the farms, frontiers and pits and entered into urban apartment houses and began roaming in great numbers through city streets. Like the Collie, the Bulldog had much credit in the bank of public opinion in the later part of the 19th century. The Bulldog had proven itself among all levels of society as a hard-working, loyal dog. The Bulldog's occasional function as a fighting dog influenced the image of the breed negatively to some degree, but the many contributions the Bulldogs had made to early Americans as farm dogs and loyal protectors counteracted their fighting image.

It is no coincidence that President Theodore Roosevelt (1901–1909) owned a Bulldog during his term in the White House at the height of the Bulldog popularity. However, the bane of any breed is popularity. As seen time and time again, when a breed becomes exceedingly popular, especially if the breed has a negative function attached to it, there will be a significant increase in substandard and unsuitable owners. Such was the dilemma of the Bulldog in the early 1900s. Bulldog popularity soared in the first decade of the 1900s and Bulldogs were now found in great numbers in urban environments.

No surprise that we should find the highest number of fatal Bulldog attacks during the height of the Bulldog popularity (1900–1909). And no small surprise these attacks would

be found clustered in the large cities, where these animals were often kept in apartment buildings or allowed to roam the city streets.

In New York City, a Bulldog killed his mistress after she savagely beat him the day before. As the woman lay dying from her wounds she remarked, “I beat the dog for disobeying me, and it was sullen all day.” The woman also said she began to feel remorse for “whipping” the dog and had gone into the kitchen to get some meat for the dog when it attacked her. She died the next day from her injuries.⁷

During this same decade, we find the previously discussed case of the Bulldog chained to the cherry tree being teased by boys and killing a little girl who wandered too close to the dog.

In 1909 another tragic case of a Bulldog-related fatality could be found in New York City. A woman, Mrs. Liebess, who suffered from epilepsy, owned a Bulldog which lived with her in her apartment. Early in August the woman collapsed in a seizure. Her neighbor Mrs. Sness and her 15-year-old son, hearing a commotion, went to the woman’s aid. Upon finding the door locked, Mrs. Sness and her son broke open the door. After they entered into the apartment, the Bulldog attacked both mother and son. Bedlam ensued as mother and son struggled to fight off the dog, with the owner still on the floor semi-conscious. Other neighbors responded to the scene but were afraid to intervene because they imagined the dog to be “mad.” The unfortunate woman who attempted to help her neighbor died from her injuries from the over-protective and clearly agitated Bulldog. Her 15-year-old son survived.⁸

Besides a handful of fatal attacks, there were numerous severe attacks involving Bulldogs from 1900–1909. During this decade we find the Bulldog’s reputation turning from a fierce dog to a ferocious dog.

One reader complained in 1904 about the tremendous boon in Bulldog ownership and the number of owners who were looking for a vicious dog:

“In recent years, the bull dog fad has become very pronounced, it being considered the thing by many people in towns to own bull dogs—and the uglier and the more vicious the brute the more highly is he prized. Charlotte, for instance, is infested with bull dogs.”

The Landmark, June 10, 1904

Another reader complained of the number of loose dogs and of the owners who “seem to gloat over the fact of having a Bull Terrier that would take a man down if he came through the yard gate.”⁹

While one faction of the public was encouraging the Bulldog to be a vicious guard dog, others were seeking Bulldogs out as pets, which led the old-time Bulldog breeders and dogfighters to bemoan the breed was losing its character (meaning fighting ability). In 1912, a dogfighter complained at a Bulldog Society Show that the Bulldog

was “becoming increasingly popular as a woman’s pet and was thereby losing much of its fighting quality.” He further complains that “it is painful to see the coddling that goes on, the feeding of milk and the best quality of steak, sleeping indoors, and general effeminizing.”¹⁰

Despite the confusion about function, despite an increase in severe/fatal attacks due to increased popularity with substandard owners and guard dog use, and despite the overall appearance of fierceness, the Bulldog never really found disfavor with the American public. The media continued to recount cases of Bulldogs performing heroic deeds during this decade (1900–1909) and in the decades to follow.

It is worthy of note that in 1911 the *Encyclopedia Britannica* felt the need to address the Bulldog’s true nature versus the reputation the breed had acquired in the previous decade as a result of increased popularity with substandard owners. The edition defined the Bulldog as:

“The Bulldog is a small, compact but extremely heavily built animal of great strength, vigor and tenacity... Bulldogs were formerly employed in bull baiting and the tenacity of their grip is proverbial. Their ferocious appearance, and not infrequently the habits of their owners, have given this breed a reputation for ferocity and low intelligence. As puppies, however, Bulldogs are highly intelligent and unusually docile and affectionate, and if well trained retain throughout life an unusual sweetness of disposition, the universal friendliness of which makes them of little use as guardians.”

Fortunately for the Bulldogs, much of this confusion about function and behavior abated when the public turned their attention to a newly emerging breed becoming known for its intelligence and watchfulness. In less than a decade, the German Shepherd would replace the Bulldog as the new status or fad dog.

With their popularity waning and with owners looking towards the German Shepherd as their new protector and intimidation dog, Bulldog-related fatalities and the number of severe attacks plummeted.



The case of the Bulldog in the late 1800s and early 1900s is perhaps the best example of how function influences public perception.

During the 19th century, Bulldogs, more than any other breed, were used in the most extreme of negative functions (dog fighting, guard/attack dogs) and in the most positive functions (police dogs and in heroic deeds on farms). The media presented balanced reporting of both the devastation Bulldogs inflicted in attacks and of the contributions they made by saving lives and defending the public as police dogs and personal guardians. Additionally, the media often printed accounts of Bulldogs interacting with their owners and others in the more mundane or everyday activities. Due to this balanced reporting, and the use of

Bulldogs in many functions, both positive and negative, the Bulldog never received widespread public condemnation, even during periods of increased popularity when many owners allowed them to roam loose and behave aggressively.

During the first three decades of the 1900s, there were scores of accounts of Bulldogs saving their masters and mistresses from snakes, fires, drownings, gas leaks, burglars and charging livestock, and saving or alerting people to children fallen off of cliffs or wandering onto train tracks and highways. Even more enlightening about the attitudes and perceptions of the times are accounts in which individual incidents of Bulldogs not previously known to be noble were recognized for an act of humane service.

In 1919 a story is told of a “big, ugly Bulldog named Sinful Sam” saving a child from being run over on a highway in Berkeley, CA. The headline of the article reads “Bulldog Saves Life of Boy Playmate, Former ‘Sinful Sam’ Now a Hero.”¹¹

A most interesting and insightful understanding of function and image, as well as a clear demonstration that owners ultimately control and determine the behaviors found in their dogs, was chronicled in September 1900. This fascinating account entitled “Bulldog Saves Child’s Life” with the subheading, “Thought it was Ordered to Attack Drowning Boy and Brought him Ashore,” demonstrates with great clarity that even dogs used in negative functions can be viewed as good dogs and can do good deeds.

The account tells of an older man walking on the banks of St. Joseph River in Indiana accompanied by his Bulldog. The owner of the dog heard a cry for help and hurried around a bend in the river to find an 8-year-old boy drowning in deep water. The man admitted to being too old to swim, but instead urged his Bulldog to go after the child. He threw a rock in the direction of the boy and urged the dog to “go after” the boy. The article states:

“The dog, it is believed, took this as a hint to attack the boy, and did so, seizing him by one arm and holding on like grim death while responding to his master’s commands to come ashore.

“Once ashore, the dog released the boy to his owner, who then pulled him up onto the riverbank.”

The story concludes:

“The dog is not credited with being actuated by a noble instinct, but the boy is thankful, nevertheless, despite a very sore arm.”

Special to the *New York Times*, September 14, 1900

This small incident clarifies the essence of dogs. It was implied this Bulldog was a fighting dog; nonetheless, when his owner commanded the dog to “attack” and “release” the boy, the dog obeyed and saved the drowning youth. Owners control the behaviors of their

dogs, and whether the dog is used in a negative or a positive function is at the complete discretion of the owner.

A century ago, there was a more balanced view of both the dangers and contributions dogs made to the welfare of humans. The media portrayed what many people at the time seemed to understand: that good dogs occasionally behave “badly” and that even “bad” dogs could do good deeds.

By the early 1920s the vast majority of Americans would quickly forget the Bulldogs. Well over half a century would pass before any of these breeds would enter back into the collective consciousness of the American public. However, for over half a century in between, 1920–1970, millions of Bulldogs, Bull Terriers, American Pit Bull Terriers, American Staffordshire Terriers and all their mixed breed cousins served Americans well in every possible capacity and circumstance. From high-profile Bulldogs such as Stubby, one of America’s foremost canine military heroes, and Petey, the famed *Little Rascals* Pit bull pal, to the millions of anonymous dogs whose owners either cherished, neglected, fought or horrifically abused them, Bulldogs served Americans consistently, courageously, faithfully, and peaceably.



WWI propoganda poster with dogs in military uniform representing rival European nations. In the center, an American Pit Bull Terrier represents the United States, with the caption: “I’m Neutral- BUT Not Afraid of any of them.” (Courtesy of Animal Farm Foundation)

CHAPTER 7

The Media Re-Shapes an Image: The German Shepherd

By the early 1900s, the large guard dog breeds, the Bloodhound, Newfoundland, Mastiff and Bulldog, were rather quickly being replaced by other breeds. It is with no surprise then that we find that severe and fatal attacks from these breeds dramatically decrease.

By the first decade of the 1900s, new breeds were being developed in other countries and imported to America. A few of these breeds gained tremendous popularity with the American people, becoming the new guard dogs, working dogs and companion animals. Perhaps no breed has risen in popularity so rapidly, become so consistently popular, served in so many capacities and dealt with so much conflicting criticism and praise as has the German Shepherd Dog.

The German Shepherd is a rather new import to the United States, with the first dog of this breed registered by the American Kennel Club in 1908. The start of a new century along with introduction of an entirely new breed allows for an old set of problems (breed, function, aggression) to be examined from a clean slate.

Like the Bloodhounds, Northern breeds and Bulldogs, attempting to obtain accurate breed identification of the German Shepherd in cases of aggression is, at best, a difficult task. Although the German Shepherd is a distinct-looking breed, the reliability of breed identifications in attacks where German Shepherds were named as the breed is relatively low. Police dog, German police dog, Shepherd dog, German Shepherd, Alsatian (still widely used in Europe and other parts of the world), Alsatian Wolf dog and, of course, German Shepherd Dog are all terms that have been used at one time or another to describe the breed of dog we know today as the German Shepherd.

The first reported fatal attack that may seem to suggest a German Shepherd is found in 1887, when a young boy was killed in Indiana as he tried to pet a “shepherd dog.”¹ There is no doubt the dog involved in this fatality was *not* a German Shepherd, as the breed of dog we know as the German Shepherd had not yet been created. The term “shepherd dog” was certainly used to describe the function or class of dog (i.e., sheep dog, hound dog, terrier) and not a specific breed.

The generic term “shepherd dog” is seen again in another fatality in 1903, except this dog was further described as a “valuable shepherd dog.” This case involved a farmer who was going into town and wished to lock the dog in the barn while he was away. The dog refused to enter the barn and when the owner tried to force the dog through the door, it

turned on his master. The shepherd dog was relentless in his attack. The man's wife arrived and made a desperate attempt to save her husband. She hit the dog in the back with an axe, but this only maddened the dog further. She then swung a fateful blow that missed its mark, instead striking her husband in the leg. The man died a few hours later from blood loss.²

From 1887 through 1919, the only classification seen that even remotely suggests the involvement of a German Shepherd in attacks is the word "shepherd" dog. It hardly needs to be said that none of these cases can reasonably or reliably be attributed to the specific breed of German Shepherd.

Clues as to the possible breed involved in fatal/severe attacks are only slightly more revealing beginning in 1928, when it was reported that a 5-year-old boy in Minnesota entered into a building to play with three dogs kept there. The dogs, one of which was a police dog, became excited, knocking the boy to the floor. The situation escalated into a fatal attack.³ But here again, function takes precedence over breed and the dog is described by what it does, "police work," rather than its specific breed. There exists the real possibility that this dog was not a German Shepherd, as it was not unheard of for Collies or Bulldogs to be described as police dogs during this time.

By the mid-1930s, the descriptions are more revealing, as German police dogs are found in reported cases of attacks. In July 1945, a young girl in Virginia was reported to have been attacked and killed by a "big, brown and very vicious German police dog."⁴ German police dog was a very popular name for the German Shepherd from 1920–1945. This terminology does not allow for the suggestion of any other breed, unlike the description "police dog."

It was 1947 before the first dog involved in a fatality was officially named as a German Shepherd, when it was reported that a small boy was attacked and killed while sledding in Pennsylvania. By the 1940s the identification of German Shepherds involved in attacks appears to have some reliability, and even though fatalities were rare, there were a substantial number of severe attacks by this breed reported in the news.



In direct contrast to the harm the media did to the reputation of the Bloodhound in the previous century, the media was directly responsible for salvaging the quickly deteriorating image of the German Shepherd in the beginning of the 20th century.

By the 1920s the German Shepherd had already gained tremendous popularity in the U.S. However, another phenomenon was gaining momentum just as quickly—the demonization of the German Shepherd. By 1920, the German Shepherd was well on its way to becoming the first "bad breed" of the 20th century. It is unclear as to the exact forces at work which were rapidly destroying the reputation of this newly formed breed.

In the first decade of the 20th century (1900–1909), there were a significant number of fatal dog attacks reported in the U.S. The only one of these that even remotely suggests a

German Shepherd was the attack mentioned earlier (in 1903, involving a valuable shepherd dog and a farmer).

By the second decade of the 20th century (1910–1919), fatal dog attack reports were few and far between. It is unlikely that canine behavior changed dramatically from one decade to the next. Perhaps it may be that with the First World War looming, the nation and the media were focused on issues of greater magnitude and dog attack stories took a back seat to national and international events.

With no authenticated cases of fatal German Shepherd attacks to be found from 1900–1919, it is difficult to surmise how the breed was developing such a bad reputation so quickly. But, by the start of the 1920s, the German Shepherd had developed a widespread reputation as a treacherous, deceitful and vicious dog, and was starting to overshadow the Bloodhound's long-standing image as the most ferocious breed.

No doubt there were non-fatal attacks on humans, and there appears to be a number of cases of predation (attacking livestock) with this newly popular breed. The fact that the breed was known in England as the Alsatian Wolf dog, and the term 'wolf' was attached to this breed in its beginnings, most assuredly contributed negatively towards their image. A common thread seen in maligning the breed is this reference to wolf blood. Up until very recently, people were very passionate in their hatred and fear of the wolf.

But what is clear is that by the 1920s there was a public perception that the German Shepherd had few redeeming qualities, and that the breed's only contribution to society was in increasing the number of dog attacks in the community. We find the public debate in full swing concerning the nature and disposition of the German Shepherd by the early 1920s. After a volley of letters debating the behavior of the German police dog was printed in the editorial section of the *New York Times*, Mrs. Dorothy Holden voiced her opinion in a response dated July 11, 1924:

"I live in a neighborhood where there are at least ten within a radius of half a mile, and during the past year six women and children (including my own daughter) have been attacked by them without provocation—in two cases the victims were only saved from being torn to pieces by the intervention of the dogs' owners.

"They do not seem to attack men or large dogs and if even a small dog shows fight they usually slink off. And for any usefulness they may have or endearing qualities, I do not notice...and with only a thin veneer over the wolf, they are certainly not to be trusted.

"They are being imported in such numbers and are breeding so fast that they will soon be as numerous as the rabbits in Australia, and are a far greater menace.

“In conclusion, we live in a semi-besieged state of terror from these German police dogs, and the law does not seem to be able to help us, as their owners are wealthy.”⁵

Indeed, this woman was not alone in her beliefs. In 1925, a New York magistrate proposed a ban on the German Shepherd dog in Queens. The City Magistrate of Queens requested that the County Health authorities ban German police dogs from the city, as they had been “branded a menace.” Magistrate James J. Conway was also quoted as saying the German police dog was:

“...savage, vicious and bred from wolves...In the city at the present time there are thousands of these savage dogs. The police records show that there are 2,000 German police dogs in Queens...Hundreds of persons have been victims of dog bites during the past year, and the majority of biting dogs were police dogs. The dogs should be barred from the city.”

The New York Times, January 7, 1925

It is not well-known, but the first official breed ban was against the German Shepherd. On May 2, 1929, the Australian government imposed an import ban on the Alsatian (German Shepherd) that was to stay in effect until March 1974. The ban was proposed due to the claim by the Graziers Federal Council of Australia and others that the Alsatian dog was a vicious dog with wolf blood in its veins. The Alsatian was also branded a sheep killer and the pastoralists (farmers) believed the dogs would mate with the dingo and produce a new strain of powerful and intelligent sheep killers.

A Montana reader was in full agreement after reading about the ban in Australia. His letter to the editor, entitled “Killer Dogs,” speaks for itself. He expounds on his theory with the following comments:

“Australia has banned the German police dog and has ordered all in the country to be sterilized, due to the fact that this dog is not a shepherd dog, but a killer. The police dog is little less than a wolf.”

The editorial goes on to describe attacks by German police dogs on livestock in Minnesota and concludes with:

“Why pay a bounty on wolves?...when we allow misguided citizens to import half-domesticated wolves from Germany and proceed to breed them and turn them loose on the already over-vexed sheepman. The sheep dog is a friend to man, but I would prefer the hyena to the German police dog.”⁶

Just as the anti-German Shepherd movement was picking up speed, a number of extraordinary events occurred that turned the tide of public opinion on its proverbial head.

At the end of World War I, Air Force Corporal Lee Duncan returned to his California home with two German Shepherd puppies he rescued from a deserted bunker in France. The female puppy died soon after reaching the United States, but the surviving male puppy thrived and was named Rin Tin Tin. Duncan, an animal enthusiast, spent the next three years hounding movie studios to use his intelligent and well-trained dog in their productions. Finally, in 1922, Rin Tin Tin won a bit part in the movie *The Man from Hell's River*. The rest is history; Rin Tin Tin went on to star in another 25 films (most of them silent movies) in his 10-year career.

At the end of the 1920s, instead of printing editorials about vicious German police dogs, the newspapers were full of accounts of heroic deeds by German police dogs, as the German Shepherd craze was in full swing.

Another event occurred concurrently with the rise of Rin Tin Tin, which perhaps was not as well publicized, but certainly contributed to the turn around in public sentiment towards the German Shepherd. In 1928, Buddy, a female German Shepherd, became the first seeing-eye dog in the United States. This novel and humane function of the German Shepherd was another very positive image that helped dispel the rumors and allegations of wolf-like savagery associated with the breed only 10 years earlier.

The tide had turned so dramatically that in July 1934, when a young Long Island boy was killed by a chained German police dog, it was reported that the dog killed his young companion because he was "tied out" and "crazed by the heat." Another article describes the dog as "maddened by the heat." The implication now was that it was not in the true nature of the breed to behave this way; provocation or extenuating circumstances drove this dog to aggressiveness. This is quite a turnaround from the savage, vicious, treacherous depictions of the German police dog prior to the introduction of Rin Tin Tin and Buddy.

In addition to portraying the German Shepherd as a heroic breed, the media negatively manipulated other breeds to assist in bolstering the "new" positive image of the German Shepherd. A fascinating example of this was the 1925 release of the Rin Tin Tin movie *Below the Line*.

The movie begins with Rin Tin Tin being trained as a pit fighting dog. Early in the movie, Rinty (as Rin Tin Tin was familiarly referred to) falls from a train and is severely injured. He is nursed back to health and, of course, becomes devoted to the humans who have shown him kindness. In return, Rinty saves his human benefactors from all types of peril, one of these perils being an attack on the heroine by a pack of Bloodhounds.

A 1926 review of this movie shows with great clarity the reactions that Bloodhounds could still elicit from people. It also demonstrates that the shift in public attitude towards the German Shepherd had been so greatly influenced by the fictional Rin Tin Tin, that the public could also easily accept the death of a villain by an attack by the "new" heroic German Shepherd.

The title of this review is telling in and of itself:

Bloodhounds Rip into Rin Tin Tin in New Picture

“The Bloodhounds are loose! When that anguished cry shrieks out on the screen sub-title, you take a new hold on whatever is nearest you and prepare to try and stand the biggest thrill of all. For *Below the Line* has thrills from the opening flash. But, when the Bloodhounds get loose, excitement knows no bounds...The fight between the great shepherd dog and the pack of hounds is so vividly realistic that the producers of the picture have seen fit to explain, in a screen note, that it was filmed without any harm to the dogs involved.”

The review of this film also describes the scene in which the villain is attacked and killed by Rin Tin Tin:

“...and you see Rin Tin Tin, the wonder dog come to the rescue. The dog kills the villain in a scene that carries with it the maximum of terror but with the minimum of repulsive detail.”

Appleton Post-Crescent, July 7, 1926

In addition to Rin Tin Tin’s severe aggression against the villain being acceptable in the context of the dog acting in the interest of a “worthy cause,” the public’s overall attitude towards certain canine behaviors was vastly different 80 years ago than they are today. A century ago, dogs were not expected to behave amicably all the time. Aggression was recognized to be part and parcel of what was the essence of the dog.

Americans have always loved their villains, be they of the two-legged or four-legged variety. And even though some breeds had developed ferocious reputations, it was nevertheless understood that dogs were complex beings, capable of behaving badly, while still serving their masters well. The concept of the familiar bond between owner and dog, along with the exclusivity on which this bond was based, was well understood and accepted by most people. This understanding allowed for the media to produce and the public to accept the concept of this movie. The idea that Rin Tin Tin could be an ex-fighting dog, wary and afraid of people, not only capable of severe/fatal aggression, but displaying fatal aggression towards a villainous human, while at the same time being a courageous and wonderful companion animal to the humans with whom he had formed attachments, was understood at some level to be the very essence of all dogs, be they Bloodhounds, German Shepherds, or Bulldogs.

One of the most fascinating aspects of the Rin Tin Tin movie *Below the Line* is not just simply how dramatically it assisted in the reversal of the German Shepherd’s image from vicious to noble, but the dredging up and use of the old “ferocious” breed, the Bloodhound, to help accomplish this.



Rin Tin Tin

However, by the late 1940s, there was a slight trend towards the vilification of the German Shepherd again as the population of the breed was so great in the U.S. that it was unlikely that all those dogs were following in the heroic pawprints of Rin Tin Tin. But this sentiment was also squashed by another perfectly timed media event—television. Rin Tin Tin was reinvented on the television and brought into millions of American homes in *The Adventures of Rin Tin Tin*, which ran from 1954–1959. This was to start another huge wave of popularity for the German Shepherd and new issues with aggression would emerge in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

While the media was instrumental in salvaging the image of the German Shepherd, the breed itself is also responsible for the turnaround in public sentiment. The German Shepherd dog truly was, and still is, a versatile, intelligent, loyal and hard-working dog. The fact that this breed is used in humane and legitimate services to mankind (police work, military service, seeing-eye dog, movie star, shepherd of livestock, and more recently bomb sniffing, drug detection and search and rescue) are vital to helping the breed obtain and maintain a positive public image.

CHAPTER 8

The Myth of the Super-Predator: The Doberman Pinscher

How the Doberman Pinscher came to be considered a vicious breed is a fascinating study in the creation of a myth. A new, entertainment-hungry society was unmoved by the shop-worn vicious dog attack stories. Dogs have always attacked people and, as one journalist famously commented, “When a dog bites a man, that is not news, because it happens so often...”

To shock or interest an audience that had seen the atrocities of War World II would take more than your typical “dog bites man” story. And as was seen with the Bloodhound, villains and monsters (real or manufactured) are great entertainment. Jesse James, Lizzie Borden, Bonnie and Clyde, the Boston Strangler and Charles Manson are so familiar to generations of people because their evil doings are a thing of fascination and interest. And because no animal can compare with the wanton acts of cruelty and depravity of humans, we need to embellish or wildly exaggerate an animal’s size or savagery for it to even begin to compare to the evil that men do.

We super-size animals to increase their capability to do tremendous damage and destruction, from over-sized apes (*King Kong*) and giant sharks (*Jaws*) to 40-foot crocodiles and gigantic ants. And if super-sizing may seem too far-fetched with more familiar animals (dog, cats, wolves), we instead instill them with supernatural or evil powers. We demonize them to increase their shock or entertainment value.

The German Shepherd dog had the right ingredients upon which an image of the super-predator could be created. Their association with the wolf was the prerequisite evil needed to separate this breed from “normal” dogs. The intelligence of the German Shepherd was never denied, even by those who despised the breed. Intelligence coupled with evil are perfect ingredients from which to build an image of supernatural abilities.

The breed was barely two decades old before this fear of a super-predator overcame the Australian government. Of course, their belief that German Shepherd dogs would mate with wild canids and create a super-intelligent, super-efficient sheep killer did not materialize in other countries which did not ban the breed. So while there were severe/fatal attacks involving the breed, the German Shepherd had the opportunity to prove itself as an excellent working dog and companion animal. The positive functions the breed became associated with and a hearty dose of fictional fame helped this breed steer away from becoming the first 20th century super-predator.

By the 1930s, the Bloodhound image as the most vicious breed had finally faded and with the new contender (the German Shepherd) knocked out of place, this left open the top contender spot of most vicious breed.

There would be no positive roles, humane functions or Rin Tin Tin to save the Doberman Pinscher. With the arrival of WWII, the Doberman would be dragged into the super-predator spot by the leash of Nazi guards. And the American public would do its part in keeping the Doberman firmly placed there for decades to follow.

The formula for creating a dangerous dog has been demonstrated (use in negative functions, abuse, poor socialization, chaining, dogs maintained as a pack, etc.). The formula for creating a dangerous breed is something entirely different. Since no breed of dog is inherently vicious, the creation of a “vicious breed” is in reality the creation of an image.

The Doberman—From Intelligent Watchdog to Nazi Killer Dog to Homicidal Guard Dog

In direct contrast to the controversy caused by the German Shepherd shortly after its introduction into the United States, the Doberman Pinscher’s beginnings here started off quietly and uneventfully. Both German imports, the German Shepherd and the Doberman, were first recognized by the American Kennel Club in 1908. By the 1920s the Doberman was gaining popularity and was beginning to get the attention and respect of a fair number of Americans.

In 1929, *The Daily Northwestern* newspaper (Oshkosh, WI) ran a photograph of two impressive Dobermans side-by-side. The title over the photo was “Watchdogs for Chief Executives.” The caption explained that President Hoover was to be the recipient of one of these dogs for his residence and Governor Kohler of Wisconsin was to receive the other dog for the protection of his home.¹

The Doberman was quietly gaining respect as an effective and intelligent watchdog. No references to savagery or viciousness could be found describing the breed prior to 1940. On the contrary, almost all references and superlatives used to describe the Doberman were decidedly positive. Prior to WWII the adjectives repeatedly found describing Dobermans included: well-behaved, well-trained, super intelligent, sleek, handsome, beautiful, pedigreed, champion, watchful, alert, and brave, along with other references which allude to the Doberman’s growing popularity as a show dog, respected watchdog, and obedience dog.

In the 1930s there was a relatively famous traveling show called “Willy Necker’s Canine Carnival.” The stars of this show were five exceptionally trained Dobermans who awed many audiences across the country with their intelligence and ability to perform tricks.

In 1932, a Doberman Pinscher named Myra was awarded a gold medal from the National Humane Society in recognition of her bravery. The Doberman was credited with saving the life of her 3-year-old master in Dayton, Ohio. The child was picking a rose from a bush in which a rattlesnake was coiled. The dog killed the snake, but was bitten in the process.

The mother of the child and the veterinarian who tended the Doberman's wounds made application to the Humane Society to honor the dog's bravery.²

By the end of the 1930s the Doberman seemed to have passed the courtship stage with the American people and it appeared the breed would meld into American society as just another intelligent and hard-working dog.

Then came WWII, with images of SS guards standing rigid and tall, their obedient Dobermans at their side and depraved accounts of concentration camp guards using Dobermans to torture and kill prisoners. These horrific images of Dobermans serving their sadistic masters in the subjugation and destruction of innocents were seared into the minds of the public, images many people can still conjure up today, 60 years later.

What is puzzling is that the German Army used other breeds as well as the Doberman Pinscher. Why the Doberman was the only breed to become directly associated with the atrocities of the Nazi soldiers is unknown. It is known that every concentration camp had an SS dog unit, and many of these dogs were indeed Dobermans. When the U.S. Army liberated Dachau, the American soldiers shot and killed all the SS dogs (Dobermans) kenneled there.

The fact that the United States Marine Corps also used Dobermans during WWII did little to negate the Doberman's association with Nazi Germany. Most of the Marine Corps' Dobermans were used in the Pacific theater of operations, ferreting out Japanese soldiers in fox tunnels and serving as sentry dogs and scout dogs. Dobermans were credited with saving hundreds of lives of American soldiers in the battle of Guam.

The Doberman was invaluable and highly respected by the soldiers of the U.S. Marine Corps and served their country with extraordinary efficiency and loyalty during WWII. Unfortunately, this did not weigh heavily in assisting the image of the Doberman. Perhaps if the Marine Corps dogs had not been nicknamed "devildogs," it may have alleviated some of the evil associated with the breed. But it is doubtful that anything could have impacted strongly enough to erase the image of a Doberman standing at the side of Nazi guards.

By 1950 the transformation was complete. The Doberman was almost universally known as a vicious, heartless, demon dog, a beast which took delight in killing, unpredictable and untrustworthy. Homicidal muscle dogs, Nazi hounds, crazed killers: There was literally no end to the emotional epithets. The reaction to the sight or utterance of the word "Doberman" was instant and emotional.

Although the Doberman had proven itself to be an extraordinarily trainable, intelligent and reliable working dog, its newly formed reputation excluded its use in positive functions. Before the dog could effectively work as a seeing-eye dog or in any other humane function, people needed to put aside their fears and emotions, and this is almost impossible with many people once they accept a belief.

An interesting case in 1952 demonstrates the typical reaction to a Doberman. The account is about a blind man who, rather unwillingly, is the recipient of a Doberman Pinscher seeing-eye dog. The report tells of Mr. Mike Chodak, a father of four children, who was having

difficulty finding work due to his blindness. A friend urged him to get a seeing-eye dog which would allow him more independence and opportunity to provide for his family. Mike agreed and applied to the Pilot Guide Dog Foundation. After being accepted, he was notified that he needed to report to the Foundation's training school in Columbus, Ohio. After being evaluated at the school, Mike was assigned a dog suited to his particular needs. The article reads:

“Needless to say when Mike was told that he had been assigned Baron, and that Baron was a Doberman Pinscher, he ‘almost packed up and came home.’ All he could think about were the four children at home and the countless things he heard about Dobermans. All the rumors, Dobermans were mean, they were vicious, they were untrustworthy, they minded only their master, they attacked for no reason at all, made it impossible for Mike to sleep at night.”

The story goes on to tell of the confidence and trust developed between Mike and Baron, and how inseparable man and dog had become during training. Still, Mike feared introducing the dog to his wife and children. Upon returning home with Baron, Mike was amazed at how wonderfully the dog responded to his children, and commented on how rapidly “the dog and the children took to each other that in a very few minutes, the four youngsters and the dog were wrestling each other all over the living room floor.”³

Most people did not have a Doberman thrust on them and did not need to go through the emotional process of discarding their fears and dealing with reality. This prejudice became



Young marine with Doberman during WWII (Official U.S. Marine Corps Photo #95252)

a constant obstacle in introducing the breed to new functions. Organizations that trained dogs for humane services then reasoned, Why take on this extra burden of “selling” the breed when other breeds could provide these services without “threatening” the public?

Now being shunned from legitimate and humane work because of its image, the breed had no avenue by which to rise above and beyond the original breed design (i.e., guard dog). As seen, guard dog status bodes poorly for any breed—it encourages breeding for aggressive traits and for use in negative functions which are often abusive to the dog and serve to instill fear in the general public.

No Doberman *Lassie* would arrive in American living rooms, showing the breed saving children from wells and romping with children. But, of course, there were thousands of Dobermans romping with children and protecting and saving their masters.

The Doberman would be kept in this position of super monster by a couple of real life incidents and by a huge number of rumors, myths, untruths and outrageous theories. While Doberman fatal attacks were very few and very far between, there were two cases of fatal attacks that had the terrible misfortune to occur within 5 years of each other, to both occur in New Jersey, with both victims being female owners, and both cases were covered extensively by both national and local newspapers throughout the country.

The 1955 case involved, not surprisingly, two Doberman guard dogs in Seaside Park, N.J. The owner, a 64-year-old woman, was walking the dogs on the beach when the dogs “turned on her” and killed her. The dogs were reported in the news to be “racing madly about her body.”⁴

The 1960 case involved a 55-year-old woman in Northvale, N.J. The woman was the owner of the Aufenberg Kennels and there were approximately 40 dogs on the premises, many of them Dobermans. The Doberman responsible for killing his mistress was a 5-year-old champion male show dog. The woman was killed inside the house after an apparent struggle. The newspapers reported the dog was found near the woman “lunging about in wild circles.”⁵

What seemed to be lost in the recounting of the 1960 attack was that this dog did not suddenly “turn” on his mistress. The woman had been advised by one individual to “keep the dog in check” after two persons had recently been bitten by the animal, and she had been advised by her doctor to get rid of the dog because of his aggressiveness.

Both these stories made references to what could only be described as psychotic behaviors by the dogs involved. The one case the dogs were “racing madly about her body” and in the other case the Doberman was “lunging in wild circles.” This kind of reporting was virtually unheard of in all other fatal attacks. No doubt many dogs involved in fatalities were still in a state of heightened agitation after an attack, but except for being described as generally vicious or ferocious, extreme behaviors after an attack were almost never reported.

Certainly these dogs were vicious, but one can't help but wonder if the reporting of the behaviors after the attack were added to reinforce the pre-existing rumors of maniacal behavior or if these two stories were the beginnings of the "crazed" Doberman theory.

The dates when the rumors and theories of Doberman homicidal tendencies began to emerge are impossible to pin down, however, sometime during the 1960s these rumors of the crazed Doberman had taken on a life of their own. One of the most popular myths had the skulls of the Doberman too small to accommodate their growing brains—causing the dogs to go mad and their brains to explode. (Unbelievably, this rumor is still heard today—but it is mostly now attributed to the new "super-predator," the Pit Bull). Almost comically, two conflicting rumors were running at this same time: Dobermans only *obey* their masters and the strangely opposite rumor in which Dobermans only *kill* their masters. Slightly less popular, but still the belief of many people, was that the Doberman did not respond to human kindness, that the dogs were robotic killing machines, unmoved and unresponsive to the love and affection of humans.

Other breeds of dogs were involved in far more severe/fatal attacks during this time period. Hundreds of thousands of Dobermans were in the United States, living peaceful lives—certainly not mauling or killing anyone. The Doberman had proven itself an invaluable asset to the U.S. Marine Corps, was recognized as an intelligent seeing-eye dog and efficient tracking dog and had served thousands of Americans well in numerous capacities. None of this mattered. Like the Bloodhound, the image was set in the collective consciousness of the public and would not be shaken loose.

From 1950 to 1979, at the height of the Doberman's infamy and popularity, the breed was found responsible for the same percentage of fatalities as the "friendly" Retriever breeds (Labrador and Golden). The question then becomes, how did the Doberman maintain its reputation as the most vicious of all dogs when other breeds and types of dogs were involved in as many, or more, cases of severe and fatal attacks?

Either Dobermans were truly vicious, but terribly ineffective in causing injuries, or their image was not based in reality. Clearly, the Doberman is not ineffective at any function assigned to it. The breed is powerful, capable, and intelligent. It is doubtful the German Army and the U.S. Marine Corps, two very efficient-minded organizations, would use the breed if it proved ineffectual at the required tasks (which included aggression). This leaves the only other possibility: The Doberman's image was just that—an image.



Diane McWhorter is the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Carry Me Home: Birmingham, Alabama: The Climactic Battle of the Civil Rights Revolution*.⁶ In a 2005 interview, Ms. McWhorter commented on the critical use of photo imagery in the Civil Rights Revolution during the 1960s.⁷ She discusses how the use of a single episode of media-presented dog aggression could arouse and influence an entire population into accepting a cause or belief.

In discussing how the country finally came to rally behind the Civil Rights movement, Ms. McWhorter commented on the infamous photographs of children being attacked by police dogs, along with the use of fire hoses, during the Birmingham protest riots in 1963:

“The photos of the dogs and the fire hoses nationalized the movement, no doubt about it. The actions photographed were such a graphic, primitive expression of the system. Ironically, the dogs were only out for no more than half an hour, and they never came back again...But the dogs got the job done very quickly! It is sort of a joke in the movement that a few dog bites—and not even that many people were bit—accomplished what a century of suffering and mayhem had not.

“The pictures not only recalled Nazi Germany and their police dogs, but also *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, with the Bloodhounds chasing Eliza. They really spoke to the collective memory of the country.”

All the speeches by civil rights activists, all the injustices and pleas for change and equality, did not impress the public nearly as much as a half hour of film footage showing police dogs biting and worrying protestors (specifically, child protestors). These few dog bites were perhaps the very least of the injustices bestowed upon African-Americans, but this brief imagery had more impact than a thousand speeches.

A fixed time and place (Nazi Germany during WWII), and a single horrifically negative function (attack-trained dog), would be the image associated with all Dobermans for decades. How quickly and effortlessly the public embraced the image of Doberman savagery is an unsettling example of transference. How long and insistent the public was in refusing to believe otherwise, despite evidence to the contrary, is an equally disturbing example of mass ignorance. The Nazi Doberman could have been so easily seen for exactly what it was—human savagery and human initiated evil.

It is doubtful the human ego will ever allow for the full acknowledgement that the terrible acts exhibited by these dogs were a direct result of the evil in us—be it the Cuban Bloodhound incited to attack a fleeing slave, a Doberman incited to attack a prisoner of war, or a Pit bull incited to attack another Pit bull. These *human* perversions of the human/dog bond have resulted in a public condemnation, prejudice and accepted cruelty against certain breeds because placing the blame on the dogs allows us to distance ourselves from the abominations found in our own nature.



As with the Bloodhound and the Doberman and, later, the Pit bull, for every person who fears this breed there seems to be another who will seek it out for this exact reason. And so despite, or because of the Doberman’s image of viciousness, the popularity of this breed soared during the three decades from 1950–1979.

In 1964 there were 4,815 new dog registrations for Dobermans filed with the American Kennel Club, making the Doberman the 22nd most popular purebred dog in the U.S. Five years later, in 1969, the Doberman rose to the 16th most popular purebred dog in the U.S., with 13,842 new dog registrations. Ten years later, in 1979, the Doberman would be the 2nd most popular purebred dog in the United States, with 80,363 new dog registrations.

At the height of their infamy, 1950–1979, well over half a million people obtained and registered a Doberman Pinscher. The Doberman Pinscher was consistently more popular during this time than the Golden Retriever, with more than double the amount of dogs being registered by the American Kennel Club.

While there were probably a substantial number of dog-savvy people who obtained a Doberman because they did not buy into the “crazed Doberman theories,” there is no denying that many people who obtained Dobermans did so precisely because they did buy into these theories. An increase in a breed’s negative image or reputation for aggression unfailingly yields an increase in the number of substandard owners.

Still, hundreds of thousands of Dobermans did not live up to their vicious reputation, despite the increase in substandard owners, despite the increase in irresponsible breeding to meet high demands, and despite their use as guard and protection dogs.

What was sorely lacking in real-life attacks for the media to cover was more than made up for in fictional accounts of vicious Dobermans. Any movie, TV or advertisement spot that required the portrayal of a vicious dog would be filled by a menacing, snarling Doberman, most times with lips pulled back to expose the maximum amount of teeth.

Fortunately for the Doberman breed, by the 1980s their “reign of terror” had run its course and people would set their sights on a new breed to become their next super-predator.

It needs to be pointed out that all the prior bad reputations assigned to individual breeds, from the bloodthirsty Bloodhound, to the treacherous German Shepherd, and the homicidal Doberman, did not come about as the result of newspaper manipulation or sensationalism. The media outlets which contributed so greatly towards shaping (or redeeming) bad reputations of these breeds were plays (Tom Shows), playbills, movies, television, advertisements and word of mouth.

Prior to the 1980s, newspapers never appeared to have a breed-biased agenda. Breeds were identified in the reports to add interest and detail. As seen, the newspapers were very keen on presenting triggers, circumstances and factors which may have contributed to a dog attack. The newspapers also printed many positive stories about dogs, and did not shy away from a good dog story because it involved a breed with a bad reputation.

Prior to 1980, the breed of dog was *not* the story; the attack was the story, with the breed an added detail.

Even in the two highly publicized cases of Doberman attacks in New Jersey in 1955 and 1960, the newspapers did not malign or discuss breed tendencies or imply breed viciousness. Other than describing the psychotic behaviors of the dogs after the attack, nothing

else was remarkably different about these dog attack reports than any of the other dog attack stories reported in the newspapers.

Prior to the 1980s, theories and myths about Doberman skull size and wild rumors about viciousness were not taken up by the newspaper media—these outlandish theories were left in the schoolyards where they belonged. But, starting in the early 1980s, all of this would change.

A new breed of dog would start to be found in attacks and a new unscrupulous media would stir this into a storm of hysteria. Not only would the newspapers emphasize breed above all other elements in dog attacks, but the media would print outrageous rumors, myths and theories about anatomy and temperament that earlier generations of reporters had the good sense and professionalism to leave in the children's playgrounds.

CHAPTER 9

Setting Dogs Up For Failure: The New Guard Dogs

*“Tis sweet to hear the honest watch-dog’s bark
By deep-mouth’d welcome as we draw near home.”*

Lord Byron, *Don Juan*

Of all the functions that dogs perform, perhaps none is more rooted in the familiar bond than that of the guard dog. For thousands of years dogs have been praised and held in esteem for their service in protecting their owners from the dangers of unfamiliar persons or animals. However, as evidenced, this is the function which also dooms many dogs to failure, as it expects dogs to assess danger by human standards and morals. Another level of owner recklessness that dooms many dogs to failure is found when dogs are mismanaged to such a degree that they are permitted to harass, intimidate or attack other beings while roaming off their territory.

The following incidents of canine and human aggression are but a very small sampling of newspaper articles found during one single decade:

- “Policeman Uses Last Bullet to Kill Dog” is the headline of an article about a dog attack which sent three people to a hospital in Philadelphia and led to the pursuit of the dog by police. A police officer had finally barricaded the attacking dog inside a doghouse, but the dog tore down the boards blocking the entrance and lunged at the policeman. The officer shot the dog six times, after which the dog retreated back into the doghouse. Within seconds the dog “came flying out of the doghouse again” and it took another three bullets to kill the charging dog.
- Drug agents drove up to a duplex looking to make an arrest. The suspects rushed out of the house, loosening and ordering their dog to attack the officers.
- A girl is critically injured after three dogs attack her, tearing her scalp off and dragging her through the yard.
- A dog is shot twice after attacking two children and biting a police officer. The wounded dog runs from police and, after a protracted chase, they catch up with the dog. The dog attacks the police officers and it requires another seven bullets to stop the charging animal.

- A police officer is forced to shoot a dog that aggressively cornered him at a gas station.
- A mounted police officer is forced to shoot a dog attacking his horse.
- Police arrive to find a small girl being mauled by a dog. They are unable to release the child from the dog's grasp and instead are forced to shoot the dog at close range.
- Police are unable to locate a murder suspect. When answering a call for a vicious dog attacking a pedestrian, they capture the dog and trace it back to the murder suspect.
- A pack of dogs terrorize schoolchildren, chasing and biting three of them.
- A postal worker is severely injured when a dog bolts out of a house and attacks him.
- A man and his dog are attacked by another, larger dog. The man is injured attempting to save his little dog, but the small dog is mauled to death.
- A dog chained to a tree attacks and mauls a woman; she dies three days later.
- A boy is severely mauled by the dogs his parents use for breeding.
- An elderly woman enters into her backyard and is killed by her son-in-law's two guard dogs.
- An owner is arrested for releasing and siccing his dog on a police officer.

If asked to guess the breed of dog in all the above cases, most people today would be rather quick to venture that they involved a Pit bull, because these are kinds of stories we read about that breed today. However, all the above cases occurred from 1965 to 1976 and all the dogs involved were German Shepherds.

It is fairly obvious that the German Shepherd was the dog of choice for those who were looking for an intimidation dog or an attack/guard dog during the 1960s and 1970s. So it should be of no surprise that the German Shepherd would be found overrepresented in severe and fatal attacks during this time period (see Appendix B). But the German Shepherd never received the widespread public condemnation that the Bloodhound had in the 1800s or that the Pit bull receives today.

The explanations for this are rather obvious:

- The German Shepherd has consistently been used in positive functions by persons in authority (i.e., police, search and rescue, bomb detection, seeing-eye dog, etc.). These very public displays of the German Shepherd in positive functions were a tremendous asset to the breed image.
- The media never portrayed the German Shepherd negatively (as shown, the exact opposite was true).

- During the time of increased attacks with this breed, experts discussed and addressed canine aggression from a multi-faceted approach (examining owner, victim and canine behaviors as contributory factors in dog attacks).
- The Doberman Pinscher already held the top spot as super-predator.

Since the German Shepherd breed was involved in far more severe/fatal attacks than the Doberman, reason would have it that the Doberman should have been upstaged as most vicious breed by the German Shepherd during these two decades. However, image and reality are not dependent on each other. The German Shepherd had both a real-life and fiction-based image rooted in positive functions, which the Doberman breed was sorely lacking.

The Doberman Pinscher had no visible redeeming qualities to most people and so the image of viciousness could easily be maintained. Additionally, the German Shepherd did not have wild theories or outrageous claims about brain size, unpredictability and other myths associated with the Doberman.

Another very important factor occurring during the 1970s afforded much damage control to aggressive attacks involving German Shepherds. Despite increased incidence of aggression with certain breeds (specifically Great Danes, St. Bernards and German Shepherds) during this period, medical professionals (both human and canine specialists), humane society personnel and animal control officers were giving serious consideration to the forces behind what they perceived to be a growing dog bite problem.

After a series of very severe attacks in the early 1970s, a group of experts addressed the issue of the “rising epidemic of dog bites in major American cities.” This was based on the fact that dog bites rose in New York City from 27,000 reported bites in 1965 to 38,000 reported dog bites in 1972. The opinion was that the increased number of dog bites was related to inner city ghetto growth, as low-income families acquired dogs they could not properly care for, while others obtained large guard dogs to protect against burglary and vandalism. The only reference to breed was the mention of a trend for families to switch from smaller pet dogs to the larger guard dog breeds, such as the German Shepherd and Great Dane.¹

In 1977, a young boy in Atco, New Jersey was severely attacked by his grandmother’s German Shepherd. The dog ripped off part of the crown of his head, severed his ear from the ear canal and mangled his mouth. The parents despaired at the numerous operations that would be required to reshape the boy’s mouth to return it to some normalcy. The plastic surgeon involved in this case commented publicly about the increase in severe dog bites seen in the hospitals in Southern New Jersey and Philadelphia, stating “35 youngsters in one summer (1977) is way out of line.” Also recounted was an incident of another young boy severely disfigured by his neighbor’s Labrador Retriever mix and Great Dane. The surgeon commented on the deforming injuries inflicted on children by family pets “which had never shown signs of being vicious before.”²

The experts consulted for this article (plastic surgeons and veterinarians) discussed the epidemic as being the result of the acquisition of guard dogs by inexperienced owners, the indiscriminate breeding of dogs and the inability of owners to properly care for or control their dogs.

Throughout the 1970s dog attacks were viewed as a multi-faceted problem, based on function of dog (guard dog), owner responsibility, loose roaming dogs, poor breeding practices, and the danger of children with unfamiliar dogs. The problem was discussed and viewed as a combination of factors at work, along with a need to educate the public in dog bite prevention. Neither experts nor the media suggested the eradication of the German Shepherd (or any other breed) as a solution to the dog bite epidemic. Nor was breed presented as the driving force behind aggression. More than anything, guard dog function was presented as the single most predominant factor in canine aggression, coupled with uneducated owners.



The German Shepherd shared guard dog status with the Doberman Pinscher and Great Dane in the late 1960s and early 1970s. A person looking for a guard or attack dog during this period usually turned to one of these breeds. It was not uncommon to find some owners having more than one of these guard dog breeds at the same time. A fatality in 1967 involved a little girl killed by her stepfather's Great Dane guard dog. The stepfather also kept a Doberman and German Shepherd in the yard, neither of which participated in the attack on the little girl.

In only a five-year span, 1970–1974, these three breeds (German Shepherd, Doberman, Great Dane) together registered 735,469 new dogs with the American Kennel Club. Those examining canine aggression at this time understood the consequences of nearly 3/4 of a million of these large guard dog breeds going into the hands of many less than suitable owners in such a short period of time. It was the acquisition of these breeds as guard dogs or status dogs and their owners' subsequent lack of control over these animals which was correctly identified as the force behind attacks on humans.

Thirty years later, both the dog and human population in the United States had increased by millions, yet the population of these three guard dog breeds has decreased dramatically.

In the five-year time span from 2000–2004, there would be only 300,000 Dobermans, German Shepherds and Great Danes registered with the American Kennel Club. There were over 400,000 *less* of these three guard dog breeds registered in the U.S. than there were 30 years earlier (1970–1974). This was not because people no longer sought out guard dogs or status dogs; it is simply because people sought out new breeds to be their guard dogs. The new breeds were the Pit bull, and later the Rottweiler.

The now familiar trend repeats itself. As the German Shepherd, Doberman and Great Dane were no longer sought out as status or guard dogs, severe attacks and fatalities associated with these breeds decreased dramatically. As the Pit bull and Rottweiler dogs became

the new guard and image enhancing dogs, attacks associated with these breeds increased. The fatalities are directly associated with the increased popularity of these breeds among substandard owners.

Unlike the American Pit Bull Terrier, the Rottweiler is recognized by the American Kennel Club. New dogs registered on a yearly basis with this organization provide some indication of an increase in the population of certain purebred dogs.

	5 Year Span 1975–1979	5 Year Span 1995–1999
	# of Dogs Registered	# of Dogs Registered
Doberman	372,532	82,243
Rottweiler	9,961	355,797

Clearly, a new generation of owners looking for a status/guard dog turned to the Rottweiler as their breed of choice.

Owners who admire and respect other characteristics in the Doberman continue to own the breed, and these tend to be the more responsible and serious owners. Those owners looking for a new status breed obtained the newer version of the Doberman, namely the Rottweiler. These are potentially dangerous owners, because they purposely seek out what they believe to be the newer, trendier breed of dog in order to project an image of power. People who simply acquire the newest status/guard dog are very often unfamiliar with breed characteristics, have no genuine concern for obtaining or maintaining dogs with stable temperaments, and/or fail to ensure that breeding dogs are medically and behaviorally sound. Yet these are the very owners producing the next generation of guard/status dogs, as their dogs are usually intact and more often than not have been bred.

As history has demonstrated, the bane of any breed is popularity coupled with an increased use of the breed as guard dogs by substandard owners.

The following four examples are typical scenarios found in guard dog attacks and are actual cases of human fatalities:

Case #1

Elderly woman wanders into her backyard and is killed by her son-in-law's two guard dogs.

Case #2

Elderly woman wanders into her backyard and is killed by her son-in-law's two guard dogs.

Case #3

3-year-old climbs over fence and is killed by two guard dogs.

Case #4

4-year-old climbs over fence and is killed by two guard dogs.

Notice that Case #1 and Case #2 are identical in all respects: victim profile, function of dog, location, relationship (or lack) of victim to dogs, etc. Case #1 occurred in 1976 and involved two German Shepherds. Case #2 occurred in 1994 and involved two Rottweilers.

The 3rd and 4th cases are also identical in all respects, except for a one-year age difference between the victims. Case #3 occurred in 1972 and involved two German Shepherds. Case #4 occurred in 1997 and involved two Rottweilers.

The breed of guard dog is the only variable that changed over the decades. In 1975 the German Shepherd was the second most popular purebred dog in the United States with 76,235 AKC registered new dogs. In 1995 the Rottweiler was the second most popular purebred dog in the United States with 93,656 AKC registered new dogs. The Doberman was the 4th most popular purebred dog in 1975 and fell to 18th place in 1995. Clearly, Americans were looking to the Rottweiler (and Pit bull) to be their new status/guard dogs.

The truth is, regardless of breed, guard dogs are not suitable animals to keep in a residential area. Anyone believing ownership of such a dog is an asset faces the real possibility of being criminally and/or civilly charged when their guard dog causes injury to a person. They also risk the possibility of being attacked themselves if they are unable to exert control, physically and mentally, over these powerful animals.

As demonstrated throughout the last two centuries, guard dogs rarely attack and injure criminals or trespassers intent on evil doings—guard dogs attack neighbors, children, and persons looking to conduct legitimate business on or near the location of the dogs. And as seen a century ago, guard dogs are not averse to attacking their owners when treated harshly or when owners can not control these potentially dangerous animals.

While there may be a small number of very experienced and professional trainers able to handle, control and supervise their guard dogs adequately, almost everyone else lacks the resources, ability, strength, knowledge or time to properly control and supervise a dog trained or encouraged to behave aggressively as a guard dog.

A clear example of the difference between guard/attack dogs and companion animals is found in a case of a fatal attack involving three Rottweilers and their owner:

In 1998 an elderly woman broke her hip, which necessitated the use of a wheelchair. The woman had owned a female Rottweiler for the past eight years. More recently she had obtained two male Rottweilers, imported from Germany. Neighbors claim she took pride in the fact that both these dogs were professionally trained attack dogs. One day in September she was in her driveway when the two male dogs attacked her. She was dragged up and down the driveway before deputies arrived, shooting both dogs. The female Rottweiler was found “hiding” in the backyard near a kennel. The female dog had bite wounds on her body and a severe bite to her face. It is unknown if the female Rottweiler had attempted to intervene on behalf of her long-time owner or if the male dogs had simply attacked her during the fray and she escaped to the backyard. Either way, the female Rottweiler did not participate in the attack and she was clearly “frightened” by the behavior of the two male guard/attack dogs. The owner later died from her severe injuries.

This case demonstrates many components and factors found in severe/fatal dog attacks. Three large dogs take a considerable effort to maintain. In addition to the female Rottweiler, this woman needed to be able to control two intact, 2-year-old male Rottweilers with attack dog training. For even the most able-bodied person these dogs would be a formidable challenge to maintain control over and to care for.

Certainly, elderly or physically challenged individuals can safely keep a large dog, but increased risks may occur when multiple dogs, intact and trained for aggression, are kept by individuals clearly not able to control these animals should they become excited or aggressive.



Since the beginning of the human/dog bond, people have used dogs to protect themselves from other beings. While dogs obtained to function as defenders or guards to their masters and his possessions have higher incidents of aggressive encounters with humans than dogs acquired strictly for companionship, there are other risk factors which need to be assessed before condemning the use of guard dogs.

There is no question that man inflicts far more grievous and frequent harm to his fellow man than dogs ever have or will. Guard and protection dogs have rendered a great service to mankind throughout history. Untold numbers of people have *not* fallen victim to other humans because they owned a guard dog that was perceived as protective or menacing. Millions upon millions of lonely people have benefited emotionally and physically from the security and comfort of having a protection dog by their side. While there are elevated risks associated with the maintenance of guard dogs (as compared to dogs maintained strictly as companions), the truth is that legions of guard dogs have contributed to our well-being without cost.

If we wish to continue to reap the emotional and physical benefits of owning guard dogs we must treat them humanely and owners must take responsibility for controlling situations where their dogs may be behaving appropriately by canine standards, but inappropriately by human standards.

CHAPTER 10

The Media Attacks a “Breed”: The Pit Bull

“Falsehood flies and the truth comes limping after, so that when men come to be undeceived, it is too late: the jest is over, and the tale has had its effect.”

Jonathan Swift

In a 10-year span, from 1966–1975, there is only one documented case of a fatal dog attack in the United States by a dog which could even remotely be identified as a “Pit bull” (i.e. American Pit Bull Terrier, American Staffordshire Terrier, Staffordshire Bull Terrier, Bull Terrier, American Bulldog, English Bulldog or any dog resembling a “Pit bull” or “Bulldog”).

So, how did the “Pit bull” find itself fully entrenched as the new super-predator by the early 1980s?



By the middle of the 1970s there became an emerging public awareness of the cruel practice of dog fighting in the United States. Dog fighting began to get the attention of law enforcement and, hence, the media during this time and was being exposed as an insidious and growing problem throughout the country.

About the same time, in the summer of 1976, a California boy was killed by a dog. Newspapers from Louisiana and New Jersey to California reported this event, with each newspaper using a different breed description. The dog involved in this incident was alternately described as a Bulldog, Bull Terrier, or Pit bull. More than a few newspapers reported that the dog “locked its jaws on the child’s neck.” One newspaper could not make up its mind as to which breed caused the fatality so they simply mixed and matched the anatomy and alleged behavior of an American Pit Bull Terrier with that of the (English) Bulldog. The headline starts off claiming, “Five-year old killed by Bulldog” and in the next line identifies the dog as a “Pit bull.” After now identifying the dog as a Pit bull, the article offers the following (incorrect) theory about English Bulldog anatomy that allegedly explains the “locking jaw” reported in this attack: “Because a Bulldog’s lower jaw is longer than the upper jaw, it is physically impossible for the dog to let go while there is any tension on whatever it is holding in its mouth.”

During this time, as police raided dog fighting operations, arresting dog fighters and seizing Pit bulls, the media began covering this growing subculture of drugs, guns, gambling and fighting dogs in earnest. Shelter personnel were interviewed about why the Pit bulls seized during the raids were being euthanized. Comments about the “killer instinct” of the Pit bull (unfortunately not defined as it was meant—dog-on-dog aggression) were found in these reports. Many of these shelter personnel lamented the destruction of these dogs and commented that despite their strength, tenacity and encouraged aggression towards other dogs, the seized Pit bulls were loyal, friendly and affectionate animals.

Unbeknownst to the media, law enforcement and shelter workers, the exposure of this cruel and seedy subculture and their descriptions of the Pit bull’s fierce but loyal nature would strike a chord with a segment of the human population which has always been attracted to dogs they believe will enable them to impress or intimidate other humans. Exposing breeds of dogs involved in a negative function, through no fault of their own, will not increase their popularity with the average owner looking for a dog. Dogs portrayed in negative functions (fighting, guarding drug stashes, etc.) will only serve to increase their popularity with unsuitable owners who seek out dogs to increase their status as a person of power or intimidation.

The media’s intention in first reporting dog fighting, police raids, and Pit bull seizures appears to have been legitimate and well-intentioned coverage of animal cruelty which rightfully should be exposed as criminal behavior. However, the media’s first reports of two Pit bull-related fatalities in the late 1970s were filled with erroneous Pit bull anatomical references and sensationalized claims of Pit bull abilities. These glaring errors, along with the continuous exposure of Pit bulls used by dog fighters and drug dealers, would produce an immediate and predictable increase in the popularity of this breed with substandard and criminal owners. By the early 1980s the Pit bull was on the fast track to becoming the new super-predator.

Like the producers of the Tom Shows in the 1880s, when the 1980s media recognized that Pit bull attack stories elicited an emotional reaction from their audience, the media went into overdrive. The early 1980s find the media continuously churning out emotionally charged articles about Pit bull anatomy and behaviors that were based on rumors, myths and unproven claims by both experts and laymen. By 1982, Pit bulls were becoming a hot topic and the media would capitalize on this at every opportunity.

As the media delighted in reporting the Pit bull to be unpredictable and deadly, the population of Pit bulls accelerated each consecutive year. United Kennel Club (UKC) registrations show a 30% increase in registrations of American Pit Bull Terriers in a single year,(1983 to 1984).

The media would be in full lather by 1985 and nary an expert or laymen would pass up the opportunity to comment on the Pit bull issue in any public forum, with the Pit bull population continuing to increase in step with the hysteria.

In 1986 there were over 350 newspaper, magazine and journal articles printed about the Pit bull in the United States. The media image of the Pit bull was becoming so intense and magnified that it sometimes took precedence even over a person's actual experience with the breed. Owners with loving, affectionate Pit bulls were having them euthanized in fear they would "turn." One man who was "attacked" by a Pit bull in 1986 did not assess the temperament of the Pit bull by the dog which allegedly attacked him, but rather by the image of the Pit bull as portrayed in the media. The "attack" occurred when his neighbor's loose Pit bull came near the man's daughter, when he kicked the dog away, apparently the dog snapped at him. He easily warded off the dog with his foot and no injuries occurred. But it was reported in the media that the man "escaped serious injury." He is quoted as saying, "The Pit bull has the same instincts as a panther and should be treated as such. Some say if you train it enough, maybe it can become a pet. Well, so can a rattlesnake. But in the meantime, they're killing people, ripping their throats out." This comment came from a man who fended off an "attacking" Pit bull with only his foot.

The Pit bull hysteria would continue unabated in 1987 and the media, not above cannibalizing itself, would begin to report on the over-reporting of Pit bull stories. Two news stories in 1987 demonstrate with great clarity the extent of the hysteria about Pit bulls during this time. Some people became so frightened that they assumed any misfortune needed to be attributed to a Pit bull, while others used the hysteria and hype about Pit bulls in an attempt to disguise their own evil acts.

In 1987 a woman rushed her bleeding and partially paralyzed dog to a Veterinary Hospital in Kalamazoo. The woman claimed her small dog had been "mauled by a Pit bull." The dog had no visible bite wounds and x-rays were taken. It was discovered the dog had been shot and a bullet was lodged near the spine. The veterinarian commented that "unless Pit bulls are now carrying guns, the dog was probably shot by one of the woman's neighbors."¹

Also in 1987, an Oakland, California, man called the police to report his 19-month-old daughter had stopped breathing. The man tried to convince police the family Pit bull had attacked and killed the little girl. There was absolutely no evidence the child had been attacked by the dog. The investigating officer stated the dog blamed for attacking the child "was so young, it barely had teeth." The father was arrested on suspicion of murdering his daughter. The Pit bull puppy was taken into custody by Animal Control.²

In 1987, *Rolling Stone* magazine did a remarkable and graphic exposé on teenagers, inner city gangs, violence and the horrific abuse of Pit bulls, entitled "A Boy and his Dog in Hell."³ This investigation into inner city youth showed that not only were Pit bulls being used as an extension of their owners' depravity, but were extensions of their teenage owners' egos. When Pit bulls lost an arranged street fight they were subjected to unimaginable cruelty and violent deaths, because they became a source of embarrassment or failed to uphold the machismo image of their owners.

Addressing the societal ills identified in the *Rolling Stone* report—crime, poverty, animal abuse, ignorance, greed, depravity, and man’s lust for violence—is a far too daunting and disturbing task for most people. So much easier on the human psyche to address the situation with Pit bulls as *Sports Illustrated* did that same month. On July 27, 1987, the entire front cover of this issue was a photograph of a Pit bull, mouth open, teeth bared, over which in bold print was the headline, “Beware of this Dog.” The lengthy article inside the magazine gave lip service to the abusive “sport” of dog fighting, while alternately portraying the Pit bull as vicious and unpredictable.⁴

Here we also see the beginnings of outrageous examples of Pit bulls involved in attacks being described as “family dogs.” One of the “family” Pit bulls described in this *Sports Illustrated* article was actually one of four dogs chained behind a trailer in Oklahoma. All the dogs (three chained Pit bulls, and one chained Chow) had scars consistent with dog fighting. The owners/parents were charged with criminal neglect for allowing their 2-year-old daughter to wander out to these “family” dogs.

But no article could compete with the blatant fear mongering and horrendous portrayal of the Pit bull that *Time* magazine ran this same month. In an apparent attempt to top all others in shocking the public into reading their Pit bull article, they ran the headline “Time Bomb on Legs.”

Horror author Stephen King could not have created a more frightening monster than this portrayal of the Pit bull. The second sentence of this article reads, “Never in the delirious dream of a disordered brain could anything more savage, more appalling, more hellish, be conceived than the dark form and savage face” (of the Pit bull).⁵ The rest of the article descends even further, vilifying the Pit bull as a creature that revels in a “frenzy of blood-letting,” and described as “lethal weapons” with “steel trap jaws” and as “killer dogs,” and the new “hound of the Baskervilles.” An unproven, unreferenced claim of Pit bulls biting with 1800 *psi* is included. The article then goes on to describe the formula used to torture, abuse and create a dangerous dog.

The author of this article is blithely unaware or unconcerned with his role in perpetuating the problem. While this type of journalism may be entertaining, the demonization of dogs by the media has serious consequences. Demonizing certain breeds only furthers their appeal to the most extremely abusive of owners while feeding into a public hysteria and frightening off any potential suitable owners for this breed of dog.

This same month, July 1987, still another major publication, *People Weekly*, would also contribute to the hype and hysteria about the Pit bull with their article, “An Instinct for the Kill.”⁶

Even when other breeds of dogs were involved in attacks, the media would “spice” up the story with a reference to Pit bulls. In 1989, an Akita attacked and severely mauled a 5-year-old girl in Massachusetts. The article describes the attack and claims the Akita is “a breed that resembles the Japanese Pit bull.”⁷

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) report *Dog Bite-Related Fatalities From 1979–1988*, released in September 1989, would seal the fate of the Pit bulls with pseudo-statistics.⁸ The CDC breed “statistics” were actually numbers derived largely from newspaper stories and from the media’s identification of dogs involved in attacks. The report then discussed canine aggression almost exclusively from a focus of breed. Factors such as the function of the dog (guarding/fighting/breeding), reproductive status, sex of dog, victim behavior, and owner behavior were not addressed.

The primary focus of the study was breed of dog and victim profile (age/sex). While the media was quick to quote the CDC findings on the percentage of Pit bull attacks, virtually no coverage was given to one important finding in this study. A number of times in report, the CDC identified the risk of infants left unsupervised with dogs. In summarizing their findings the CDC wrote, “In particular, parents should be aware that very small infants left alone with a dog may be at risk of death.” This finding with the potential to save lives was ignored. The number of Pit bulls found in attacks was of much greater interest.

The 1980s media and epidemiological focus on breed was a drastic departure from the multi-faceted approach of the early 1970s. Now, the story of dog attacks began and ended with breed of dog. Politicians, the media, and even some “experts” discussed and debated the problem of canine aggression only as it related to the Pit bull. Pit bull history, anatomy, and temperament were all dissected and examined at length. Little to no mention was made of the factors that had been recognized for centuries as contributing to canine aggression. The heat-stressed, chained dog that attacked a child in 1965 was now being reported as the “family Pit bull” which mauled a child. Almost no one cared to know anything about a dog attack, apart from breed.

Yet the courts and law enforcement have often demonstrated that incidents of severe/fatal aggression were the direct result of negligent, dangerous and/or criminal behavior by the dogs’ owners. In the 1980s an unprecedented number of owners (Pit bull and non-Pit) were beginning to be charged criminally when their dogs were involved in a fatal attack. During this period, fully 25% of all owners of Pit bulls involved in fatalities were convicted of some type of criminal offense related to the attack. Law enforcement and the judicial system not only recognized that owners were the direct cause of their dogs’ involvement in attacks, but pursued the matters criminally. Unfortunately, then (as today) many other owners escaped convictions due to the fact that many local or state laws did not adequately address negligent and/or abusive dog owners.

Nevertheless, four Pit bull owners during the 1980s were convicted of involuntary manslaughter and received prison sentences after their dogs were involved in a fatality. Another Pit bull owner received a 5 year prison sentence for reckless injury to a child when his 4-year-old stepson wandered near one of his Pit bulls chained to a utility pole. His defense, “That boy knew better than to get near that dog,” probably did not help his case. (He was allowed to serve this sentence concurrently with a 10-year sentence he had already

received for drug possession.) Other owners of Pit bulls (and other breeds) were convicted of crimes ranging from child endangerment to criminal negligence.

So while politicians, the media and others were clamoring about Pit bulls behaving unpredictably, the courts found and proved that indeed many of these attacks were very predictable.

Finally, in 2001, the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) convened a Task Force on Canine Aggression and Human-Canine Interactions to address the continuing dog bite problem and to assist in avoiding “ineffective responses” following a severe dog attack in a community.⁹ This in-depth study reported that “dog bite statistics are not really statistics, and they do not give an accurate picture of dogs that bite.” Unfortunately the findings and information presented by these learned experts has been largely ignored by many communities when addressing dangerous dogs.



If the media acknowledged their over-reporting of anything Pit bull in the late 1980s, one would imagine they would be able to recognize their intense over-reporting on Pit bull related matters today. Apparently not.

During the middle 1990s, as the Rottweiler appeared to be replacing the Pit bull as America’s new guard/protection/intimidation dog, the Pit bull’s popularity with unsavory owners who sought out dogs for negative functions appeared to have waned. No surprise, Rottweilers then overtook the Pit bull in severe and fatal dog attack statistics.

With a new monster looming on the horizon, the media briefly took their focus off the Pit bull. It seemed the Pit bull had finally run its two decade course as America’s favorite super-predator and the unfortunate Rottweiler was positioned to suffer a similar fate.

In 1997, there were “only” 400+ newspaper headlines with the words “Pit bull” in them (down from 850+ in 1987).

In 2000, the third and latest CDC report on dog bite-related fatalities in the United States released another set of pseudo-statistics claiming the Rottweiler caused the most fatalities for the years 1997 and 1998. But, again, the CDC report counted the number of Pit bull-type dog attacks from their previous two studies (dating back to 1979 and still using media sources for breed identifications) and released a total for Pit bull-related fatalities during the last two decades, from 1979–1998.¹⁰

The unbridled media coverage of this report could only be described as orgasmic. Within a month after the release of the CDC report, hardly a person in America did not come to know that Rottweilers and Pit bulls caused the most human fatalities over the previous two decades.

It didn’t matter that the odds of dying from a dog attack during the year 1996 were 1 in 11,534,087, while the odds of being struck by lightning during the same year were 1 in 4,210,857.

Nor did it matter that some of the dogs included in this study were terribly abused or were invited to act so aggressively by their owners. Dog breeds involved in fatal attacks were big news.

If the intense media focus on an event which occurred to one person in every 11 million exaggerated the risk of a fatal dog attack, things would get much worse for the Pit bull.

The War on Pit Bulls—Politicians Declare the Pit Bull Public Enemy Number One

In 2003, a 23-year-old woman was at work as an administrative assistant in Denver when Animal Control officers arrived at the home she shared with her mother. The officers explained to the woman's mother that they were there to confiscate her daughter's two dogs. The mother, confused and unsure as to what was happening, allowed Denver's Animal Control officers to enter her home and seize her daughter's two pet Pit bulls, Lady and Man.

Thus began this young woman's abrupt introduction to the world of Denver's Pit bull politics. It is no surprise this woman knew nothing of the ban on Pit bulls in the city of Denver, as she was only 9 years old in 1989, the year Denver concluded that the solution to canine aggression was to rid the city of Pit bulls. Now with her dogs seized and at Denver Municipal Animal Shelter, the only way to save them from death was to take them and move outside the city limits. Reluctantly, she moved, consoling herself that she was still close enough to visit and check on her mother regularly.

And so she did. For the next few months she frequently drove back into the city to visit her ailing mother. One day she took her two Pit bulls into the city with her, both for companionship and because her mother loved the dogs and their presence gave her comfort and joy. The young woman arrived at her mother's house and was inside with the dogs when, not half an hour later, Denver Animal Control officers appeared at the door. The young woman explained to the officers that she no longer lived in Denver and provided proof of her new residence. She attempted to explain that she was only visiting for a few hours with her mother. Pleading with the officers, she said she knew the dogs could not live in Denver, but she believed she could still bring them into the city to visit as long as she was able to prove the dogs resided outside the city. Nevertheless, Animal Control officers entered the home and seized the two dogs. Sometime during the next 24 hours, while the distraught young woman was making phone calls and trying to contact people in order to find out how she could get her dogs back, Denver Animal Control killed her pets.

Two years earlier, at the age of 21, when this woman received the young female Pit bull from her boyfriend, never did she imagine that the dog would be taken from her and destroyed. She believed if she was a good owner and did everything right—her Pit bulls were house dogs, never allowed to run loose or even be in the yard unless she was there also—the dogs would be safe. Additionally, the dogs were well-behaved, sweet, friendly and had never harmed anyone—what could possibly go wrong?

What went wrong was that these dogs were born Pit bulls. And as of 1989, Denver had passed a law making it illegal for a dog to be born a Pit bull.

How did Denver come to conclude that it is wrong to be a Pit bull? We've seen that starting in the 1980s the media introduced many of the ingredients necessary to frighten the public into believing that Pit bulls were dangerous. But while it is one thing for the public to buy into fear mongering, hysteria, misinformation and unproven claims, it is quite another matter for laws to be passed based on unsubstantiated claims and media-driven rhetoric.

Laws banning Pit bulls were introduced by another element that entered into the Pit bull debate during the 1980s, disseminating misinformation and unproven claims while manipulating the fear fostered by the media: The Politician.

We would like to believe that our laws are passed based on scientific data, proven theories or the testimony and evidence provided by, if not the majority, at least a respectable number of experts or professionals. This has never been the case with breed specific-legislation or the decision by officials to ban or restrict particular breeds of dogs. Experts are rarely consulted and even when they are invited to speak, their testimonies are more often than not discarded in favor of newspaper headlines or the emotional testimonies of a few victims.

Hundreds of examples can be given of politicians who flatly refuse to believe canine experts who have extensive personal and professional experience with dogs. The following example is typical of the responses politicians give when faced with the issue of canine aggression as presented by someone who has spent a lifetime working with aggressive dogs or studying canine behavior.

During a roundtable meeting about Denver's proposed Pit bull ban in 1989, a dog expert was attempting to describe and explain the nature and workings of canine aggression to a Denver councilwoman. The man was a professional dog trainer and had personally handled and trained over 100 protection trained dogs (of different breeds). He was explaining how all dogs can display the same types of aggression and how all dogs will respond aggressively to certain stimuli.

The councilwoman flatly refuted his knowledge of canine aggression, commenting, "You can't tell me that if there was a Pit bull loose and a small terrier loose, that they are going to respond in the same manner, because that is not true."

The expert dog trainer assured the councilwoman that it was true and stated, "You could be attacked by a Schnauzer the same way that you could be attacked by a Pit bull."

Again she rebuffed his knowledge of canine aggression based on her self-appointed expertise and knowledge of the subject matter, with the response, "I'm sorry but people run away from Pit bulls. People don't run away from Schnauzers."

Perhaps worse than the "Pit bulls are dangerous because people run from them" argument, are comments such as the following, so often used by politicians and delivered by Denver's Director of Environmental Health:

“I’ll tell you the difference between Pit bulls and other breeds: They have lower levels of fighting inhibition; they have a tendency to attack without provocation because they’re bred to do that. They will continue to fight until they’re either dead or exhausted, no matter how bad you’ve hurt them, because they have been trained to do that. They don’t signal when they’re going to attack...”

This is the standard description used by almost all politicians when discussing how Pit bulls are different and need to be banned.

It is incredible that these politicians do not see what they are doing by asserting these claims: They are deliberately ignoring the testimonies of legitimate professionals (veterinarians, humane society personnel, dog trainers, breed clubs) and choosing to believe and to validate the boasts of a criminal, inhumane, machismo group of dog owners who for a hundred years have touted extraordinary abilities about their dogs in order to increase their personal and financial worth. The claims like those quoted above are almost word for word the claims of dog fighters.

Additionally, the city of Denver entered into evidence outrageously flawed statistics and then drew totally inaccurate conclusions about the “differentness” of Pit bulls based on these meaningless numbers (see Appendix C).

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, newspapers were hyping the Pit bull for all it was worth. Many politicians quickly jumped on the bandwagon, enacting laws and ordinances in response to the hysteria. Denver would be joined by Miami, Cincinnati, Kansas City, Toledo, and dozens of smaller cities in enacting bans on Pit bulls in the late 1980s.

But things would get much worse for the Pit bull as, by the end of the 20th century, there would be another 200+ cities, communities and counties which enacted breed bans or restrictions against them or any dog that may be viewed as having “Pit bull characteristics.” Not only was ridding the community of Pit bull-looking dogs touted as a cure-all for dog attacks, but at least another 26 breeds of dogs would be banned or restricted as “dangerous” in communities across the country. The arbitrariness of these “dangerous breed” determinations cannot be overstated. Some breeds with no documented cases of severe or fatal attacks in the community (or even throughout the country) were banned. Some communities touted their breed bans to be a pre-emptive strike, banning an entire breed *before* it had a “chance” to attack. Others merely looked up the history of a breed and determined the dangerousness of the dogs according to the original function of the breed. Other community leaders offered no reason for the “dangerous” determination of certain breeds on their ban/restricted list.

The beginning of the 21st century shows little respite for the Pit bull (and other breeds) as the media and some politicians have partnered up to create a tag team of misinformation and hysteria about canine behavior.



The 21st century media has introduced the public to a host of new canine experts: Kory Nelson (Denver, CO), Michael Bryant (Ontario, Canada), Virginia (Ginger) Rugai (Chicago, IL), Rep. Paul Wesselhoft (Moore, OK), and Peter Vallone Jr. (Astoria, NY). These “experts” can easily be found in newspaper articles discussing the history, anatomy, nature and temperament of the Pit bull. The only problem is all these “Pit bull experts” have other full-time jobs—as politicians.

Yet, somehow they have managed to acquire the sum total of knowledge about dog breeds, canine behavior, epidemiology (the study of dog bites), canine population statistics, Pit bull history, Pit bull temperament, Pit bull anatomy, and Pit bull aggression. Not only have they acquired all this knowledge, but they have analyzed it and discovered the solution to canine aggression which has eluded full time canine experts throughout the last century.

Their analysis of the data has led them to definitively conclude that the dog attack problem is caused by: the Pit bull.

And this is supported by their assessment that either:

- Pit bulls are ticking time bombs
- Pit bulls are land sharks, or attack like sharks
- Pit bulls feel no pain, or are impervious to pain
- Pit bulls are inherently or uniquely dangerous
- Pit bulls exhibit behaviors unlike any other breed of dog, or are “different”
- The Pit bull’s history of dog fighting makes the breed uniquely dangerous

These assessments are incredible in the breadth and depth of their ignorance of Pit bulls (and all breeds of dogs), the function of dogs in the history of the human/canine bond, and the human and canine behaviors which contribute to incidents of aggression.

The fact that government officials in some of these cities and provinces can enter your home to seize your property (Pit bulls or mixed breed dogs that may look like Pit bulls) based on these grade-school-level assessments of canine behavior is a frightening reality. Yet, outrageous comments about Pit bulls and canine behavior are broadcast across the country, enabling these very same legislators to garner support for their one-step solution to canine aggression.

Perhaps worse than failing to address the real reasons for dog attacks, is the fact that these politicians seem blissfully unaware of the insidious results of making such outrageous claims about Pit bulls and Pit bull behavior. History has repeatedly shown that publicly portraying a breed of dog as exceedingly ferocious or dangerous will only serve to increase the breed’s popularity with dangerous owners. Public statements that Pit bulls are “land sharks” or “ticking time bombs” will not increase the breed’s popularity with responsible

owners, but only serve to increase the breed's popularity with owners who are purposely seeking out a "dangerous" dog. The claims of these politicians have only perpetuated the problem by demonizing breeds of dogs and then making them even more desirable and more sought after by people who will mismanage and abuse these animals in such a way as to put the community at risk.



At perhaps no time in history has mankind been as ignorant of natural canine behavior as we are today. Perhaps at no time in history has mankind been more ignorant of the essence of the familiar bond between owner and dog—the bond which drives and directs most canine behavior. And perhaps at no time in history has man publicly forsaken or denied his command of the canine species.

It has even been suggested that Pit bulls are no longer domesticated animals. Maquoketa, Iowa, has made it unlawful to keep certain animals. The list includes all types of wild and exotic animals from lions and baboons to hyenas. Pit bulls are included in the list between Piranha fish and the puma (mountain lion).

A claim that Pit bulls are different or unlike other domestic dogs is a direct refusal to acknowledge a factual relationship which has formed over tens of thousands of years—a relationship which man has controlled, directed, and mastered with great efficiency over the centuries.

In a society unparalleled in its access to information and ability to control our natural environment, we now claim that we are unable to master our dogs. Supremely adept in the art of transference, humans have now absolved themselves from any control or culpability in the creation and maintenance of the Pit bull. We've thrown up our hands and cry out that we are now the victim of this breed. They have forced us to destroy them. It is not our fault; the beast has gotten away from us.

How easily we forsake the dogs rather than take responsibility for their behavior is a sad testament to how well humans fulfill their commitment to the canine/human bond. This is perhaps the ultimate act of betrayal which humans have inflicted on our canine companions—the refusal to own what is ours, what we have created.

It is no mere accident that Pit bulls are labeled "different." It is also no small coincidence that Pit bulls are compared to sharks. This is a psychological ploy that has been used for centuries to disassociate or distance one being from others of its own kind in order to subjugate, abuse or annihilate them.

With humans, color of skin, religion, sex, language, and country of origin have all been used at one time or another as the basis for categorizing the "inferiority" or "differentness" of another group of persons. Once a mental distancing or disassociation is accomplished, it "allows" for abusive or atrocious behaviors to be visited upon these dissimilar beings.

For those with their own agenda, this psychological ploy has been used (wittingly or unwittingly) with great effectiveness against the Pit bull. By stripping away the traits that

humans recognize and cherish in their dogs (loyalty, obedience, devotion, faithfulness, predictability, trustworthiness), the Pit bull has been separated from all his canine brethren or stripped of his “canineness.”

We would like to believe our society has advanced from the mass persecutions and ethnic cleansings that our fellow humans have ruthlessly practiced since the dawn of history. However, fear coupled with ignorance are still powerful mind-numbing agents, allowing seemingly rational people to be swept up by currents of panic-stricken accusations and led into notorious miscarriages of justice. From the Salem witch hunts to McCarthyism and the Communist red scare, Americans have proven we are not immune to the suspension of reason and the sacrifice of innocents to quell public hysteria.

History now clearly shows there were no witches in Salem, nor was our country overrun and infiltrated by communists, and eventually history will bear out that Pit bulls are dogs just like any other dogs. But before that can happen we must come to realize that we are in the midst of a social hysteria about Pit bulls.

Today, police chase down fleeing Pit bulls in the street, firing dozens of wild shots in response to media-fed rumors of supernatural Pit bull abilities. Politicians coach and nurture this fear with their own brand of rhetoric used to assist in the passing of quick and ineffective legislation created to pacify communities ignorant of the real cause of dog attacks. Hundreds of animal shelters throughout the country kill unclaimed Pit bull-looking dogs, as they are deemed “unadoptable” solely on their physical appearance.

This has occurred because we have allowed the Pit bull to be “stripped of his canineness”—not by genetics or by breeding, but by wild theories, rumors and myths. We have succumbed to the fear propagated by individuals and organizations with agendas totally unrelated to community safety or dog bite prevention.

CHAPTER 11

Pseudoscience and Hysteria Triumph

“There is nothing to fear except the persistent refusal to find out the truth, the persistent refusal to analyze the causes of happenings.”

(Dorothy Thompson, 1894–1961)

There is an incredible amount of information and misinformation available both in paper form and on the Internet about the history, function and temperament of the American Pit Bull Terrier. This plethora of information consists of everything from factual data to hysterical diatribes and unsubstantiated theories about Pit bull temperament and anatomy.

Politicians, prosecutors, attorneys, newspaper reporters, TV and radio station personalities, breeders, trainers, animal control officers, veterinarians, shelter workers, dog fighters, street thugs, and just about anyone able to speak has an opinion or personal theory about the strength and temperament of the American Pit Bull Terrier. These opinions and theories are based on a dizzying mixture of personal experience, media-induced images, rumors, myths, speculation, fear mongering, and personal or political agendas.

Separating fact from fiction is time consuming and tedious work. It is much easier for most people to embrace information which supports their pre-existing belief. For example, if your neighbor has a gentle and friendly Pit bull, you may be more inclined from personal experience to believe information presented which supports this view of the breed. If your neighbor is a drug dealer and has three Pit bulls lunging from chains or barking madly behind a fence, you may be more inclined to believe information supporting the vicious nature of Pit bulls.

Professionals, too, can have diametrically opposed viewpoints and opinions about Pit bulls. Police officers are more inclined toward encountering bad owners (criminals and their aggressively encouraged dogs) and often see only the “bad” Pit bulls. Veterinarians often have a positive image of Pit bulls since in their profession they more frequently encounter these dogs in stressful situations (pain, fear, with strangers) and recognize the extreme tolerance found in Pit bulls.

If you have no personal experience with Pit bulls, then your only information is acquired from newspapers headlines, and it is not difficult to understand how people have formed

a very negative opinion of Pit bulls with the media as their only source of knowledge about the breed.

Not until false claims, both of anatomical and behavioral issues, are cast aside, not until breed identification issues are addressed, and not until the circumstances that contributed to dog attacks are examined can aggression be addressed in a way which may provide viable solutions and offer preventive measures to decrease the number of attacks on humans. Solutions to canine aggression are doomed to fail if they are based on “facts” not founded on evidence or on unproven claims of canine anatomy or behavior. Unfortunately, much of the information presented about Pit bulls falls under the category of pseudoscience. Pseudoscience can best be described as information presented as fact, with the appearance of a scientific basis, which, however, is found upon examination to have no evidence supporting such claims.

Claims of anatomical abnormalities, for instance, seem to have a ring of truth about them. The fact that a tangible physical feature is the source of a theory or “fact” would seem to suggest there is tangible physical evidence to support this. In other words, the jaw of an animal is a tangible feature; it can be seen, touched and examined. Claims of abnormalities in such a visible feature seem to be based in reality because, seriously, why would these claims be quoted and widely believed if they can so easily be disproved?

Pit Bulls and the Locking Jaw Myth

The Doberman was purported to have anatomical abnormalities (brain size vs. skull size) which rendered it dangerous and unpredictable, setting it apart from other breeds of dog. To upstage the Doberman another breed would also need an anatomic abnormality which set it apart from other breeds in its ferocity. The Pit bull arrived on the scene in the early 1980s with not one, but multiple rumored anatomical features which quickly outclassed the Doberman in their ability to frighten and shock the public.

The first anatomical claim to fame about the Pit bull was the myth of the locking jaws. This theory suggests that the Pit bull has a unique jaw and dental structure which allows it to “lock” onto their victim.

While Pit bulls do have a specialized and manipulated trait which allows them to exhibit tenacity and perseverance in maintaining their grip (from their Bulldog ancestor), this is not sufficient to propel the breed into super-predator status. After all, while Pit bulls (and Bulldogs) had this ability to hold for well over a century, prior to 1980, other breeds were considered far more vicious than the Pit bull. All breeds of dogs have a particular trait or appearance which sets them apart from other breeds. The new breed that “we love to hate” would have to have much more impressive credentials than just a specialized ability to hold on tenaciously; they would have to have an evil design which would allow for this ability. And an inescapable locking jaw is just such an evil- sounding device.

This is a classic example of a belief that has no factual or scientific basis. The locking jaw mechanism is a myth. But this myth was as easily bought into by the public as was the myths about the bloodthirsty nature of the Bloodhound and the Doberman brain size. It is not terribly difficult to see how easily this was accomplished and how fervently people hold onto their beliefs once they accept them.

The myth of the Bloodhound's "bloodthirsty ferocity" was a rather easy sell. The breed was mostly used to track down unsavory persons or in the cruel pursuits of their masters. Being chased or set on by dogs taps into humans' instinctive and primal fear of being prey. The name "Bloodhound" certainly held a negative connotation and many people confused or misunderstood the true definition of the term. Bloodhounds were defined as a hunter *of* blood, not a hunter *by* blood. To some, this distinction may seem trivial, but in reality there is a vital difference. The Bloodhound tracked warm-blooded animals, but was not following a "blood trail" (not thirsting after blood). As discussed previously, the Tom Shows did much to reinforce this bloodthirsty image.

A generation later, with images of Dobermans and Nazi Germany still fresh in the minds of the public, anyone taking even a cursory look at a Doberman's rather narrow skull could easily buy into the "skull too small-dog goes mad" theory. The media showing any attack or guard dog as a snarling Doberman helped fix this image of viciousness.

In the 1980s, the broad head and square jaw of the Pit bull easily sold a whole new generation of people into the "locking jaw" theory.

All these theories sound like they have a scientific basis, and that there must be evidence on which these beliefs are based. The truth is, there isn't. There are no scientific studies or evidence which validates any of these widely held beliefs. On the contrary, there are several written statements by experts definitively refuting the locking jaw theory.

Dr. Howard Evans (Professor Emeritus, College of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell University, Ithaca New York and author of the world's definitive work on canine anatomy [*Anatomy of the Dog*]), in conjunction with Dr. Sandy deLahunta, one of the foremost dog neurologist in the country, along with Dr. Katherine Houpt, a leading dog behaviorist wrote the following statement about the "locking jaw" in Pit bulls:

"We all agree that the power of the bite is proportional to the size of the jaws and the jaw muscles. There is no anatomical structure that could be a locking mechanism in any dog."

Research on the functional morphology of the jaws of various dog breeds conducted by Dr. I. Lehr Brisbin of the University of Georgia showed that:

"there were no mechanical or morphological differences between the jaws of American Pit Bull Terriers and those of any of the other comparable breeds of dogs which we studied. In addition, we found that the American Pit

Bull Terriers did not have any unique mechanism that would allow these dogs to lock their jaws.”¹

Clamps with Front Teeth and Grinds/Chews with Back Teeth Myth

This is a carry-over from the old 1800s Bulldog myth. Jack London may have unintentionally contributed greatly to this myth with the publication of his novel *White Fang*. In his classic theme, wild animal versus dog, we find a wolf pitted against a Bulldog. In London’s telling of this lengthy and protracted battle, the Bulldog’s fighting technique in defeating the wolf is described in part as, “the jaws shifting their grip, slightly relaxing and coming together again in a chewing movement.” The wolf is described as at a loss to defend itself against the Bulldog’s tactics as he “did not know the chewing method of fighting, nor were his jaws adapted to it.”

But, as one reader in 1908 pointed out, Mr. London “displays an innocence (about dog fighting) which does him credit.” The reader, apparently intimately familiar with dog fighting, explains in great detail how the Bulldog is not truly a fighting dog, and that the breed’s function and physical appearance was designed to bait or hold onto bulls and not for fighting. The author then describes the creation and capabilities of what he believes to be the true fighting breed, the Bull Terrier (“A Question of Bulldogs and Fakers, President Roosevelt and Jack London Seem to Forget That the Bulldog is Not Really a Fighter,” *New York Times*, November 1, 1908).

The grinding/chewing jaw capability is just another of the many myths which surrounded the Bulldog a century ago, and which has carried over into the new Pit bull mythology. Neither Bulldogs, Pit bulls, nor any other breed of dog have a jaw structure that would allow for gripping with their front canine teeth and simultaneously grinding or chewing with their back molar teeth.

Pit Bull Bite Force Calculated in *psi* (pounds per square inch) Myth

Another physical ability alleged to set the Pit bull apart from all other breeds of dogs, and even surpass the capabilities of many wild carnivores, is the claim of massive biting power, measured in *psi*, or pounds per square inch of force.

A disturbing number of newspaper reporters, attorneys, politicians, physicians, and testosterone-driven websites discussing Pit bulls advance outrageous claims of Pit bull biting power in terms of *psi*. Claims of 1200 *psi*, 1800 *psi*, 2000 *psi*, and even 2600 *psi* are quoted

and bantered about regularly in discussions on Pit bulls. And like the locking jaw mechanism, though widely believed, none can cite a reputable source for this information.

Extensive research on the subject of Pit bull biting force reveals only one medical journal reference on the *psi* of Pit bulls. The information (or rather misinformation) is startling and unsettling in that it is printed in a scientific journal without supporting data. “Mauling by Pit Bull Terriers: Case Report”² is an article presented in 1989 by four medical doctors on the multidisciplinary management of a child presented with extensive soft-tissue damage as the result of an attack by four Pit bull terriers. The authors of this article state: “Pit bulls bite with greater force than most dogs (up to 1800 lb/in 2).” They cite their sole reference for this claim as: Boenning, D.A., Fleisher, G.R., Campos, J.M.: “Dog bites in children.” *Am. J. Emerg. Med.*, I: 17–21, 1983.

Examination of this cited report, “Dog bites in children,”³ reveals an extensive medical article written on the management and treatment of dog bites in children. *No* mention or reference whatsoever is found to Pit bulls, biting force, or dog breeds within this article. Their source cited for the *psi* claim is nothing more than a red herring.

The authors of the original report (“Mauling by Pit Bull Terriers”) make other unsettling and unsubstantiated claims about Pit bull anatomy when they state, “Once they have their victim in a hold, they do not merely maintain the ‘bite’, but continue to grind their premolars and molars into the tissue while the canine teeth stabilize the hold.”

Despite the proclamations of these human doctors, this simply is not true. Pit bull anatomy, jaw structure, dentition, biting/chewing behaviors and abilities are no different than any other breed of dog (perhaps with the exception of the some of the brachiocephalic or extremely short nosed breeds). Pit bulls, and all other breeds of dogs, have an upper jaw (maxilla) and a lower jaw (mandible), neither of which have movable parts (or joints), meaning that if the back molars in the upper jaw are moving so are the front canine teeth in the upper jaw. The front canine teeth cannot be unmoving (or stable) while the back molars are moving (grinding) as they are fixed on the same bone (maxillary bone). The same is true of the lower jawbone or mandible.

Misinformation and unsubstantiated claims about Pit bull anatomy and abilities published in medical journals is profoundly disturbing. Once inaccurate and unsupported data is published in a science journal, all future studies which reference this source become fundamentally flawed. Doctors who treat human patients, in reporting on dog attack cases in medical journals, continue to reference each other in a never-ending succession, building on one false and unsubstantiated claim made in 1989. These unproven claims have even been entered into official court documents as “evidence” of the “destructiveness” of the Pit bull bite. Needless to say, any conclusions about the type of injuries inflicted by Pit bulls found in a medical journal article that cites this inaccurate source (Pit bulls bite with a force of 1800 lb/in 2) are invalid.

Recently, Dr. Brady Barr of *National Geographic* did a study on animal bites. Domestic dogs and humans were tested along with wild animals. The results seem more feasible and within the parameters of reason. The force of bite in the test subjects was recorded as:

Humans: 120 pounds of bite pressure

Wild dogs: 310 lbs

Lions: 600 lbs

White sharks: 600 lbs

Hyenas: 1000 lbs

Snapping turtles: 1000 lbs

Crocodiles: 2500 lbs

Domestic dogs: 320 lbs. of pressure on average

A German Shepherd, American Pit Bull Terrier and Rottweiler were tested using a bite sleeve equipped with a specialized computer instrument. The American Pit Bull Terrier had the least amount of pressure of the three dogs tested.⁴

In addition to the *National Geographic* study, other reliable sources have done studies on the *psi* of non-specific breeds of dogs. It is generally agreed that all dogs bite at approximately 200–450 *psi* (the higher end numbers apply to larger dogs).

While these results seem within reason, bite force in animals is difficult to measure accurately. Variables which cannot be controlled include: the individual animal's motivation to bite into a testing device and how hard the animal chose to bite. It is not possible to know if animals are biting with full force or if a bite is inhibited.

According to Dr. I. Lehr Brisbin of the University of Georgia:

“To the best of our knowledge, there are no published scientific studies that would allow any meaningful comparison to be made of the biting power of various breeds of dogs. There are, moreover, compelling technical reasons why such data describing biting power in terms of ‘pounds per square inch’ can never be collected in a meaningful way. All figures describing biting power in such terms can be traced to either unfounded rumor or, in some cases, to newspaper articles with no foundation in factual data.”⁵

Fortunately, an emergency room doctor in New York, seemingly unaware of the debate and rumors of *psi* biting force in Pit bulls, allowed common sense to prevail when presented with a patient with severe bites. It was reported in the newspapers in the fall of 2003:

A 37-year-old man entered Harlem Hospital (NYC) seeking treatment for bite wounds. The man claimed he had been bitten by a Pit bull dog. An emergency room doctor, after examining the wounds, determined the injuries to the man could not have come

from a dog bite, Pit bull or otherwise. The wounded man abruptly left the hospital. Police officers later arrived at his apartment to find the animal responsible for the bites was a 400 lb. Bengal-Siberian tiger the man was keeping as a “pet” in his Harlem housing project.⁶

Hormonal Reactions, Chemical Imbalances, Brain Size and Other Neurological Nonsense

None of the claims about chemical imbalances or brain pressure warrant serious discussion. These are outlandish assertions serving only to embellish the super-predator image of the Pit bull and appear to be myths simply transposed from the Doberman onto the Pit bull.

Recently, a newspaper article stated that “some experts even believe that the presence of hormones in children of puberty age can set off Pit bulls.”⁷

As with most of these outrageous claims, the source (“some experts”) is not cited. The questions which could be put to these “experts” are: How has it happened that Pit bulls, exclusively, have come to acquire this ability to detect and react to pubescent hormones? And the even more compelling question: Since pre-teens and teenagers (male and female) are vastly underrepresented in fatal dog attacks, what evidence supports such a theory? (Pre-teens and teenagers are in one of the age groups least likely to be attacked and killed by any dog. Children under the age of six and the elderly are overwhelmingly the most frequent victims of severe/fatal dog attacks by any breed.)

Nonetheless, newspapers and editorials print this baseless nonsense. Suffice it to say, these are all untrue and there is no evidence whatsoever to support any claims of a chemical, neurological or puberty-based aggression exclusive to Pit bulls.

Pit Bull Attacks are Like Shark Attacks—Pit Bulls are Land Sharks

A first impulse is to simply dismiss these allegations as nonsensical because, like the exploding brain myth, they are so outlandish as to not warrant serious discussion. The fact that the city of Denver introduced the claim that “Pit bull attacks are like shark attacks” as evidence for breed-specific legislation demonstrates how this kind of misinformation and shoddy research can wind up as “fact” in official court records. The fact that “educated” and not-so-educated people in positions to legislate and enact laws are making these claims necessitates addressing this theory as if it truly had any merit.

From the Poodle to the Pit bull, all domestic dogs are descended from the same ancestor—the wolf. But the Pit bull has seemingly accomplished an astounding genetic feat. It

has singularly been able not only to surpass all traits found in its direct ancestor (the wolf), but has allegedly been able to bypass its own species and class and cross over to join the ranks with entirely different species and classes of animals (lions/tigers/sharks).

Not only do Pit bulls allegedly attack and bite like tigers, lions and sharks, but the implication is that they have also taken on the behaviors of these wild animals. In the interest of not belaboring similar inane theories (Pit bulls are like tigers/lions), only the shark issue will be addressed, as this is the most commonly seen comparison to Pit bull attacks.

Shark Anatomy/Jaws, Teeth (Class: *Chondrichthye*)

Sharks are cartilaginous fish. The shark's jaw exhibits characteristics unique in the animal kingdom. Unlike almost all other animals (and all mammals), the shark is equipped with two mobile and independent jaws, enabling it to attack large prey and tear off extensive pieces of flesh. This jaw structure allows for tremendous extensibility, enabling the animal to swallow some prey whole.

In addition to a unique jaw structure, the shark has a set of teeth of which the anatomy and manner of replacement is unique in the animal world. While there are over 400 species of sharks and they differ significantly in dental formula, all sharks have at least five sets of teeth, covered to varying degrees with buccal mucous membrane. One set of teeth sits on the ridge of the jawbone, with at least 4 rows of teeth lined up behind the first, functional row. If one or more of the teeth on the functional row are broken or torn out, the corresponding teeth in the next row will rotate up to replace them.⁸ For example, the White Shark has 46 teeth arranged in seven rows (not all of which are functional) for a total of 322 teeth.⁹

While shape and size of teeth vary among shark species, all sharks have serrated teeth. These teeth are edged or lined with smaller teeth, which are razor-sharp, rendering each tooth a veritable saw.

Canine (Pit Bull)/Jaws, Teeth (Class: *Mammalia*)

Dogs are mammals. Unlike the shark, the dog does not have two mobile and independent jaws. The only mobile bone in the mammalian skull is the mandible, or lower jaw. The dental formula for the dog is 2 (I 3/3, C 1/1, P 4/4, M 2/3) for a total of 42 teeth.

Anatomically, the comparison between dogs and sharks could not be any more far-fetched. The dog does not have a jaw structure which allows it to swallow prey whole, nor does its jaw structure contain independent jaws (upper and lower). Unlike the shark, the dog's upper jaw is firmly attached to the skull. The dog's teeth are not serrated with razor-sharp edges, nor do they have rows of teeth positioned behind a primary set of functional teeth.

Perhaps the persons who made the claim that “Pit bull attacks are like shark attacks” will say that the comparison was not to be taken so literally—that they meant it as the “manner of the attack,” “the nature of the attack,” “the behavior of the attack” or “the injurious nature of the attack” when they compared Pit bulls to sharks.

The manner, nature, behavior, and injuries inflicted by sharks during an attack are driven by predation or feeding. Biting off large chunks of flesh, tearing and ripping are methods by which the shark obtains food. The comparison would have to end here, as no one can seriously believe Pit bulls view humans as a food source.

If an argument is made that the comparison was not to be taken literally at all, but was simply a metaphor, the question then becomes: *How can comparing Pit bulls to sharks help in the understanding, or prevention, of canine aggression?*

Well, it can't.

Which leads to the following questions:

- What is the purpose of comparing Pit bulls to sharks?
- Is this approach an effective way to address canine aggression?

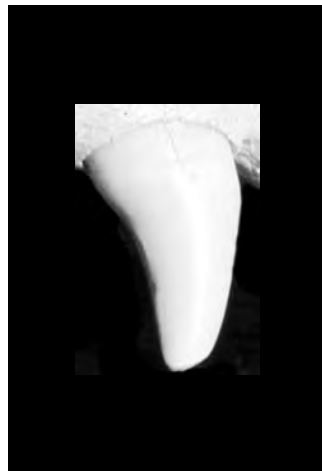
Since Pit bulls do not behave, attack or have anatomical features which allow for any meaningful comparison with sharks, this cannot possibly be an effective way to address canine aggression. This leaves the remaining question about the purpose of this comparison.

While some politicians appear to know very little about canine anatomy and aggression, and even less about shark anatomy, they do know how to promote themselves as “effective” and “concerned” lawmakers. The “facts” released about Pit bulls by some politicians are not really facts, but rather tactics—tactics that alarm and frighten the public into buying into a quick and ineffectual approach to a complex human problem.



Shark Tooth - Great White

L 1.78 inches x W 1.20 inches



Canine Tooth - 70 lb. Dog

L 0.79 inches x W 0.47 inches

Photo Credit:
megalodonsharkteeth.com

Statements comparing Pit bulls to sharks tap into a primal human fear of being attacked and eaten by large predators. These references are emotionally charged, attention-getting devices, capable of frightening a large segment of the public into believing that they are more likely to be killed by a roaming land shark (Pit bull) than by driving to work in the morning. A jittery public sighs in relief when politicians tell them not to fear, for they have the problem within their grasp. They have legislation which will rid the streets of these menaces, soothing the very fear they helped to create.

This is certainly not to suggest that all politicians are unconcerned with finding real preventive measures to control dangerous dogs. But those who instill fear in order to promote their agenda are either grossly ignorant of canine behavior or have questionable motives. Either way, this will not produce effective legislation to protect the public from dog attacks.

Pit bulls are Impervious to Pain and Therefore More Dangerous During an Attack

Because Pit bulls have historically been bred to have an increased tolerance for pain, it would not be unreasonable to conclude that this would be a factor in severe/fatal dog attacks. There are also some documented cases where Pit bulls appeared highly tolerant of pain and focused during an attack.

But sweeping statements like this are never based on documented evidence of significant populations. Behaviors such as extreme tolerance to pain can be found in groups of dogs within a population, but it is equally easy to find groups of dogs within the Pit bull population which have normal or even increased sensitivity to pain. Increased tolerance for pain is an unnatural or artificial trait within the breed and as such needs to be constantly selected for. Therefore, the number of Pit bulls that are extremely tolerant to pain would depend largely on the recent breeding practices of humans, which cannot be determined.

There are documented cases of Pit bulls that were extremely difficult to disengage from an attack. There are documented cases of Pit bull attacks which were thwarted when the dogs were struck with bats or shovels. There are documented cases of Pit bull attacks which ceased when the animals were struck with sticks, curtain rods, hands, feet or other relatively ineffectual objects. And there are many cases of Pit bulls attacking without much conviction, with the dog retreating at the shouts or mere appearance of another person. But these situations only demonstrate that there are many variables within any breed.

It is well-documented that other breeds of dogs, upon attacking in a severely aggressive manner, are also difficult to disengage. This could be seen as far back as the previously mentioned 1903 attack with the shepherd dog, during which the arrival of the wife, who struck the dog on the back with an axe, “only maddened the dog even further.” Even though the dog was frenzied, the arrival of the woman might very well have saved her husband’s life, had she not struck him in the leg with the axe.

Many severe Pit bull attacks did not result in a fatality, precisely because of direct interference or thwarting of the attack. Attacks that resulted in a fatality overwhelmingly involved unsupervised children or elderly persons alone with the dog(s), regardless of breed.

The probability is not that a Pit bull attack will result in a fatality because the dog could not be “beaten off” the victim, but simply because there was no one of significant force to do exactly that.

While it may seem logical that increased tolerance to pain would be a significant factor in Pit bull attacks, in reality it is not. Most dogs do not respond to pain while in the frenzied state of a severe attack. This is a behavior observed in many different breeds of dogs and is found repeatedly in many of the earlier examples given of dog attacks. However, forceful and direct intervention, by either separating or shielding the victim from the dog(s) has prevented many a severe attack from becoming a fatality in both Pit bull and other breed attacks.

Again, this distinction is important, because claims of Pit bulls being highly tolerant of pain easily turn into the misconception that Pit bulls feel no pain. Recently, Chicago Alderman Rugai, in commenting on the reasons for introducing breed-specific legislation in her city, was quoted in the *Chicago Tribune* as saying, “Pit bulls feel no pain...”¹⁰ These kinds of outrageous comments do incalculable damage. Aside from the obvious repercussions Pit bulls may suffer from this, humans can suffer as well.

One hundred years ago the media was reporting that dogs would attack in response to pain, thus educating people in the avoidance of attacks. Yet today the very persons who clamor so loudly about their desire to save people from dog (Pit bull) attacks disseminate information which is the antithesis to dog bite prevention.

Pit Bull Attacks are Unprovoked—Pit Bulls Attack without Warning

This subject will be discussed in more detail in the chapter on media and interpretation of behavior as it relates to all breeds of dogs. However, as it relates to Pit bulls, this is just another unsubstantiated claim which has been used to classify Pit bulls as “different.” Pit bulls are alleged to attack “without provocation” as a result of their breeding and use as fighting dogs.

Outrageous claims about Pit bulls and provocation are found regularly. Statements that “most” Pit bull attacks are unprovoked can be found from politicians, physicians, and others unschooled in canine behavior and unfamiliar with the circumstances preceding dog attacks. There are numerous reasons why claims of Pit bulls (or any breed) attacking without provocation are baseless.

The classification of an attack as unprovoked is usually based on the declarations of a negligent owner who does not care to understand canine behavior, an owner who is unable to read (understand) canine behavior, a busy owner who is too preoccupied with the tasks

of daily living to see the signs and signals dogs usually display, or persons who deliberately misrepresent the facts to limit their culpability.

Dogs have evolved over thousands of years (both from their ancestor the wolf, and as domesticated dogs in a human society) to be social animals. Social animals communicate by body language and with vocalization. Dogs do this with stares, body stiffening, positioning of ears, tail and head, and growling, to name only a few. Pit bulls do this as much as any other breed of dog.

Only hubris allows humans to declare that a few generations of selective breeding of a small population of Pit bulls (for fighting) can erase what thousands of years of evolution have created.

While we certainly can find cases in which a Pit bull seemingly attacked without displaying any warning signals, again this is not a phenomenon exclusive to Pit bulls, and it certainly is not representative of most Pit bull attacks. Additionally, since so many severe and fatal dog attacks (all breed) are on young, unsupervised children who cannot read or understand canine warning signals, this certainly leads one to question how these types of claims of “attacking without warning” can be taken seriously. As previously stated, there was only one recorded fatality by a Pit bull-type dog in the United States from 1966–1975. The first fatal Pit bull attack we find after this decade occurred in May 1976, when a 6-year-old girl wandered over to a Pit bull chained under a carport at an apartment complex. It is worthy to note that neighbors stated they heard the attack and “heard the dog growling,” but assumed it was growling at another animal and did not respond. Only too late did they realize that these very clear signals of aggression were directed towards the child.

The overwhelming majority of Pit bulls in the United States cannot trace their lineage directly back to game-bred fighting dogs. And fortunately most Pit bulls are not used for fighting but live, to varying degrees, in social environments where signals of fear, aggression, excitement, contentment, and friendliness are sent and received on a daily basis. Because humans attached to these dogs cannot, or care not, to read these signals does not mean they do not exist. Contrary to what the media and most owners of attacking dogs would have you believe, severe/fatal attacks by Pit bulls are usually the end result of an escalation of a series of obvious aggressive behaviors.

It is more within the nature of humans to lie about events that point to their culpability than it is within the nature of dogs to attack unprovoked. So, we find owners less than truthful about prior incidents of aggression or improper treatment of dogs when they are facing legal or civil action after their dog has severely or fatally injured someone.

No owner is going to admit a Pit bull attacked a child because it was kept on a heavy logging chain for five years, bred two times a year, was worm-infested and parasite-ridden, was teased by children and lived a miserable, lonely existence in the far corner of the backyard. The owner is going to tell police that the dog never showed any signs of aggressiveness. And if owners’ comments are unreliable, media accounts of these events are even

more so as they are all too content to describe these dogs as “family pets” and print the abusive owners’ cries of ignorance and denial.

Another reason why statements about dog attacks being unprovoked are unreliable is because rarely do they take into account the familiar aspect that is so important from a dog’s perspective. What may be provocation for one dog will not be provocation to another dog, depending on the relationship between the dog and the person. A clear example of this occurred in Tennessee in 2003 when a 4-year-old boy accompanied his grandfather to a nearby home. The boy had a Rottweiler at home, with which he was known to play very roughly. It was not uncommon for the boy to jump upon his dog and attempt to ride on the Rottweiler’s back. Like true family dogs, the Rottweiler tolerated this child’s rambunctious play good-naturedly.

However, the home they were visiting also contained a Rottweiler along with another large mixed breed dog. Neither of these intact, male dogs had any history of aggression but, unfortunately, the boy went into the yard alone and it is believed he attempted to play with these dogs in the same fashion as he would play with his pet Rottweiler. Clearly, the reactions of these dogs if the boy attempted to climb onto their backs would be different than the boy’s pet Rottweiler. Did the boy mean to harm the dogs? Did he intentionally provoke them? Of course not. But from the dogs’ perspective this easily could have been perceived as a threat.

And for those who proclaim that dogs should tolerate all these conditions and that the provocation was not serious enough to justify an attack, their opinion matters little. It was



*In 2004 the media reported this “Pit bull” attacked and killed a 4-year-old boy. It was **not** reported that this chained, intact male dog was visibly underweight with numerous old scars on his head and neck. Veterinarian examination revealed the dog was heartworm positive, flea-infested, and suffering from internal parasites (hookworms). He was anemic with a low-grade fever and was diagnosed as having very poor body condition and muscle mass. Stress and wear marks along the teeth suggest the dog did not receive adequate nutrition during development. The dog was poorly socialized and very fearful.*

the dog's perception which ultimately decided if the provocation was serious enough to warrant an attack. Owners and non-owners alike need to anticipate a dog's reaction or perception of provocation before an attack or deal with the consequences afterward. And this applies to Pit bulls as much as any other breed of dog.

Pit Bulls are "Ticking Time Bombs"

"Pit bulls are ticking time bombs."

Michael Bryant, Attorney General, Ontario,
in defense of his legislation to ban Pit bulls

"...the breed should be terminated as simply being a time bomb waiting to go off."

Kory Nelson, Assistant City Attorney, Denver, Colorado

These comments are almost always used to support the claim that Pit bulls are vicious, unpredictable and need to be restricted or banned. This is blatant fear-mongering. It is as baseless as saying that "Pit bulls are land sharks," "Pit bulls have chemical imbalances" and other claims used by those who are so grossly unschooled in the subject of dog attacks and canine behavior that this is the only way they can address the issue.

These statements are even more troubling when they are made by people who claim they have the interests of the public at heart, the very same people responsible for enacting laws to control dangerous dogs under the guise of safeguarding the public. Should the public feel safer when politicians enact dangerous dog legislation based on the "ticking time bomb theory" of canine behavior?

Would we accept this one-dimensional, emotional argument from our children's fourth grade teacher? Could a teacher tell a classroom of children that the Civil War started because men are inherently aggressive, or World War II started because men are evil? Would this be an acceptable teaching and learning tool? Do we solve problems or address issues effectively this way, or do we learn from examining both the major and subtle forces which preceded a war, or a dog attack?

A Breed Apart—or "Attacks Unlike Any Other Breed"

Pit bulls are often accused of being inherently different from other breeds of dogs, both in anatomy, temperament, manner of attack and ferocity of attack. In any discussion about the dangerousness of Pit bulls, the most frequently used evidence is the number of fatalities attributed to this breed and the description of the injuries to victims. But are Pit bull attacks, in terms of physical injury to the victim and the potential to cause death, actually different than those of other breeds?

Consider the cases of double human fatalities due to dog attacks. While fatal dog attacks are extremely rare, cases in which dogs have attacked and killed more than one victim during an attack are almost unheard of. However, over the last century, throughout the world, there are found fourteen reported cases of double human fatalities during a single episode of a dog attack (five in the U.S., two in Canada, one in Mexico, one in Italy, one in France, one in Hungary, one in North Korea, one in South Africa, and one in Kenya).

While most fatal attacks involve severe aggression, the aggression and ferocity of an attack by dog(s) resulting in the death of two victims during a single episode would have to be utterly extreme in nature and force. Yet, of the fourteen cases of multiple deaths resulting from a single episode of a dog attack, not one of the dogs involved in these incidents was identified as a Pit bull or a Pit bull-type dog.

Clearly, other forces are at work in these types of attacks that are unrelated to breed.

Consider also that during the 20th century there have been over 450 documented cases of fatal dog attacks in the U.S. by non-Pit bull breeds. This would certainly suggest that either other breeds exhibit aggression similar to Pit bulls, or Pit bulls are exhibiting aggression similar to other dogs.

One of the characteristics often used in claims that Pit bull attacks differ in nature and force from other breed attacks is the shake, hold and tear “manner of attack.” In enacting a ban on Pit bulls in 1989, the city of Denver “proved” that Pit bulls inflicted more serious wounds than other breeds because they tend to attack the deep muscles, to hold, to shake, and to cause ripping of tissue.

As far back as 1875, descriptions of dogs holding, shaking and tearing their victims could be found. The word “torn” is actually the most frequently found description of dog bite wounds during the last century.

A fatal attack on a little girl by a large mongrel occurred in 1875. The dog is described as having “teeth fastened into the child, and was shaking her furiously.”¹¹

In 1893 a vivid description was given of a woman killed by a Mastiff. The article reports that the woman was viciously attacked and lying on the ground when help arrived.

“Mrs. Morrison was lying on the ground unconscious, and the angry brute, with his teeth buried in her flesh, was standing over and worrying her. When the men approached the dog seemed to grow more furious. An attempt was made to beat him off with clubs, but he refused to let go his hold, and at each blow from a club he shook his victim so that it was feared he would kill her. After some delay a pistol was obtained and the brute was shot, but only after he received a second bullet did he release his hold on the woman” (*The Daily Advocate*, February 15, 1893).

The next year, a fatal attack by a Newfoundland is described in great detail. In Chicago, a young boy, Tommy O’Hara, was playing with a Newfoundland when the dog turned and

attacked the boy. The report describes many of the typical behaviors found in severe/fatal attacks:

“During the progress of the terrible attack on the child, a small brother and sister appeared on the scene and the maddened brute turned on them momentarily and inflicted cruel wounds. But his rage seemed to be against the boy Tommy, and he turned again and seized the little one in his teeth, shaking him until he was almost lifeless.” (*Herald Dispatch*, March 3, 1894).

The canine behavior of holding and shaking during a severe attack continues to appear in recorded dog attacks throughout the century. In 1965, a 4-year-old boy died after being attacked by a Labrador Retriever. The dog was tied to a picnic table and when the boy approached the dog, the “black Labrador seized and shook him.” Adults nearby could not intervene quickly enough to save the boy from the fatal head injuries inflicted by the dog.

There are untold numbers of other cases involving many breeds and types of dogs involved in these behaviors (tearing, shaking, and holding) during an attack, seen consistently over the last century. Throughout the history of the human/dog bond, owners have witnessed their puppies or adult dogs vigorously shaking and tearing at everything from stuffed toys to captured small animals. For the city of Denver to claim this is a behavior exclusive to Pit bulls demonstrates how statements made with no factual basis can easily wind up in “official” court records, especially in a climate of fear and hysteria.

Statements that Pit bulls inflict wounds unlike those of other dogs display unfamiliarity with postmortem reports of victims of other breed attacks. It is not necessary to provide the graphic details of autopsy results of Pit bull victims versus non-Pit bull victims. The fact is, they are indistinguishable. It is impossible to examine an autopsy report of a dog attack victim and determine what breed of dog inflicted the injuries. Clearly, other breeds can and do inflict injuries so grievous and profound as to cause fatalities.

For centuries farmers have been plagued by livestock losses due to predation by loose roaming dogs. As recently as the 1970s, newspapers were full of stories of dogs attacking all types of farm animals, from two Labrador Retrievers breaking into a pen and killing 900 chickens in Oregon to a pack of large mixed breed dogs attacking a herd of 26 young Holstein bulls in Maryland, killing one and severely mauling another.

Wild animals also regularly fall prey to loose roaming dogs and, during the previous decades, local newspapers were often reporting the yearly number of deer kills caused by dogs. As people lose touch with the natural world we allow ourselves to be convinced by sensationalized newspaper headlines that only certain breeds are capable of participating in these types of attacks.

In 2001, a woman witnessed four domestic dogs attacking a large buck off a rural North Carolina roadside. The dogs circled the deer, then began jumping and tearing at the flesh from the deer’s neck. Distressed at witnessing this attack, the woman immediately called

authorities. Officials responded, capturing three of the dogs and shooting the gravely injured buck. The owner of two of the dogs expressed surprise and dismay in learning that his two Labrador mixed breeds had participated in this brutal attack. However, faced with reality, the man was forced to acknowledge that the breed of dog mattered little, as Labradors, like all dogs, are predators, and all dogs have the potential to behave “badly,” especially when operating as a pack.

Dogs capable of killing a 150-lb. buck or bringing down a 500-lb. steer would have little trouble inflicting fatal wounds on a 2-year-old child. Whether the breed is an 80-lb. Labrador or an 80-lb. Pit bull has little to no bearing on the injuries. The determining factors are the intent and the bite inhibition of the individual dog.

To address fatal attacks as a Pit bull-specific problem invalidates the hundreds of deaths caused by other dogs. This approach renders any lessons we may have learned from all non-Pit bull attacks useless or of no intrinsic value in the understanding of canine aggression. There are lessons to be learned from all fatal attacks—lessons which can only be gleaned from examination of all the available data, not just the cases which involve a single breed.

The Pit Bull Dominance Factor—Or, If a Pit Bull (or Rottweiler) is in the Pack, the Other Dogs Don’t Count

This is perhaps the single best argument for the unreliability of breed statistics. It also happens to be the single most compelling argument for the extreme bias of the media.

While the media and others are guilty of broadly interpreting and applying the term “Pit bull” to dogs of very questionable breed, the omission of dogs other than Pit bulls (or Rottweilers) in the reporting of attacks is nothing short of disreputable. The media (and others) repeatedly give no recognition to breeds in multiple dog attacks unless they are of Pit bull or Rottweiler descent, even when it is proven the non-Pit bull or non-Rottweiler dogs participated in the attack.

To demonstrate how single-minded the media is in reporting breeds, and how inaccurate statistics can be on dog attacks: In the past four years alone (2002–2005), eleven dogs involved in fatal attacks with *no* Pit bull characteristics were counted as Pit bulls, while their “true” breeds were not reported, and three dogs that were clearly not Rottweilers were identified as Rottweilers. Even more distressing is that in the media’s haste to report Pit bull or Rottweiler attacks, three human deaths were attributed to dogs (two cases were reported to be Pit bull attacks and one case was reported to be a Rottweiler attack) when, in reality, the cause of death of these individuals was later determined to be from causes other than dog bites.¹²

Even if we increased the accuracy of breed identification (hence statistics) by subtracting the number of falsely reported “Pit bulls” and adding corrected breed identifications, the results are still unacceptable.

Even though, in the above examples, photographs of the animals were examined and animal control personnel and law enforcement were consulted for the breed identifications, the breed identifications were still admittedly guesswork. It is as unreliable to classify/count Pit bull mixes as Pit bulls as it is to classify/count Labrador mixes as Labrador Retrievers.

Bear in mind, all previous “statistical” studies on fatal dog attacks (Winkler, Pinckney, and the CDC) have relied on newspaper articles for breed identification. The frequency of media-reported errors in breed identification is so great (and biased) as to render all numbers on breeds obtained from media sources invalid.

The CDC Studies and Pit Bull “Statistics”

The oft touted and well-known study by the CDC (Centers for Disease Control) “Breeds of dogs involved in fatal human attacks in the United States between 1979 and 1998,”¹³ has been quoted, misquoted, cited, misread, and misunderstood on a regular basis by politicians, attorneys, the media and others looking for a sound-byte or quick solution to a complex problem.

The CDC study, if read in its entirety, explains in detail the inherent problems in attempting to calculate breed involvement in fatal attacks. The CDC further explained that a major flaw in their study was the inability to factor in total breed populations relative to breed related fatalities. The CDC concluded that fatal attacks are so rare as to be statistically insignificant in addressing canine aggression.

Despite these inherent flaws, the numbers of particular breeds involved in fatal attacks, as put forth in the CDC study, are continuously used as “evidence” of the danger of certain breeds of dogs. Ignoring the claims of the CDC that the number of dogs involved in fatal attacks cannot be used as a basis for legislation to address dangerous dogs, many individuals, organizations, courts, and communities continue to cite the numbers of breeds involved in fatal attacks found in the CDC studies.

The number most frequently cited from the CDC study is that 66 fatalities (more than any other breed/type) were attributed to Pit bull-type dogs over a 20-year period from 1979–1998 (or approximately three deaths per year from dogs reported to be “Pit bulls”). This number has repeatedly been used as “statistical evidence” as to the dangerousness of Pit bulls.

However, consider the statistics on child deaths from physical abuse versus child deaths from dog bites. In both of these examples, the first two statements are factual:

Fact: In 2002 over 420 children were killed as the direct result of physical abuse by a parent or a guardian (*this number does not include death from neglect*).¹⁴

Fact: The majority of physical abuse deaths of children were inflicted by fathers or father-type men (stepfathers, live-in boyfriends).¹⁵

Conclusion: *Therefore, fathers are “statistically” the most dangerous of all persons.*

Fact: In 2005, sixteen children were killed by dogs.

Fact: The majority of the dogs responsible for these fatalities were Pit bulls, Pit bull-type dogs or Pit bull mix dogs.

Conclusion: *Therefore, Pit bulls are “statistically” the most dangerous of all dogs.*

Why does the first conclusion sound ridiculous and the second sound reasonable?

We’ve all been exposed to fathers, either our own or other people’s, and we know from personal experience that they are not all potential child killers. Also, even though most people are not statisticians, on some level we understand that variables are missing or other factors are not taken into account before coming to this obviously faulty conclusion.

Not all people are exposed to Pit bulls and therefore have no frame of reference of personal knowledge which would make the second conclusion appear as absurd as the first.

People unfamiliar with Pit bulls often rely on information presented to them through the media to make an assessment about the nature of Pit bulls. But when the media or politicians talk about vicious Pit bull attacks, and hundreds of people write in telling of their friendly Pit bulls, no one wants to hear it. Reporters and politicians have been heard to say, “Don’t tell me about your friendly Pit bulls.” In reality what they are saying is, “Don’t inform me of the behavior of one thousand or ten thousand Pit bulls, because I want to base my theories on the behavior of 10 or 20 dogs and then present this to the public as evidence of my belief.” The non-Pit bull owning public then accepts this skewed and biased presentation as reliable information, and the second conclusion does not appear as absurd as it really is.

Anyone admitting that the first conclusion (fathers are the most dangerous persons) is an invalid one based on the data presented has to acknowledge that the second conclusion (Pit bulls are the most dangerous dog) is also invalid based on the data presented. Yet, this is the exact data and faulty conclusion which are used to prove how dangerous Pit bulls are.

No reasonable person can believe that the extreme behaviors of a small group can be used to define an entire population, whether it is fathers or Pit bulls.

Additionally, to demonstrate how most people’s belief that Pit bulls cause the most child fatalities are skewed by the media, the years 2002, 2003 or 2004 could not be used in the above comparison, as the Pit bull was NOT the breed responsible for the majority of child fatalities during any of those years.

Temperament and Unpredictability

Perhaps the most difficult problem facing the Pit bull today is the image that the breed is unpredictable and unstable. This has come about largely through the intense media focus given to a number of cases in which owners have encouraged or permitted their dogs to engage in dangerous behaviors. These are the dogs that then become representative of the breed.

However, for every Pit bull that attacks someone, there are tens of thousands of his brethren that tolerate all the conditions humans place them in, from loving homes to horrific conditions of abuse, without ever biting or attacking. There are no highly publicized reports or scientific journal articles on the behaviors of these dogs. The tolerance of Pit bulls in extremely abusive situations is almost never reported or given recognition by the scientific community or the public. Only a few of these long-suffering dogs can be found as a footnote in a report on a completely unrelated matter or in newspaper articles or reports of dog fighting and cruelty investigations. *Yet, the behaviors of these dogs are the behaviors which define the breed*—the hundreds of thousands of dogs that reside in homes with small children and elderly persons, from doting owners to distracted owners, from abusive owners to demented owners.

Millions of examples can be given of loving, loyal Pit bulls, but these are usually of little interest to most people. The following examples are the type that does interest us; though these stories are of monsters and monstrous acts: only it is not the Pit bulls who are the monsters.

In 2004, a sad story begins with the discovery of a dead child inside a bag on the steps of a New York City church. Investigation reveals the dead boy was placed there by his father, who claimed he did not call 911 because he had outstanding warrants. Further investigation has the father admitting to hitting the 3-year-old to “stop” the boy’s seizures. Photographs of the apartment where this child lived with his three siblings reveal filthy, roach infested rooms, with dirty water covering the bottom of a corroded tub, and flies buzzing around decaying food.¹⁶

Prior to his death, this 3-year-old child, with cerebral palsy and a history of seizures, resided with the most minimal care in an uninhabitable apartment along with four loose Pit bulls.

In 2003, a 15-month-old girl died in Lucas County, Ohio. The newspapers reported the child had suffered multiple broken bones, a head injury, and abdominal trauma. The coroner also found the child had recent exposure to cocaine and there was evidence of cigarette burns on the child’s buttocks, near her armpit and on the sole of one foot.

The mother’s boyfriend was charged with inflicting the toddler’s injuries. The environment this child lived in prior to her death was one of domestic violence, extreme child abuse, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, and criminal activity. The man accused of inflicting the injuries to this child owned a Pit bull. The dog’s name, Ice, was shaved into the fur on the dog’s back. The man’s estranged wife told authorities he injected the dog with steroids and this aggressive dog was incited to attack family members at the direction of his owner. Yet, in this horrific climate of abuse and encouraged aggression, it was never the Pit bull which harmed this desperate child. The boyfriend, with the silent consent of the mother, was alleged to have abused and tortured this child until it ultimately resulted in her death.¹⁷

There are thousands of these types of stories, enough to convince the skeptics and bore the believers. However, these stories are not accessible to most people and so the extreme tolerance and stoic nature of these dogs goes unnoticed, while hundreds of articles are printed about the errant behavior of a handful of dogs involved in attacking a person.

Pit Bull Identification

“Those who disagree with the ban will say that there will be identification problems. I don’t doubt there will be some issues on the margins, but, by and large, I think most people know what a pit bull is. The *Toronto Star* did a caricature the other week. They had a pit bull on it. I won’t say what was underneath the caricature, but everyone who saw that picture knew, everyone who read that caricature knew what that was. That was a pit bull. It didn’t say ‘pit bull,’ but you knew when you looked at it that it was a pit bull. That’s what it was.”¹⁸

Attorney General Michael Bryant

This rambling and surreal method of breed identification was uttered by Ontario’s Attorney General in his speech during hearings to ban Pit bulls in the Canadian province. And if perhaps comparing a dog to a cartoon character (caricature) is unsuccessful in helping identify whether a dog is a Pit bull or not, the Attorney General offered another method:

“I’ve said before and I will say again, if it walks like a pit bull, if it barks and bites like a pit bull, wags its tail like a pit bull, it’s a pit bull. That is going to apply, I’m sure, to the vast majority of identification cases.”

If these methods appear to border on the absurd, the proof of this was established when the Attorney General was asked to point out which dog was a Pit bull when shown photos of different dogs. Unable to do so, he referred to this as a “trick.”

Apparently the Attorney General isn’t the only one “tricked” by the Pit bull. Those in the media also believe it is easy to identify a Pit bull, and when they are equally taken to task as to their methodology, resort to similar excuses. Those who have knowledge of dogs and dog breeds understand that breed identification in dogs anything less than purebred is often difficult, if not impossible.

Even with purebred dogs, many people could not correctly identify certain breeds. These breeds need not be exotic or rare. Most people would not be able to identify an Australian Cattle dog, an Anatolian Shepherd, or distinguish between a white Boxer and an American Bulldog. Even experienced shelter workers, veterinarians, and rescue organization personnel are at a loss to identify certain cross breeds. Mixing similar-looking, yet distinctive, breeds, such as the Mastiff, Bullmastiff, Bulldog, Boxer, American Pit Bull Terrier, American Bulldog, Presa Canario, Coonhound, Weimaraner, Rhodesian Ridgeback and even the Chesapeake Bay and Labrador Retriever, would yield a dog that even experts would have difficulty identifying correctly.

Mixing Malamutes, Huskies, Wolf Dogs, German Shepherds, Samoyeds, Eskimo dogs, or any of the Northern-type breeds would equally yield a dog in which it would be next to impossible to guess the exact parentage or even predominant breed.

However, the media has been able to solve the seemingly complex identification problem with Pit bulls. The application of the “one drop rule” has made identifying a Pit bull an easy task for many in the media. The “one drop rule” has long been the standard used in America for determining race. This racially biased theory was based on notions of bi-racialism (the world is viewed as divided simply into White or Black races). The “one drop rule” emerged from the Old South and defined any person having any trace of black/negro blood as black/negro. Having even a single drop of black/negro blood determined one’s race to be black/negro. The implication was that African-Americans were inherently inferior; therefore any trace of “black blood” was a pollutant.

The field of population genetics now rejects the “one drop rule,” recognizing that this system was based on social issues and not based on biology or science. But today the canine equivalent of the “one drop rule” is applied to any dog appearing to have any characteristics (blood) of a Pit bull. The notion here is also that any Pit bull blood “pollutes” the dog, regardless of degree or ancestral fractions.

The canine world is currently viewed as made up of Pit bull and non-Pit bull dogs. The same principles which allowed for discrimination against African-Americans are now applied to dogs. Determining a dog to have Pit bull blood allows for the dog to be classified as genetically and socially inferior, allowing for segregation and discrimination. Dogs clearly of very mixed parentage, if involved in attacks, are repeatedly described in the media as Pit bulls or Pit bull mixes. The insistence on classifying dogs as Pit bull or pit bull mixes, even when unable to reference the source of this identification, is clear evidence of the media bias.



These very poorly socialized, fearful dogs were repeatedly identified as “Pit bulls” by the media—even though they were identified by Animal Control as Labrador mixes. These dogs were part of a pack of six dogs that mauled to death their owner’s elderly neighbor in 2001. All six dogs were intact, with one of the females giving birth to puppies shortly after the attack. The pack had a history of aggression and were so unsocialized they could not be handled by shelter personnel.



From the Bloodhound-type dogs to the Northern-type breeds to the Pit bull-type dogs, accurate identification of specific breeds involved in aggression has always been unreliable at best. However, there is always other information which can be recorded with precision and which yields valuable insight into the circumstances which directly contributed to an attack. For instance, debating whether the dogs that killed a child in 2005 were Pit bulls, Pit bull mixes or simply mixed breed dogs is an exercise in futility, yielding no definitive results. The information about this attack that can be recorded accurately is:

- An intact, male dog, found as a stray, usually chained, was brought into the basement for the night.
- A female dog, usually chained, was brought into the basement with a litter of newborn puppies.
- The dogs were used by the child's parents for a negative function—guard dogs.
- An unsupervised, 2-year-old child was allowed to enter the basement with the dogs.
- The owners/parents had a history of drug abuse (use of drugs the night before the attack).
- The house was found to be “uninhabitable” and condemned.
- The owners/parents had a history of animal abuse (two of their previous guard dogs had died from heat exhaustion).

Whether the dogs involved in this attack had any Pit bull characteristics is highly debatable. The facts listed above are *not* debatable, and this is the tangible evidence which needs to be examined and addressed when searching for the causes and solutions to dog attacks.



*This dog was repeatedly referred to as the “family Pit bull” in the media—and is the female dog cited in the case above. Photo credit: Michael Kestner and the *Virginian-Pilot*.*

CHAPTER 12

Fighting Dogs: Branded with the Sins of Their Masters

*“And, like a dog that is compell’d to fight,
Snatch at his master that doth tarre him on.”*

William Shakespeare, 1564–1616
(*King John*, Act IV, Scene I)

William Shakespeare wrote this verse nearly three hundred years before the existence of any of the breeds recognized today as the American Pit Bull Terrier, American Staffordshire Terrier, Bull Terrier or Staffordshire Bull Terrier, all of which were not established until the 19th and early 20th century. Though Shakespeare was hardly an expert on dogs, he understood the vital component in the relationship between men and dogs that seems to elude many people today. That is: When we encourage or expect our dogs to behave badly, we cannot feign surprise if they do, nor can we ignore the owners who are directly responsible for the behaviors of these dogs.

In breeding dogs some humans have created and continue to select for traits that will increase their tendencies to inflict injuries and to fight one another for the exclusive purpose of our “enjoyment.” To claim that the dog is dangerous because we seek out, select for and encourage these behaviors is just another example of the transference of cruel human traits and behaviors unto our dogs.

Both the dog fighters who claim that “Pit bulls love to fight” and the politicians who claim Pit bulls are “inherently dangerous” because of their fighting history are equally obvious in their attempt to absolve humans from any guilt and responsibility for the plight of the Pit bull in our society. Consider the claims of both of these self-serving groups against the real situation of the “fighting” Pit bull:

90 Days of Reported Cruelty in the United States (January 2005–March 2005)

- A woman is arrested in Texas for felony cruelty to animals after three dead Pit bulls are found in her yard. Two other Pit bulls were barely alive in a storage area

without food or water. One dog was so emaciated it could not walk. The surviving dogs had scars indicative of dog fighting.

- A Louisiana man is arrested on animal cruelty after animal control officers found a pile of dead dogs and starving live ones chained in his yard. Seven Pit bulls were found dead, some still chained. Three chained Pit bulls were still alive. There was no food on site and all living dogs were severely malnourished.
- Deputies in Hancock County, LA, received a call about dog fighting. They arrived at the residence to find 35 Pit bulls “living in poor conditions.” The owners claim they were “only” breeding the dogs.
- A Pittsburgh, PA, man who mailed videotapes of fighting Pit bulls to a government investigator becomes the first person convicted at trial under a 1999 federal animal cruelty law.
- Police officers find two men fighting their Pit bulls in an arranged dog fight between two public housing complexes in Annapolis, Maryland.
- Five men face felony charges in a night raid that one official called the biggest dog fight event he’d ever seen in Texas. Ninety Pit bulls were removed from the grounds in eastern Bexar County. Taken to the humane society, the dogs elicit only sympathy from shelter personnel as one dog is shown walking gingerly in a cage due to his severe wounds. The Pit bull, 15 pounds underweight, is wagging his tail and welcoming the attention of reporters and TV cameras. His front paws are bent inward, as if he were bowlegged from the elbows down. This is thought to be caused by having his front legs broken and not being taken to the vet for treatment, as dog fighters naturally do not take fighting dogs in for medical attention. The dog was also covered with quarter-sized splotches of pink flesh and scabs dotted over his body.
- Floyd Boudreaux and his son, Guy Boudreaux, are each arrested on 64 counts of dog fighting, 64 counts of animal cruelty and one count of possession of anabolic steroids, a schedule III narcotic. Hundreds of fighting roosters were also on the Youngsville, Louisiana, grounds. Both men were accused of fighting the dogs and breeding, training and selling the Pit bull terriers for fighting. The Louisiana Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals called Floyd Boudreaux “the grandfather of dog fighting” for his work as a breeder since the 1950s.
- A Mobile man is convicted of dog fighting and steroid possession. During the trial, witnesses testified that about 20 of the 23 Pit bulls found on the man’s property were disfigured with injuries. All the Pit bulls were dehydrated and emaciated to various degrees. The dogs had been kept on heavy logging chains.
- Franklin County undercover detectives execute a major dog fighting arrest in Ohio, after two dog fighters were caught on tape talking about horrific methods used to kill “losing” dogs.
- A Pit bull is found dead in a trash can behind a restaurant in Indiana. The dog’s mouth was bound with duct tape and the mauled condition of the Pit bull’s body convinced authorities the dog was used as a bait dog by dog fighters.

- Deep in the woods of rural central Florida, officers find half a dozen Pit bulls chained to trees. There is no shelter, food, or water for these dogs bound with heavy logging chains.
- A Wisconsin man is charged with fighting Pit bulls in his basement.
- Six people, including a law enforcement officer, are sentenced to community service and probation for dog fighting in New Orleans. All six persons are able to expunge their records after serving their sentence (i.e., community service) and paying a \$125 fine.
- A suspected dog fighting ring is found in Detroit. Police found seven Pit Bulls, growth hormones used on the dogs, syringes and dog fighting training equipment. One official commented, “There was blood everywhere in the basement. I don’t think the dogs were ever let outside.” Five adults and six children were at the residence at the time of the raid.
- A New York teenager is arraigned on charges of torturing animals and dog fighting after numerous Pit bulls, starving and with open wounds, are found at his home. Several Pit bulls were found in pens in the yard and nine Pit bulls were found in the basement. All the dogs were emaciated, scarred and had fresh, untreated wounds.
- A Richmond man is convicted on a charge of dog fighting after twelve Pit bulls on heavy logging chains, a treadmill, illegal veterinary drugs, dog fighting videos and other paraphernalia is found in his Virginia home.
- A Long Island man is arrested for training fighting dogs when police were alerted to his website. Although the website claimed to offer “gentle and effective training for puppies and dogs,” this was hardly the case. Officials found 12–15 fighting dogs in his garage in unsanitary and cruel conditions.
- Two men are charged with dog fighting after deputies found them cleaning up and taking apart a portable dog fighting arena in South Carolina. Deputies seized fifteen Pit bulls from the property. An animal control officer stated, “The dogs should weigh 50 pounds or more, but most of them didn’t weigh half that.”
- An 18-year-old in Tyler, Texas, is arrested for dog fighting and theft after a police investigation found him stealing dogs from backyards, taping their mouths shut and tossing the stolen pets to his nine Pit bulls. Police found the remains of six dogs on the property, believed to be stolen pets.
- The son of a former Ku Klux Klan grand dragon is arrested after staging a Pit bull fight in a makeshift arena in the living room of his home. Madison County officials found two Pit bulls with fresh wounds that were bleeding and another Pit bull with old scars on its head.
- In only three days more than 80 Pit bulls are seized in Anderson County, Texas. Authorities believe the dogs had been used for fighting. At least nine Pit bulls were found dead, still chained to trees. Six Pit bulls had their ears completely cut off, and the infections resulting from this required immediate medical attention. All the

dogs were extremely underweight, malnourished and being kept in deplorable conditions. Some of the chained dogs had no shelter and were huddled in a ball, shivering. The owners of these dogs were charged with varying crimes, including: cruelty to animals, possession of a controlled substance, unlawful possession of a firearm by a felon, and assault on a public servant.

- For five days, Simon the Pit bull lay in the bottom of dumpster, near death. The Pit bull was thrown in the trash bin near a Portage Little League baseball field in Indiana. The dog had a gaping wound in his head and multiple lacerations and bite marks over his entire body. Officials believe he suffered abuse for a long time. His teeth were broken off, his left eye was injured and the dog was “skin and bones.”

Consider the population of Pit bulls and Pit bull-type dogs in the United States during these three months (January 2005–March 2005):

There were the 380+ horrifically abused Pit bulls listed above. There were thousands more fighting dogs whose owners were not apprehended by law officers and reported in the news during these 90 days. During this time there were also other Pit bulls that were subjected to horrendous injuries or unspeakable acts of depravity by humans, unrelated to dog fighting. There were also thousands more abusive owners, who may not have necessarily been fighting or inflicting depraved injuries on their dogs, but nonetheless kept them in extremely abusive environments. There were also hundreds of thousands of negligent owners, reckless owners, ignorant owners, irresponsible owners, average owners, good owners and great owners of Pit bulls.

There were millions of Pit bull-type dogs experiencing every type of positive or negative emotional and physical circumstance humans are capable of imposing on dogs—and only two of these Pit bull-type dogs responded by fatally attacking a human during these 90 days.



Pit bull found inside a dumpster in Indiana in 2005



A terribly abused Pit bull responding to humane treatment.

As for the claim of dog fighters that Pit bulls “love to fight”—and the claim of some politicians about the “inherent dangerousness of the breed”—no sane person could witness the horrific condition surrounding many of these dogs and believe either of these statements have an ounce of validity.

“The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, because of those who look on and do nothing.”

Albert Einstein

In March 2005, a Mobile, Alabama, man was convicted of dog fighting and steroid possession. He was found with 23 Pit bulls chained in his yard. Twenty of the Pit bulls were emaciated and disfigured from injuries. All the dogs were scarred and wounded. His wife was also arrested and went to trial on these charges. The jury, while convicting her husband, acquitted the wife.

During the trial, the wife of the dog fighter testified that “She didn’t know about the dogs on her property and never saw them.”¹

The woman claimed ignorance of 20 starving, disfigured Pit bulls chained in her own backyard.

As a society, we are no different than this wife of a dog fighter who claims no responsibility or knowledge of events occurring in her own backyard. Yet dog fighting is pervasive. No town, city, county or state is immune. Dog fighting is found from the backwoods of Louisiana to the urban streets of Chicago. The Anti-Cruelty Society (SPCA) of Illinois reports that a survey of Chicago’s school children has found that students are almost universally aware of dog fighting in their neighborhood, with 1 out of every 6 children admitting that they have attended a dog fight.²

These fighting Pit bulls are kept in garages, basements, backyards and even have occasion to run loose. These dogs then pose a direct danger to children—not because they are Pit bulls, but because they are individually abused, encouraged to be aggressive, poorly socialized and have not had the opportunity to form positive attachments to humans. As demonstrated, this is the classic formula for creating a dangerous dog.

Many an article has been written about a suburban mother’s outrage over her children being traumatized after witnessing a Pit bull killing a cat or attacking another dog. These mothers are given a voice, both in the media and in community hearings, on dangerous dog legislation and these complaints are often used as “evidence” of the dangerousness of Pit bulls to support the banning of the breed.

Nary an article has been written about an urban mother’s outrage over the trauma her children endured from witnessing an organized dog fight in a ghetto apartment or an informal dog fight in a back alley.

Do all these urban mothers not care that their children witness this terrible violence and cruelty to animals, or is it the media that cares not to report the outrage of less affluent members of our society?

Urban mothers and other persons in Chicago do care very much about the horrors of dog fighting. Recently, Chicago’s Mayor Daley began a city-wide public service labeled the “Born to Lose” campaign, for the purpose of targeting dog fighting. In 2002, the city of Chicago designated an emergency code for people to call and report animal fighting, and in 2003, the city received and responded to 1,093 animal fighting complaints.³



Only when, and if, society becomes committed to applying the energy and resources needed to actively and forcefully penalize dog fighters and animal abusers can there be any hope of reducing aggressive dogs in the community.



Horrifically abused Pit bull picked up by Chicago police



The Pit bull's history of being bred for dog fighting is used by some politicians, experts, courts of law, the media, and even Animal Control personnel as proof of the "dangerousness" of the breed. There are many books and much information to be found on the history of dog fighting and the history and development of the Bulldog breeds. But, briefly, the history of the American Pit Bull Terrier begins at least two centuries ago, in England, where a type of working Bulldog was found to be useful to butchers in holding and controlling animals at market or to be slaughtered. This function (the ability to hold a bull) was also used solely for entertainment in the brutal spectacle of bull and bear baiting and was popular in England until it was outlawed in 1835. Since human history is steeped in violence and the exploitation of other beings, outlawing the bloody "baiting sports" had only minimal effect. Although the practice of bull and bear baiting did wane after these events became illegal, the use of dogs for ridding (pitting dogs against rats) and dog fighting increased. Adding Terrier genes to these working Bulldogs was found to create a lighter, athletic and more agile dog which proved more efficient in fighting smaller or equal-sized adversaries.

Some of these Pit bull-dogs or Bull-terrier dogs were brought over to America prior to the Civil War. The traits which were found to be useful in bull baiting and fighting were also found to be of great use in the hard-scrabble life of many frontiersmen. So while a segment of Bulldogs were being bred and maintained as fighting dogs, most 19th century Americans were busy eking out a living and using their Bulldogs in functions other than the cruel (and illegal) blood-sport of dog fighting. However, here is the point when the history and beliefs about the Pit bull splinters and becomes skewed.

There has always existed a core segment of the population that bred, maintained and used Pit bulls for dog fighting. The very essence of this blood sport required the participants to promote or record the breeding, traits and abilities of their dogs. Dog fighters chronicled extraordinary claims about their dogs because it served their egotistical and financial needs. Often times, the "best" history available about the American Pit Bull Terrier has come from a criminal based, self-aggrandizing minority of dog owners who recorded their claims and boasts about their dogs in order to increase their personal status or worth.

The untold number of average persons who owned Bull-dogs or Bull-terrier dogs functioning in everyday, legal activities have not provided a chronicle of legends and claims about breed temperament and abilities, so today the contributions these dogs have made and the high regard Americans had for the Bull and Terrier dogs have largely been lost or forgotten. Yet, Pit bull-type dogs were a highly respected and recognized part of American culture for the better part of the 20th century. Pit bulls and Bulldogs were prominently displayed in advertising, literature and in the cinema. Buster Brown and his Bulldog, Tige, started off as a comic strip in 1902 and later became affiliated with the Brown Shoe Company, and the Bulldog became a well-known advertising icon. Even more famous and

recognizable during the better part of the 20th century was Petey, the famous Pit bull pal in the *Our Gang* comedy series (later known as *The Little Rascals*). So famous was Petey that, even today, many people can still recall the Pit bull with a black circle painted around his eye tagging along in the comedic misadventures of Spanky, Darla, Buckwheat, Alfalfa and the other child stars of *The Little Rascals*.

So today, while much of the history of the Bulldog/Pit bull is only a brief remembrance of some of the more famous and high profile dogs of days past, access to late 19th and early 20th century newspapers has now allowed for renewed insight into the popularity, function and behaviors of the Bulldogs found in the general, non-fighting-dog population of dog owners. These records show that many Bull-dogs or Bull-terrier dogs continued to work in their old function as farm/stock dogs, while many more became guard dogs, hunting dogs, traveling companions and family pets.

While professional dog fighting men may have been breeding for traits believed to increase fighting abilities, they were certainly the minority of breeders/owners. Bulldog-type dogs were exceedingly popular in the late 19th and early 20th century and even became so popular in cities that complaints could be found in the newspapers about the large number of Bulldogs roaming through the streets. Certainly all these Bulldog owners were not breeding their dogs for fighting abilities.

While dog fighters certainly shaped and contributed to breed appearance and some behaviors, they cannot make claim to “owning” the breed. The original baiting, gripping, Bulldog had been used for many centuries to control stock animals, before being specifically bred for dog fighting. And even after dog fighters began breeding Bulldogs for fighting traits and behaviors, they cannot make claim to controlling the population.

Those who choose to define all behaviors of the Pit bull solely by their history as told by dog fighting men are in essence choosing to believe the claims made by a century-old, criminal-based, cruel, self promoting minority of Pit bull owners, while at the same time refusing to believe the claims or examine the behaviors found in the much larger, legal, non-fighting community of Pit Bull owners.

Even if we were to believe the claims of dog fighters about the extraordinary ability of the Pit bull, one cannot conclude that this translates into aggressiveness or dangerousness towards humans. Over the centuries, the majority of dog breeds were originally created, encouraged and maintained to harass, worry, chase, fight, hunt, or kill other species of animal, from small vermin and large game animals (deer, boar) to other large predators (wolves, bear). Dogs are predators: all dogs are equipped and have the innate ability and drive to hunt, fight and kill. Throughout history most types of dogs were bred for specialized aggression or behaviors towards specific prey (Irish Wolfhound, Scottish Deerhound, Rat Terrier, Foxhound, etc.). A dog encouraged, either by artificial selection and/or by training to excel in hunting, fighting or killing other animals, has never been considered a precursor or basis for aggression towards humans.

All breeds of dogs are created by men, therefore any breed-specific trait or ability is the result of artificial selection. Highly selective or artificial traits, if not constantly selected for, are easily lost. It has long been the lament of working dog enthusiasts that when a breed becomes popular with the general public and breeding for appearance or pet qualities takes precedence over breeding for ability, the dogs quickly lose their edge or ability to outperform other breeds at a particular task or function. Individual breeds will retain some specialized traits, but they become muted or less viable. Pointers will still point, retrievers will still retrieve, sheepdogs will still herd and fighting dogs will still fight, all to some degree. But the uniqueness of the trait or specialized ability to perform a particular function becomes blunted. These behaviors then begin to revert back to more normal or natural levels found in all canids.

Those who claim the Pit bull is destined by its genetic code to behave a certain way are denying the very fact that man has selected for these traits, continues to select for them and could just as easily select against them. It is this claim that Pit bulls cannot revert back to normal behaviors; that they are permanently altered as to render them unable to behave like “normal” dogs, which is the basis for the flawed argument of “inherent dangerousness.”

The Pit bull breeds are maintained by a constant and continuous selection for traits. To claim we can no longer control the appearance, behaviors or traits within the breed, or that the breed has “gotten away from us,” is absurd. We can easily fashion the Pit bull to exhibit increased or decreased behaviors. We can test for temperament and select for reduced aggression and drive before breeding dogs. Once dogs are born, we can continue to select and direct behaviors by neutering, training, socializing and practicing humane treatment and maintenance. If dogs still exhibit undesirable or aggressive traits it is still entirely possible to effectively control and supervise the animal so that it does not become a potential danger to others.

Every part of the Pit bull, from conception to death, is within the direct control of owners.

Any way in which the Pit bull differs from any other breed of dog is the direct result of our behaviors (or lack thereof). To claim we are now hapless victims of the Pit bull’s strength, temperament or anatomical traits is denying the indisputable fact that breeds of dogs are man-made, while at the same time failing to acknowledge the very essence of the human-dog bond—dogs will perform functions or behave in ways to serve their owners.

CHAPTER 13

Sensationalism Replaces Common Sense

Towards the end of the 1970s, two incredible transformations in human and canine behavior occurred in perfect unison:

- Children suddenly stopped teasing dogs.
- Dogs suddenly started attacking without provocation.

In less than a decade, human children thoroughly evolved into empathetic little beings, thoughtful of the feelings and mindful of the needs of other forms of life. Adults also became paragons of morality and empathy, ceasing all forms of provocation and abuse towards animals. Just as quickly as children and adults evolved en masse into considerate beings, dogs reverted to their ancestral roots, discarding their long held attachments to mankind and attacking humans in wild abandon. Dogs seemed no longer affected by heat, pain, or frustration, and began attacking only from a natural viciousness.

Or so the media would now have us believe.

Half a century ago, the newspapers relished a good dog attack story as much as the media today. But here is where any similarity between the newspapers of a generation ago and the media of today ends. As recently as 30 years ago newspapers were still printing circumstances believed to have been a trigger or contributory factor in dog attacks. All manner of insightful details were given which explained canine behavior. This type of reporting filled two vital needs: It provided both entertainment and information on individual cases of dog attacks, but even more importantly, this type of reporting provided subtle information for the prevention of dog attacks.

Behaviors from small infractions, such as pushing or shoving a dog, to major abuses, like hitting dogs with pipes, were observed as triggers for a dog attack. These details were given in addition to some of the larger forces at work, such as the chaining of dogs, owners permitting dogs to roam loose or children attempting to interact with unfamiliar dogs.

The reporting of dog attacks and the overall attitude of the people a generation ago seemed to maintain a healthy balance between the danger which some dogs presented versus the overwhelming tolerance and good nature of most dogs. If anything, dog attack reports in the middle 20th century demonstrated an even more acute understanding of canine aggression and the limits to a dog's tolerance than the colorful dog attack reports of the 19th century.

While 19th century America was rather unforgiving of dogs no matter how extreme the provocation which made them bite, mid-20th century attitudes were more tolerant of dogs and episodes of biting.

There are scores of cases reported during the 1960s and 1970s in which dogs were euthanized only after a third or fourth bite on a child. Children were known to provoke dogs, and dogs were recognized to have limited tolerance. A 1971 newspaper story which demonstrates this is entitled, "Patient Dog Bitten 6 Times by Boy." The story goes on to tell of a family trying to find a new home for their German Shepherd because they could not stop their two-year-old son from biting the dog. Six times the boy had bitten the dog so hard that the animal bore scars from the boy's teeth. The parents commented, "Not once has the dog retaliated. We felt we couldn't try the dog's patience any longer."¹

Another article clearly demonstrates the understanding of the behavior of dogs in pain and the true forgiving nature of dogs. A 1948 article tells of a boy, Jimmy, walking in the woods with his dog, BoBo, and the poor animal stepping into a steel-jawed leg trap. The boy could not bear to see his dog howling in pain and attempted to free him. But each time he approached the dog, the distressed animal snapped at him. The article then describes the thoughts of the boy:

"For a minute he wondered what he should do—run for help and let Bobo suffer until he got back, or try to get Bobo free, even if it meant getting bitten.

Jimmy decided to risk the bites. He reached in toward the trap's jaws. Bobo bit him—three times. Jimmy winced but kept trying to open the trap. Finally he did.

Bobo jumped out—and immediately began licking Jimmy in gratitude."²

Another case reveals both the overall and immediate events which led to a dog attack. In 1972, the parents of three children went out to dinner, leaving a babysitter in charge. The babysitter left the house, leaving a 9-year-old in charge of his two younger siblings. The children decided to make popcorn and accidentally spilled the scorching hot kernels on the back of their German Shepherd dog. The dog reacted violently by attacking the children.³

An account of an attack by a German Shepherd police dog provides an excellent visual impression of how the attack occurred:

"Not even a fellow member of the police force can get away with treading on the tail of Wolf III. Wolf III, German Shepherd member of the police canine corps, was sitting by his master, Patrolman Funderbruk, near an escalator of the City Hall subway station. Another patrolman was standing with his back to Wolf III, when people getting onto the escalator forced him to take a step backward, right onto the tail of Wolf III.

Wolf III whirled about and sank his fangs in the patrolman's leg. The officer was treated at Philadelphia General Hospital and released."⁴

From the early 20th century until the late 1970s, hundreds of dog bite stories describe events which contributed to dog attacks/bites. Children are found throwing blankets over dogs' heads, pelting them with snowballs or rocks, shoving dogs, running in fear from dogs, poking dogs with sticks, yanking bones out of their mouths, inciting dogs to attack other animals, and generally trying the patience of even the most tolerant of dogs. Dogs are found biting in reaction to being scalded by burst radiator pipes or after being tripped over. We find a case of a chained dog watching children in the yard chase a rabbit, and the frustrated dog biting a child running past him. There are scores of cases of children trying to hug, pet, kiss or "caress" chained dogs and being severely bitten in the process.

Experts asked to comment on cases of dog attacks during the 1960s and early 1970s almost unanimously agreed the problem rests with owners failing to control their dogs, children attempting to interact with dogs unfamiliar to them, and the use and procurement of large dogs for guard/attack dog functions.

But by the 1980s the events contributing to a dog bite virtually disappear from newspaper reports. Dogs were now reported as biting without provocation and even some of the "experts," relying on media accounts for their information on dog attacks, began to erroneously blame specific breeds.

It was the great misfortune of the Pit bull to be the new "fad" dog and thus the new dog found in incidents of attacks at the very same time when the media stopped reporting triggers or events which precipitated an attack. This would not only prove to prejudice the public against Pit bulls while creating a myth of breed unpredictability, but would also play an important role in the general public's loss of knowledge about canine behavior.

In 1950, a man was rushed to a hospital in Pennsylvania in critical condition from loss of blood. The man was able to tell doctors that he had fainted while in the backyard with his Dalmatian. A neighbor found the man with the dog alongside him. The Dalmatian had chewed his master's hand off at the wrist and the man had lost a critical amount of blood. This poor old gentleman loved his dog to the last. Before dying from shock and loss of blood, he insisted the dog was only trying to rescue him and only injured him in an effort to drag him into the house. One of the last things the man said before dying was, "He's a good dog."⁵

Whether this dog was indeed trying to rescue his master or was exhibiting some other, less altruistic behavior is unknown. What can be gathered from this sad story is the prevailing attitude towards dogs. At the time, many people's perceptions towards dogs were the same as could be seen 50 years earlier; that even good dogs could do "bad" things and that even "bad" dogs could be found doing good deeds.

Consider an incident reported in 2002. An elderly woman was found dead in her daughter's home. The woman appeared to have several dog bites on her. A Pit bull and a Pit bull mixed breed dog were in the house with the deceased woman. The police and coroner reported the dogs had caused her death. The newspapers, always on the alert for a Pit bull attack, ran the following headlines and stories:

“Killer Pit bulls Rip Granny to Shreds” (*New York Post*, December 11, 2002)

“Grandmother mauled to death by family’s Pit bulls” (*Newsday*, December 10, 2002)

One article claimed that one Pit bull was “covered in blood.” This same Pit bull in another article “appeared to have blood” on him (the him was actually a female dog). One neighbor claimed, “the dogs were vicious, they barked a lot and looked vicious.” Another neighbor claimed they were nice dogs. One newspaper printed a photograph of one of the dogs clearly agitated (teeth bared) in the new and stressful surroundings at the animal shelter. The dogs would be impounded for the next eight months.

The daughter, the owner of the dogs, could not believe they would have killed her elderly mother. She hired an independent forensic pathologist from the renowned Henry Lee Forensic Institute to review and re-evaluate the findings of the initial autopsy report. Only then was it discovered that the woman had died from a cardiac arrhythmia, and the few bite wounds on her body were non-lethal and post mortem.* Her death was attributed to natural causes and it was determined the dogs did not participate or contribute to her death. There was a dangerous dog hearing which resulted in both dogs being released back to the daughter.

No retraction or correction was ever printed about this “Pit bull attack.” This incident remains permanently archived in the newspapers and on the Internet as a “Pit bull-related fatality.”

*Note: It is well-documented that dogs will, on occasion and for unknown reasons, inflict post mortem bites on their deceased owners. This has been documented with breeds from Poodles and Dachshunds to Labradors and mixed breed dogs.



In a society of violent video games, Internet pornography, schoolchildren shooting their classmates, husbands killing wives, court TV, gang warfare, drug abuse, serial killers, terrorist bombs and mothers drowning their children, we are becoming increasingly more difficult to shock. Our monsters need to be increasingly terrible in order to keep pace with a society easily bored by our own species’ violent acts. Since dogs have for thousands of years befriended, sacrificed and served mankind in selfless devotion, it would require constant and wildly exaggerated claims of ferocity and supernatural abilities in order to convince most people to view them as a significant danger.

The intense and persistent media and political attention given to Pit bull attacks has skewed our perceptions so dramatically that we no longer have a balanced view of the dangerousness of a very few dogs against the extreme tolerance and contributions that millions of other dogs provide. And this has been accomplished by constant over-sensationalism of anything Pit bull related. The barrage of headlines with the word “Pit bull” in

them appears to be very convincing evidence of the vicious nature of Pit bulls. But are these reports legitimate evidence of aggressive behavior within the breed?

There are simply too many outrageous examples of media manipulation and fear-mongering to list. Not only are there different types of biased reporting, but the media has been relentless in pursuing all things “Pit bull.” Despite claims to the contrary, there is no question the media vastly over-reports Pit bull attacks as compared to other breed attacks.

- In September 2003, a young boy was killed by a Husky-type dog in Alaska. The incident was covered briefly in only two Alaskan newspapers.
- In December 2003, an elderly woman was killed by a “pack of Pit bulls” in Florida. (None of these dogs were actually Pit bulls—four were identified by animal control as Lab mixes and two were Pit bull mixes.) This story was covered in over 200 major U.S. newspapers and television stations, and was reported in newspapers in Australia, the United Kingdom, South Africa and Canada.
- In 2004, a man was killed by his large mixed breed dog in California. The briefest mention of this attack (less than 50 words) could be found only in the local newspaper.
- A month later, a child was killed by a Pit bull in Michigan and this story ran in over 100 national and international newspapers.

Nor is this extraordinary media blitz confined to the American media, as a Pit bull-related fatality in the United Kingdom in January 2007 generated over 1,120 articles on this tragic, but singular event.



In 2004 this dog killed his owner when the elderly man attempted to stop the dog from lunging at another dog on the other side of his fence. The only media coverage given to this attack was a 50-word article in the local paper.

The over-reporting of injuries to children by Pit bulls versus other forms of grievous injuries to children are possibly the most disturbing type of reporting. We are justifiably upset when a child is the innocent victim of a dog attack. Dogs that inflict severe/fatal injuries on children are certainly dangerous dogs. However, the level of fear and outrage towards dogs after such an incident is not proportional to the real risk of severe injury and death.

In Illinois, on November 5, 2005, three Pit bull-type dogs rushed out of a house and attacked two children. One child was severely injured and the other child was very critically injured. Even the owner was severely bitten in an attempt to control his dogs. During the next few days, there were over 250 articles printed on this incident. The story was covered in Canada, Japan, Australia, Russia, India, Italy, on FOX News, CNN news, and in over 200 national newspapers. Though one boy suffered grievous and life-threatening injuries and remained hospitalized for over a month, the child did survive. The media continued to report on the long and difficult recovery of this boy over the next month. (Eight months later, in August 2006, another 60+ separate newspaper articles were published covering this very same attack.)

The same week as the non-fatal Pit bull attack on the children in Illinois, at least eight children suffered other types of horrific injuries and abuse from a parent or guardian, which resulted in the death of seven of these victims. None of these extreme child abuse injuries/deaths warranted more than one or two small articles run only in the local newspapers.

This type of over-reporting of Pit bull attacks versus acts of extreme human violence towards children demonstrates how media bias can easily distort the public's perception of the dangerousness of dogs, while minimizing the more frequent and devastating injuries suffered by children.



Errors and random breed identifications by the media have been discussed; however, one further example will demonstrate that even when the breed has come to be identified accurately due to intense public and political interest in a case, the media will still make gross errors when referring to breeds of dogs involved in attacks.

The 2001, San Francisco death of Diane Whipple is unquestionably the most publicized dog bite fatality in the history of the human/dog relationship. Thousands of articles were written on the initial attack and the subsequent murder trial of the owners. An entire book was written on this single dog bite-related fatality (*The Red Zone*),⁶ and another entire book was published on the victim (*Death of an Angel*).⁷

In many severe/fatal attacks, the first newspaper reports in the day or two following the attack include breed identifications that are unreliable and inaccurate. Initially, the breed involved in this case was identified as Bullmastiffs or Pit bulls. Due to the unprecedented amount of interest in, investigation into and coverage of this case, the breed of dogs involved

was later correctly identified to be the Presa Canario. Photographs of these dogs ran in dozens of newspapers and even the dogs' names became familiar to many people (Bane and Hera).

Yet, incredibly, four years and thousands of articles later, some in the media still refer to this as a Pit bull-related fatality. In the coverage of a Pit bull attack in Illinois in 2005, the regional newspaper printed the following quote as additional "evidence" as to the vicious nature of Pit bulls:

"A San Francisco couple was charged with involuntary manslaughter when a Pit bull they were watching mauled a woman in the hallway of an apartment complex in 2001."⁸

And if over-reporting and erroneous reporting of Pit bull attacks were not enough for the media, they have concocted a new and novel way to titillate their readers. Incredibly, the media now reports Pit bull "almost attacks" or "escape from attacks." The reporting of "almost or escaped" attacks is a phenomenon never witnessed before in the newspaper reporting of the interactions between dogs and humans.

Approximating on the low side, 350,000 persons are attacked and bitten by dogs seriously enough to require medical attention each year in the United States. This translates into at least 950 persons PER DAY receiving a significant bite by a dog.

Incredibly, the media will often report an "almost" attack or an "escaped" attack by a Pit bull in which absolutely no injuries were inflicted on a person. The only conclusion which can be drawn from this is that the media views an "almost" Pit bull attack to take precedence over a real attack by another breed of less interest.

This type of reporting is most often found in communities or areas in which Pit bull bans are being considered. Instead of reporting bites by other breeds to present a more balanced and realistic approach to dog bite prevention, the media feeds the flames of hysteria with reports of Pit bull "almost" attacks.

In 2005, California was in the process of considering state-wide dangerous dog and/or breed specific legislation. An example of journalistic hysteria during this time is found in the San Jose media, which ran the headline "Elderly Man Narrowly Escapes Pit Bull Attack." This article goes on to tell about an elderly man taking out his garbage when he spots two loose Pit bulls. The man claims that "he saw them, and they saw him and then they came after him." He is reported to have run from the dogs and escaped into his house. (This is obviously the one and only trait Pit bulls are not reported to have—the ability to outrun elderly gentlemen.)

This same article goes on to report another "Pit bull attack" involving two Pit bulls and a man walking his small dog. The man was reported to have not been injured, and his small dog received minor injuries.⁹ How or why the man and his small dog "escaped" from this "attack" by two Pit bulls is not reported.

In Louisville, Kentucky, in 2005, after a fatality by a Pit bull and another fatality by two mixed breed dogs (which were, of course, reported as Pit bulls), the news also began grasping at Pit bull straws for stories. Since Louisville was considering breed-specific dog laws in reaction to these two tragic cases, the newspapers attempted to keep Pit bulls in the news

by reporting “almost” attacks. The story “Pit Bull Traps Boy, 4, on Car Roof” tells the not-so-harrowing story of a boy placed on the roof of a car by his father when a Pit bull “charged” them. The father “fended the dog off with a pole and a lawn chair.” No one was reported to have been bitten, scratched, mauled, clawed or otherwise come into contact with the dog. But, the article made special attention to note the dog was “confirmed to be a Pit bull.”¹⁰

Even in communities that are not focused on enacting Pit bull legislation, some in the media cannot pass the opportunity to print any encounter between a person and a Pit bull(s).

“Two Teenagers Escape Serious Injury after Pit bull Attack near Hanover” is a headline that ran in 2005. This story claims the Pit bulls “attacked without warning” and that the dogs were “vicious.” The only problem with this story is that no one was truly attacked, bitten, knocked down or mauled by any of these six Pit bulls. Two teenagers walking down a street in Hanover stated that “six Pit bulls came out and started attacking us. We kept walking.” It was reported that neither youth was “seriously hurt” and, after being examined by a doctor, the “scrapes” were deemed to be so minor as to not require any treatment.¹¹

Six dogs (Pit bulls or otherwise) surrounding and jostling a person can be an unnerving and worrisome event. Especially in today’s climate of fear surrounding Pit bulls, these two teenagers were justifiably worried. But are two upset teenagers a newsworthy event? Also, these teenagers did not “escape serious injury,” nor were they “attacked,” because it is obvious these dogs were exhibiting appropriate bite inhibition. Even in this large pack, acting independently of their owner, clearly excited, and with two unknown and very nervous-acting teenagers, these dogs did not inflict any bites. More accurately the headline should have read, “Negligent Owner Allows Dogs to Frighten Teenagers.”

It has gotten to the point where any Pit bull witnessed near a person in distress is assumed to be the cause of that distress. In March 2004, police received a call about a Pit bull mauling a man in Fort Madison, Iowa. The dog was lying beside his owner, who was dead from a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the chest. The dog did not bite, attack or cause any injury to this man, but was simply lying beside his fallen master. A dog of another breed would have been heralded for devotion to his deceased owner.

Since persons being severely injured or killed by automobiles are so commonplace as to not elicit much reaction from the reading public, one media source seriously misrepresented the facts of one incident to grab the interest of their audience. “Man Struggles to Recover from Pit Bull Attack,” “Update on Pit Bull Attack” and “Pit Bull Attack Victim Leaves Hospital” were three separate news stories run from April 14 through April 29, 2003.¹² The first line of one of these articles reads, “After a vicious dog attack families of the victims often suffer the most.” The first line of the follow-up article reads, “A Rockford man has now left his hospital bed after being attacked by a vicious dog.”

These articles are a shameful and gross misrepresentation of the facts. The facts of this accident are that a man was walking into a restaurant when a Pit bull began “chasing him.” Unfortunately, in running away from the dog, the man ran into the street and slammed into

a passing van. The man's injuries were the result of coming into contact with a motor vehicle, not with the dog.

Additionally, Pit bulls attacking cats (and even rabbits) are now being reported in newspapers, usually accompanied by highly emotional quotes from parents claiming fear for the safety of their children. The reporting of such cases as Pit bull related aggression conveys either questionable motives or a shocking level of ignorance about very natural, albeit unpleasant, canine behavior (i.e., chasing and killing small prey animals).

Even the most innocuous events involving Pit bulls are deemed not only newsworthy but threatening. Chicago, Illinois, was in the midst of a much-publicized proposal to ban Pit bulls in late 2005. A neighboring suburban community swept up in the latest media-driven Pit bull hysteria was also considering a ban of Pit bulls. The area newspaper tells of the experience and testimony of one man at the town council meeting. The news story is headlined, "Pit Bull Angers Resident." The article goes on to tell of one resident's anger and fear of Pit bulls resulting from a loose Pit bull stealing food from his bird feeder. The man addresses the council, stating that the town needs to "do something before there is another incident."¹³

With thousands of legitimate and serious injuries inflicted both by other breeds of dogs and by parents on children each day in the United States, we need to examine why our society views a Pit bull attacking a cat or an "almost" Pit bull attack as more newsworthy.



The media barrage of all-things-Pit-bull has defiled the image of the Pit bull so profoundly that it has resulted in a public perception that only certain breeds of dogs can be aggressive towards humans (and other animals).

Time and again other breed attacks are reported only if the attack was so extreme it could not be ignored. The overwhelming majority of serious and even severe attacks by other breeds are either unreported or underreported as compared to Pit bull attacks. Proof of this is found in human interest stories in which attacks by non-Pit bull dogs played a role. Often, non-Pit bull or non-Rottweiler dog attacks are not reported on their own merit, but only as they relate to how the attack impacts another part of a person's life. The following examples are taken from only one year, 2005:

A highly publicized case of the first face transplant was reported in November of 2005. This was a significant medical and media event. How the woman came to need this operation was revealed to be the result of a severe mauling by her Labrador Retriever. The woman, while unconscious, had her nose, lips and chin torn off by the dog. The attack occurred months prior to the operation and was apparently of no interest to the media at that time.

Another attack by a large mixed breed dog (listed as a Shepherd mix) was only reported in the media a month later when the mother was arrested on a charge of child abuse after she failed to get medical attention for the severe injuries caused by the dog. The dog had

bitten one of her children in early 2005, and a social worker had advised the mother to remove the dog from the home. A few weeks later the dog bit another child in the home, inflicting a laceration 7 x 2 centimeters long on the top of her head. The attack became publicized due to the consequences of the bite becoming infected and the mother being arrested for child neglect.

An October 2005 attack was not reported until December 2005 in the story of a hardship case of a man who could not afford to pay the bills incurred as a result of a dog attack. Two months earlier the man had attempted to stop a Chow dog from attacking two girls on the street and in the process he was attacked, losing part of his finger and receiving severe bites to his arm. Unable to work after these injuries and with no insurance, the story tells of the unfortunate financial circumstances of this man.

A September article discussing the outcome of a lawsuit and jury-allotted award to the parents is the only report found of the severe injuries received when a 4-year-old boy was attacked by a caretaker's dog. The dog, a Golden Retriever-Basset hound mix, had clamped its teeth on the boy's head and swung the child back and forth repeatedly during this attack.

In December 2005, a brief article was published in reference to the recovery and solicitation of funds to help a small girl who was the victim of a severe dog attack. The article is about the family's gratitude to all the kindness people had shown them and their injured daughter. At the time of the article the child had been released from the hospital and was facing "several more surgeries, including major reconstructive surgery to her face." One sentence describes how her injuries came to be: "The fourth-grader was injured last Tuesday by the family's Labrador Retriever, who has been with the family for 3-1/2 years. Details regarding the incident were unavailable."¹⁴

The attack itself was not reported in the media when it occurred and is only mentioned in this article about the family's appreciation of people's support.

The obvious harm of such unbalanced reporting of different breed attacks is illustrated in a comment made by Chicago Alderman Ginger (Virginia) Rugai. In attempting to pass Pit bull breed-specific legislation in 2004, the Alderman was quoted in the *Chicago Sun-Times* as saying, "Have you heard of any other particular breed that has, in fact, killed or maimed someone?"¹⁵

There are two distressing aspects to this comment: The first is the obvious media impact, by over-reporting Pit bull attacks, on creating a public perception that only certain breeds of dogs are responsible for severe/fatal attacks. But there is a further disturbing aspect of this Alderman's comment; unlike most individuals, lawmakers have both a staff and a responsibility to research a topic thoroughly before attempting to enact life-altering legislation and making statements to the media. Proposing laws based primarily on information spoon-fed by the media is a seriously flawed approach to controlling dangerous dogs. This is evidenced by the fact that the Alderman seems totally unaware of the number of dog bite fatalities which have occurred in her own and adjacent districts in the Chicago area. In Cook

County (which encompasses Chicago), there have been 12 fatal dog attacks since 1965. Ten of these fatalities were caused by breeds of dogs other than Pit bulls.



A valid and reasonable argument can be made that it is not the responsibility of the media to provide a comprehensive and accurate running log of dog bites in the United States. Editors, journalists and reporters all have both personal and professional standards and beliefs as to what is deemed newsworthy and of public interest. With an infinite number of stories about the human condition occurring each day, editors pick and choose which individual stories they believe have relevance. In a free and capitalistic society, this is perfectly acceptable and reasonable.

So it needs to be recognized that it is neither the responsibility nor the intent of the media to provide unbiased or detailed information on the number and types of dog attack injuries in the United States. One repeatedly finds in media accounts of dog attacks: inaccurate breed identifications, seriously flawed accounts of circumstances surrounding the attack and vital and relevant details concerning both human and canine conditions regularly excluded. Yet, all previous “scientific” studies on fatal dog attacks have used newspaper reports as either their sole source of reference or as an integral part of the study.

Therefore, it is vital for both the scientific community and the public to recognize that the media is under no obligation to provide balanced, comprehensive or accurate data on severe/fatal dog attacks, nor does it.



The Pit bull has borne the brunt of much of the misinformation and negative handling by the media. However, all breeds of dogs and even humans suffer from this new type of journalistic approach.

One hundred, even thirty, years ago, the media provided subtle and not-so subtle tips on dog bite prevention in their telling of dog attack stories. Today, this is all but absent. It may be speculated that in today’s highly competitive media climate shocking stories serve a journalistic agenda. Events that are sudden and unexpectedly violent are interesting to most people. Events that occurred as a result of “cause and effect” or events that make sense are rather boring or of less interest.

For example: “Family Pit Bull Mauls Tot to Death”
versus
“Abused Chained Dog Kills Toddler”

The first headline used two terms designed to shock: “Pit bull” and “Family.” Pit bulls are now recognized as menacing and fearful animals, so placing this breed in the headlines is assured to shock and get the attention of most people. The use of the term “family” is

“Residents Seek Pit bull ban after Child Killed—6-year-old Attacked by Family’s Pets”
(ClickOnDetroit.com, April 5, 2005)

One newspaper volunteered, “The girl had known the Pit bulls since they were puppies.”

This is how this dog attack was presented to the reading audience. Naturally, the public and politicians read this and found more “proof” of the unpredictable nature and temperament of the Pit bull—or another case of Pit bulls turning on their owners and/or family members.

Investigation of the incident and necropsy (animal autopsy) of these two “family pets” reveal:

- The dogs, a male and a female, had originally belonged to the mother’s boyfriend, who was recently deceased.
- Both dogs were 12–18 months old and intact. The female had signs of a previous pregnancy.
- The dogs were confined in the basement of a vacant house, while the mother and girl had moved into another house.
- Upon examination both dogs were found to be underweight.
- No dog food was found throughout the entire gastrointestinal tract of either dog.
- Both dogs tested positive for brodifacoum poisoning (meaning they ingested rat poison).
- The stomach contents of both dogs were found to contain multiple foreign bodies of varied forms:
 - Male: pieces of paper and cardboard (from a box of rodenticide), plant material, small nails, and a rubber gasket.
 - Female: pieces of cardboard (from a box of rodenticide), multiple small rubber bands and black plastic fragments.

It is a gross misrepresentation to label these two dogs abandoned in the basement of a vacated house, with no food or water, with their stomachs full of rat poison, cardboard, nails, plastic and rubber bands, as “family dogs.”

Any dog that has not been afforded the opportunity to socialize, interact and learn appropriate behaviors because they have been acquired for negative functions (guarding, fighting, breeding for financial gain) or maintained in semi-isolated conditions (chained, kenneled, basement/yard dogs) cannot be defined as “family dogs.” These animals are “resident” dogs. Family dogs and resident dogs *cannot* be expected to exhibit similar behaviors under similar conditions.

The toddler who wandered out to the chained, intact, breeding male Pit bull in the backyard of a home in Louisiana was reported in the media to have been killed by the “family Pit bull in an unprovoked attack.” One article even delicately described the heavy chain

around this dog's neck as a "tether;" as the dog was reported to be "tethered in the backyard." The circumstances this dog was maintained in are clear indicators of the degree of socialization, care and function of the dog. The level of socialization and apathy toward this dog was so low that the family never even bothered to name him. When asked the name of the dog after the attack on the child, the owner stated the animal had no name and was simply referred to as "the dog."

This is just another case of owners, in conjunction with the media, presenting an image of the Pit bull that has no basis in reality. Allowing perceptions of canine behaviors and the level of the familiar bond (family dog versus resident dog) to be determined by an owner attempting to limit personal culpability and by the media attempting to sell a story has led the public (and "experts" who rely on these accounts) to believe that certain dogs behave unpredictably and with unprovoked aggression.



Americans have always loved their dogs. So how has it come to pass that a breed of dog that was beloved and respected by Americans for over a century has become loathed, feared and abused both by individuals and society as a whole?

As stated previously, it would take a constant and persistent barrage of claims of unpredictability, ferocity, extraordinary abilities, powers, etc., in order to make a dog-loving country dislike a particular type of dog to the degree that the Pit bull is feared today. There can be no question that this is exactly what has transpired through the media (and more recently through outrageous claims by politicians).

- In 1987, over 800 newspaper articles were printed in which "Pit bulls" were headlined.

Over a decade later, the media is unrelenting:

- 2004, over 900 newspaper articles were printed in which "Pit bulls" were in the headline.
- In 2005, there were an incredible 1,700+ newspaper articles which headlined the words, "Pit bull."
- In 2006, the media continues to exploit the Pit bull with an unprecedented 2,800+ newspaper articles vying for their readers' attention with the words "Pit bull" in the headlines.

In a little over two decades, 1985–2006, an astounding 14,500+ newspaper articles used the words "Pit bull" in their headlines to grab the public's attention. This number does not include newspaper articles referencing Pit bulls that did not specifically use the words "Pit

bull” in the headline of the story, nor does it include magazine articles, radio or television coverage of Pit bull issues.

In the first week of November 2006, for the first time in over 150 years of recorded fatal dog attacks, an unprecedented number of children (4) were killed by dogs in a single week. One of these four attacks involved Pit bulls and three were by other breeds of dogs. The circumstances surrounding all of these attacks were strikingly similar. Examination of these cases, individually and collectively, offers valuable insight into the reasons and causes for fatal dog attacks on children.

On November 7, 2006, Nancy Grace of *CNN Headline News* chose the single fatality involving Pit bulls to feature on her television show. The coverage and discussion of this fatal attack included describing Pit bulls as “killing machines” and comparing the dogs to “machine guns and Uzis.” Graphic and highly disturbing stock film footage of Pit bulls fighting was played repeatedly during the show.

The other three children killed by other breeds of dogs during this week were not mentioned.

How could the average person not come to believe that Pit bulls are different than other breeds of dogs given this extraordinary, sensationalized and biased media coverage of dog attacks?

CHAPTER 14

The Real Causes for Dog Attacks

“If an ox gore a man or a woman that they die: then the ox shall be surely stoned, and his flesh shall not be eaten but the owner shall be quit. But if the ox were wont to push with his horn in time past, and this hath been testified to his owner, and he hath not kept him in, but that he hath killed a man or a woman; the ox shall be stoned, and his owner also shall be put to death.”

*The Bible, Old Testament
Exodus, chapter 21, verses 28, 29*

If this punishment seems too harsh, the penalties for owners today who allow their dogs to roam loose and attack individuals are equally too lenient, if not nonexistent. The following cases show that canine behavior cannot be examined without examining human behavior. The behavior of the dogs in these incidents was a direct result of the actions (or inactions) of their owners.

Case #1

In February of 2003, Vivian Anthony was walking down a street in Columbus, Ohio, when she was attacked by two loose roaming dogs. Her husband managed to fight the dogs off the woman, but she was critically injured. Two weeks later, as Mrs. Anthony remained on life support in the hospital, another woman was attacked by two loose roaming dogs, near the same location as the first attack. Two men beat the dogs off the woman. A newly fallen snow allowed police to track the dogs' bloody paw prints to a nearby residence. Inside the residence were three dogs, along with a newspaper clipping about the first attack.

After 53 days on life support, Vivian Anthony, the first victim, died from complications from the attack. DNA sampling of the dogs and the victims' clothing determined the same dogs were involved in the attack on both women. The owner of the dogs, a medical doctor, was charged with two counts of involuntary manslaughter, one count of reckless homicide and one count of assault.

There can be almost no doubt that the owner of these dogs knew of the first attack on Vivian Anthony and the involvement of his dogs. He lived not a half mile from where she

was attacked, he had a newspaper clipping of the incident in his house and the dogs almost assuredly had to return home after the attack with blood on them. Still these dogs were permitted to run loose less than two weeks later, allowing them to attack another woman.

During the trial the owner admitted to knowing that his dogs escaped often and that they had previously been involved in attacks on two other persons. Of the three dogs owned by this doctor, two were intact males and one was a very pregnant female (she was not involved in either attack). The owner pleaded guilty to one count of involuntary manslaughter and one count of assault. He was sentenced to six months in jail and a \$5000 fine.

Case #2

In 2002, a 2-year-old girl wandered too near a chained dog and was attacked and killed. This intact, male dog had worn the dirt down to a smooth bare surface in the area limited by the chain. The tree to which the dog was chained was devoid of bark as the dog paced for endless days around the tree. After the child was killed, a few neighbors commented that the dog appeared skinny and underfed. The animal control officer stated that the dog was “appropriately sized for its breed.” The owner of the dog stated in the newspapers, “About the only thing I can say is I’m sorry, but I don’t see how I could’ve stopped it from happening.”

This was the story reported in the newspapers and it is incredible in the startling lack of information. Fortunately, law enforcement officials submitted the body of the dog to the state for a necropsy (animal autopsy). What was not revealed in the newspaper accounts or by the owner was that approximately one week prior to killing the little girl, the dog had killed a young cat. Now, this is not necessarily indicative of aggression towards humans, or anything else really. Dogs do kill cats. But this dog consumed the cat. Dogs don’t eat cats after they kill them, unless something else is terribly wrong.

What was wrong with this animal was that it was starving to death.

The necropsy determined:

- The five-year-old, intact, male weighed only 25kg, or 55 lbs. (*This full-grown male dog should have weighed between 75–95 lbs.*)
- The dog was 10–12% dehydrated. (*Dehydration at 10% is considered severe and life-threatening.*)
- The intestinal tract contained only small particles of leaves and scant amounts of corn kernels.
- There was *no* dog food in the entire intestinal tract.

Diagnosis: Severe emaciation and malnutrition.

Yet, unbelievably, the owner was puzzled as to how he could have prevented this tragedy.

Case #3

In 2004, the mother of an eight-year-old boy allowed him to spend spring break at his father's house in Charlotte, North Carolina. One day during the week, the father was in the house with his girlfriend and the boy was playing in the backyard with the father's four dogs. Tragically, the dogs began attacking the boy. The father and girlfriend inside the house did not hear the boy's cry for help or his screams. A postman across the street did, though, and ran over in an attempt to save the boy. When he realized he could not help the child by himself, he ran to the door and banged on it for help. The father answered the door and threatened to kill the postman.

The boy died.

The police arrived and found that the father was a convicted felon, out on parole. Inside the house they found an assault weapon and drugs. The father was arrested for possession of a firearm, possession of illegal drugs and for threatening a federal employee (postal worker). He was also later charged with involuntary manslaughter in the death of his son.

A few neighbors warily stated the dogs seemed abused and said they had witnessed the owner beating them. The mother, obviously distressed and grieving for her son, started a petition to rid Charlotte of three different breeds of dogs.

What many people fail to acknowledge, even those not overcome with grief, is that a convicted felon, out on parole, would have little regard for any legislative efforts that would make ownership of a breed of dog illegal. The fact that it is was illegal to be in possession of a firearm or narcotic drugs were no deterrent to this man. It is very doubtful that he would have any regard for a law that banned a particular breed of dog.

It is not reasonable to expect normal or amiable behavior from dogs owned by a man who, rather than having intense gratitude, instead threatens to kill the man who is attempting to save the life of his son.

Addressing this as a dog breed issue will never solve the problem of canine aggression. Legislators and communities can destroy the dogs, ban breeds, mandate high insurance coverage, require fencing, or signs and any other number of measures to restrict the dog—but no amount of laws, restrictions or breed bans will save the lives of children whose parent(s) allow them to live in such high risk environments.

These are but three examples in a three-year period (2002–2004) showing behavior by owners so extreme in their negligence or criminality that they render the breed of dog a non-issue. There are many more cases like these, some as extreme, others to a lesser degree. This demonstrates that in many cases of severe/fatal aggression it is simply not possible to separate the behavior of the owners from the actions of the dogs.

If we were to take the above examples and add the three different breeds involved to statistics on fatal dog attacks, what does this accomplish? Can we seriously believe that any of the above owners were true devotees of the breed of dog which they so recklessly abused and/or mismanaged? Do we imagine that banning the breeds of dogs involved in

these attacks would prevent them from acquiring another breed of dog and demonstrating equal recklessness?

As some politicians and a large portion of the media spin off in the direction of focusing on breeds, fortunately law enforcement personnel work diligently behind the scenes in an attempt to address the real circumstances which permit or encourage some dogs to act so aggressively.

Unlike some in the media and some politicians, law enforcement is keenly aware that persons involved in situations in which their dog has attacked and killed someone are liable to be less than truthful about the history, function and prior bad acts committed by their dog(s) and/or by themselves. Additionally, even if a police officer is personally inclined to believe a particular breed may be aggressive, they conduct a rational and thorough investigation, as is required by their profession. Because of this, law enforcement agencies disseminate the most accurate data and least prejudicial conclusions about the circumstances and factors behind severe/fatal canine aggression.

In recent years, some police and sheriff agencies have done extraordinary work in uncovering information and details about the owners and dogs involved in fatal attacks. Based on this information, some cases of fatal dog attacks have been deemed terrible accidents. Others were concluded to have stemmed from low level negligence or a low level of supervision of dogs/children, coupled with misfortune. Some cases were negligence bordering on criminal and other cases were clearly criminal.

The only way to come to conclusions about dog attacks being accidental or criminal is to examine the owners first, then the circumstances surrounding the attack and, lastly, the dogs. Only in this way can the origins and opportunity for canine aggression be determined.

While proponents of breed-specific legislation often seem uninterested in recognizing the distinction between dog attacks that can be attributed to canine behavior and those that can be attributed to human behavior, the criminal justice system, the police and the courts frequently recognize that were it not for the reckless disregard of some dog owners (and/or parents of the victim), these fatalities would not have occurred.

Since 1982 there have been at least 29 dog owners found guilty of murder, manslaughter or criminally negligent homicide in cases in which their dogs were involved in a fatal attack. Still other dog owners and/or parents have been found guilty of child neglect, child endangerment, child abuse and reckless injury to a child after a fatal dog attack on a child.



Throughout the ages, dogs have been guardians, protectors, companions and playmates to children. Like all friendships, there may be squabbles, misunderstandings and offenses taken, but children and dogs are forgiving creatures, and both usually emerge with only the fondest of memories of their relationships together.

There are over 73 million dogs in the United States. The vast majority of these dogs interact on a daily basis with every conceivable type of child, from infants to teenagers,

from gentle children to tormenting children, from handicapped children to healthy children and from family children to neighborhood children. The dogs these children live with and are exposed to include almost every recognized purebred dog along with a never-ending variety of mixed breeds. Millions upon millions of children learn about compassion, responsibility, companionship, and respect for others by living with these animals. Virtually all these children enter into adulthood all the better for their experiences with dogs.

However, about a dozen times a year, something goes terribly wrong.

Statistically, a child has a greater chance of dying from hundreds of other maladies and mishaps, both man-made and natural, than from the bite of a dog. But society is deeply shocked and offended when a child dies from an attack by a dog. For this reason we need to take a closer look at how children come to be exposed to dogs which put them at risk.

How a child becomes the victim of a fatal dog attack is dependent on either one or both of these factors: level of responsibility and risk evaluation demonstrated by the parent and/or the failure of the dog owner to evaluate risks and safeguard children from their dogs.

More often than not, children who fall prey to dogs do so as a result of negligence by either the parent(s) and/or the dog owner. Sadly, far too many children live with parents or guardians who offer them only a low level of safety. Many of the child victims of fatal dog attacks lived in an environment which allowed for a large margin of error, which in turn invited misfortune.

The following cases demonstrate that some victims of fatal dog attacks were children whose parent(s) provided them with only a low level of safety from misadventure.

In 2001, a 2-year-old boy was killed by an intact, male chained dog. It was the middle of the afternoon and the parents were seemingly unaware the child had left the house or had been killed by the dog in their yard. After an undetermined amount of time, the child was discovered dead near the stepfather's chained dog. The stepfather was unconvinced the dog had killed the child, claiming the dog's chain had been the cause of death. The dog, prior to this incident, had killed another dog. The stepfather claimed the death of that dog was also a case of "death by chain."

The evidence clearly proved the boy was killed as a result of an aggressive attack (bites) from the dog. Yet, the stepfather's refusal to acknowledge the clear evidence was only the latest in a long list of denials and irresponsible ownership practices (unaltered, chained, unsocialized dog, with previous acts of aggression ignored or excused) that directly contributed to the ultimate act of aggression displayed by this dog.

It is worthy of note that the boy's funeral needed to be delayed as the parents overslept that morning.

A fatality in 2000 involved a 2-year-old girl wandering over to one of six dogs kept on a heavy logging chain in the far corners of a yard. The owners of the dog knew it to be dangerous and had warned their own children not to go near him. When a mother and her 2-year-old girl were visiting the house, the child wandered out and was killed by the intact male dog. The owner came home and beat the offending dog to death with a sledgehammer.

All six dogs in the yard were intact, and one of the female dogs was very pregnant. Investigation revealed that the dog which had killed the child was actively used for fighting and had been matched in a fight only weeks earlier. The mother of the deceased child refused to cooperate in the investigation or assist police. She stated in so many words that she did not want to help police get her friends in trouble.

A 2001 fatality involved the tragic circumstances of a young boy who had come to St. Louis with his brother and mother in the winter of 2000. By all accounts 10-year-old Rodney was a sweet, pleasant and intelligent boy, despite his unstable home environment. Before arriving in St. Louis, Rodney and his brother had been taken twice from their mother by the Missouri Department of Family Services and placed in foster homes. Now returned to his mother, who had a history of drug abuse and an open weapons charge pending in a neighboring county, Rodney appeared to be adapting well to his new location and school.

On a Monday evening, around 5 p.m., Rodney's mother saw him leave the house with his basketball. The following morning police arrived at the mother's doorstep to inform her that her son had been killed by dogs in Ivory Perry Park on either late Monday night or early Tuesday morning. Rodney's mother was unaware that her son had not returned home the night before. She was arrested and charged with endangering the welfare of a child.

With no parental interest in keeping this child out of harm's way and no concern for his safety or whereabouts, it is not terribly surprising that this child should be the victim of some type of terrible misfortune. Sadly, dogs were the source of his tragic death. Of course, equally culpable are the unknown owners who abandoned and allowed these dogs to roam loose in the city.

One of the most frequent scenarios for dog attacks is children visiting relatives. Seventeen percent of the children killed by dogs were attacked by a relative's dog (grandparent, aunt/uncle). While cases of extreme negligence are found here, this is the one area where seemingly innocent mistakes or slight errors in judgment have resulted in tragic consequences.

The factors which appear to be at work here are:

Adults, being familiar (or having a bond) with a relative's dog, assume the dog will be equally accepting of their young children, believing their bond with the dog will automatically extend to them.

Adults visiting with children fail to take into account the territorial issues found with many dogs.

A common scenario is: A woman visits her mother. She is familiar with her mother's dog and perhaps feels comfortable with this dog which has never shown any aggression towards her or her parents. At some point the daughter becomes a mother herself. She continues to visit her parents, but now begins to bring along her child. The dog has had only



A 5-week-old infant was left unsupervised at his grandmother's home. This Labrador and Mixed breed dog fatally mauled the infant. Photo Credit: James Crosby

minimal exposure to this (grand) child and at some point the child and dog are left alone. The dog then attacks this small interloper.

The case of a child being killed by a relative's dog is perhaps the scenario in which education may make the biggest difference in the reduction of severe attacks on children. Very often these parents made only minor errors in judgment. Also, many of these parents did have lifestyles in which they provided safe environments for their children. An added awareness of the danger some dogs may present to young visiting children may help these parents avoid attacks on their own children by a relative's dog.



While a significant number of fatal attacks on children may have been prevented by either responsible behavior or reasonable risk assessment by a parent and/or dog owner, some cases are truly unforeseeable events. There are a small number of cases in which parents and dog owners seemingly took all necessary precautions prior to a fatal dog attack, yet still suffered the same fate as severely negligent dog owners and/or parents.

A sad case of what could only be classified as a terrible accident occurred in April 2004 in Washington. John, an 8-year-old boy, was visiting his next door neighbor's home. John was inside the home with the teenage boys living there. At some point, John, unnoticed, went into the fenced-in backyard where the family kept two large dogs. John knew these dogs and had interacted with them before. For reasons which will never be known, the boy

was attacked and killed by either one or both dogs. There is absolutely nothing about this case which suggests the dogs would have behaved this way.

The dogs had responsible and quality owners, who maintained them in a controlled and safe environment. The dogs had no other function than that of companion animals and were owned by this family for three years (since they were puppies). Even the dogs' names suggest nice family pets, Precious and Diamond. The dogs were females (although intact, there were no issues with pregnancy or puppies involved). Female dogs without puppies (or not pregnant) are exceedingly rare in cases of fatal canine aggression and are responsible for less than 2% of all fatal dog attacks.

The dogs had no history of aggression prior to the attack. They were known to be friendly with neighborhood children. Neighbors unanimously agreed the dogs' behavior was always appropriate and non-threatening. The boy had knowledge of these dogs and was aware of their friendly and non-threatening behaviors. He was old enough to make a fair and reasonable assessment of the (low) risk involved in encountering these animals.

No mistakes, no bad risk assessment, no cruelty, negligence or lack of control over the dogs—just a terrible accident involving a young boy and a tragic event for two families and two dogs.



If the reason a person obtains a dog and how the dog is maintained are important signposts on the road to aggression, something as simple as a dog's name is often just as relevant to the future behaviors we expect from our dogs.

Suppose you are walking down a street and a short distance off a man is walking towards you with a large, muscular dog. The dog's leash snaps and the dog is leisurely trotting towards you. The owner yells, "Psycho, stop!"

Now envision the exact same scenario, except the owner yells, "Ladybug, stop!"

Except for those who are so petrified of dogs, or so brainwashed by the media to fear certain breeds, most people would assess the risk of each of these trotting dogs a tad differently.

It is no small coincidence that many of the dogs involved in fatal attacks have indeed been named: Crusher, Rage, Psycho, Mayhem, or a host of other names which suggest their owners wished their dogs to appear—or, worse, act—menacing.

Many dogs involved in severe and fatal attacks are found with these menacing, criminal-laced names because they had been acquired for the express purpose of intimidation. The names of these dogs coincide with their use as status symbols by urban thugs in a culture of violence, drug abuse and dog fighting.



Environment and maintenance are additional critical factors (along with function and owners) which demonstrate the level of commitment and responsibility an owner has, not only to the dog but also to the community and safety of its inhabitants.

Environment is the immediate physical surroundings of the dog (chained dogs, yard dogs, loose roaming dogs, multiple dog situations, unsupervised dogs, isolated and unsocialized dogs). Maintenance is the physical condition of the dog (intact dogs, sick, abused or underweight dogs).

Chained Dogs

The potential danger of a chained dog stems from rather simple causes:

- Chained dogs can never be afforded the same level of socialization as household dogs.
- Chained dogs have a well defined and limited territory and therefore may exhibit heightened territorial issues.
- Chained dogs cannot flee a threatening situation, increasing the probability of a defensive (or fear) bite or attack (fight versus flight response).
- Chained dogs are not able to release pent up energy or frustration and this may increase aggressive or abnormal behaviors (pacing, barking, straining at chain, etc.).
- Chained dogs are exposed to extreme weather conditions, and the discomfort of heat, cold, rain, and insects. Also, chained dogs are at the mercy of tormenting children.
- Untold numbers of chained dogs are injured or die after becoming entangled in chains or ropes or are attacked by loose roaming dogs.

None of these are very complex issues. The conditions under which chained dogs are kept are in direct opposition to the conditions needed to produce a well-balanced, social dog.

An owner who keeps his dog chained does not recognize or meet the social, emotional, and even most of the physical needs of the animal. Dogs, by nature, require physical exercise, mental stimulation, social and physical interaction with other beings (dogs or human) and a sense of belonging or attachment to other “pack” members. Depriving dogs of these important behaviors and interactions with humans invites aggression.

Putting dogs in situations where they are apt to feel threatened, protective of limited territory, or experience isolation, discomfort or pain will increase incidents of aggression. This is evidenced by the fact that 25% of all fatal attacks have been inflicted by chained dogs.

Dogs that have not been provided the opportunity to develop appropriate social behaviors due to chaining cannot, after an attack on a toddler, be classified as “family dogs.” Dogs maintained on chains in backyards are *not* family dogs. The term which correctly identifies the dog is “resident dog.” The dog resides on the premises of the owner. The dog is



This dog fatally attacked an unsupervised 1-year-old child in 2001. Here again is another visibly emaciated dog, chained to the side of a trailer, that nobody “noticed” until after the attack. In addition to starvation, chaining, and neglect, the dog was wearing a prong collar.

not a part of the family. The distinction is important and real because it defines the relationship or bond that is so important in understanding canine perceptions and, hence, behavior.

It is exceedingly rare for a *family* dog to kill an immediate family member (despite what has been reported to the contrary). Dogs attack and severely injure or kill persons to whom they have no bonds or strong attachments.

Loose Roaming Dogs

This is, without a doubt, the longest running and most frequently found complaint about dogs in our society. One hundred years ago the newspapers were full of angry letters from citizens from New York to Chicago, complaining about loose dogs attacking livestock and harassing and seriously injuring humans. An owner who allows his dog(s) to repeatedly run loose (meaning more than once) shows an utter disregard not only for their own dogs, but also for the welfare of their neighbors’ animals, and a flagrant disregard for the safety and well-being of persons in their community.

Communities which cannot or care not to enforce existing leash laws or cite owners for allowing their dogs to roam should not even consider passing additional dangerous dog legislation if they are unable to effectively and seriously penalize owners who violate this basic rule of canine responsibility.

Loose roaming dogs are simply an owner management problem. A free roaming dog is an animal acting independent of human interests. In urban and residential environments there is great potential for harm when dogs are left to their own devices. Dogs being hit by

cars or causing traffic accidents, harassing and chasing other domestic animals or wildlife, as well as threatening or attacking humans, are very real and frequent occurrences when dogs are allowed to roam loose off their property and free of human direction.

The dangers here are real and obvious, yet owners continue to allow dogs to operate in this potentially dangerous way. In one year only, 2005, ten persons died because their neighbors failed to contain their dogs on their property. Of these ten fatal attacks by loose roaming dogs, eight cases involved owners allowing not only a single dog, but multiple dogs, to run loose. Not only were these dogs allowed to roam loose, but all these cases involved dogs which were intact (not spayed or neutered).

Reproductive Status of Dogs

While politicians and the media love to quote breed statistics, no statistic about the dogs involved in fatal attacks is more overwhelming than the statistical percentage of intact versus altered animals.

Over the last six years, from 2000–2005, there were 131 fatal dog attacks in the United States. Ninety-two percent of the fatal attacks were inflicted by reproductively intact (un-neutered, un-spayed) dogs. This is a significant percentage and is highly suggestive of certain conditions (reproductively viable) predisposing a dog to aggression.

However, no single statistic is a true representation of the behaviors or forces at work driving canine aggression in severe or fatal attacks. Fatal attacks are the result of an escalation of events, behaviors and circumstances which culminate in the opportunity and ability for a dog to behave aggressively. What the statistic 92% of dogs found in fatal aggression were intact does not reveal is the other contributing factors found in the environment and maintenance of these dogs.

For instance, over 70% of the intact dogs involved in fatal aggression were maintained in multiple dog residences. This is relevant. Multiple dogs in residence introduce new dynamics to canine behavior not seen in single dog households. This requires owners to be more knowledgeable about intra-species behaviors and/or aggression and the possible development of pack mentality.

Dogs which may never snarl or snap at their owners will frequently growl their displeasure at each other. Dogs in the yard, running along the fence after a boy riding a bicycle on the sidewalk, often feed off each other's excitement. Feeding time in multiple dog households can be tension-filled. There are dozens of situations in which dogs in multiple dog households can trigger each other to behave aggressively. The most obvious situation which may trigger intact male dogs to behave aggressively is the nearby presence of a female in estrus. Dozens of cases of fatal dog attacks involved intact males with females in estrus nearby. Whether this was the singular cause for aggression cannot be determined, but undoubtedly any behaviors of the male would be more intense.



This female and a similar-looking, intact male dog were running loose when they fatally attacked a man in 2005. She had recently given birth to yet another litter of puppies. Within days after the attack, the male dog died from parvovirus.

Of course, female dogs, intact and bred, may exhibit heightened aggression if there are puppies on site. Indeed, this is when female dogs are found in fatal attacks. Not surprisingly, this is one of the very few situations in which male and female dogs are found together and the female initiates the attack on a human. In almost all other witnessed cases of fatal attacks on humans, when a male and female dog were together, the male was observed to be the instigator or initiated the attack.

The point about intact dogs involved in fatalities is not just that they were intact, but that they were more likely than not to be kept in multiple dog residences, and more likely than not to be active in breeding for the financial gain of their owners. So while the singular circumstance of being intact may seem indicative of increased aggression in dogs, there are almost always other risk factors involved.

Single Dog and Multiple Dog Situations in Fatal Attacks

Single Dogs

During the past 40 years, from 1966–2005, 65% of the human fatalities from a dog attack were the result of being attacked by a single dog. However, in the vast majority of these cases there were other dogs on the premises or near the scene at the time of the attack. In the six-year span, from 2000–2005, in over 87% of the cases of fatal attacks by a single dog, there were other dogs in residence or situated near the attack.

While many of these other dogs were not able to participate due to barriers or restraints, there were a number of dogs certainly able to join the attack that simply did not. Even in cases of the alleged “dangerous” breeds, there are incidents of one dog attacking while multiple other dogs on the scene do not participate. The behaviors of these non-participating dogs are remarkable in their restraint and inhibition.

While the behavior of the one dog beginning a frenzied attack on a human must be recognized for the extraordinarily aggressive act that it is, dogs standing off and refraining from entering into a pack mentality or pack attack require equal weight in the assessment of canine (or breed) behaviors and temperament. Yet, incredibly, these behaviors (of non-attacking dogs) are never studied or given recognition in discussions of canine (or breed) temperament.

The breed of the male dog that killed a little girl in a field after she screamed when a lizard ran over her shoe has been permanently documented in the statistics as indicative of the dangerousness of this particular breed. Yet, the behavior of the female dog (of the same breed) that was also at the scene but did not participate, and was even witnessed biting the rump of the male during his attack on the little girl, has gone unrecognized. Yet, her behavior in defining breed temperament is as revealing and significant as the behavior of the attacking male.

Multiple Dogs

Over the last 40 years (1966–2005) 35% of all fatal dog attacks have involved more than one dog.

When dogs operate as a pack, their potential to do harm is obvious. Dogs will often feed off each other's excitement, thereby increasing and prolonging an aggressive episode. In multiple dog attacks, injuries and bites are apt to be more numerous and occur more rapidly. Many a victim who may have been able to survive or ward off an attack by one dog succumbed due to the force of multiple dogs.

Not all dogs in a pack situation attack with the same intensity. Some dogs will attack seemingly without inhibition, inflicting deep, penetrating wounds. Other dogs (often times the females) may participate by worrying the victim, tearing at the clothes or inflicting lesser bites. An example of this is the infamous Diane Whipple case which occurred in San Francisco in 2001. Here, two large dogs escaped from their owner's control and attacked the gym teacher in the hallway of their apartment. Bane, the male, was observed to be the aggressor, inflicting most of the severe and ultimately fatal bites. Hera, the female, was less active in the attack, primarily worrying the victim, rather than inflicting severe bites.

In multiple dog attacks that are not witnessed, it is often impossible to know the exact level of participation of each of the dogs involved. Naturally, in large packs (of four or more dogs) it is often impossible to know how many, and to what degree, each of the dogs participated. Bite impressions of the dogs' teeth, examination of stomach contents, DNA and saliva testing will often assist in identifying the major offenders, but may reveal little about the behavior of the other dogs in the pack.

A case in which the stomach contents of the dogs did reveal the obvious offenders occurred in 1990, when a 44-year-old woman was killed by dogs she maintained on her property. There were eleven dogs on the premises, which she and her husband declared to be their "pets." The house was in a dilapidated condition, with huge cracks in the walls

through which the dogs could enter and exit at will. Two of the dogs appeared well-fed, while the other nine dogs were emaciated. All nine dogs were each at least 20 pounds underweight, with some of them being, as one official stated, “skin and bones.”

The female owner had a history of seizures. It is believed she suffered a seizure while alone in the home and this may have triggered this large pack of starving dogs to attack her. While the two well-fed dogs were determined not to have participated in the attack, examination of the contents of the stomachs of the starving dogs revealed that seven of the nine actively participated in the attack.

Like most fatal attacks, multiple risk factors need to be present before dogs behave so aggressively. Besides these dogs operating as a large pack, starvation, poor environment, possible seizure activity in the owner and perhaps other forces were in place which allowed them to behave in the manner they did.

The Familiar Bond and The Family Dog

“If you get to thinking you’re a person of some influence, try ordering somebody else’s dog around.”

Will Rogers

Unfortunately, this simple witticism, defining how canine behavior is dependent on the familiar bond between owner and dog, is lost on many people today. Dogs behave differently with those to whom they have formed strong attachments than they do with more unfamiliar persons. For centuries this has been understood, embraced, and heralded as the essence of dogs. Yet, today, this defining aspect of canine behavior is either grossly misrepresented or has been given no recognition in the recounting of dog attacks. The denial or ignorance of this basic tenet, which so often drives canine behavior (and aggression), has led to erroneous claims of the unpredictable nature of dogs and dog attacks.

Today, dozens of studies, quotes and percentages can be found claiming that “family dogs” are responsible for the majority of bites and attacks on children. However, even the most cursory examination of these stories about “family dogs attacking children” quickly reveals that many of these claims are a perversion of the familiar bond. Scores of examples can be given in which dogs, either seriously undersocialized, chained, used for breeding, guard dog use, and/or kept in isolated and even in extremely abusive conditions, were labeled as “family dogs.”

Family Dog versus Resident Dog

Though discussed previously, it needs to be stressed that dogs maintained outside the home (on chains, in kennels or in yards) and dogs obtained for negative functions (guarding, fighting, protection, breeding for financial gain) are *not* “family dogs”—they are

“resident dogs.” This distinction is vital in the understanding of canine behavior and aggression. Dogs maintained as resident dogs cannot be expected to exhibit the same level of sociability as dogs afforded the opportunity to interact with humans and their families on a daily basis and in positive and more humane functions.

The fact that there is no documented case of a single, spayed/neutered Pit bull or Pit bull-type dog, maintained exclusively as a household pet, involved in a fatal attack on a human in the United States is proof that canine behavior is profoundly influenced by the function of the dog and quality of care and control practiced by owners.

It has always been mankind’s great fortune that most dogs, despite the low level of care and control demonstrated by many of their owners and their acquisition for negative functions, are nevertheless wonderfully tolerant and sociable toward humans. It is for this reason that we often expect all dogs to behave amicably. However, dogs will, and do, bite; therefore, any serious study on the reasons and causes for dog attacks requires a truthful examination of each individual dog, the function for which the dog was obtained and how the dog was maintained. This is the first critical step toward understanding how a dog had the ability and opportunity to behave aggressively towards a human.



- Dogs are predators—predators chase and kill other animals.
- Aggression is a natural part of dog behavior, used to lay claim to resources, guard territory, protect offspring or ward off perceived dangers.
- Dogs are sentient beings, capable of experiencing pain, anger, fear and frustration.
- Dogs have different signs and signals they use to communicate intentions or emotions, and these are very different than the vocalizations and signals humans use to communicate intent or emotion.

Because of all these things, dogs bite. They bite other animals, they bite each other and they bite humans. Sometimes we can understand or relate to the reasons why dogs attack, other times the bite or attack seems to us to be unwarranted or vicious. As humans often have a difficult enough time understanding the intentions or aggressive behavior found in our own species, it should come as no surprise that the behavior of dogs should also at times confound and confuse us.

Few things in life come without some level of risk. Swimming pools, automobiles, household cleaning products, power tools, bicycles, stairs, and dogs all come with a certain level of potential harm. Our lives are comprised of evaluating risks on a daily basis. From how fast we drive our cars or when to cross a busy street, or cordoning off swimming pools and staircases from unsupervised children, we think about or act on the potential danger of things daily. Why then is it so difficult for so many people to understand that this applies to our dogs as well? While dogs are certainly less of a risk factor than automobiles or swimming pools, nevertheless, the same theory applies—dogs are safe when maintained in a responsible

manner and when people show a reasonable level of risk assessment. Terrible, unforeseeable accidents will always occur in life, but the point is to strive to make these incidents as rare as possible.

There are presently 73 million dogs¹ in the United States and approximately two dozen human deaths per year are due to dog attacks. In approximately one half to three-quarters (12–18) of these deaths, the victims are young children. However, over 250 children under the age of five die yearly in swimming pools.² Comparing yearly dog bite fatalities to yearly fatalities associated with automobiles, swimming pools or lightning shows that dogs are incredibly low on the list of potential dangers.

While the risk of being killed by a dog is extremely low, serious dog bites and attacks obviously present a likelier risk. Both serious and fatal attacks can be reduced by reasonable risk assessment. Owners can reduce the risk of their dog biting someone through dozens of different methods, from educating themselves about canine behavior and enrolling in dog training classes to properly containing and supervising their dogs. Potential victims can also reduce their risk of dog attacks by learning about canine behaviors and how to respond to an aggressive-looking dog. There are literally hundreds of books written on these topics, as well as information presented on the Internet, television and even radio. For those wishing to educate themselves and lower the potential risk associated with dogs, the information is available and highly accessible.

However, just as there will always be murderers and reckless drivers, there will always be some dog owners who refuse to safeguard others from their dogs and there will always be some victims who not only failed to make an appropriate risk assessment in a situation involving dogs, but were reckless.

In 2006, an adult male climbed over a fence at 5:30 a.m. and entered into the yard of a metalworking company in California. Three large guard dogs were kept on the premises. The man was attacked and killed by the dogs.

In 1997, a man took possession of two large dogs and placed them in the fenced yard behind his trailer. In addition to obtaining the male and female for use as guard dogs, he intended to breed them “to make some money.” Four days later his girlfriend arrived with her 3-year-old son. Authorities believe the mother and her boyfriend were in a drug-induced stupor when the boy wandered into the backyard where he was attacked by the dogs. An autopsy revealed the boy lay dying in the yard for at least two hours before either adult awoke and realized the child was missing.

While there is much society and individuals can do to reduce attacks, the two cases cited above demonstrate that there will always be incidents of severe or fatal dog attacks due to some people’s failure to take any appropriate steps to safeguard themselves or others from their dogs. If we are truly interested in reducing the number of attacks, we need to honestly examine which behaviors are the major contributors to these events: human or canine. Unfortunately, the way canine aggression is usually examined is by simply referring to the

number of deaths or bites attributed to dogs and not by an examination of the forces driving behavior.

It is inaccurate and unreliable to use the number of fatal dog attacks, and/or which breeds are involved, as “proof” of canine aggression. The reason for this is that it fails to identify exactly what it claims to be providing evidence of—namely aggression.

Consider the following deaths which are included in the Centers for Disease Control statistics on dog bite-related deaths in the United States:

- A man is bitten on the thumb by a dog. Introduced into the wound is a rapidly spreading and virulent bacteria, which results in the man’s death four days later.
- A woman dies after her boyfriend physically restrains her, while repeatedly ordering his dog to attack her.
- A two-day-old infant dies after a dog picks the child up by the head and carries the infant into the room where the parents are.
- A dog attacks his long-time owner, inflicting dozens of deep, penetrating wounds, resulting in the woman’s death.

These four deaths tell us only one thing—four people died as a result of dog bites. They tell us nothing about the level and type of aggression, or define what aggression is. Lumping these disparate events together misconstrues the very nature of the behavior. Is a bite to the thumb the same type of aggression as a dog inflicting dozens of penetrating and lethal bites? Is a dog that attacks due to repeated commands from his owner showing the same type of aggression as a dog that attacks a person of his own initiative? Is a dog that picks a baby up by the head and carries it into the room with the owners committing an aggressive act? You cannot provide proof of something which you have not defined. Yet these types of statistics are routinely used to “prove” the aggressiveness of certain breeds.

The answers to severe and fatal canine attacks are not to be found in statistics, or in discussing dog breeds, or in recent accounts of dog attacks found in the media. The answers to canine aggression can only be found beginning with an examination of the relationship (or lack of one) between dogs and owners.

CHAPTER 15

The Pit Bull Placebo: Conclusions on Canine Aggression

“We are alone, absolutely alone on this chance planet: and, amid all the forms of life that surround us, not one, excepting the dog, has made an alliance with us.”

(Maurice Maeterlinck, 1862–1949)

Recently, in North Carolina, police responded to a report of a Pit bull and a Golden Retriever fighting. One of the dogs was found tied to a tree with his front leg broken and deep gashes to his muzzle from the bites of the other dog. There can be little doubt as to which dog was injured and how this attack came to be. We have identified the two types of dogs involved in this incident, we know their history, we’ve read the newspaper headlines about which dogs are involved in aggression, we’ve listened to politicians state that certain breeds are the source of the dog bite problem, we’ve even heard some “experts” and laymen alike tell us of the uniqueness of the wounds Pit bulls inflict during an attack (breaking of bones and tearing), and through all this we’ve come to know that there are “dangerous and aggressive” breeds and there are “friendly, non-aggressive” breeds of dogs.

Today, the human/dog bond—the most complex and profound inter-species relationship in the history of mankind—has been reduced to a simple axiom: Breed of dog = degree of dangerousness.

Throughout the centuries, dogs have elicited great pride, enduring love and extreme devotion from humans. It has never been uncommon for humans to risk their lives to save their beloved canine companions and dogs have more than returned this devotion in kind. However, as frequent as it is to find humans bestowing great affection upon their dogs, it is as frequent to find humans inflicting horrific abuse and cruelty upon our canine companions.

What reasonable or sane person could expect dogs kept in such diametrically opposed conditions (cherished versus abused) to exhibit similar behaviors? How, in a society unparalleled in its access to information, have we been bullied into believing that the condition and treatment of our canine companions has no relevance on their future behaviors? And how have we become a society so ignorant and terrified of some dogs that we have allowed a wave of panic to sweep through our communities, allowing certain dogs to be banned, muzzled, restricted and killed by the hundreds of thousands in “shelters” across the nation?

Consider how information about dog attacks has been disseminated over the last century:

One hundred years ago—Newspapers provided vivid and often detailed accounts of dog attacks. Emotional and often anthropomorphic terms were used in an attempt to understand the factors that caused the dog to attack. Dogs were described as either “vicious by nature” or “caused to be vicious.” People were identified at times to be “innocent” victims, or “tormentors” who invited an attack. Dogs were understood to be complex beings reacting to human behavior. The function and condition of dogs were often included in reports, as they were understood to influence canine behavior.

Fifty years ago—Newspapers continued to report dog attacks to be a result of “cause and effect.” Although dogs were no longer described in emotional terms, they were still portrayed as sentient beings that reacted to pain, discomfort, or fear. Additionally, many reports of dog attacks conveyed the understanding that aggression was a natural and expected behavior of dogs in certain circumstances. Owners and/or victims were often identified in news reports as exhibiting behaviors (intentionally or unintentionally) that caused the dog to attack.

Today—The Pit Bull Paparazzi are our source of information on dog attacks. Like their tabloid celebrity counterparts, The Pit Bull Paparazzi are ever on the alert for any incident involving their high-profile subject, pushing past or ignoring all “low entertainment” attacks, while zooming in on and hyping any incident involving the “high entertainment” Pit bull. Theories about the breed, its history and temperament, are discussed, while details concerning the circumstances of the individual dog involved are not reported. Cause and effect, or reasons for the attack, are no longer found in reports, since breed is now recognized as sufficient information to explain aggression.

Recently, some politicians have joined in the fray with their own brand of “yellow journalism,” touting wild claims about canine behavior of which they know little and seem to care less. In 2005, despite the fact that only *one* of Canada’s 33 documented fatal dog attacks involved any type of dog even remotely resembling a Pit bull, Ontario’s Attorney General Michael Bryant began a campaign to rid the province of Pit bulls. Spouting inane and false claims about Pit bulls and aggression and refusing to consider the testimony of Ontario’s own professional canine experts, the Attorney General pushed through legislation banning Pit bulls in the entire province of Ontario.

In addition to the news media and politicians, an unholy trilogy of misinformation has been formed with the Internet. The Internet has allowed for the rare incidents of severe and fatal canine aggression to be transmitted on a global scale, at times generating hundreds of sensational headlines from a single episode of aggression, grossly distorting our perceptions as to the dangerousness of dogs and the frequency of attacks. Not only are these rare

cases instantly accessible, but oftentimes they become retrievable for a seemingly infinite amount of time, providing “a permanent record” of selective cases of aggression.

The information disseminated about Pit bulls and aggression by the newspapers, politicians and the Internet has led many to conclude that the solution to canine aggression is to rid society of the “breeds of dogs found in reported attacks.” And, since little to no information is revealed about the other circumstances contributing to an attack, breed is now found to be the only “constant” in reports of canine aggression.

The solution or cure now touted for ridding communities of dangerous dogs is found in the guise of the Pit Bull Placebo. Like the pharmacologically inactive sugar pill dispensed to placate a patient who supposes it to be medicine, eradication of the Pit bull is heralded as the cure for severe dog attacks. However, a placebo is administered solely to appease a person’s mental duress. In the present day climate of fear and misinformation about Pit bulls and dog attacks, eradication of the Pit bull is the placebo administered to ease the public’s mental anxiety. This, of course, does not address the underlying cause of why dogs attack and how they have been allowed access to their victims. Nor does this address why humans feel the need to have dogs that will intimidate, attack, or fight other beings. These factors, recognized for centuries as contributing to canine aggression, are dangerously ignored when a dog attack is deemed to be a product of breed.

The distraction of blaming the breed of dog involved in attacks, while ignoring dangerous human behaviors, has created a climate of fear towards certain breeds. Paradoxically, this fear of Pit bulls allows us to maintain our sense of well-being because it permits us to believe that canine aggression can be solved without introspection.

If we truly believe that the extremely rare cases of fatal dog attacks merit extreme measures in the management of dogs—if our concern and shock is genuine—then we must be equally genuine and sincere in seeking out and addressing the real causes for these incidents. Hanging entire breeds of dogs in effigy for the actions of a miniscule percentage of their population, while ignoring the dangerous management practices of their owners, is not an effective or acceptable solution to canine aggression.

Portraying two Pit bulls abandoned in the basement of a vacant house that have desperately resorted to ingesting inedible objects and rat poison as “family dogs” is a grotesque distortion of the human/dog bond. Furthermore, claiming that the agonizing and final behaviors of these suffering animals are proof of the aggressiveness of the breed is a monstrous mischaracterization of canine behavior.

Only by acknowledging that a social hysteria has been spawned by the sensational and inaccurate reporting of dog attacks and only by extracting ourselves from the swirl of emotion, myths, rumors, and politics of dog attacks can we rationally and effectively address canine aggression in a way that may reduce these attacks.

When we put aside our preconceived notions about breed behaviors and investigate the real causes for dog attacks, we come to discover that it was actually the Golden Retriever which initiated the attack against the Pit bull in North Carolina—and it was the Pit bull

who received the fractured front leg and severe bites described at the beginning of this chapter. Further investigation finds that the Golden Retriever had attacked and injured the Pit bull at the goading and urging of his teenage owner. Had we simply allowed the breed of dog to explain this attack our conclusions would have been a complete misrepresentation of the facts.

But the truth is that dog attacks are rarely investigated in such a way that reveal the real reasons why dogs attack. And so we have routinely come to draw totally inaccurate conclusions about canine behavior. These inaccurate assessments often lead to breed-specific legislation which is not only of no value in keeping communities safe, but has caused much anguish to responsible dog owners and has doomed hundreds of thousands of dogs to exile or death.

It is long past time for us to rethink our policies about dog attacks and the role humans play in this inter-species relationship. We owe it to the future safety of our children and communities. We owe it to our canine companions.

APPENDIX A

Dog Attacks Reported in Northeastern Newspapers, 1864-1899

<u>Date</u>	<u>Dog Described by Newspapers As</u>	<u>Victim</u>	<u>Circumstances</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Injury Description</u>
Dec. 1864	Bloodhound	10 yrs. - M	Attacked in field by dog	NJ	Fatal
Sept. 1866	Bloodhound	Adult - M	Baker attacked by dog	NY	Severe
May 1868	Vicious dog	1 yr. - M	Attacked after child tripped	AL	Fatal
		9 yrs. - F	Sister tried to help		Fatal
Mar. 1870	Vicious dogs	Little girl	Neighbor's loose dogs	OH	Fatal
Jun. 1870	Dog	Boy	Sent to house on errand	IA	Mangled - critical
Jan. 1871	Savage dog	Adult - F	Died 2 days after attack	MI	Fatal
Feb. 1873	Bloodhound	Adult - F	Washing clothes in yard	NY	Not expected to recover
Jun. 1873	Russ. Bloodhound	Adult - M	Police officer, loose dog	NY	Serious, throat bite
Mar. 1874	Newfoundland	Boy - M	Entered neighbor's yard	OH	Serious
Apr. 1874	Bloodhound	19 yrs. - M	Approached chained dog	NY	Lacerated throat
Jun. 1874	Newfoundland	3 yrs. - F	Went near dog being fed	NY	Possibly fatal
Mar. 1875	Large dog	4 yrs. - F	Girl entered henhouse	NY	Fatal
Jul. 1875	Dogs	16 yrs. - M	Attacked by loose dogs	IA	Severe
Nov. 1875	Ferocious dogs	Adult - F	Attacked in cow pasture	MS	Fatal
Aug. 1876	Bulldogs	Adult - F	Getting water from well	IN	Severe
Feb. 1877	Spitz	Newborn	Newborn left w/dog	NY	Fatal
Feb. 1877	Dogs	Adult - F	Walking near her home	KY	Not expected to live
Mar. 1877	English Bulldog	Little girl	Trying to feed chained dog	OH	Fatal

Mar. 1878	Mastiff	19 mo. - F	Neighbor's loose dog	NJ	Fatal
Jul. 1878	Bloodhound	9 yrs. - M	Neighbor's loose dog	NY	Bitten in face
Apr. 1879	Ferocious dog	7 yrs. - M	Neighbor's dog	KY	Fatal
May 1879	Bulldog	Adult - M	Loose roaming dog	IL	Severe
Jun. 1879	Newfoundland	Adult - M	Entered friend's yard	IL	Serious
Sept. 1879	Watchdog	Adult - F	Attacked by guard dog	IL	Severe
Sept. 1879	Noble Bloodhound	Unknown	Unknown circumstances	PA	Serious
Jun. 1880	Cuban Bloodhound	Adult - M	Drunken owner hit dog	NJ	Fatal
Jul. 1880	Bloodhound	Youth - M	Owners set dog on victim	NY	Serious
Nov. 1880	Large dog	17 yrs. - F	Getting off of wagon	NJ	Critical
Jan. 1881	Bloodhound	6 yrs. - M	Attacked while sledding	NY	Severe
May 1881	Pack of dogs	7 yrs. - M	Attacked on road	AR	Fatal
Mar. 1882	Bloodhound	13 yrs. - M	Neighbor's guard dog	NY	Severe
Mar. 1882	Bloodhound	Adult - M	Guard dog at factory	NY	Serious
Jul. 1882	Newfoundland	Child - M	Attacked while playing	PA	Fatal
Dec. 1882	Bloodhound	Adult - M	Guard dog at business	CT	Critical wounds
Apr. 1883	Dog	5 yrs. - M	Wandered to chained dog	PA	Fatal
Sept. 1883	Bulldog	Elderly - M	Neighbor's yard & dog	PA	Fatal
Nov. 1883	Newfoundland	15 yrs. - F	Entered neighbor's yard	IL	May survive
Dec. 1883	Savage dog	6 yrs. - F	Unknown circumstances	PA	Fatal
Apr. 1884	Bloodhound	Adult - F	Guard dog at hotel	NY	Expected to die
Apr. 1884	Dog	9 yrs. - M	Neighbor's dog in field	PA	Fatal
May 1884	Guard dog	Adult - M	Guard dog in stables	NY	Severe
Jun. 1884	Bulldog	Adult - M	Fighting dog at tavern	PA	Severe

Jun. 1884	Siberian Bloodhound	Adult - M	Chained dog broke loose	MA	Arm crushed
Aug. 1884	Bloodhound	Adult - M	Guard dog at soap factory	PA	Serious
Feb. 1885	Starving dogs	12 yrs. - F	Carrying meat f/butcher	PA	Severe
Jun.1885	Newfoundland	11 yrs. - M	Delivering ice cream	IL	Fatal
Jun. 1885	Large farm dog	Elderly - M	Attacked in henhouse	NY	Recovery doubtful
Jun. 1885	Strange dog	3 yrs. - M	Dog jumped fence	NY	Feared to be fatal
Sept. 1885	Ferocious dog	4 yrs. - F	Chained dog	OH	Fatal
Nov. 1885	Cuban Bloodhound	10 yrs. - F	Crossing farmer's field	MA	Severe
Dec. 1885	Newfoundland	10 yrs. - F	Closed door on dog's tail	NY	Serious
Dec. 1885	Siberian Bloodhound	Adult - M	Bitten in liquor saloon	NJ	Serious
Jan. 1886	Newfoundland	10 yrs. - M	Children sledding	NY	Serious
		14 yrs. - F	Girl pushed dog away		Serious
Nov. 1886	Collies & Newfound	6 yrs. - M	Boy tried to "harass" dog	MA	Life-threatening
May 1887	Large dog	8 yrs. - M	Neighbor's loose dog	NJ	Serious neck injury
Jul. 1887	Dog	Adult - M	Grabbed dog chasing hen	NY	Fatal
Oct. 1887	Newfoundland	25 yrs. - M	Knocked down & bitten	NJ	Severe
Oct. 1887	Shepherd dog	Child - M	Tried to pet chained dog	IN	Fatal
Feb. 1888	Newfoundland	Adult - M	Owner kicked guard dog	MO	Expected to die
Feb. 1888	Coal-mine dog	2 yrs. - M	Aunt's dog inside house	OH	Fatal
Apr. 1888	Savage dog	Adult - M	Bitten several days earlier	PA	Fatal
Apr. 1888	Pack hungry curs	Boy	Starving dogs at docks	NJ	May not recover
Apr. 1888	Bloodhound	Adult - M	Owner tried to chain dog	NJ	Arm crushed
Apr. 1888	Ferocious dog	Child	Loose dog attacked child	IA	Fatal
May 1888	Large, vicious dog	Baby	Dog took child f/carriage	NJ	Expected to be fatal

May 1888	Large hunting dog	5 yrs. - M	Went near dog w/bone	NY	Severe, disfigured
May 1888	Bullmastiff	Adult - M	Doctor delivering baby	MA	Serious
Jul. 1888	Bloodhound	Child - M	Two boys killed by dog	NY	Fatal
		Child - M	Unknown circumstances		Fatal
Jul. 1888	Bloodhd & Newfnd	Adult - F	Loose dogs in road	NJ	Dangerous wounds
Aug. 1888	Bloodhound	Adult - F	Woman attacked	MD	Severe
		14 yr. - M	Boy tried to help		Torn to bone
Oct. 1888	English Bulldogs	Adult - M	Peddler entering yard	PA	Fatal
Apr. 1889	Savage dog	Adult - M	Owner let dog kill tramp	NJ	Fatal
May 1889	Bloodhound	Adult - M	Owner set dog on man	CT	Fatal
Jun. 1889	Mastiff	6 yrs. - M	Dog chained in cellar	NJ	Severe
Jul. 1889	Siberian Bloodhound	Adult - M	Loose dog on street	NJ	Serious
Jul. 1889	Bulldogs	Adult - M	Guard dogs at stone yard	OH	Fatal
Aug. 1889	Dogs	70 yrs. - F	Attacked by loose dogs	IN	Torn to pieces
Jan. 1890	Bloodhound	Small boy	Attacked in churchyard	MD	Bitten in throat
Jan. 1890	Vicious dog	Adult - M	Farmer attacked by dog	OH	Torn to pieces
Jun. 1890	Savage dog	Adult - M	New, chained dog	PA	Severe
Aug. 1890	Savage dog	7 yrs. - F	Loose roaming dog	MA	May prove fatal
Nov. 1890	Newfoundland	Infant	Infant left alone w/dog	SD	Fatal
Mar. 1891	Bloodhound & Dog	Schoolgirl	Loose roaming dogs	PA	Fatal
Jun. 1891	Newfoundland	Young girl	Boy threw dog's bone at girl	OH	Serious
Jul. 1891	Dog	4 yrs. - F	Tried to pet chained dog	NJ	Serious
Jul. 1891	Mastiff	8 yrs. - M	Went to house for milk	NJ	Critical, torn scalp
Jul. 1891	Vicious dog	Adult - F	Mangled by loose dog	OH	Feared will die
Aug. 1891	Mastiff	Adult - M	Owner's new guard dog	NJ	Serious

Aug. 1891	Bloodhound	6 yrs. - M	Went to pet chained dog	NJ	May die, ear torn off
Sept. 1891	Mastiffs	9 yrs. - M	Dogs broke free f/pen	WV	Fatal
Dec. 1891	English Mastiff	6 yrs. - M	Loose dog on sidewalk	NJ	Severe wounds
		4 yrs. - M	Little brother went to help		Serious
Feb. 1892	Ferocious dog	Child - M	Unknown circumstances	IN	Fatal
Feb. 1892	Pack strays	Adult - M	Starving pack of dogs	KS	Fatal
		17 yrs. - F	attacked father & daughter		Fatal
May 1892	Bulldog	Adult - M	Drunken man, chained dog	IN	Serious
Jul. 1892	Ferocious dog	5 yrs. - M	Loose roaming dog	WI	Critical
Aug. 1892	Bulldogs	Adult - M	Prize-fighter's fighting dogs	NJ	Serious
Oct. 1892	Vicious dogs	14 yrs. - M	Loose dogs on road	IL	Fatal
Feb. 1893	Black Eng. Mastiff	Adult - F	Neighbor's dog in yard	KY	Fatal
Mar. 1893	St. Bernard	11 yrs. - F	Mother breeding dogs	NY	Scalp torn off
May 1893	Mastiff	12 yrs. - M	Dog chained at shop	NY	Serious
Jul. 1893	Newfoundland	6 yrs. - M	Tried to pet dog	NJ	Fear may die
Jul. 1893	Cur dog	Adult - M	Chained in bakery cellar	NY	Serious
Jul. 1893	Mastiff	Adult - M	Guard dog at livery stables	PA	Serious
Aug. 1893	Siberian Bloodhound	Adult - F	Dog with history of attacks	NY	Serious
Sept. 1893	Big brown mongrel	2 yrs. - F	Approached dog being fed	NY	Doubtful recovery
Dec. 1893	Newfoundland	14 yrs. - M	Attacked after kicking dog	OH	Fatal
Dec. 1893	Savage dog	6 yrs. - F	Loose dog on street	PA	Fatal
Jan. 1894	Vicious dog	6 yrs. - F	Unknown circumstances	IL	Fatal
Feb. 1894	Newfoundland	4 yrs. - M	Boy playing with dog	IL	Fatal
Mar. 1894	Newfoundland	Adult - M	Attacked by neighbor's dog	PA	Serious
Mar. 1894	Bulldog	3 yr. - F	Female dog w/puppies	MA	Serious

Jul. 1894	St. Bernard	Girl	Went near dog w/bone	Unk.	Serious
Jul. 1894	St. Bernard	6 yrs. - M	Attacked and nearly killed	MD	Precarious condition
Aug. 1894	Bloodhound	Youth - M	Guard dog at orchard	CA	May not recover
Oct. 1894	Newfoundlands	6 yrs. - M	Loose dogs on sidewalk	NY	Serious
Dec. 1894	Newfoundland	50 yrs. - M	Guard dog attacked owner	NY	Severe, hospitalized
Dec. 1894	German Boarhound	Adult - M	Tried to stop dogs fighting	CT	Serious
Feb. 1895	Newfoundland	9 yrs. - M	Child attacked by loose dog	IN	Severe
Feb. 1895	Mastiff	9 yrs. - M	Attacked & bitten	IN	Serious
Apr. 1895	Mastiff	19 yrs. - M	Guard dog at opera house	NJ	Serious
May 1895	Several dogs	Adult - M	Attacked by several dogs	NY	Likely prove fatal
Jun. 1895	Vicious dog	5 yrs. - M	Neighbor's dog	IN	Fatal
Sept. 1895	Newfoundland	4 yrs. - M	Playing near his house	PA	Serious face injury
May 1896	Ferocious dog	Elderly - F	Unknown circumstances	OH	Will probably die
May 1896	Vicious hounds	10 yrs. - M	Entered neighbor's yard	OH	Fatal results feared
Jul. 1896	Water Spaniel	3 yrs. - U	Attacked by hunter's dog	OH	Feared will die
Aug. 1896	Newfoundland	Adult - M	Unknown circumstances	OH	Serious
Sept. 1896	Guard dog	6 yrs. - M	Watchdog at tannery	NY	Fatal
Sept. 1896	St. Bernard	7 yrs. - F	Attacked girl at house party	MO	Fatal
Oct. 1896	Newfoundland	5 yrs. - M	Family pet attacked boy	OH	Serious head injury
Jul. 1897	Dog	4 yrs. - F	Child attacked by dog	PA	Severe, lost eye
Jul. 1897	Pack stray dogs	Boy	Dogs near slaughterhouse	OH	Severe
Aug. 1897	Shepherd dog	8 yrs. - F	Took bone from dog	MD	Doubtful recovery
Aug. 1897	Newfoundland	3 yrs. - F	Dog returning from "romp"	NY	Severe head injury
Oct. 1897	Newfoundland	17 yrs. - F	Dog hurt by rocking chair	NJ	Serious

Dec. 1897	Bulldog	6 yrs. - M	Feeding dog chained in barn	OH	Fatal
Dec. 1897	Bloodhound Mix	14 yrs. - F	Entered neighbor's yard	NY	Serious
Jan. 1898	Newfoundland	11 yrs. - M	Prolonged attack on child	NY	Fatal
Apr. 1898	Prized family pet	5 yrs. - M	Child playing in yard w/dog	OH	Critical head injuries
May 1898	Pet dog	15 dys. - U	Infant left alone w/dog	IL	Fatal
Sept. 1898	Savage dog	Adult - F	Entered yard to visit neighbor	CT	Fatal
Sept. 1898	Bloodhounds	Adult - F	Walking past house w/dogs	NY	Serious
Aug. 1899	St. Bernard	6 yrs. - M	Children playing with dog	NY	Bit ear off & lost eye
Sept. 1899	Great Dane	Adult - F	Feeding chained guard dog	NY	Fatal
Nov. 1899	Bloodhound Mix	5 yrs. - M	Loose dogs in alleyway	NJ	Severe

* Note * During the next century (1900-1999), fatal attacks by Bloodhounds and Newfoundlands decreased dramatically, with only one reported fatal attack by a Bloodhound in 1910, and only two reported cases of a fatal attack by a Newfoundland, one in 1912, and one in 1988.

APPENDIX B

Dog Attacks Reported in U.S. Newspapers, 1960-1975

<u>Date</u>	<u>Dog Described by Newspapers As</u>	<u>Victim</u>	<u>Circumstances</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Injury Level</u>
Mar. 1960	St. Bern & GS	9 yrs. - M	Walking home f/school	MI	Serious
Mar. 1960	Husky-type	7 yrs. - F	Stray dog entered yard	AK	Fatal
Mar. 1960	Doberman	55 yrs. - F	Kennel owner w/ 40 dogs	NJ	Fatal
May 1960	Boxer	Adult - M	Starving dog w/puppies	OH	Serious
Jul. 1960	German Shep	4 yrs. - M	Uncle's dog eating bone	WI	Fatal
Mar. 1961	German Shep	4 yrs. - M	Went to pet chained dog	WV	Critical
Jun. 1961	Poodle	65 yrs. - F	Owner bitten in throat, head	CA	Critical
Jul. 1961	Great Dane	12 yrs. - M	Dragged off bike by dog	PA	Serious
Dec. 1961	(3) Boxer-type	51 yrs. - F	Attacked walking her dog	MA	Severe
		55 yrs. - F	Prior attack by same dogs	MA	Serious
Apr. 1962	Black dog	2 yrs. - M	Neighbor's loose dog	WV	Severe
Apr. 1962	English Mastiff	2 yrs. - M	Unsupervised child w/dog	MS	Fatal *
Sept. 1962	German Shep	4 mo. - M	Infant left alone w/new dog	PA	Serious
Oct. 1962	(2) Gr. Shep	8 yrs. - M	Boy dragged 50 feet by dogs	CA	Serious
Nov. 1962	(2) Gr. Shep	5 yrs. - M	Neighbor's loose dogs	TX	Severe
Nov. 1962	Half-shepherd	5 yrs. - M	Loose dogs in street	TX	> 50 bites
Jan. 1963	(2) Shep-type	31 yrs. - M	Guard dogs escaped f/auto	PA	Serious
		69 yrs. - M	shop attacked 2 men on street	PA	Serious
Apr. 1963	GS/Boxer X	10 yrs. - F	Neighbor's loose dog	OH	Serious

May 1963	German Shep	3 yrs. - F	Neighbor's dog in yard	PA	Severe
Jun. 1963	Siberian husky	3 yrs. - M	Chained, starving dog	CO	Fatal
Jul. 1963	German Shep	2 yrs. - F	Child alone in yard w/dog	AR	Serious
Aug. 1963	Husky	5 yrs. - F	Only had dog a few "minutes"	NV	Serious
Oct. 1963	Pointer	7 yrs. - M	Loose dog dragged boy down	WI	Severe
Oct. 1963	German Shep	2 yrs. - F	Babysitter's abused dog	PA	Fatal
Nov. 1963	(3) Mixed	10 yrs. - M	Boy on bike - loose dogs	MD	Critical
Nov. 1963	Malamute	2 mo. - M	Father's "new" guard dog	IL	Fatal
Dec. 1963	German Shep	11 yrs. - F	9 yr old girl walking dog	NJ	Serious
Mar. 1964	German Shep	23 yrs. - M	Loose roaming dogs	PA	Serious
		46 yrs. - M	attacked elderly man and		Serious
		85 yrs. - M	two men who tried to help		Severe
May 1964	Hunting dog	7 yrs. - M	Boy playing with chained dog	KS	Severe
Aug. 1964	Mixed breed	4 yrs. - M	Grandfather's dog	MO	Fatal
Aug. 1964	(5) Ger Shep	2 yrs. - F	Parent's breeding dogs	IN	Fatal
Aug. 1964	German Shep	9 yrs. - M	Loose roaming dog	PA	Severe
Oct. 1964	(3) Boxers	2 yrs. - F	Child alone in yard w/dogs	MA	Severe
Mar. 1965	(3) Boxers	4 yrs. - M	Loose dogs in alley	TX	Serious
Mar. 1965	Mongrel	22 mo. - M	Newly acquired, chained dog	CA	Fatal
Apr. 1965	Pit bull	4 yrs. - M	Wandered to chained dog	UT	Fatal
Apr. 1965	Siberian husky	4 yrs. - F	Wandered to chained dog	NY	Fatal
Jun. 1965	Collie	4 yrs. - M	Child visiting at friend's home	NJ	Severe
Jul. 1965	Labrador Ret.	4 yrs. - M	Tried to pet restrained dog	WI	Fatal
Aug. 1965	German Shep	3 yrs. - F	Attacked at motel by loose dog	VA	> 100 stitches
Aug. 1965	Spitz/Chow X	4 yrs. - M	Newly acquired chained dog	MO	Fatal *

The Pit Bull Placebo

Sept. 1965	Bulldog	2 yrs. - M	Neighbor's chained dog	TX	Fatal
Nov. 1965	Shepherd-type	60 yrs. - F	3rd & fatal attack on owner	WI	Fatal
Nov. 1965	(3) Gr. Shep	2 yrs. - F	Child alone w/neighbor's dog	TX	Very critical
Dec. 1965	(2) Great Dane	59 yrs. - F	Loose dogs on street	LA	Severe
Jan. 1966	German Shep	7 yrs. - M	Saved smaller child from attack	FL	> 270 stitches
Mar. 1966	GS & Gr. Dane	18 mo - M	Babysitter's dogs in yard	CA	Fatal
Apr. 1966	Shepherd-type	6 yrs. - F	Walking to school - loose dog	CA	Serious
Apr. 1966	German Shep	7 yrs. - M	Visiting child attacked in house	NJ	Severe
Jun. 1966	Mongrel	2 yrs. - M	Attacked by neighbor's dog	PA	Fatal
Jun. 1966	German Shep	10 yrs. - M	Dog escaped from kennel	PA	Severe
Aug. 1966	(5) Great Dane	5 yrs. - F	Dogs escaped f/kennel	MD	Fatal
		4 yrs. - M	and attacked two children		Severe
Aug. 1966	Great Dane	2 yrs. - M	Went near dog eating	PA	Critical
Aug. 1966	Shep/Collie X	5 yrs. - F	Playing in neighbor's yard	PA	Serious
Nov. 1966	(2) Samoyed	4 yrs. - M	Loose dogs at schoolyard	AK	Fatal
Jan. 1967	(2) Malamute	6 yrs. - M	Loose dogs in alley	WI	> 100 bites
Feb. 1967	Four dogs	7 yrs. - M	Attacked by neighbor's dogs	MI	Severe
Feb. 1967	(15) Collies & Mixed breeds	72 yrs. - F	Owner attacked by her dogs	WI	Fatal
May 1967	Dog	3 yrs. - F	Wandered to chained dog	NM	Severe
Jul. 1967	Mastiff	73 yrs. - M	Owner walking dog in woods	PA	Fatal
Aug. 1967	German police	6 yrs. - F	Watchdog attacked visiting girl	SC	Serious
Aug. 1967	(2) Wolf/Lab Xs	3 yrs. - F	Attacked in babysitter's yard	AK	Fatal
Aug. 1967	Miniature Poodle	Elderly - F	Owner "mutilated" after fainting	CA	Severe
Sept. 1967	German Shep	7 yrs. - M	Chained, breeding dogs	NJ	Severe
Dec. 1967	German Shep	7 yrs. - F	Police shot dog to stop attack	PA	Very critical

Dec. 1967	(2) Sheepdog	7 yrs. - M	Riding bicycle near kennels	VA	Serious
Dec. 1967	(2) Gr. Shep & Mixed	5 yrs. - M 4 yrs. - M	Two boys killed by neighbor's loose dogs & 2 stray dogs	VA	Fatal Fatal
Dec. 1967	(3) Wolfhounds	7 yrs. - M	Dogs escaped from yard	CA	Severe
Dec. 1967	Great Dane	5 yrs. - F	Newly acquired guard dog	GA	Fatal
Feb. 1968	Shepherd-type	3 yrs. - M	Unknown circumstances	NE	80 stitches
Mar. 1968	German Shep	5 yrs. - F	Dog jumped 5 ft. fence to attack	IA	Severe
Mar. 1968	German Shep	42 yrs. - F	Tripped over sleeping dog	PA	Serious
Apr. 1968	Irish Setter	3 yrs. - F	Wandered to chained dog	PA	Serious
May 1968	Belgian Shep	3 yrs. - F	Grandmother's chained dog	CA	> 125 stitches
Jun. 1968	(2) Ger Shep	6 yrs. - M	Boy fell into guard dogs' pen	PA	Critical
Jun. 1968	German Shep	21 yrs. - M	Guard dog at auto shop	NJ	Severe
Jun. 1968	German Shep	3 yrs. - M	Children hit dog with pipe first	FL	Severe
Jul. 1968	German Shep	10 yrs. - M	Paperboy - dog chained to log	NJ	Serious
Jul. 1968	German police	3 yrs. - M	Child attacked by loose dog	NY	> 100 stitches
Oct. 1968	Doberman	5 yrs. - M	1-day-old puppies in house	PA	Serious
Mar. 1969	German Shep	1 mo. - F	Family dog jumped into crib	NY	Fatal
Apr. 1969	German Shep	4 yrs. - F	Ran past chained dog in yard	NJ	Severe
Apr. 1969	Husky-type	22 mo. - F	Unsupervised child w/dog	ME	Fatal *
May 1969	Cocker Spaniel	3 yrs. - F	Stray dog attacked child in yard	PA	Serious
Jun. 1969	German Shep	9 yrs. - M	Attacked by relative's dog	KY	> 200 stitches
Jul. 1969	<Crazed> GS	8 yrs. - F 67 yrs. - M	Loose dog on street Also attacked rescuer	PA	Serious Severe
Jul. 1969	Sentry dog	Adult - F	Recently purchased dog	NY	Severe
Jul. 1969	Dog	18 mo. - M	Child pushed dog	NY	Critical

Jul. 1969	Wolf dog	2 yrs. - F	Child left alone w/dog	AK	Fatal
Sept. 1969	Shepherd-type	5 yrs. - M	2 other dogs "saved" boy	CA	Serious
Oct. 1969	German Shep	33 yrs. - F	Shelter worker attacked in pen	PA	Serious
Oct. 1969	(Pack) Mixed	2 yrs. - F	Loose dogs entered yard	CA	Fatal
Dec. 1969	(2) Gr. Shep	59 yrs. - F	Released dogs f/pen	FL	Severe
Feb. 1970	German Shep	18 mo. - M	Child alone with dog	MO	Fatal
Feb. 1970	German Shep	3 yrs. - F	Visiting girl & new dog	PA	Critical
May 1970	German Shep	5 yrs. - M	Loose dog in street	PA	Serious
Jul. 1970	German Shep	5 yrs. - F	Child feeding dog	OH	Serious
Aug. 1970	German Shep	8 yrs. - F	Playing in yard w/dog	WI	Serious
Aug. 1970	(4) Mongrels	6 yrs. - M	Boy on bike - stray dogs	MD	Severe *
Oct. 1970	German Shep	3 yrs. - F	Entered neighbor's home	NY	Severe
Nov. 1970	(2) Gr. Shep	4 yrs. - M	Dogs in backyard	VA	Severe
Dec. 1970	Malamute	3 mo. - M	Child left alone w/dog	WI	Fatal
Jan. 1971	Great Dane	3 yrs. - F	Child climbed 6 ft. fence	CA	Severe
Apr. 1971	Malamute	13 yrs. - F	Dog broke chain, jumped fence	PA	Severe
May 1971	Husky	4 mo. - F	Child left alone w/dog	IL	Fatal
Jul. 1971	(3) German Shep.	3 yrs. - M	Boy climbed in dogs' kennel	AL	Fatal *
Jul. 1971	Chow chow	18 yrs. - F	Attempting to chain dog	AR	Serious
Sept. 1971	GS/Wolf X	21 mo. - F	Child "playing" w/chained dog	CA	Fatal
Oct. 1971	Irish Setter	2 yrs. - M	Wandered to chained dog	CA	Serious
Dec. 1971	Stray dog	4 yrs. - M	Female dog protecting pups	NJ	Critical
Jan. 1972	Collie/GS X	7 yrs. - M	Attacked by loose dog on road	PA	Severe *
Feb. 1972	St. Bernard	15 yrs. - M	Playing with dog at home	PA	Ear torn off

Feb. 1972	(3) Shep-type	50 yrs. - M	Attacked at farmhouse	VA	Fatal
Mar. 1972	Dog	4 yrs. - F	Female dog w/puppies	OH	> 400 stitches
Mar. 1972	St. Bernard	8 yrs. - F	Playing w/neighbor's dog	CA	Fatal
Mar. 1972	(2) Gr. Shep	3 yrs. - F	Climbed into guard dogs' pen	NY	Fatal
Apr. 1972	(3) Boxers	63 yrs. - F	Owner - dogs fighting	AZ	Fatal
May 1972	St. Bernard	12 yrs. - M	Loose dog at rest stop	IN	Fatal
Jun. 1972	Husky	4 yrs. - F	Guard dog at store	CA	Critical
Jun. 1972	German Shep	13 yrs. - M	Unknown circumstances	CA	Serious
Jun. 1972	GS & Mixed	27 yrs. - F	Neighbor's dogs	PA	Bitten to bone
Aug. 1972	Mongrel	3 yrs. - M	Loose dogs on street	PA	Serious
Aug. 1972	German Shep	2 yrs. - M	Family dog inside house	FL	Fatal
Sept. 1972	German Shep	2 yrs. - M	Wandered to chained dog	NY	Severe
Sept. 1972	Malamute	2 yrs. - M	Wandered to chained dog	PA	Fatal
Nov. 1972	Hunting dog	6 yrs. - F	Neighbor's newly adopted dog	NJ	Skull exposed
Feb. 1973	Bulldog	20 mo. - F	Fell near chained dog eating	NC	Fatal
Mar. 1973	(2) Great Danes	8 yrs. - M	Loose roaming dogs	MI	Fatal
May 1973	Irish Setter	4 yrs. - F	Wandered to chained dog	OH	> 150 stitches
May 1973	German Shep	59 yrs. - F	Attacked by chained dog	NE	Died in 3 days
Jun. 1973	(2) Great Danes	15 yrs. - F	Loose dogs on street	NE	Serious
Jun. 1973	Mixed breed	2 yrs. - M	Entangled in dog's chain	PA	Fatal
Aug. 1973	Doberman	2 yrs. - M	Approached chained dog	CA	Severe
Sept. 1973	Beagle X	4 yrs. - M	Boy playing in yard with dog	FL	> 200 stitches *
Oct. 1973	German Shep	11 yrs. - M	Dog barged into house	WV	> 300 stitches
Nov. 1973	(2) Gr. Shep	6 yrs. - M	Loose dogs in vacant lot	NJ	Fatal

Nov. 1973	(3) Gr. Shep Xs	5 yrs. - M	Neighbor's loose dogs	VA	Critical *
Nov. 1973	English Setter	3 yrs. - M	Resident chained dog	WV	Fatal *
Jan. 1974	St. Bernard	4 yrs. - M	Attacked by neighbor's dog	IN	Fatal
Jan. 1974	(2) St. Bernard	9 yrs. - F	Loose dogs attacked girl	PA	Serious
Apr. 1974	St. Bernard	6 yrs. - M	Friend's dog in house	NY	Fatal
Apr. 1974	Shaggy hound	6 yrs. - F	Boy climbed into yard	TX	Severe
May 1974	Golden Ret.	6 yrs. - F	Attacked by neighbor's dog	NC	Fatal
May 1974	Irish Setter	2 yrs. - M	Child alone w/neighbor's dog	TX	Fatal
Jun. 1974	St. Bernard	68 yrs. - M	Attempted to chase dog away	WI	Fatal *
Jul. 1974	German Shep	5 yrs. - M	Threw rocks at chained dog	MD	Fatal
Jul. 1974	Malamute	3 yrs. - M	Wandered to chained dog	AK	Fatal
Sept. 1974	Dachshund	7 mo. - M	Newly acquired dog	NY	Fatal
Sept. 1974	German Shepherd	17 yrs. - F	Impaired girl entered kennel	MI	Fatal *
Oct. 1974	Akita	2 yrs. - M	Neighbor's chained dog	NE	Fatal
Nov. 1974	Br. Collie & Lab	5 yrs. - M	Loose dogs entered yard	IL	Fatal
Nov. 1974	Great Dane	25 yrs. - F	Killed in house by family dog	NY	Fatal
Dec. 1974	German Shep	8 yrs. - F	Neighbor's loose dogs	PA	Ear torn off
Dec. 1974	(2) Terriers	78 yrs. - F	Attacked burying her dog	MI	Critical
Jan. 1975	Basenji	5 mo. - F	Baby left on floor w/dog	MO	Fatal
Feb. 1975	Great Dane	5 yrs. - F	Loose dogs on street	CA	Serious
Mar. 1975	Labrador & GS	6 yr. - M	Loose dogs entered yard	CO	Severe
Mar. 1975	Collie/Shep X	75 yrs. - M	Owner killed by her dog	MO	Fatal
Mar. 1975	Husky-type	4 yrs. - M	Playing with chained dog	AK	Fatal
Apr. 1975	(3) Gr. Shep & Schnauzer	7 yrs. - M	Dogs pulled boy over fence	OK	> 400 stitches

May 1975	German Shep	2 yrs. - M	Chained dog broke loose	TX	Fatal
Jun. 1975	German Shep	3 yrs. - M	Newly acquired guard dog	OH	Serious
Jun. 1975	Small Husky-type	3 yrs. - F	Chained dog behind store	MT	Fatal
Aug. 1975	(7) Shep/Lab Xs	5 yrs. - M	Entered into neighbor's yard	NV	Fatal
Aug. 1975	Great Dane	17 yrs. - F	Neighbor's dog	OH	Fatal
Dec. 1975	German Shep	9 mo. - M	Dog burned by hot water	NY	Severe
Dec. 1975	Mixed breeds	78 yrs. - F	Owner of 40+ dogs	MI	Fatal

Note: Severe and fatal attacks by German Shepherd dogs consistently and steadily decreased over the next three decades.

Over the last decade (1997-2006) fatal attacks by German Shepherds were reduced to five deaths, with two of the five fatalities inflicted by severely abused, chained dogs.

* Additional documented cases (since first printing)

APPENDIX C

Denver, Colorado “Evidence” Used to Ban Pit Bulls (Breed-Specific Legislation)

In 1989, the Denver City Council enacted an ordinance making it “unlawful to own, possess, keep, exercise control over, maintain, harbor, transport, or sell within the city any Pit bull.”

A “Pit bull” was defined by Denver as “any dog that is an American Pit Bull Terrier, American Staffordshire Terrier, Staffordshire Bull Terrier, or any dog displaying the majority of physical traits of any one (1) or more of the above breeds, or any dog exhibiting those distinguishing characteristics which substantially conform to the standards established by the American Kennel Club or United Kennel Club for any of the above breeds.”

In 2005, Denver’s Assistant City Attorney, Kory Nelson, in defending the ban on Pit bulls in the city and the findings of the court which “found” Pit bulls to be different than other dogs, claimed that there is “only new relevant evidence that adds additional support for breed specific legislation, as the differential treatment of Pit bulls is based upon logical, rational evidence from the scientific field of ethology” (canine behavior).¹

The “logical, rational evidence from the scientific field of ethology” that Denver introduced and their City Attorney continues to tout as “proof” of the “differentness” of Pit bulls is in reality critically flawed, limited and inaccurate data and is a combination of pseudoscience, anecdotal evidence, media generated hysteria, and unexplainable conclusions drawn from irrelevant data interpreted by those who have little to no knowledge about the “field of ethology.”

In hearings defending the ban on Pit bulls, Denver presented 15 reasons or “evidence” explaining that, as a group, Pit bulls are different than other breeds of dogs. The trial court, while not believing all of Denver’s 15 claims about the “dangerousness” of Pit bulls, did find “evidence” to support the following:

(Note: The court’s findings are in italics)

1. Biting

“The court finds no scientific evidence proving that the biting power of pit bull dogs exceeds that of other dogs. However, the City did prove that they inflict

more serious wounds than other breeds. They tend to attack the deep muscles, to hold on, to shake, and to cause ripping of tissues. Pit bull attacks were compared to shark attacks.”

The major flaw in all of the conclusions drawn by the court about the behaviors and temperament of the Pit bull is the failure to use a significant study population and the use of seriously flawed and inaccurate data presented by the City of Denver as “evidence.”

Because severe and, to a much larger degree, fatal attacks are relatively rare, and since the focus of most epidemiological studies in the past two decades has been on breed only, there was a scarcity of comprehensive data on the types of injuries other breeds of dogs have inflicted and, as such, no valid comparison could be made between the types of wounds inflicted by Pit bulls versus other breeds of dogs.

Shaking, holding and tearing are NOT breed-specific behaviors—they are canine behaviors. Injury to deep muscles and the ripping of tissue are easily and frequently accomplished by any large dog during the process of a severe attack. The fact is, one cannot examine autopsy reports or autopsy photographs and determine the breed of dog by the injuries inflicted. There are hundreds of examples of grievous, tearing- type injuries inflicted by other breeds of dogs. They were simply not entered into evidence or presented to the court.

The shark analogy has been discussed in Chapter 11, but will be addressed here as it was presented by the City of Denver. Denver introduced a plastic surgeon from Arizona to testify as to the specific types of injuries caused by Pit bulls. Despite the fact that this plastic surgeon had stated he had personally treated *only three non-fatal cases* of victims attacked by “Pit bulls,” he was nevertheless entered into the record as an “expert” witness. To bolster his lack of personal experience with victims of Pit bull and shark attacks, this witness then entered into the record the alleged “learned treatise” on the subject of reconstructive surgery in Pit bull attacks printed in a *Texas Medicine Report*.²

The following claim was read from this study and entered into court record as evidence:

“Fourteen of the 20 recorded fatal dog attacks on people between October, 1983, and November, 1986, were from Pit bulls or Pit bull mixes. During the one year period between June 1986 and June 1987, 14 people were killed by dogs in the United States; ten of those 14 deaths are attributed to Pit bulls. Thus, 71 percent of the deaths during that period were attributed to a type of dog that accounts for one percent of the dog population.”

The fact is that from October 1983 to November 1986, at least 48 people were killed by dogs in the United States (not 20). Of the 28 fatal attacks shockingly absent in this study, 24 were by breeds of dogs other than Pit bulls.³ This degree of statistical error is so significant that it renders any conclusions based on this data invalid.

That errors of this magnitude were entered into court records to “prove” the dangerousness of Pit bulls is highly disturbing.

Equally distressing is another claim reported in this study (*Texas Medicine Report*) and entered into evidence that “Pit bull attacks are like shark attacks.” The report states: “Most

breeds do not repeatedly bite their victims; however, a pit bull attack has been compared to a shark attack and often results in multiple bites and extensive soft-tissue loss.”

The study cited two sources for this claim:

“Prophylactic antibiotics in common dog bite wounds: controlled study” (*Annals of Emergency Medicine*),⁴

“The Pit Bull: friend and killer” (*Sports Illustrated*).⁵

The first cited source is a detailed medical journal report on the management of dog bite wounds. There is *no* mention or reference to Pit bulls or sharks anywhere in this study.

The second cited source is not a scientific or medical journal study, but an article written in *Sports Illustrated* magazine. The only reference to sharks versus Pit bulls is found in a comment by a field officer from a Humane Society when he stated, “A pit bull attack is like a shark attack. He keeps coming back.”

It hardly needs to be said that a single comment from a single person, quoted in a *Sports Illustrated Magazine* article, does not qualify as evidence to be used in a scientific journal, nor does it qualify as evidence by which a Court can uphold a claim that Pit bull attacks are “found” to be like shark attacks.

2. Destructiveness

“The Court finds that some pit bull type dogs, due to their strength and athletic ability, can damage facilities and equipment. There is a disproportionate number of attacks by chained pit bull dogs which is indicative of their strength.”

There is simply no way to explain how the Court could possibly have come to the conclusion that being attacked by a chained dog is indicative of strength. It simply is not a reasonable or valid conclusion.

The only possible explanation is that they were basing this finding on a chained dog breaking a restraint and then attacking a person (breaking a chain allegedly being indicative of strength)—see Finding #6 addressing this.

3. Fighting Ability and killing Instinct

“Importantly, there was no evidence that any AKC registered American Staffordshire Terrier or Staffordshire Bull Terrier or any UKC registered American Pit Bull Terrier was involved in any severe or fatal attack. Nevertheless, the City did prove that unregistered pit bull type dogs were responsible for a disproportionate number of severe or fatal attacks on other

dogs and human beings. Credible testimony also proved that, when a pit bull dog begins to fight, it often will not retreat.”

Since the data on fatal attacks presented by the City was so significantly flawed and biased (see Finding #1), it is little wonder that Pit bull attacks appeared “disproportionate” to the Court.

As for the “often will not retreat” remark, see Finding #4.

4. Frenzy

“Many aggressive and vicious dogs can become uncontrollable when excited or challenged. No credible evidence proved that pit bull dogs were more likely to enter a frenzied state than other dogs. However, the evidence proved that once pit bull type dogs do attack, they are less likely to retreat than other dogs.”

These two findings of the Court contradict each other. The Court found that Pit bulls are *not* more likely to become frenzied or uncontrollable than other breeds of dogs, but were less likely to retreat. A frenzied, uncontrollable attack by a dog is highly aberrant and abnormal behavior. The very definition of “frenzied” is “wildly uncontrollable or abnormally excessive.” What the court is implying is that other breeds behave “normally” during a frenzied attack and Pit bulls behave “abnormally” during a frenzied attack.

Also, how can retreat be defined or measured in a frenzied and uncontrolled attack? At what point in time is retreat during a frenzy determined to be normal versus abnormal? One minute or five minutes after the attack? When the victim stops moving? When the dogs are subjected to other stimuli or interference? None of these components were defined or accounted for, yet the court, nevertheless, concluded that anecdotal evidence presented by the City was sufficient to find that Pit bulls “were less likely to retreat.”

5. Manageability

“American Staffordshire Terriers, Staffordshire Bull Terriers, American Pit Bull Terriers, and their mixed breeds can make excellent, gentle pets. Nevertheless, credible testimony proved that proper handling, including early socialization to humans, is very important for these dogs. Even their most ardent admirers agree that these dogs are not for everyone and they require special attention and discipline. The Lockwood study reported that 13.3 percent of pit bull type dogs attacked their owners as compared with 2.2 percent of other dogs.”

The study from which these claims are based (Lockwood) did not identify or define the relationship between the “owner” and the dog. Was the owner an abusive owner? Was the

dog maintained on a chain 100 feet from the owner's residence? How long did the owner have the dog: 1 day, 1 month or 5 years? These are extremely important details that explain behavior and aggression, yet they were not defined, accounted for, or qualified, rendering any conclusions or statistics about aggression towards owners meaningless.

The court found that Pit bulls can make "excellent and gentle pets," yet stated it was important for Pit bulls to receive "proper handling and early socialization to humans." If Pit bulls can become excellent and gentle pets with proper handling and socialization, then how is this evidence that the breed is "different" than any other breed? This "finding" of the court about the "manageability" of Pit bulls has been recognized for centuries as the essence of all dogs—it is the very foundation on which thousands of years of dog ownership and management have been based. "Proper handling and early socialization to humans" is how *all* dogs come to be "excellent and gentle pets" and certainly is not a characteristic particular to Pit bulls.

6. Strength

"Pit bull dogs are stronger than many other dogs. The evidence showed that 42.7 percent of the pit bull type dogs attacked while restrained (Defendants' Exhibit CC and Plaintiffs' Exhibit 50)."

The court came to this totally inaccurate conclusion quoting data that in no way implied or supported this.

The statistics used to prove "strength" was a study that stated, "42.7% of Pit bull type dogs attacked while restrained."⁶ The entire quote from this study reads: "Virtually all the dogs in the cases we studied were owned. A surprising number, however, were restrained at the time of the attack. In the case of pit bull bites, 61 of 143 (42.7%) involved animals that were fenced, chained, or inside prior to the incident. Twenty cases (14%) involved pit bulls that escaped by jumping fences or breaking chains immediately before the attack. Of the 135 cases involving other breeds, 36 (26.7%) involved restrained animals, but only 1 (0.7%) broke restraint to initiate the attack."

The authors of this study did not imply or suggest that this statistic was indicative of strength. The authors of this study defined "restrained" to be "animals that were fenced, chained, or inside prior to the incident." How does 42.7 percent of Pit bulls attacking someone while fenced, chained or inside a house indicate strength?

An equally disturbing possibility is that Denver, and/or the trial court, used the wrong statistic, meaning they should have used the 14% quoted in this study of Pit bulls jumping fences or breaking chains as indicative of strength. But again, this would be an inaccurate and totally baseless conclusion since the type and strength of the "restraint" is not defined and therefore cannot be used as evidence of strength. For example, was the fence these Pit bulls jumped three feet high or five feet high? Did all of these owners use chains with the

same thickness and gauge? Did the Pit bull break loose of a bicycle chain or a logging chain? None of these vital qualifiers were taken into account or measured; therefore any conclusions about the strength of any of the dogs in this study are invalid.

7. Unpredictability

“The evidence showed that most dog attacks (by all breeds) are unprovoked. However, pit bull dogs, unlike other dogs, often give no warning signals before they attack.”

This is simply not true. All information about provocation and warning signals from any breed of dog is anecdotal at best and, at worst, unreliable (see chapters 11, 12, 13). A large majority of victims of dog attacks are very young children. *Young children are most frequently bitten by dogs precisely because they are unable to read and understand the warning signals that dogs so often give prior to an attack.* Also, in a highly litigious society, both victims and owners are increasingly less than truthful about their involvement or behavior preceding a dog attack, making their testimony about provocation suspicious. Additionally, any cases in which media accounts were used as evidence to support the argument that dog attacks are unprovoked are meaningless, as the media is NOT a credible or impartial source of information on the nature or behavior of dogs involved in attacks.

Notes

1. “One City’s Experience, Why Pit Bulls Are More Dangerous and Breed-Specific Legislation is Justified.” Nelson, Kory A., *Municipal Lawyer*. July/August 2005, Vol. 46, No. 6, p. 12–15, 29.
2. “Pit Bull Case Report Nurture Review.” Viegas, Steven F., Calhoun, Jason H., Mader, Jon. *Texas Medicine*. Vol. 84; Nov. 1988. (Exhibit KK).
3. “Fatal Dog Attacks: The Stories Behind the Statistics.” Delise, Karen. Anubis Publishing, Manorville, NY, 2002.
4. “Prophylactic antibiotics in common dog bite wounds: controlled study.” Callaham, M. *Ann Emer Med* 9 (8): 410–414, 1980.
5. “The pit bull: friend and killer.” Swift, E.M. *Sports Illustrated* 67: 72–84, 1987.
6. “Are ‘Pit bulls’ Different? An analysis of the Pit Bull Terrier Controversy.” Lockwood, R., Rinky, K. 1987 *Anthrozoos*. Vol.1 No. 1, 1987: pg. 2–8.

APPENDIX D

Denver, Colorado: An Ineffective and Uninformed Approach to Dog Attacks

After a fatal dog attack in 1986 and a severe dog attack in 1989 in Denver, Colorado, the city/county of Denver enacted a ban against Pit bulls and any dog which may be determined to resemble a Pit bull (the type of dog involved in these two attacks). The city/county of Denver chose to blatantly ignore the dangerous and irresponsible behavior of the owners of these dogs and instead placed the blame for these attacks squarely on the back of a “breed of dog.” Not addressed by their breed-specific legislation was how these dogs had access to their victims, nor was the maintenance, function, condition or history of the dogs and their owners considered relevant.

An examination of Appendices A and B demonstrates that the breeds of dogs involved in severe and fatal attacks change over the decades. A serious analysis of severe and fatal attacks reveals that while the breeds change, many of the circumstances surrounding these attacks are seen with remarkable consistency throughout the last 150 years.

The factors which contribute to canine aggression and have been found consistently in cases of fatal dog attacks over the past century are:

- Dogs obtained and maintained for negative functions—This includes dogs obtained for fighting, guarding, and protection, dogs used for intimidation or as status symbols, and dogs being bred for financial gain.
- Failure of owners to humanely care for and control their dogs—This includes owners who maintain dogs on chains or allow dogs to run loose, owners who fail to socialize, train and supervise their dogs, owners who abuse or neglect their dogs, and owners who allow or encourage their dogs to behave aggressively.
- Young unsupervised children and dogs—This includes newborns left alone with dogs, young children allowed to interact with unfamiliar dogs or children allowed to play with multiple resident dogs (pack) without adult supervision.
- Reproductive status of dog—This includes intact animals actively used for breeding, bitches guarding puppies, pregnant bitches, and intact males in the vicinity of a female dog in estrus.

In the decade from 1966–1975, fewer than 2% of all dogs involved in fatal attacks in the United States were of the breeds which today are targeted so frequently as the solution to canine aggression (Pit bull or Rottweiler). However, one or more of the critical factors listed above were evidenced in over 90% of the fatal attacks during these years.

An Examination of Fatal Dog Attacks—Colorado, 1963–2006

1963—Boulder

An unsupervised 2-year-old boy was attacked and killed by one of two chained Husky dogs in the backyard of a duplex where he lived. The owner of the dogs had gone on a three-day fishing trip and left the dogs unattended without food or water.

1977—Breckenridge

The owners of three dogs responsible for killing a 6-year old girl were charged with Criminally Negligent Homicide. The girl was walking to a friend's home when the dogs, a St. Bernard, Norwegian elkhound and German shepherd/Husky mix, attacked her, biting her repeatedly. A man caring for the dogs while one owner was out of town was also charged with Criminally Negligent Homicide as the dogs were off the property when they attacked the girl.

1985—Littleton

A five-year-old boy was killed by his babysitter's Doberman Pinscher. The intact, male dog mauled the child while he was playing with the dog.

1986—Denver

An unsupervised 3-year-old boy was attacked and killed when he wandered away from home and over to a chained, intact female Pit bull. The owner of the dog had previously been sued, charged and was on probation after another one of his dogs severely bit an 8-year-old child three years previously. Since he was unable to pay the medical bills of the previous victim, the civil suit against him was dropped. Undaunted by his inability to meet his financial and moral responsibility to the previous victim of one of his dogs, this owner proceeded to obtain additional dogs and maintain them in an environment which invited aggression (intact, chained, unsocialized, etc). One of these dogs would later be the dog responsible for the attack on the unsupervised 3-year-old child.

Instead of instituting laws to severely penalize or punish owners such as this who repeatedly obtain dogs, breed these dogs, and maintain these animals in a condition in which they have the ability and opportunity to attack children, Denver opted to ban the breed of dog.

1990—Arapahoe County

A 4-year-old boy wandered out of his house and was killed by a neighbor's loose roaming dog. The male dog was identified to be either a Chow/Malamute mix or a Malamute. The dog was maintained primarily as a chained or outside dog. The owner was charged with letting a dog run loose and harboring a vicious animal.

1994—Northglenn

A woman had borrowed a 120-lb. male Rottweiler from a friend for protection. Two days later her 5-year-old daughter was playing on a swing in the backyard when the dog "snatched her from the swing, and shook her like a rag doll." Only later was it discovered that the intact, male dog had a history of aggression and previously attacked another child in 1993.

1996—Black Forest

Two wolf hybrids attacked and killed their caretaker, a 39-year-old woman. The woman was attempting to get them back into a pen when the dogs turned on her and killed her. The wolf dogs were a male and female used for breeding and kept in outside pens. The woman was dragged over 1/10 of a mile by the animals as they continued their attack.

1998—Denver

A neutered, male Rott/Mastiff mix attacked and killed a 21-month old boy, as the child was crawling on the floor towards his father, seated on the couch. This fatal attack is the rare "exception to the rule" in which the parents/owners had neutered the dog, had it obedience trained and maintained the dog as a household pet. Additionally, unlike most fatal attacks, the child and dog were in the presence of supervising adults at the time of the attack.

2003—Ebert County

Three loose roaming intact Pit bulls attacked and killed a 40-year-old woman in her barn. These dogs and their owners were well known in the community due to previous aggressive episodes involving the dogs and the owners repeatedly allowing these (and other dogs) to roam the area, harassing and attacking other beings. One neighbor had previously sustained a very severe bite to her leg from dogs alleged to belong to these owners. The female owner was convicted of owning dangerous dogs resulting in a death, and received a 6-year prison sentence. The male owner of these dogs fled the jurisdiction, was a suspect in a murder case in another state and was finally apprehended in 2005.

2005—Fruita

A 7-year-old girl was attacked and killed after her mother left her in the yard alone with newly acquired male and female Malamutes. It is believed only the male attacked the girl and the child was dead when the mother re-emerged from the house a few minutes later.

An examination of fatal attacks in the state of Colorado reveals that not only are these incidents incredibly rare (10 fatal attacks in the state over a 45-year period, 1962–2006), but they involve complex human and canine behaviors.

Denver's approach to the first documented fatal attack in the state of Colorado by a Pit bull-type dog was to ban the breed. There was no examination or discussion of previous fatal attacks in Colorado or the critical role owners play in allowing their dogs to behave aggressively. Denver chose to criminalize a breed of dog rather than enact laws that would impose strict penalties to control the behavior of dangerous dog owners.

NOTES

CHAPTER 1

1. "Terrific Encounter," *Bangor Daily Whig and Courier*, January 2, 1883. pg. 2.
2. "A Dog Attacks His Master," *The Washington Post*, February 9, 1888. pg. 1.
3. "Bitten by a Mad Dog," *New York Times*, July 27, 1893. pg. 5.
4. "A Child Terribly Mangled by a Dog," *New York Times*, June 14, 1874. pg. 7.
5. *Fort Wayne Sentinel*, June 4, 1879. pg. 3.
6. *Newark Daily Advocate*, April 12, 1889. pg. 3.
7. *The Newark Advocate*, January 30, 1902. pg. 1.
8. "Bloodhounds for Apaches," *The Washington Post*, February 28, 1892. pg. 10.
9. *General Court Martial Orders No. 607*. War Department, Adjutant-General's Office, Washington, November 6, 1865. Court Martial of Henry Wirz—Charges and Specifications.
10. "Bloodhounds are Bought," *Perry Daily Chief*, February 22, 1903. pg. 2.
11. "A Lovely Father," *Olean Weekly Democrat*, January 9, 1894. pg. 4.
12. "Mangled by a Dog," *New York Times*, May 27, 1888. pg. 3.
13. "Boy Torn by Savage Hounds," *The Washington Post*, June 8, 1903. pg. 1.
14. "Saved by Dog," *The Daily Courier*, August 3, 1907. pg. 1.
15. *The Hornellsville Tribune*, April 2, 1875. pg. 2.
16. "Savagely Attacked by his Dog," *New York Times*, June 15, 1885. pg. 2.
17. *The Massillon Independent*, August 5, 1887. pg. 1.
18. "Devoured by Wild Dogs," *The Washington Post*, February 16, 1892. pg. 6.

CHAPTER 2

1. "The True Bloodhound," *Denton Journal*, June 30, 1888. pg. 4.
2. "Hunted with Bloodhounds," *The Davenport Daily Leader*, November 2, 1891. pg. 2.
3. "Molossor Dogs" (www.molossordogs.com).
4. "A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies (Brevisima relacion de la destruccion de las Indias)" Bartolome de las Casas, 1552.
5. *Dogs of the Conquest*. John Grier Varner and Jeannette Johnson Varner. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman. 1983.
6. "The Horrors of Slavery and England's Duty to Free the Bondsman: An Address Delivered in Taunton, England, on September 1, 1846," Frederick Douglass. *Somerset County Gazette*, September 5, 1846.
7. "A Terribly Brutal Scene: Fight Between a Professional Sport and a Siberian Bloodhound," *The Washington Post*, December 25, 1879. pg. 1.
8. "A Siberian Bloodhound Killed," *New York Times*, March 24, 1882. pg. 3.
9. "Attacked by a Bloodhound," *New York Times*, January 30, 1900. pg. 3.
10. "Peasant is Torn to Death by Savage Bloodhounds," Special cable to *The Washington Post*, November 18, 1906. pg. F5.

11. *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*. Lott, Eric. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993 (Chapter 8: "Uncle Tomitudes: Racial Melodrama and Modes of Production," p. 211–233).
12. "Life and Times of Actress EJ Phillips (1880s & 1890s): Her dramatic career, cross-country travels, family life, Golden Age of the American Theatre & Arrival of the 20th Century." Em Turner, Nickinson Kuhl and Mary Glen Kuhl Chitty (<http://home.comcast.net/~m.chitty/index.html>).
13. "Bloodhounds Attack Woman," *New York Times*, September 23, 1898. pg. 2.
14. "Wicked Dogs," *New York Times*: New York City, April 6, 1855. pg. 1.
15. *The Florida Historical Quarterly*: "Cuban Bloodhounds and the Seminoles," James W. Covington. Volume XXXII, No. 2, October 1954.

CHAPTER 3

1. "A Dog's Revenge," *Fort Wayne Sentinel*, November 8, 1890. pg. 1.
2. "Boy Killed by a Dog," *The Washington Post*, December 26, 1893. pg. 3.
3. "Hoboken Terrorized," *New York Times*, July 30, 1889. pg. 2.
4. "Mad Dog's Desperate Attack," *The Daily Advocate*, June 12, 1894.
5. "No Hydrophobia," *New York Times*, July 25, 1887. pg. 4.
6. "Attacked by Dog Team, Woman Dies in 2 Days," Special to the *New York Times*, April 29, 1925. pg. 3.
7. "Devil Dogs of Labrador," *The Washington Post*, September 20, 1908. pg. M4.
8. "The Dogs of Labrador," *The Chronicle*, January 29, 1903. pg. 7.
9. "Dog Pack Attack: Hunting Humans," Simon P. Avis. *The American Journal of Forensic Medicine and Pathology* 20(3): 243–246, 1999.
10. "The Dogs of Labrador," *The Chronicle*, January 29, 1903. Pg. 7.

CHAPTER 4

1. "Young Boys Attacked by a Dog," *New York Times*, December 13, 1891. pg. 2.
2. "Mutilated by a Dog," *New York Times*, May 1, 1893. pg. 8.
3. "Boy and Girl Bitten When Collie Runs Amuck," *Indianapolis Star*, May 2, 1915.
4. "Bitten by Dog," *Fitchburg Daily Sentinel*, March 29, 1910. pg. 2.
5. "Boy is Bitten 30 Times by Collie," *Oakland Tribune*, June 8, 1913.
6. "Child Bitten by a Dog," *New Oxford Item*, November 16, 1916. pg. 1.
7. "St. Bernard Dogs Termed a Menace: Swiss Doctor Says Penning-up and Cross-Breeding Have Ruined Their Tempers; Urges Their Banishment," *New York Times*, July 18, 1937. pg. N2.
8. "Bernard Dogs Reprieved After One Kills Child," *The Washington Post*, June 8, 1937.
9. "Child Attacked by a Dog," *New York Times*, June 29, 1901. pg. 2.
10. "Baby Killed by Dog," *The Washington Post*, February 4, 1909. pg. 3.
11. "Boy Bitten Twelve Times by Dog in Saving His Sister," *Syracuse Herald*, May 3, 1925.
12. "Man Attacked by Wild Dog," *New Oxford Times*, February 24, 1921. pg. 10.
13. "Dog Attacks Its Mistress," *Reno Evening Gazette*, April 10, 1931. pg. 10.
14. "Dog Meat at \$125 a Pound," *Gettysburg Times*, June 21, 1918.
15. "Terribly Mangled by Dogs," *New York Times*, April 23, 1884. pg. 5.
16. "Dead, Torn by Her Dog," *The Washington Post*, March 12, 1910.
17. "Attacked by Dogs, Boy Dies," *New York Times*, August 18, 1917. pg. 5.
18. "Attacked and Slain by Hungry Dogs," *New York Times*, February 23, 1926. pg. 25.

CHAPTER 5

1. "Girl Mangled by a Pet Dog," *New York Times*, October 27, 1897. pg. 4.
2. "Attacked by Starving Dog," *Newark Daily Advocate*, February 19, 1885.
3. "Mangled by Mastiffs," *The Washington Post*, September 7, 1891. pg. 1.
4. "Torn by a Fierce Dog," *Daily Nevada State Journal*, September 26, 1905. pg. 1.
5. *Evening Observer* (from the *Boston Globe*), July 21, 1884. pg. 3.

CHAPTER 6

1. "Brave Bulldog Saves Twenty Women," *The Washington Post*, July 31, 1907. pg. 1.
2. "Settled in One Round," *The Lima Daily Times*, July 18, 1889. pg. 1.
3. "Faithful Bulldog Copper Patrols Georgetown Beat," *The Washington Post*, August 26, 1906.
4. "Woman's Battle with Dog," *New York Times*, January 19, 1905. pg. 1.
5. *The Davenport Democrat*, August 7, 1924. pg. 1.
6. *New York Times*, August 20, 1905.
7. "Killed by Dog She Beat," *The Washington Post*, February 14, 1907. pg. 1.
8. "Dog's Bite May Kill," *The Washington Post*, August 4, 1909. pg. 1.
9. "Canines," *Semi-Weekly Age*, January 20, 1888. pg. 1.
10. "Bulldog Losing Character," Special Cable to the *New York Times*, November 10, 1912. pg. C2.
11. "Bulldog Saves Life of Boy Playmate," *Oakland Tribune*, October 25, 1919.

CHAPTER 7

1. "The News of the Week," *The New Era*, October 27, 1887. pg. 1.
2. "A Dog Kills His Master," *The Wellsboro Agitator*, September 2, 1903. pg. 1.
3. "Boy Killed When Attacked by Dogs," *Bismarck Tribune*, April 13, 1928. pg. 10.
4. *The Washington Post*, July 13, 1945. pg. 5.
5. "Police Dogs," *New York Times*, July 20, 1924. pg. XX13.
6. *The Bismarck Tribune*, February 20, 1930.

CHAPTER 8

1. "Watchdogs for Chief Executives," *Daily Northwestern*, May 27, 1929.
2. "Gold Medal Voted, Dog That Killed Rattler, Saving Baby," *Syracuse Herald*, August 3, 1932.
3. "Baron, Seeing-Eye Dog, is Adopted as Family Member," *Sheboygan Press*, October 29, 1952. pg. 25.
4. "Two Dogs Attack and Kill Mistress," Special cable to the *New York Times*, June 3, 1955. pg.46
5. "Woman Owner Bitten to Death by Prize Doberman in Jersey," *New York Times*, March 20, 1960. pg. 50
6. *Carry Me Home: Birmingham, Alabama: The Climactic Battle of the Civil Rights Revolution*. Diane McWhorter. Simon & Schuster, 2001.
7. "Interview with Diane McWhorter," *Jerry Jazz Musician*, July 25, 2002 (www.jerryjazzmusician.com).

CHAPTER 9

1. "Increase in Dog Bites Linked to Ghetto Growth," *Evening Bulletin*, June 26, 1974.
2. "Dog Bites: Surgeon's Warning," *Evening Bulletin*, May 14, 1978.

CHAPTER 10

1. "Pit Bulls: Months of Hysteria Lead to a Distorted Response," *Detroit Free Press*, August 10, 1987.
2. "Father Held in Tot's Death after Telling Pit Bull Story," *San Jose Mercury News*. June 19, 1987.
3. "A Boy and his Dog in Hell," Sager M. *Rolling Stone*, July 2, 1987. pg. 39–40, 62–65.
4. "Beware of This Dog," Swift, E.M. *Sports Illustrated*, July 27, 1987. pg. 72–84
5. "Time Bomb on Legs," *Time*, July 27, 1987.
6. "An Instinct for the Kill," *People Weekly*, July 7, 1987.
7. "Dog Attack Leaves 5-year-old girl with 120 stitches," *The Boston Globe*, August 19, 1989.
8. "Dog Bite-Related Fatalities From 1979 Through 1988." Sacks JJ, Sattin RW, Bono SE., *JAMA* 1989; 262: 1489–1492.
9. "A community approach to dog bite prevention." AVMA Task Force on Canine Aggression and Human-Canine Interactions. *JAVMA.*, 200.1 218: 1732–1749.
10. "Breeds of Dogs Involved in Fatal Human Attacks in the United States between 1979–1998." Sacks JJ, Sinclair L, Gilchrist J, Golab G, Lockwood R., *JAVMA* Vol. 217, No. 6, September 15, 2000.

CHAPTER 11

1. Ontario Superior Court of Justice Affidavit of Dr. I. Lehr Brisbin, Jr., Senior Research Scientist, University of Georgia.
2. "Mauling by Pit Bull Terriers: Case Report." Baack, B.R., Kucan, J.O., Demarest, G., Smoot, E.C. *Journal of Trauma*, Vol. 29, No. 4. 517–520, 1989.
3. "Dog bites in children: Epidemiology, microbiology, and penicillin prophylactic therapy." Boenning, D.A., Fleisher, G.R., Campos, J.M. *Am. J. Emerg. Med.*, 1: 17–21, 1983.
4. "Dangerous Encounters: Bite Force." Dr. Brady Barr. *National Geographic*. August 18, 2005.
5. Dr. I. Lehr Brisbin, Jr., Senior Research Scientist, University of Georgia.
6. "New York Police Remove 400-pound Tiger from Housing Project," *New York Daily News*, October 4, 2003.
7. "Keep the Pit Bull Ban—and Put Some Bite in It," *The Washington Post*, October 2, 2005.
8. *The Jaws of Death*. Xavier Maniguet. Crescent Books, Avenel, New Jersey, 1996 (Chapter 3: An Extraordinary Machine, pg. 45–47).
9. ReefQuest Centre for Shark Research, R. Aidan Martin, Director (www.elasmo-research.org).
10. "Alderman Wants to Ban City's Pit Bulls," *Chicago Sun-Times*, December 1, 2005.
11. *The Hornellsville Tribune*, April 2, 1875. pg. 2.
12. Of the two victims reported to have been killed by Pit bulls: Autopsy results listed one victim's death as caused by cardiac arrhythmia (unrelated to dog bites), the other cause of death was from blunt force trauma (the result of an assault by a human during a robbery

attempt). The victim reported to have been killed by a Rottweiler: Autopsy determined the manner of death to be “natural” with the cause of death as “atherosclerosis, cardiac disease and chronic liver disease.” National Canine Research Council (www.nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com).

13. “Breeds of dogs involved in fatal human attacks in the United States between 1979 and 1998.” Sacks, JJ., Sinclair, L., Gilchrist, J., Golab, G., Lockwood, R., *JAMVA*, Vol 217, No. 6. September 2000.
14. The National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS), 2002.
15. “A Nation’s Shame: Fatal Child Abuse and Neglect in the United States.” U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Washington D.C.
16. *Daily News*, September 20, 2004.
17. *Toledo Blade*, January 12, 2003.
18. Legislative Assembly of Ontario, 38th Legislative, 1st Session. Bill 132, Second Reading, November 15, 2004.

CHAPTER 12

1. “Mobile Man Convicted of Dog-fighting, wife acquitted,” *Tuscaloosa News*, March 19, 2005.
2. The Anti-Cruelty Society, Chicago, Illinois (www.anticruelty.org).
3. “Dog Fighting Detailed Discussion,” Hanna Gibson. Animal Legal and Historical Center. Michigan State University College of Law, 2005 (www.animallaw.info).

CHAPTER 13

1. “Patient Dog Bitten 6 Times by Boy, 2,” *Evening Bulletin*, April 21, 1971.
2. “Boy, 11, Braves Pet Dog’s Bites to Free Him from Steel Trap,” *Evening Bulletin*, December 29, 1948.
3. “Hot Popcorn Hits Family Dog, Children Bitten,” *Evening Bulletin*, May 1, 1972.
4. “Policeman Steps on Police Dog, Is Bitten on Leg,” *Evening Bulletin*, February 23, 1968.
5. “Dog Kills Owner in Trying Rescue,” *Syracuse Herald Journal*, March 23, 1950.
6. *Red Zone: The Behind-the-Scenes Story of the San Francisco Dog Mauling*. Aphrodite Jones. HarperCollins, N.Y., 2003.
7. *Death of an Angel: The Inside Story of How Justice Prevailed in the San Francisco Dog-mauling Case*, Joseph Harrington. Quantum Entertainment, June 2002.
8. *Morris Daily Herald*, November 8, 2005.
9. “Elderly Man Narrowly Escapes Pit Bull Attack,” KGO-TV (ABC 7 News), June 23, 2005.
10. “Pit Bull Traps Boy, 4, on Car Roof,” *Courier Journal*, November 22, 2005.
11. “Two Teenagers Escape Serious Injury After Pit Bull Attack near Hanover,” *The Citadel*, November 14, 2005.
12. WorldNow and WTVO, Channel 17 News: April 14, 2003, April 15, 2003, April 29, 2003.
13. “Pit Bull Angers Resident,” *Herald News*, January 8, 2005.
14. *The Reporter*, December 20, 2005.
15. “Fed-up Alderman Wants to Rid City of Pit Bulls,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, January 15, 2004.

CHAPTER 14

1. *APPMA Advisor*, Quarterly Newsletter, National Pet Owners Survey. American Pet Products Manufacturers Association. May 2005/Issue 6.
2. "CPSC Warns about Pool Hazards, Reports 250 Deaths on Young Children Annually." U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, Washington, D.C., May 25, 2004. Release #04-142.

Index

Airedale Terrier, 48, 53-55, 66
Alaska, 41, 46, 143
Alsatian, 72, 74, 75
AKC (American Kennel Club), 22, 36, 49, 72, 80, 86, 91, 92, 191
American Bulldog, 95, 127
American Pit Bull Terrier, 63, 65, 71, 92, 95, 96, 107, 109, 112, 127, 130, 136, 191, 193, 194
American Staffordshire Terrier, 71, 95, 130, 191, 193, 194
Andersonville Prison, 10, 11, 33
Australia, 53, 74, 75, 79, 143, 144
Barr, Dr. Brady, 112
Bird dog, 13, 14
Bite force, 110-112
Bloodhound, 1-4, 6, 9-12, 20-36, 41, 44, 48, 61, 63, 64, 72-74, 76, 77, 79, 80, 84-86, 89, 109, 129, 175-181
Boston Terrier, 48, 53-55
Breed specific legislation (BSL), 102, 113, 117, 145, 148, 157, 174, 191, 196, 197
Brisbin, I. Lehr, 109, 112
Bryant, Michael, 104, 120, 127, 172
Buddy, seeing-eye dog, 76
Bull Terrier, *ix*, 63-66, 68, 71, 95, 130, 136, 137
Bulldog, *ix*, *x*, *xi*, 3, 15, 16, 21, 28, 35, 53, 60, 63-71, 72, 73, 77, 95, 108, 110, 121, 136, 137, 175-181, 184, 188
Bulls, 14-16, 21, 50, 63, 65, 69
Camp Sumter, 10, 33
Canada, 36, 41, 42, 104, 121, 143, 144, 172
CDC (Centers for Disease Control), 39, 99, 100, 124, 170
Chained, chaining dogs, 4, 5, 7, 8, 13, 17, 24, 32, 48, 49, 60, 61, 66, 68, 76, 80, 89, 98, 99, 107, 118, 119, 129, 131-34, 139, 141, 149-51, 155, 158, 162, 163, 167, 171-79, 181, 183-189, 193, 195, 196-99
Chicago, 36, 56, 104, 117, 121, 134, 135, 147-49, 163
Child abuse, 124, 126, 144, 147, 157
Civil War, *ix*, 10, 23, 120
Collie, 15, 47-51, 56, 59, 67, 73, 177, 184, 185, 189
Colorado, 18, 54, 120, 191, 197-200
Cuba, 22, 34
Cuban Bloodhound, 10, 11, 21-24, 26, 34, 35
Dalmatian, 141
Denver, *x*, 101-04, 113, 120, 121, 122, 191-98, 200
Doberman Pinscher, 49, 79-87, 90-93, 108, 109, 113, 183, 186, 188, 198
Dog fighting, 63, 65, 69, 95, 96, 98, 104, 110, 126, 130-37, 161
Douglass, Frederick, 24
English Bulldog, 58, 95, 175, 178
English Mastiff, 22, 47, 48, 60, 179
“Family” dog, 98, 119, 150-152, 162, 163, 167, 173
Florida, 10, 21-23, 34, 132, 143

Fox Terrier, 51-53
German Shepherd, 35, 48, 69, 72-80, 86, 89-93, 112, 127, 141, 183-89, 198
Germany, 75, 81, 85, 93, 109
Golden Retriever, 84, 86, 148, 171, 173, 174, 188
Grace, Nancy, 153
Great Dane, 48, 90, 91, 181, 183, 185-89
Guard dogs, 3-9, 13, 17, 19, 26, 35-37, 47, 48, 51, 59, 63, 64, 68, 69, 72, 80, 83, 88-94, 109, 129, 137, 150, 167, 169, 176-81, 183, 184, 186-89
Hunting dog(s), 3, 11, 13, 19, 63, 137, 178, 184, 188
Husky, 41, 44, 45, 46, 49, 127, 143, 183, 184, 187-89, 198
Hydrophobia. *See* Rabies
Indians, 10, 12, 23, 34
Intact, 92, 94, 119, 128, 129, 151, 155, 158, 159, 161, 162, 164, 165, 197-99
Jackson, Horatio Nelson, *x*
Labrador (coast of), 42, 44
Labrador Retriever, 84, 90, 122-24, 127, 128, 142, 147, 148, 160, 184, 189
Lad, A Dog, 50
Las Casas, Bartolome de, 23
Lassie, 50, 83
Little Rascals, The, 71, 137
Locking jaw, 95, 108-111
London, Jack, 110
Malamute, 41, 45, 127, 184, 185, 187-89, 199
Manslaughter, 99, 145, 154-57
Mastiff, 3, 9, 22, 23, 28, 47, 60, 61, 72, 121, 127, 176, 178-80, 185, 199
McWhorter, Diane, 84, 85
Mixed breed(s), *ix*, 33, 56, 57, 71, 104, 119, 122, 123, 129, 141, 142, 143, 145, 147, 158, 160, 184, 185, 188, 189, 194
Mongrel, 3, 15, 17, 33, 47, 55-57, 121, 179, 184, 185, 188
Morgan, Emily, 46
Murder, 11, 89, 97, 144, 157, 199
National Geographic, 112
Nazi (guards), 80, 81, 85, 109
Necropsy, 151, 155
Nelson, Kory, 104, 120, 191, 196
Neutered, 164, 166, 199
New York City, 4, 26, 32, 33, 48, 53, 57, 58, 66, 68, 90, 126
Newfoundland, 36, 42
Newfoundland dog, 3-5, 20, 21, 36-38, 41, 47-49, 56, 59, 72, 121, 175-81
Northern breeds, 36, 41, 42, 45, 63, 72
Ontario, 104, 120, 127, 172
Pasteur, Louis, 41
Petey, 71, 137
Pit bull, anatomy, 96, 104, 108-11
Pit bull, bite force. *See: psi*
Pit bull, dog fighting. *See: dog fighting*
Pit bull, history, 99, 104, 107, 136-137
Pit bull, identification, 64, 99, 100, 108, 123, 124, 127-29, 144
Police dog, 48-50, 63, 69, 72-76, 85, 140
Presa Canario, 127, 145

Protection dogs. *See* guard dogs
psi (pounds per square inch- bite force), 98, 110-12
 Queens (New York), 75
 Rabies, 38-41, 49
 Rat poison, *xiii*, 151, 173
 Reproductive status, 99, 164-65
 “Resident” dog, 151-52, 162-63, 167-68, 197
 Rin Tin Tin, 76-78, 80
 Roosevelt, President Theodore, 67, 110
 Rottweiler, 91-94, 100, 112, 119, 123, 147, 150, 198-99, 204
 Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 42, 45
 Rugai, Virginia (Ginger), 104, 117, 148
 Sallie, *ix*
 Scent dogs. *See* tracking dogs
 Seminole Indians, 10, 23, 34
 Sharks, 79, 104-05, 112-16, 120, 192-93
 Siberian Bloodhound, 21-22, 26-29, 32, 35, 64, 177-79
 Siberian husky, 41, 184
 Slaves, 9, 22-24
 Sled dogs, 41-46
 Spayed, 164, 168
Sports Illustrated magazine, 98, 193, 196
 St. Bernard, 40, 48, 51, 52, 61, 90, 179-81, 187, 188, 198
 St. Hubert’s Bloodhound, 21-23, 25-26, 33
 Starvation, 18, 43-47, 56-57, 59, 131-32, 134, 155, 163, 167, 177, 179, 183, 184
 Stowe, Harriet Beecher, 28-29, 32
 Stray dogs, 17-19, 47, 129, 179-80, 183, 186, 187
 Stubby, 71
 Switzerland, 52
 Teeth, canine, 110, 111, 114-15
 Teeth, shark, 114-15
 Tige, 136
 Tiger, 14, 113, 114
 Tom Shows, 28-31, 86, 96, 109
 Tracking dogs, 9-12, 25, 28
Uncle Tom’s Cabin, 28-32, 85
 United Kingdom, 53, 143
 U.S. Marine Corps, 81-82, 84
 U.S. War Department, 33
 Vallone, Peter Jr., 104
 Water Spaniel, 14, 180
 Wesselhoft, Paul, 104
 Whipple, Diane, 144, 166
White Fang, 110
 Wild dogs. *See* Stray dogs
 Wirz, Captain Henry, 10-11, 33
 Wolf, wolves, 41, 43, 45, 55, 72, 74-76, 79, 110, 113, 114, 118, 127, 185-187, 189, 199
 WWI, 54, 71
 WWII, 80-82, 85, 120

About the Author

Karen Delise is a licensed Veterinary Technician with a degree in Veterinary Science Technology.

She has worked for the Suffolk County Sheriff's Office, Long Island Game Farm, the New York State Marine Mammal Rescue Program, the East End Emergency Animal Hospital and was a volunteer for the Bide-A-Wee Pet Therapy Program which brings pets to nursing homes to visit with patients.

Her book is based upon 15 years of research and interviews with hundreds of Animal Control Officers, Law Enforcement Officials, Medical Examiners, Public Health Officials Epidemiologists, Shelter Workers, Detectives and journalists.

She is the author of *Fatal Dog Attacks: The Stories Behind the Statistics*, and is the founder and lead researcher for The National Canine Research Council.

www.nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com

THE HUMAN-CANINE BOND AT RISK

First it was the bloodhound, sensationalized in the dramatizations of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Then it was the Doberman, the symbol of Nazi cruelty. Today, the pit bull is vilified for the depravity of his master.

Sensationalized reports by the pit bull paparazzi sow fertile ground for politicians to promote breed-ban placebos, which offer no solution to rare cases of extreme canine aggression.

Karen Delise's groundbreaking history of society's response to canine aggression pulls away the fear frenzy sweeping the country. Americans have abandoned common sense and allowed their perceptions of canine behavior to be dictated by those who traffic in myths and pseudoscience.

We have reached a critical divide on the road where men and dogs have traveled together. Do we accept breed-ban placebos and risk losing our most rewarding and profound interspecies relationship, or do we step forward and take responsibility for our dogs?

"Delise provides common-sense solutions for public safety and sheds light on current media bias involved in the reporting of dog attacks. A compelling and thorough analysis of reckless owners and dangerous dogs in America. A must-read for any public official concerned with increasing public safety."

—Ledy VanKavage, senior director of legislation and legal training, ASPCA

"Delise's exhaustively researched, often riveting account of how America's most-respected dog became its most reviled takes us beyond the pitiable plight of the pit bull. It goes to the heart of the storied bond between dogs and humans and the ways the latter often corrupt it for their own craven purposes. By dispelling common misperceptions about certain dog breeds, Delise successfully shifts the onus for problem dog behaviors back to where it should be: squarely on us."

—Charles Siebert, author of *Wickerby: An Urban Pastoral* and *Angus: A Novel*

"An eye-opening look at how media portrayals of dog attacks have changed, through the lens of newspaper reports sampled over more than a century and a half. Delise has uncovered a profound change in our cultural perception of dog aggression."

—Janis Bradley, author of *Dogs Bite But Balloons and Slippers Are More Dangerous*

About the Author

Karen Delise, founder of and Director of Research for the National Canine Research Council, has been investigating fatal dog attacks for more than twenty years. She is the nation's leading expert on the subject, constantly maintaining and improving her database of cases dating from the nineteenth century. Now retired, Ms. Delise divided her working life between law enforcement and animal welfare. She worked for the Suffolk County Sheriff's Office for twenty-eight years. A licensed veterinary technician with a degree in veterinary science technology, she also worked for Long Island Game Farm, New York State Marine Mammal Rescue Program and East End Emergency Animal Hospital. She volunteered at the Bide-a-Wee Pet Therapy program, which brings pets to visit nursing home patients.

Ms. Delise makes her home in Maryland, where she devotes herself full time to research and writing for the Council.

The Pit Bull Placebo: The Media, Myths and Politics of Canine Aggression is also available for download at no cost from www.nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com.

ISBN 13: 978-0-9721914-1-8 \$24.95



Select Language

Powered by Google Translate



AMERICAN DOG BREEDERS ASSOCIATION

THE AMERICAN PIT BULL TERRIER IS NOT JUST OUR BUSINESS, IT'S OUR HERITAGE

- HOME
- HOW DO I
- STORE/MERCHANDISE
- SCHOLARSHIPS
- BOOKS/ARTICLES
- PHOTO GALLERY

- About The ADBA
- APBT Registration
- Applications
- APBT Gazette
- Clubs and Events
- Safe Dog Program
- Responsible Ownership
- Buying a New Dog?
- APBT Classifieds
- Legislation



- ::NEWS ::**
- [APBT Gazette Back Issues](#)
 - [Producer Of Excellence \(NEW!\)](#)
 - [APBT Apparel](#)
 - [Event Calendar](#)
 - [Find a Club Near You!](#)
 - [Pedigrees](#)
 - [Advertise Your Kennel in the Gazette](#)
 - [Follow us on Facebook](#)
 - [ACCOUNT LOGIN](#)



UNITED KENNEL CLUB, INC

We are currently processing registration applications received as of Feb. 4, 2014.

*Note: Processing may take 7-10 Business Days

NOTICE
 Re-Opening of the American Pit Bull Terrier Single Registration
UNITED KENNEL CLUB

NOTICE
 UKC Announces the Recognition of the American Bully
UNITED KENNEL CLUB

Breed Standard
REVISION
UKC

[prevnext](#)



Follow us on Facebook!

Like Share 18,234 people like this. Sign Up to see what your friends like.



Above: UKC offers a wide variety of events for your dog. Learn more about us by playing the video above, or by browsing our site.

Recent Videos



01/2014: Video highlights from the 2014 Grand American in Orangeburg, South Carolina.... [View](#) ▶



AMERICAN
KENNEL CLUB®

The Latest on Social Media

Dog lovers, Meet Tucker! :)

#CanineCuteness

<http://t.co/PhnxumrO1Q>

15 hours ago

• [Reply](#)

• [Retweet](#)

[Favorite](#)

Follow [@akcdoglovers](#) 107K followers

Join AGILITY: America



What's New!

[Tell Them Dennis Sent
You: Top Restaurants to
Try During Westminster](#)

[Housetraining a Rescue](#)



GET STA



Reflecting on Pit Bulls - Whatever they are!

For the purpose of this website, we've used the generic term 'pit bull' to describe our dogs, even though there is no proper definition for pit bull. Recent research including DNA analysis by [Dr. Victoria Volth](#)



(<http://nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com/resources/breed-and-behavior/>) and others has proven that dogs commonly identified as pit bulls are quite often a mix of multiple breeds, so breed identification by appearance alone is now considered to be inaccurate and misleading. The conundrum is a good one though, because it frees us up to look at these incredibly popular dogs as a fascinating American phenomena rather than an identifiable item with fixed genetics, behaviors and definable features. Welcome to our exploration of the enigmatic pit bull!

Above: Two different centuries, two celebrated 'pit bulls.' On the left, [Sergeant Stubby](#) (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sergeant_Stubby) is celebrated for saving human lives in WWI. In 2010, [Jonny Justice](#) (<http://www.parade.com/news/2010/08/15-can-you-teach-a-bad-dog-new-tricks.html>) is celebrated for surviving the cruelties of NFL Player Michael Vick and going on to help children learn to read.

The 'pit bulls' you meet may be shelter dogs of indeterminate origin or they may have pedigree as American Staffordshire Terriers, Staffordshire Bull Terriers, American Pit Bull Terriers (APBT) or more recently, American Bullies. Whichever definition or registry you prefer, fanciers and animal lovers alike can agree that the dogs that fall under this label are as well-loved as they are maligned in this society, with a history that's as blended as their genetics. While we puzzle over what a pit bull is, we should all take note that the dogs have been dutifully helping us learn what it means to be human. With unflinching optimism, the dogs that fill our shelters and homes seem to want to remind us that they are what we've made them to be, either victims of human cruelty, neglected sentries in lonely yards, or cherished family companions in our homes. Slowly, society is starting to recognize these lessons and accept responsibility for their station in life.

Created in the UK

A dog (Olde English Bulldog) that looked much like today's pit bull was originally used in the 1800's in the British Isles to 'bait' bulls. These matches were held for the entertainment of the struggling classes; a source of relief from the tedium of hardship. In 1835 bull baiting was deemed inhumane and became illegal, and dog fighting became a popular replacement. Soon, a new bulldog was created by crossing the Olde English Bulldog with terriers to create smaller, more agile dogs. The best fighters were celebrated and held up as [heroes](#) (<http://badrap-blog.blogspot.com/2011/03/lets-do-time-warn-funeral-of-spol.html>) for their courage and fortitude during battle. At the same time, bite inhibition towards humans was encouraged through selective breeding so gamblers could handle their dogs



during staged fights. Partially because of these early breeding efforts which frowned on "man biters," pit bulls gained a reputation for their trustworthy nature with humans.

History in America

Immigrants brought their dogs across the ocean along with their families and prized possessions. They soon became a fixture in a developing nation. In early America, the dogs were valued for much more than their fighting abilities. They were entrusted to protect homesteads from predators and worked as vital helpers on family farms. Homesteaders depended on their abilities to help in hunts and as hog catchers (hence, the common title "catch dogs"). They were constant companions to the young children who were entrusted in their care. Pit bulls earned their place as an important part of the fabric of a developing nation.

Like the vintage photos? See our [Vintage Photo Gallery](http://www.badrap.org/vintage-photos) (<http://www.badrap.org/vintage-photos>) here.

As cities sprung up, Pit Bulls remained a prominent part of the American culture. The USA admired this breed for qualities that it likened in itself; friendly, brave, hardworking, worthy of respect. Pit Bulls were thought of less as pit fighters and more as 'regular dogs'. They show up in hundreds of turn of the century photos, flanked by loving family members. Early advertisements, posters, and magazines began to use the image of the All American Dog, including Buster Brown, whose companion was a Pit Bull.



World War I posters displayed illustrations of APBTs as proud mascots of neutrality and bravery. This was Sargeant Stubby's era!

The pit bull was also a favorite dog among politicians, scholars, and celebrities. Helen Keller, Theodore Roosevelt, and the "Our Gang" Little Rascals all had pit bulls. Many reading this website may have grandparents and great grandparents who kept a favorite pit bull as a pet. Today, this tradition continues with countless numbers of Americans who love and cherish their family pit bulls.



Character over Form

Because the earliest breeders were going for speed, stamina and attitude rather than looks, the general appearance of the purebreds can vary greatly. They can range between 25 and 75 pounds. The earlier 'classic' APBTs were on the small side - an advantage which afforded them speed and agility in the fighting pits. As the pit dogs made their way to the working farms of America, larger characteristics were encouraged in breedings. In recent years, appearance and conformations vary so widely that it's hard to recognize the 'old world' pit bull anymore in the 'new world' creations. A good reminder why DNA analysis keeps coming back with mixed breed results for so many dogs considered to be 'pit bulls.'

Pit bulls are beautiful in their variety, but their most appealing features are their inner qualities. Strength, confidence, a sense of humor and a zest for life are all hallmarks of the breed. They also tend to be sensitive and get their feelings hurt easily. Properly socialized dogs are quite affectionate and friendly, even with strangers, and therefore do not make good guard dogs. They're intelligent and eager to please and tend to remain playful throughout their lives. While some can be low key 'couch potatoes,' many others need a job to channel their enthusiasm and energy. They excel in dog sports, search and rescue work, drug and bomb detection work, and as therapy dogs. Severe shyness, fearfulness or human-directed aggression is not characteristic of the breed and highly undesirable in any dog.



A Printable HAND OUT on what to know to be true about real pit bull **personality**. ([/sites/default/files/pitbull_personality.pdf](https://sites/default/files/pitbull_personality.pdf))

Above Right: Bailey came to BADRAP after Hurricane Katrina washed away her home. She was adopted to a teacher and now serves to help children with autism learn to connect with others. Her owner Andrea Vu Nguyen tells us that she's stunning in this role and has helped inspire impressive improvements in her students.

What's in a Name?

AmStaff or APBT? AKC? UKC? ADBA or ABKC? So many registries, so many ways to label a "pit bull!"

"American Staffordshire Terrier" is not a polite new name for pit bull, although it's often misapplied by people who dislike the term 'pit bull.' Understanding the jumbled history of the breed names helps to clear up some of this confusion and mislabeling.

Before the end of the 1800's, the dogs we think of as 'Pit Bulls' were typically called bulldogs - a name that's still used by many breed enthusiasts. In 1898, Chauncy Z. Bennet founded the United Kennel Club (UKC) and re-named the bulldogs 'American Pit Bull Terriers'. This move gave legitimacy to the breed and provided a framework for breed standardization. Then, in the 1930's a group petitioned the American Kennel Club (AKC) to allow pit bulls to be shown in the conformation ring. To separate the dog from its reputation as a pit fighter, they were given the new title 'Staffordshire Terrier' which was later changed to 'American Staffordshire Terrier' to avoid confusion with the English Staffordshire Terrier. Right: *The original 'Pete the Pup' from Our Gang fame was one of the first to be duo-registered as a UKC American Pit Bull Terrier and an AKC American Stafforshire Terrier.*

The American Staffordshire Terriers have been developed since that time for conformation, while the APBTs have been developed for working drive, in addition to conformation. The two styles are basically mirror images of each other, with slight differences in build and character that have started to show over the past 65 years. To make

Securing the future of the American Pit Bull Terrier as a cherished family companion.

matters even more confusing, some AmStaffs are dual registered as both UKC APBTs and AKC AmStaffs, while APBTs cannot be registered with both organizations. Depending on who you talk to, AmStaffs and APBTs can be the exact same breed, or completely separate breeds.



In 1909, Guy McCord founded an organization titled ADBA (American Dog Breeders Association). This was created exclusively for APBTs and continues to be the lead registry for this breed. In 1976, the ADBA outlined its own breed standard, or, Basis of Conformation. In 1990, a new registry called ABKC was formed to promote 'American Bully' dogs - a new breeding style of thick, bulldoggy looking dogs that are said to have English Bulldog in their background as well as other breeds.

A Lonely Twist In the Road

While large numbers of pit bull type dogs in this country live out their lives as cherished family companions, many not so fortunate suffer from man-made shortcomings, including unspeakable cruelties, the socio-economic pressures of under-resourced owners, and the relentless biases and discrimination of an ill-informed public. The All American dog began to be exploited through dog fighting in greater numbers in the eighties and were soon associated with poverty, 'urban thugs' and crime. The media, including Sports Illustrated, shamefully capitalized on fears of a modern day werewolf by promoting stereotypical images like the one on this now infamous cover shot (right), and the reputation of the entire breed was dragged down with yet more sensationalistic headlines and damaging **myths and untruths.** (node/26) This set the stage for breed specific laws (BSL), which cropped up in select places as the dogs began to be used as a political platform by opportunistic politicians.



Dogfighting is now a felony in all 50 states and arrests have increased, and many now work to restore the dogs' image to its rightful place as an American tradition. But even the most responsible owners still struggle to keep their dogs safe from discrimination and harm. The larger threats to the dogs are much more insidious and mainstream than even the threat of dog fighting, and result in an unforgivable prejudice that condemns countless pit bulls to homelessness and an early death. It is the housing market that routinely forces families to surrender their dogs to crowded shelters because no property owner will rent to them - even to a **hero dog.** (#) It's ill-informed professionals, like a librarian in an affluent San Francisco suburb, who promotes profiling dogs based on **appearance** (<http://badrap-blog.blogspot.com/2011/03/when-librarians-judge-books-by-their.html>).

It's become public policy when law-makers misuse their positions to remove and destroy innocent pets from their responsible families in places like **Denver**, (http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/8644998/ns/health-pet_health/d/denver-pit-bull-ban-leads-dogs-hiding/) rather than adopt progressive policies that work to create safe, humane communities. Once again, pit bulls reflect back to us who we are: A culture of incredible contrast and conflicting beliefs about our roles and responsibilities as stewards of our canine companions.

Still Heroes

Despite the societal pressures many of the dogs and their owners endure, one thing rings true: The canine hero who was admired by this country's earliest citizens continues to show itself in the faces of the overwhelming majority of pit bulls in our homes and even most of our shelters. The animal that was once courageous enough to grab a bull by the nose or save human lives on a WWI battlefield, now utilizes that same bravery to accomplish modern day feats - including surviving conditions that would drive most humans to madness.

There are no greater contemporary examples of this resiliency and ability to bounce back from darkness than the dogs rescued from Michael Vick's Bad Newz Kennels. So many (30 and counting) have found success in new homes since the rescue that the media couldn't help but take a new look at pit bull type dogs when they emerged, and the public happily embraced their stories of recovery. Twenty years after the breed took its first major PR hit in the media, Sports Illustrated returned to show us a different face of the dog, one that invokes sympathy and even surprise from a re-educated public.



Link to Sports Illustrated Article. (<http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/2008/magazine/12/22/vick.dogs/>) Breed enthusiasts celebrated this historic issue and hailed it as a sign of a welcome change in the landscape.

In loving and committed homes they dazzle us with unmistakable charms. It's not hard to see that the original Hero Dog is still alive and well in the show ring, in the various dog sport competitions, in law enforcement work, in our homes, and even in the saddest of places in our urban shelters.

We'd like to think that BAD RAP's **rescued pit bulls** (<http://www.badrap.org/hall-fame>) accurately reflect that same original spirit of tail wagging resiliency. We hope to inspire others to take a second look at the breed that has so much to say to us about its strengths and qualities as well as who we are as a nation of doglovers. Thank you for stopping by!

DOG BREED SPECIFIC LEGISLATION

The cost to people, pets and

veterinarians, and the damage to the human-animal bond.

Veterinarians, their clients, and their clients' pets in 300 cities and towns in the United States live with special burdens and added costs because of ordinances banning or restricting dogs of one or more breeds and breed mixes. Thirty-six breeds of dogs and mixes of those breeds have been restricted, in various combinations and groupings. These restrictions and bans compromise the human-animal bond and complicate the professional landscape for veterinarians.

“There has never been any evidence that breed bans or restrictions contribute to improved public safety.”

AVMA, the CDC, the National Animal Control Association, the Association of Pet Dog Trainers, and virtually all animal welfare charities oppose breed-specific regulation.¹ AVMA PLIT recently released a statement opposing breed discrimination by insurers.

There has never been any evidence that breed bans or restrictions contribute to improved public safety. The Netherlands repealed its breed ban last year because, based upon a report from a committee of experts, the ban had not led to any decrease in dog bites.² Italy repealed its breed-specific regulations in April of this year.³

DEMONIZED DOGS THEN

As America's conflict over slavery intensified, public attitudes towards the bloodhound paralleled the increasingly negative attitudes towards the dogs' most publicized function: slave catching. The depiction of the slave catcher's dog in stage re-enactments of UNCLE TOM'S CABIN made him an object of dread to ordinary citizens, and an object of attraction to dog owners who wanted dogs for anti-social purposes. As these owners acquired more and more dogs, serious incidents – and fatalities – associated with dogs identified as bloodhounds became prominent in the public press.⁴

In the 20th century, other groups of dogs replaced the bloodhound as objects of dread, most notably the German Shepherd (In 1925, a New York City magistrate said they should be banned.⁵ Australia banned the importation of German Shepherds from 1928 until 1973⁶), the Doberman Pinscher (frequently associated with soldiers of the Third Reich), and the Rottweiler (portrayed as the guardian of Satan's child in the popular 1976 film THE OMEN).

DEMONIZED DOGS NOW

Early in the 20th century, pit bull type dogs enjoyed an excellent popular reputation. An American Bull Terrier had symbolized the United States on a

World War One propaganda poster. “Tighe”, a pit bull type dog, had helped sell Buster Brown shoes. Pete the Pup, the “little rascals” pit bull pal of the *Jur Gang* comedies, was the first AKC-registered Staffordshire Terrier (Registration number A-103929).

In 1976, the Federal government amended the Animal Welfare Act to make trafficking in dogs for the purposes of dog fighting a crime. The media focused on the dogs, rather than on the people who fought the dogs; and the dogs made headlines. Monster myths of super-canine powers began to dominate the stories.⁷ As had happened to the bloodhound, the myths attracted the kind of owners who use dogs for negative functions. Sensationalized, saturation news reporting of

1966–1975, fewer than 2% of all dogs involved in fatal attacks in the United States were identified as of the breeds that figured prominently in the CDC study.⁴

The CDC has since concluded that their single-vector epidemiological approach did not “identify specific breeds that are most likely to bite or kill, and thus is not appropriate for policymaking decisions related to the topic.”¹ AVMA has published a statement to the same effect.⁹

“Dog bite statistics are not statistics, and do not give an accurate representation of dogs that bite.”¹⁰ Nevertheless, the questionable data-set covering only one particular 20-year period, and not the

**“Dog bite statistics are not statistics,
and do not give an accurate
representation of dogs that bite.”¹⁰**

researchers’ conclusions and recommendations, is repeatedly cited in legislative forums, in the press, and in the courts to justify breed discrimination. Dr. Gail Golab of the AVMA, one of the researchers involved in the CDC project, said, “The whole point of our summary was

incidents involving dogs called pit bulls, linked them in the public mind almost exclusively with criminal activity. This small subset of dogs being used for these negative purposes came to define the millions of pit bull type dogs living companionably at home.

to explain why you can’t do that. But the media and the people who want to support their case just don’t look at that.”¹¹

WRONG NUMBERS, NOT STATISTICS

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) attempted to identify the breeds of dogs involved in fatal human attacks.⁸ The study period, 1979–1998, happened to coincide with the sensationalized media portrayal and resulting notoriety of pit bulls and Rottweilers.^{4,7}

The researchers had suspected that media coverage of “newsworthy” breeds could have resulted in “differential ascertainment” of fatalities by breed attribution. Relying on media archives, of the 327 fatalities identified within the 20-year period, the researchers located breed or breed-mix identifications for 238, approximately 72% of the total. More than 25 breeds of dogs were identified.⁸

In reporting their findings, the researchers made clear that the breeds of dogs said to be involved in human fatalities had varied over time, pointing out that the period 1975–1980 showed a different distribution of breeds than the later years.⁸ Subsequently, Karen Delise of the National Canine Research Council reported that, in the decade

Of those incidents for which the researchers could find no breed attributions ($n = 89$), Karen Delise of the National Canine Research Council later located breed attributions in 40; and 37 of these cases involved dogs identified as other than Rottweiler and pit bull, a result that confirmed the researchers concerns regarding “differential ascertainment” of incidents because of breed bias.¹²

In addition to the problem of the small, unrepresentative, and incomplete data sets, the researchers expressed concern about the reliability of the breed identifications they had obtained, and were uncertain how to count attacks involving “cross bred” dogs.⁸

It is estimated that at least one-half of the dogs in the United States are mixed breed dogs.¹³ What is the reliability or significance of a visual breed identification of a dog of unknown history and genetics?

Pit bull is not a breed, but describes a group of dogs that includes American Staffordshire Terriers, Staffordshire Bull Terriers, American Pit Bull Terriers, an increasing number of other pure breeds, and an ever-increasing group of dogs that are presumed, on the basis of appearance, to be mixes of one or more of those breeds. Ordinances restricting or banning dogs generally rely on someone’s visual assessment of their physical characteristics.

The modern science of genetics renders a breed label based on visual identification problematic. According to Sue DeNise, vice-president of MMI Genomics, creators the Canine Heritage Breed Test for mixed breed dogs, each test result is furnished to the dog owner with the following proviso: “Your dog’s visual appearance may vary from the listed breed(s) due to the inherent randomness of phenotypic expression in every individual.”¹⁴

Scott and Fuller, in their landmark genetic studies, produced offspring of considerable phenotypic variety from purebred and F1 crosses.

Breed identification of a mixed breed dog based on its phenotype is unscientific, and is likely to be contradicted by a DNA test. A study to be published in the Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science points to a substantial discrepancy between visual

identifications of dogs by adoption agency personnel and the breeds identified in the same dogs through DNA analysis. Of 16 mixed breed dogs labeled as being partly a specified breed, in only 25% of these dogs was that breed also detected by DNA analysis.¹⁵

THE LANDSCAPE OF BREED SPECIFIC LEGISLATION

Legislative restrictions range from an outright ban in Denver, Colorado, where, since 1989, thousands of dogs have been seized and killed¹⁶; to a regulatory catalog of muzzling, neutering, and confinement mandates that only apply to the regulated group, however defined; and to requirements that owners pay special license fees and maintain higher levels of liability insurance. Apart from statutory requirements, some homeowners’ insurers are imposing special requirements before they will include liability coverage for dogs of certain breeds, or are declining to cover dogs of an increasing number

“Breed identification of a mixed breed dog based on its phenotype is unscientific, and is likely to be contradicted by a DNA test.”

of breeds altogether. Rental apartments, planned communities, campgrounds, and neighborhood associations impose a wide range of special rules or restrictions regarding many breeds of dogs.

In a jurisdiction with breed-specific regulations, veterinarians can easily be drawn into an official controversy. When a police officer in Maquoketa, Iowa identified a dog as a pit bull and served notice on the owner that she had to remove it from the town, the owner appealed to the state Office of Citizen’s Aide/Ombudsman. The 21-page report that resulted, chronicles the failure to arrive at an agreed-upon breed identification for the dog. Among other documents, the owner produced

vaccination certificates from her veterinarian that described the dog as a “Rott-mix.” The town countered with another veterinarian’s intake form that described the dog as a “pit mix”.¹⁷

In January, 2009, the U.S. Department of the Army banned Chows, Rottweilers, pit bulls, wolf hybrids and Doberman Pinschers from all privatized military housing. The previous July, Fort Hood, Texas banned pit bulls and pit bull mixes from government housing. The Fort Hood mission support order specifies that, in the event of a dispute, “the Fort Hood Veterinary Clinic [emphasis mine] will be the deciding authority to determine if a dog is a Pit Bull [sic] cross.”¹⁸

HUMANE COMMUNITIES ARE SAFER COMMUNITIES

In “A Community Approach to Dog bite Prevention,” the AVMA Task Force reported, “An often asked question is what breed or breeds of dogs are ‘most dangerous’? This inquiry can be prompted by a serious attack by a specific dog, or it may be the result of media-driven portrayals of a specific breed as ‘dangerous.’ . . . singling out 1 or 2 breeds for control . . . ignores the true scope of the problem and will not result in a responsible approach to protecting a community’s citizens.”¹⁰ Delise, based upon her study of fatal attacks over the past five decades, has identified poor ownership/management practices involved in the overwhelming majority of these incidents: owners obtaining dogs, and maintaining them as resident dogs outside of the household for purposes other than as family pets (i.e. guarding/ protection, fighting, intimidation/status); owners failing to humanely contain, control and maintain their dogs (chained dogs, loose roaming dogs, cases of abuse/neglect); owners failing to knowledgeably supervise interaction between children and dogs; and owners failing to spay or neuter resident dogs not used for competition, show, or in a responsible breeding program.⁴

Focusing on breed or phenotype diverts attention from strategies veterinarians and other animal experts have consistently identified as contributing to humane and safer communities.

BREED LABELING AND VETERINARY PRACTICE

In an environment of breed discrimination, the breed identification of a dog can have serious consequences with municipal authorities, animal shelters, landlords, and insurers, all of which will compromise the bond between a family and their dogs. Ordinances may obligate owners with expensive special housing and containment requirements. Owners may even be forced to choose between sending a beloved family pet away, or surrendering it to be killed.

Veterinarians who attempt to visually identify the breeds that might make up a dog do not derive any benefit from this activity, while the client may hold the veterinarians to the same professional standard as they would with respect to the delivery of medical services.

It is impossible to breed label dogs of unknown origin and genetics solely on the basis of their appearance. There is so much behavioral variability within each breed, and even more within breed mixes, that we cannot reliably predict a dog’s behavior or suitability based on breed alone. Each dog is an individual.¹⁹ Owners may be influenced as to what behavior to expect from their dog, based upon breed stereotypes.²⁰ Veterinarians must take the lead, and free themselves from stereotypes, in order to better serve their clients, their clients’ animals, and society.

Jane Berkey, President
Animal Farm Foundation, Inc.



REFERENCES

- 1 <http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Dog-Bites/dogbite-factsheet.html>;
http://www.avma.org/issues/policy/dangerous_animal_legislation.asp;
<http://www.nacanet.org/poldanger.html>;
http://www.apdt.com/about/ps/breed_specific_legis.aspx.
- 2 Associated Press, "Dutch government to lift 25-year ban on pit bulls," June 10, 2008
- 3 ANSA, "Italy Scraps Dangerous dog Blacklist," March 3, 2009
- 4 K. Delise, The Pit Bull Placebo: The Media, Myths, and Politics of Canine Aggression, Anubis Publishing, Ramsey, New Jersey, 2007
- 5 New York Times, January 1, 1925
- 6 German Shepherd Dog Club of South Australia, "History of the Breed," <http://gsdcsa.org.au/breedhistory.htm>.
- 7 New York Times, 'Sport' Pitting Dog Against Dog Is Reported Spreading Secretly,' December 10, 1978;
E.M. Swift, "The Pit Bull: Friend and Killer," Sports Illustrated, July 27, 1987; D. Brand, "Time Bomb on legs," Time Magazine July 27, 1987
- 8 J. Sacks, L. Sinclair, G. Golab, et al, "Breeds of dogs involved in fatal human attacks in the United States between 1979 and 1998," JAVMA, Vol 217, No. 6, Sept 15, 2000.
- 9 AVMA, "To Whom It May Concern," open letter, copy furnished upon request
- 10 B. Beaver, et al, "A community approach to dog bite prevention: American Veterinary Medical Association Task Force on Canine Aggression and Human-Canine Interactions," JAVMA, Vol 218, No. 11, June 11, 2001
- 11 Golab quoted in "Dangerous Breeds?", Best Friends Magazine, Sept/Oct 2004, p 14
- 12 <http://nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com/dog-bites/dog-bite-studies/wrong-numbers-notstats/>; G. Patronek, S. Slavinski, "Zoonosis Update: Animal Bites," JAVMA, VOL 234, No. 3, February 1, 2009.
- 13 B. Beaver, "In Opposition to the Ontario Law," affidavit submitted in Cochrane v In Right of Ontario, Ontario Superior Court of Justice, Court File No. 05-CV-295948PDI
- 14 Quoted in J. Brackman, "Can DNA Decipher the Mix?" The Bark, Issue #50, Sep/Oct 2008
- 15 V. Voith, E. Ingram, K Mitsouras, et al, "Comparison of Adoption Agency Identification and DNA Breed Identification of Dogs," Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science, In Press July 2009
- 16 K. Delise, "Denver: Selective Counting and the Cost to Dogs and People, Animal Law Coalition, <http://www.animallawcoalition.com/breed-bans/article/648>
- 17 Investigative Report State of Iowa Citizens' Aide/Ombudsman, "Investigation of Maquoketa's Pit Bull Ban Ordinance and Enforcement," Case File 0603634, December 21, 2006.
- 18 HQ, III Corps & Fort Hood Fort Hood, TX 76544 041229LAug 08, MISSION SUPPORT ORDER PC 08-07-269
- 19 A. Marder and B. Clifford, "Breed Labeling dogs of Unknown Origin," <http://nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/10/breedlabelingncrc.pdf>
- 20 Duffy, D.L. et al, "Breed differences in canine aggression," Appl. Anim. Behav. Sci, (2008) doi: 10.1016/j.applamin.2008.04.006; S. Gosling, et al, "A Dog's Got Personality: A Cross Species Comparative Approach to Personality Judgments in Dogs and Humans," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 2003, Vol. 85, No.6, 1161-1169

Animal Law Coalition

Advocating for animals to live and live free of cruelty and neglect

[About Animal Law Coalition](#) [Events](#) [Resources](#) [Press Releases](#) [Action Alerts](#)

[Home](#) » [Breed Bans](#) » Information Your Community Leaders Need to Know about BSL

Information Your Community Leaders Need to Know about BSL

July 14, 2008 Posted by russmead under Breed Bans

[23 Comments](#)

Breed bans single out particular breeds of dogs, usually pit-bull-type dogs, and ban or restrict them. These breed bans are over-inclusive and penalize responsible dog owners.

Breed bans are also under-inclusive: These bans do not target all dogs that present a danger to the public. Typically, a number of types of breeds and mixed breeds are responsible for bites. For example, pit bulls and pit-bull mixes were responsible for only 8% of bites in one community considering a pit-bull ban. A pit-bull ban wouldn't have protected the public from the dogs that caused 92% of the bites.

If dogs bite or attack, it's not because they belong to a particular breed. Instead, it's usually because of owner irresponsibility: The dog may not have been socialized or trained properly. The dog may have been abused, chained, neglected or isolated. Or the dog may have been trained to be aggressive or for fighting.

There are no major animal or health organizations that support BSL, including American Veterinary Medical Association, Centers for Disease Control, ASPCA, National Animal Control Association, American Kennel Club, American Canine Foundation, Humane Society of the US as well as countless others.

[The National Animal Control Association:](#) (Reviewed/Revised by the NACA Corporate Office- 09/17/02)

Dangerous and/or vicious animals should be labeled as such as a result of their actions or behaviors and not because of their breed.

Basis for Policy

Any animal may exhibit aggressive behavior regard-less of breed. Accurately identifying a specific animal's lineage for prosecution purposes may be extremely difficult. Additionally, breed specific legislation may create an undue burden to owners who otherwise have demonstrated proper pet management and responsibility.

Policy Recommendations

Agencies should encourage enactment and stringent enforcement of dangerous/vicious dog laws.

Sha

digg

t

American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA):

In 2001, a task force on Canine Aggression and Canine-Human Interaction was formed by the American Veterinary Medical Association. In its paper, "*A Community Approach to Dog Bite Prevention*", the task force concluded there is no evidence any breed of dog is more vicious or dangerous than the others. The AVMA does not support BSL and instead recommends a dangerous dog law.

Centers for Disease Control (CDC):

In 1996, the Division of Unintentional Injury Prevention of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention observed in a paper on fatal dog attacks that BSL does not address the reasons dogs bite.

BSL does not work to prevent or reduce dog bite incidents

1. In a well known study researchers in the UK examined the frequency and severity of dog-bite injuries at a hospital accident and emergency department. The UK's Dangerous Dog Act bans four breeds of dogs, the pit bull, Japanese tosa, dogo Argentino and fila Brasileiro, as well as mixes and dogs with the behavioral and physical characteristics of these breeds. Under that law the Secretary of State can also ban any dog bred for fighting or which is of a "type bred for" fighting.

Researchers looked at a three month period before the breed bans and found there were 99 bites, 3% of which were by pit bull types. Two years after the ban was implemented, there were 99 dog bites in a 3 month period, and 5% were by pit bull type dogs. The percentage of bites involving "dangerous" dogs increased from 6% to 11% following passage of the Dangerous Dogs Act.

The study also determined that the Act did not result in any decline in dog bite incidents with 73.9% before and 73.1% after enactment of the law. ("*Does the dangerous dogs act protect against animal attacks: a prospective study of mammalian bites in the accident and emergency department*", 1996, Klaassen B, Buckley M, Esmail A., Department of Accident and Emergency, Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, UK)

In fact, the UK Dangerous Dogs Act was declared a failure in 2007 when it was found numbers of dog bites had risen 10% in a year and 50% since 1998-1999. According to the BBC, hospitalizations due to dog bites increased by 25% after 'pit bulls' were banned in Britain.

3. A recent Spanish study compared dog bites during a four year period, 1995-1999, before BSL, and those from 2000-2004, following BSL. Breeds listed as dangerous were responsible for only a small percentage of bites both before and after the legislation. ("*Spanish dangerous animals act: Effect on the epidemiology of dog bites*", 2007, Beln Rosado DVM, MSc, Sylvia Garca-Belenguer DVM, PhD, Marta Len DVM, PhD and Jorge Palacio DVM, PhD, Animal Pathology Department, Faculty of Veterinary, University of Zaragoza, Zaragoza, Spain; Meril Laboratorios, S.A., Tarragona, Barcelona, Spain)

4. Another study in Germany from 2000-2002 tested several hundred dogs belonging to several breeds including those banned or deemed dangerous according to BSL. 95% of the dogs, regardless of breed, reacted appropriately during testing. 5% displayed excessive aggressive behavior in inappropriate situations. These instances were associated with the dogs' fear or inappropriate handling by the owner.

The study found no significant difference between breeds and no indication of dangerousness in specific breeds. The study found no justification for the BSL. ("*Is breed specific legislation justified? Stud of the results of the temperament test of Lower Saxony, 2000-2002*", Esther Schalke, DVM, Stefanie A. Off, DVM, Esther Schalke, DVM, Amelie M von Gaertner, DVM, Hansjoachim Hackbarth, DVM, PhD, Angela Mittmann, DVM, PhD, FTA; Institute for Animal Welfare and Behavior, University of Veterinary Medicine Hanover, Hanover, Germany)

The results were then compared to tests done on a control group of golden retrievers. Again, no significant difference was found among the breeds in displays of aggressive behavior. There was no scientific basis for BSL. ("*Is there a difference? Comparison of golden retrievers and dogs affected by breed specific legislation regarding aggressive behavior, 2002*", Stefanie A. Off, DVM, Esther Schalke, DVM, Amelie M von Gaertner,

DVM, Hansjoachim Hackbarth, DVM, PhD, Institute for Animal Welfare and Behavior, University of Veterinary Medicine Hanover, Hanover, Germany)

Basing its opinion on these studies, the Central Administration Court in Berlin, upheld a ruling that voided over Saxony's ban on Bull Terriers, American Staffordshire Terriers and Pit bull Terriers and regulation of Rottweilers and Dobermans.

5. Just last month, in June, 2008, the Dutch Minister of Agriculture, Gerda Verburg, announced to the parliament that the 15 year old rule banning pit bulls in The Netherlands would be lifted. A rule banning rottweilers that was instituted in 2000 will also be lifted. The reason? The breed specific legislation failed to reduce incidents of dog bites.

These laws known as RAD or "Arrangement for Aggressive Animals" exempted registered, purebred dogs. RAD sought to eliminate non-registered dogs if their appearance was of the "pit bull type".

John Payne, president of The Netherland's Institute of Animal Control Officers, told the committee that then recommended elimination of the BSL, that an American pit bull terrier could be an "*extremely good animal*" depending on the owner.

6. According to the city of Winnipeg's own data, when Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada banned 'pit bulls' in 1990, there were 214 reported dog bites that year. For the decade following Winnipeg's 'pit bull' ban, there were an average of close to 50 **more** dog bites per year.

7. There had been just over 500 reported bites, the year Kitchener, Ontario, Canada decided to ban the #8 'breed' in their dog bite statistics ('pit bulls', but not the #1 breed, German Shepherds, and not even the #7 breed, Poodles). Eight years later, in 2004, the city again reports just over 500 dog bites.

Communities that have *repealed* pit bull bans because they were found to be (1) too costly; (2) difficult to enforce and (3) ineffective: Detroit, MI, East Point, MI, Redford, MI, Saginaw, MI, Baltimore, MD, Belton, MO, Carbondale, IL, Beloit, Kansas, Algona, Washington, Hudsonville, MI.

April of 2007, Middletown, Ohio lifted its 2 year old pit bull ban. Pit bulls accounted for 5% of bites the same percentage of bites before and since the ban.

9. Despite its famous, long time ban on pit bulls, Denver's Director of Animal Control, Doug Kelly, recently said, "*We've experienced a continuing upward trend of pit bulls impounded since 2001. The ban hasn't ended the popularity of the pit bull breed in Denver. There are still pit bulls, apparently more every year.*" When asked if the ban has been effective, Kelly responds, "*I don't know.*"

BSL is costly to administer and enforce, particularly given that it does not work to reduce bites

1. In Prince George's County, Maryland, the cost to enforce a pit bull ban from 2001 to 2002 was at least \$560,000. Of the 900 pit bulls euthanized during that time, animal control reported that 720 were nice family pets.

2. Baltimore, MD estimated that in 2001 it cost the city \$750,000.00 a year to enforce the BSL which was later repealed as ineffective, unenforceable and too costly.

3. Ontario spent \$170,000 per year on enforcing a pit bull ban. After the ban passed in 2005, animal control spent 25% of its time on pit bull-related calls, but only 4% of licensed dogs were pit bulls.

4. Cincinnati, Ohio spends \$160,000 per year trying to enforce a pit bull ban and millions in litigation defending challenges to the ban.

5. A pit bull ban means additional animal control workers for identification and enforcement and litigation, vet care and other costs of care for restricted breeds that have been impounded and must be held pending hearings; less in licensing fees as owners decline to register restricted breeds for fear of not being able to afford or follow through on restrictions; an increase in restricted breeds in shelters in surrounding communities, less shelter and resources for other animals that are euthanized.

Dogs are often mis-identified as pit bulls

1. Pitbull is not, in fact, a breed of dog. The term "pitbull" is typically associated with these three breeds: American Staffordshire terrier, American Pitbull Terrier, and Staffordshire bull terrier.
2. There is a genetic test to determine a specific dog breed, but not aggression. The only way most dogs are identified is by appearance. In her research, Dr. Cornelia Wagner, concluded aggression in dogs cannot be determined by appearance. She found no basis to conclude aggression beyond that found in all dogs is hereditary. (Wagner, Cornelia, DVM, MS, "Are certain dog breeds more dangerous than others?", October 18; 2001; Wagner, Cornelia, DVM, MS, "Is it possible to identify dogs as members of a specific breed?", September 9, 2002.) Also, there are virtually no genetic differences between breeds. (Serpell, J, "The domestic dog: its evolution, behaviour, and interactions with people", 2001, Cambridge University Press, pp 162-178).
3. There are 20+ breeds of dogs that have similar appearances and are commonly mistaken for pit bulls. It is almost impossible for the average person to accurately identify a pit bull.
4. In the case of *Margolius v. Denver*, the court found animal control officers could not definitively identify a dog as a pit-bull terrier.
5. In the Ohio case of *Toledo v. Tellings* the dog warden testified if a dog was 50% pit bull but didn't resemble a pit, then the dog was not considered a pit bull. If a dog looked like a pit, regardless of the % of breed, he considered it a pit bull. The dog warden agreed one cannot really tell whether or not many dogs have pit bull in them. The *Tellings* appeals court noted "Criminal charges have likely been brought based on purely individual and speculative decisions on whether the jaw of a dog is "massive" enough or the chest is muscular enough or the brow is broad enough to be designated as a "pit bull". The appeals court found the process of identifying a pit bull was too subjective, basically that there is no definitive way to prove a mixed breed is a pit bull. The appeals court found it was likely many non-pit bull dogs had been mis-identified.

"Pit Bulls are not naturally human aggressive. The majority of attacks on humans reported to be by Pit Bulls are made in error through misidentification of the breed or through the wrongful lumping of mixed breeds in with reported bite statistics." (Pit Bull Registry)

7. The chance of being killed by a pit bull is one in 145 million. (American Pit Bull Registry)

Dispelling Myths

Remember: There are few genetic differences between breeds.

Fear:

Pit Bulls have "locking jaws."

Fact:

"We found that the American Pit Bull Terriers did not have any unique mechanism that would allow these dogs to lock their jaws. There were no mechanical or morphological differences ." Dr. I. Lehr Brisbin, University of Georgia

Fear:

Pit Bulls have massive biting power measuring in 1,000s of pounds of pressure per square inch.

Fact:

On average, dogs bite with 320 pounds of pressure per square inch. The bite pressure of a German Shepherd, an American Pit Bull Terrier and a Rottweiler were tested. The American Pit Bull Terrier had the least amount of bite pressure of the three dogs tested. Dr. Brady Barr, National Geographic

Fear:

Family pet pit bulls turn on their owners.

Fact:

No single neutered household pet pit bull has ever killed anyone. * Karen Delise, founder of the National Canine Research Council

Fear:

Bulls attack without warning.

Fact:

"Pit Bulls signal like other dogs." * The Institute of Animal Welfare and Behavior of the University of Veterinary Medicine, Hannover, Germany, which temperament tested over 1,000 dogs.

Fear:

Pit Bulls are "ticking time bombs" that turn on their owners.

Fact:

"No single, neutered household pet pit bull has ever killed anyone." * Karen Delise, founder of the National Canine Research Council

Fear:

While there are some pit bulls with good temperaments, they are the exception not the rule.

Fact:

The American Temperament Test shows pit bulls consistently score above the average for all breeds tested, year in and year out! * The American Temperament Test Society

Fear:

Pit Bulls are more dangerous than other dogs.

Fact:

"A dog is only as dangerous as its owner allows it to be." * Diane Jessup, founder of LawDogsUSA

Source: Animal Farm Foundation

Proactive, positive solutions to keep communities safe

Calgary, Alberta, Canada, developed a successful method for reducing dog bites, and even making their animal control department financially self-sufficient...and they did so without banning any breeds. Calgary boasts the lowest dog bite rate of any major Canadian city, after having reduced dog bites by 70% using the very techniques nearly all experts agree are key in reducing unprovoked dog bites:

1. Educational programs to teach dog owners responsible dog ownership. Promote socialization and training with community-wide programs to reward responsible dog owners and encourage socialization and training as part of basic and common canine care practices.
2. Increased access to off-leash parks for proper socialization of dogs is vital. Representatives from Calgary feel that a large part of their success in reducing dog bites is attributed to the ample access dog owners have to leash-free parks for socialization purposes. Calgary has the largest number of dedicated off-leash areas, of any major city in Canada, with over 200!
3. Pass a dangerous dog law that recognizes that any dog, regardless of breed, is potentially dangerous or considered dangerous if the dog has demonstrated aggressive behavior. The dangerous dog law should allow for different levels of aggressive behavior. The point is to protect the public by encouraging owners to take action to control and manage their dogs – through spay/neuter, training and pet owner responsibility classes – before their dogs' behavior causes them to be classified at a higher level of aggression.
4. Pass strictly enforced leash or dog-at-large laws that require spay/neuter after the second violation. 82% of dog bites are by dogs running loose. (JAVMA, September 15, 2000) After passing a leash law, the city of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, reported a 35% drop in dog bites.

Pass laws that restrict the tethering, chaining and penning or caging of dogs. Dogs that are chained are 2.8 times more likely to be aggressive. The American Veterinary Medical Association has stated: "Confine your dog in a fenced yard or dog run when it is not in the house. Never tether or chain your dog because this can contribute to aggressive behavior." (May 15, 2003). Lawrence County, Kansas, adopted an anti-tethering

ordinance. From 2005 to 2006, the number of calls concerning cruelty and dog fighting dropped from 800 to 260. Officials attribute the decline in large part to the anti-tethering law.

6. Encourage spay/neuter and provide low-cost spay/neuter in your community. 90% of fatal dog attacks are dogs that are not spayed or neutered. Research cited in a 2000 Journal of American Veterinary Medical Association study indicated unsterilized dogs are 2.6 times more likely to bite. (Delise, National Canine Research Council) 80% of dogs seen by veterinary behaviorists for dominance aggression were not spayed/neutered. (JAVMA, Vol. 218, No. 11, June 1, 2001) More than 81% of dogs involved in bites or attacks were found in one survey not to have been spayed/neutered. (Texas 2002 Severe Animal Attack and Bite Surveillance Summary) The key to encouraging spay/neuter is education and also the availability of a subsidized, low cost spay neuter program. Also, mandate spay/neuter for potentially dangerous dogs, dogs adopted out by shelters or rescues or sold by breeders or pet stores, and dogs impounded more than once or found at large.

7. Encourage responsible dog ownership, including socialization at an early age and training. Dogs should be part of the family. 81% of fatal dog attacks are by dogs that were isolated or not included in the family's activities.

8. Strengthen dog-fighting laws, and ban training of dogs for aggression. Make animal neglect and cruelty laws more specific and easier to enforce, with tougher penalties. Breeders should be registered or licensed and subject to inspections and sales of their dogs tracked. Sales of dogs along roads, in flea markets and other public places should be banned. Stop felons from owning dangerous dogs. 61% of fatal dog attacks are by dogs that were not humanely controlled, or had been abused or neglected.

23 Responses to *Information Your Community Leaders Need to Know about BSL*

 **Anonymous**

January 12, 2009 at 1:09 pm

Please do not ban bully breeds. It is not the dog that you need to worry about, it's the people who have them. People who have bully breeds need to be responsible and educated – as does any dog owner. Please realize this and make sure that the owners of these dogs are right for the breed. These dogs should not have to be killed because of their breed. There are many wonderful, loving bullies out there.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Valerie Sanderson
Rescue/MN

[Log in to Reply](#)



Anonymous

January 13, 2009 at 5:49 pm

Not all pitbulls are bad, if they are brought up in a loving family they can be a perfect pet and not and viscous animal that they are made out to be,

[Log in to Reply](#)



Anonymous

January 13, 2009 at 7:15 pm

I have owned pit bulls, akitas and german shepherds most of my 62 years. Never have my dogs been a threat to anyone. If you must pass a ban, ban the people who abuse these beautiful animals. It is not the breed it is and will always be the owner.

Animal Law Coalition

Advocating for animals to live and live free of cruelty and neglect

[About Animal Law Coalition](#) [Events](#) [Resources](#) [Press Releases](#) [Action Alerts](#)

[Home](#) » [Breed Bans](#) » A Legal Challenge to Miami-Dade County Pit Bull Ban

A Legal Challenge to Miami-Dade County Pit Bull Ban

September 18, 2008 Posted by russmead under Breed Bans

[11 Comments](#)



Florida attorney, Rima C. Bardawil, has served notice on Miami-Dade County's Animal Services Attorney, Dennis Kerbel, that she represents certain, as yet unnamed dog owners "who lost, were forced to move, had to give up their beloved pet, or are presently in fear of losing their pet and being wrongly fined."

Bardawil states the Miami-Dade County pit bull ban, Miami-Dade County Ordinance 89-22, Section 5-17, "is improper and must be invalidated immediately. The Ordinance is unconstitutional, implemented inconsistently, selectively and results in capricious and arbitrary results."

Bardawil notes, "The Ordinance states that it relies on American Kennel Club for American Staffordshire Terriers or Staffordshire Bull Terriers and United Kennel Club for American Pit Bull Terriers; however this claim is untrue. First and foremost, these are copyrighted standards of which you have never been given permission to use and have actually been advised not to use them by the respective associations."

"Secondly, even if some how you find a way to support your using these standards, you are NOT using their entire standard list. The list of traits that Miami-Dade County uses is a summary of some, but not all traits

listed by these organizations. How can you properly determine what is "Substantially conform," when you are not even using the entire list of traits to go by?"

Bardawil continues, "Moreover, how can you determine what substantially conforms is? Is it Fifty-One (51%) percent, Fifty Five (55%) Percent, Sixty-Five (65%) percent, or Seventy-Five (75%) percent within which you are measuring substantial to mean? How can a citizen of Miami-Dade County determine whether they are in compliance with this law when the very law is unclear?"

Bardawil summarizes, "[T]his Ordinance [is] wholly invalid on its face. Clearly this ordinance is in direct violation of Miami-Dade County residents' right to due process of law. It is clear that since different people can interpret what is classified as a dog substantially complying as to what a Pit Bull is, then this ordinance is 'void for vagueness.'

"Miami-Dade County's Ordinance 89-22, improperly forces people of common intelligence to have to guess as to the meaning of the statute, and differ as to its interpretation. A better case of a statute or ordinance being struck down as being void for vagueness could not have been created."

Bardawil points out, "[O]ver the years, Miami-Dade County has improperly killed countless dogs in violation of the very ordinance that you are claiming to go by. Specifically, the ordinance at issue states in Section 5-17.6-Time for Compliance subsection (b)(2). This section states that violation of section 5-17.6, may result in civil violation notice and (2) 'Humane destruction of the pit bull dog by order of a court of competent jurisdiction. The County Manager or his designee may apply to the court for such order pursuant to this paragraph.'"

"Miami-Dade county has wrongfully taken alleged pit bull dogs away from their owners to kill them without seeking court order or advising the owner that killing of their pet cannot be completed without court order. As a result, Miami-Dade County has committed countless acts in violation of this ordinance and has deprived countless residents of their property without due process of law."

Bardawil demands "that Miami-Dade County **CEASE AND DESIST** at ONCE, its implementation of Ordinance Jo. 89-22 in its entirety, or otherwise face impending legal action."

Expect litigation to follow. The fight is on to overturn the longstanding Miami-Dade County pit bull ban. A federal district court in *American Dog Owners Ass'n v. Dade County*, 728 F. Supp. 1533 (S.D. FL 1989) has rejected a challenge to the ordinance's facial validity, claiming it was not too vague for people to understand what was prohibited. No court has ruled whether the ordinance is applied or enforced unconstitutionally.

[For more on breed bans, why they don't work and what will work to make communities safer from irresponsible and criminal dog owners.](#)

You can help. [Contact Miami-Dade County commissioners and urge them to repeal the pit bull ban.](#)

11 Responses to A Legal Challenge to Miami-Dade County Pit Bull Ban



Anonymous

October 20, 2008 at 7:30 pm

Although I will soon be working in Dade County for the US Federal Government, I am in the process of buying a house in Broward County, because I own an American Pitbull Terrier. I am banned from Dade County, like a criminal, because of my dog. SO Dade county loses out on my property taxes, and revenues will be spent in Broward. I will commute to Dade but I will not live there or spend money there.

[Log in to Reply](#)

Animal Law Coalition

Advocating for animals to live and live free of cruelty and neglect

[About Animal Law Coalition](#) [Events](#) [Resources](#) [Press Releases](#) [Action Alerts](#)

[Home](#) » [Breed Bans](#) » A Lawsuit Challenges The Constitutionality Of Denver's Pit Bull Ban

A Lawsuit Challenges The Constitutionality Of Denver's Pit Bull Ban

August 18, 2007 Posted by russmead under Breed Bans

[4 Comments](#)

A lawsuit has been filed in federal court in Denver that challenges the Denver pit bull ban.

Denver bans pit bulls defined as "any dog that is an American Pit Bull Terrier, American Staffordshire Terrier, Staffordshire Bull Terrier, or any dog displaying the majority of physical traits" of these breeds. Denver Mun. Code Â§8-55

The ordinance makes it unlawful to "own, possess, keep, exercise control over, maintain, harbor, transport, or sell" any pit bull dog within the city. Denver Mun. Code Â§8-55

The ban was first enacted in 1989 but because of a state law passed in 2004 that banned breed specific legislation, Colorado Rev. Stat. Â§18-9-204.5(5)(b), Denver suspended enforcement of its pit bull ordinance. Enforcement of the pit bull ban resumed on May 9, 2005 when a court ruled the city and county of Denver could enforce the ban.

According to the Complaint filed in this case since reinstatement of the ban on May 9, 2005, the city has killed at least 1,100 dogs believed to be pit bulls or dogs possessing the majority of physical traits of those breeds. Some estimates place the death toll much higher, at least 2000 or more.

Denver Assistant City Attorney Kory Nelson, a proponent of the ban has insisted pit bull attacks are "more likely" to hurt someone seriously than other dogs.

Two of the plaintiffs, pit bull owners, Sonya Dias and Hillary Engel, were forced to leave Denver with their dogs because of the ban. Neither dog had ever threatened or hurt anyone or another animal.

Dias rescued 3-year old Gryffindor in Griffin, Georgia, after "finding him chained and bearing signs of abuse, including possible use as a "bait" animal by dogfighters". She moved from Denver rather than surrender him when the ban was reinstated.

In Hillary Engel's case an animal control officer threatened to seize the dog, Cysco, an 8 year old. Ms. Engel immediately contacted Animal Control and was advised to submit Cysco to an evaluation if she had any doubts about whether Cysco was prohibited under the Pit Bull Ordinance.

On May 9, 2005 Ms. Engel took Cysco to Animal Control for the evaluation. The evaluation was conducted by three individuals said to be "experts" in identifying animals prohibited under the Pit Bull Ordinance.

Following the evaluation, Ms. Engel was informed by an unknown Animal Control official that although Cysco as "beautiful and friendly, she looked too much like a Pit Bull to remain in Denver". However, the official gave Ms. Engel 48 hours to remove Cysco from Denver.

A third plaintiff, Sheryl White, claims Sherman, her two year old pit bull, was seized by an Animal Control officer who was responding to a neighbor's report that she had a pit bull dog. Sherman also had never displayed menacing or threatening behavior; he had never hurt anyone or another animal.

Ms. White later tried to see her dog at the city shelter but was not allowed to do so. Though the ordinance does not require this, to remove the dog from the shelter, she and her husband, Dana White, were required to bring a third person who agreed to take possession of the dog and remove him from the city.

On December 23, 2005, Ms. Lauren Krieger signed a form attesting to her willingness to remove Sherman from Denver.

Mr. White was also required to sign a form stating: "I, Dana White, in consideration for the release of my pitbull dog from the Division of Animal Control do hereby agree to immediately remove the pit bull dog from the city and county of Denver."

Mr. White was then required to sign a second form stating that "I, Dana White, . . . agree that Sherman, black-white, male, is an American Pit Bull Terrier, American Staffordshire Terrier, Staffordshire Bull Terrier, or exhibits the majority of physical traits of any (1) or more of the above breeds." After the signature block, the form states, "Note: signing this document waives your right under D.R.M.C. §(f) to contest the determination that this animal is a pit bull."

Sherman was released and removed from Denver.

The Whites requested a hearing anyway to challenge the determination Sherman was prohibited by the ordinance. Based on evaluations by three Animal Control employees, the hearing officer determined Sherman to be a prohibited animal under the Pit Bull Ordinance. Animal Control refused to provide the Whites with copies of the evaluations.

After charges for violating the ordinance were dropped, Ms. White returned to Denver with Sherman.

The plaintiffs claim the City and County of Denver violate rights to due process by (1) seizing animals without a prior hearing, (2) summarily executing dogs whose owners have one previous violation of the ordinance, and (3) coercing dog owners to waive their rights to due process and self-incrimination before they are allowed to remove seized dogs from the jurisdiction.

The plaintiffs also claim the ordinance is unconstitutionally vague and does not give dog owners fair warning of the prohibited conduct. The plaintiffs point out the ordinance refers to breed standards most people would not be able to identify. After all, even animal control relied on "experts" to decide if Engel's and White's dogs were banned by the ordinance. And, the so called experts would not even give Whites their methodology for determining whether a dog is banned. So, how does a dog owner know if he or she is violating the law?

The plaintiffs further allege it is a violation of their liberty and property interests protected by the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution for the city to seize and kill dogs that pose no nuisance or threat to the public safety.

The Progressive Law Center has joined the suit which also names as defendants Denver mayor, John W. Dickmeiss, Nancy Severson, Manager of the Denver Department of Environmental Health, Doug Kelley, Director of the Division of Animal Control, and Major Juan Zalasara, the Supervisor of the Animal Control investigators for the Denver Division of Animal Care and Control.

The Plaintiffs have requested certification as a class, claiming they represent persons whose animals were seized by Defendants under the Pit Bull Ordinance after April 8, 2005 and persons who removed their animals from Animal Control after April 8, 2005 and signed self-incriminating statements and/or due process waivers.

You can help! Contact Denver officials and let them know it's time to repeal the pit bull ban! Click here to find names and contact information for the mayor and council members.

<http://www.denvergov.org/ElectedOfficials/tabid/37896/Default.aspx?skintab=Elected%20Officials>

4 Responses to *A Lawsuit Challenges The Constitutionality Of Denver's Pit Bull Ban*



matt February 23, 2010 at 11:25 pm

This is crazy, I want to move to aurora with my staffy mix and they are murdering dogs left and right and the shelters say "they are just doing their job", sounds like Nazi's, they know it is wrong but keep killing. This is so wrong in so many ways the only way it is going to change if all dogs are deemed dangerous and people realize how stupid it is.

[Log in to Reply](#)



Amanda April 25, 2010 at 7:36 am

I need to know where I can actually live with my pit that's in California, near the city of Denver, without fear of losing him to this ridiculous ban.

[Log in to Reply](#)



bullboxer13 October 30, 2010 at 3:18 am

you can live in lakewood or somewhere in jefferson county... there is no ban there.

[Log in to Reply](#)



Anonymous November 12, 2010 at 12:58 pm

Centennial and Parker are both pit bull safe and close to the metro area. Centennial has its own dangerous dog law that is not breed-specific and they are very tolerant. However, they do share a very close boundary line with Aurora, which is another pit bull hating city and very aggressive toward eradicating them, so you want to be careful not to let your dog wander out of your yard if you live on the eastern edge of Centennial. Englewood is a great choice; they deliberately chose not to have BSL and it's a nice area to live in. Westminster is also pit bull friendly, but a little far from the action being very far north and west. Stay out of Castle Rock, Lone Tree, Commerce City, and Louisville (which is near Boulder), as they all have really awful pit bull bans, especially Louisville. Wherever you are, get a padlock on your gate, because the neighbors here are like Nazis - they will call animal control to "report" you have pit bull, and even if your city is safe, they may open your gate to let the dog out, and then he'll be picked up for being at large. Happened to my brother.

[Log in to Reply](#)

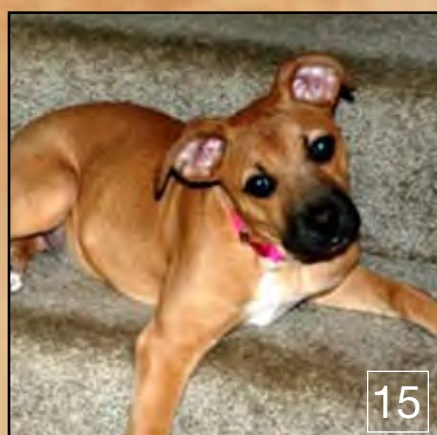
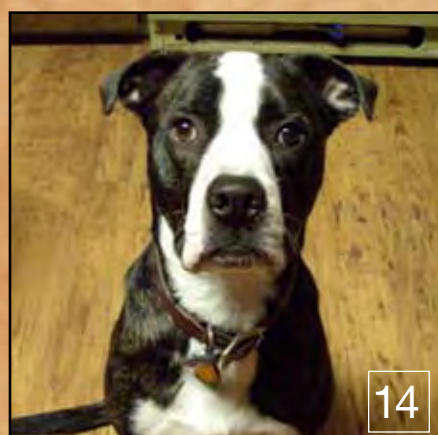
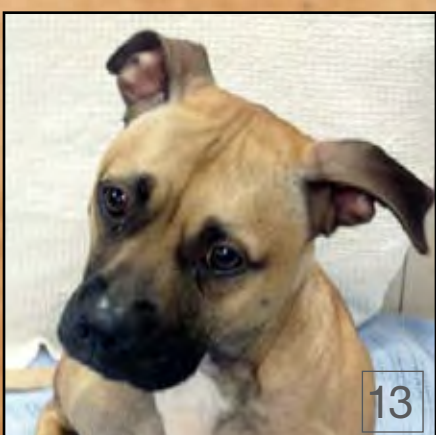
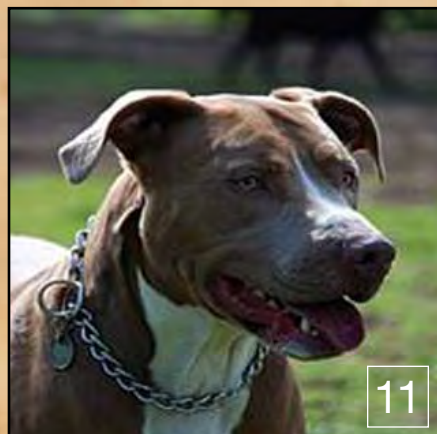
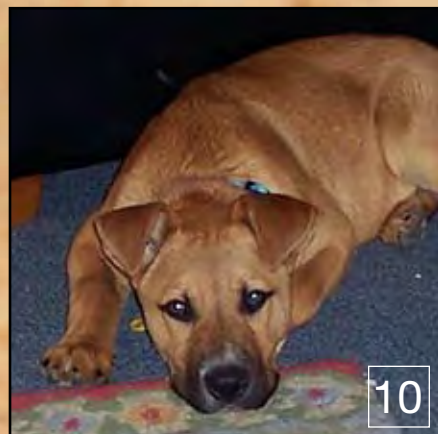
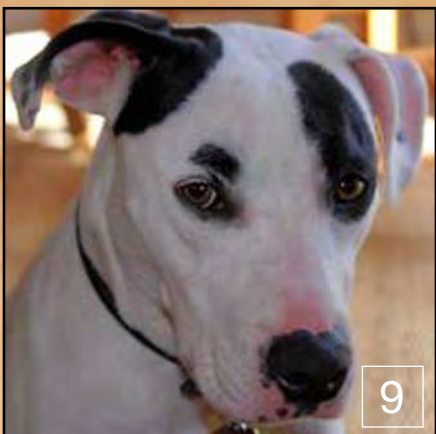
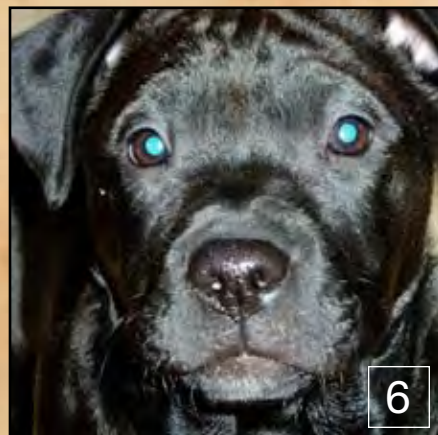
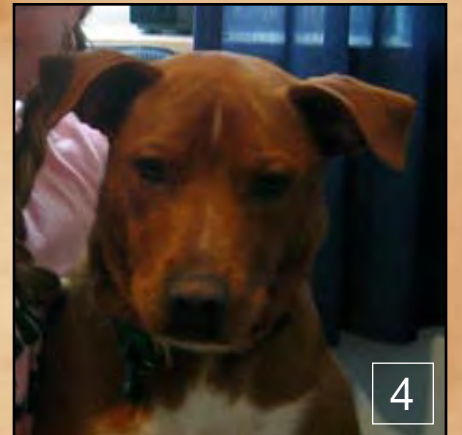
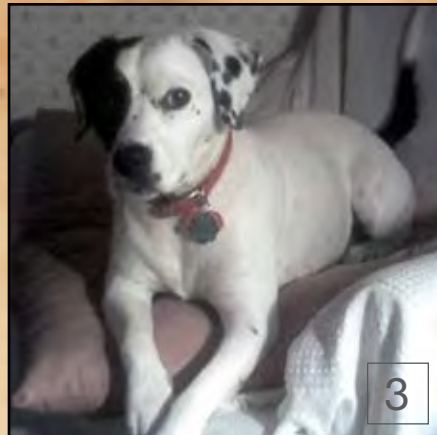
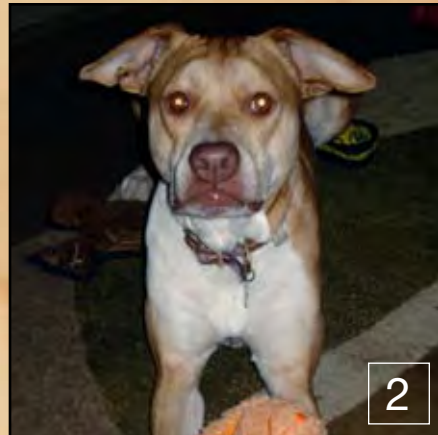
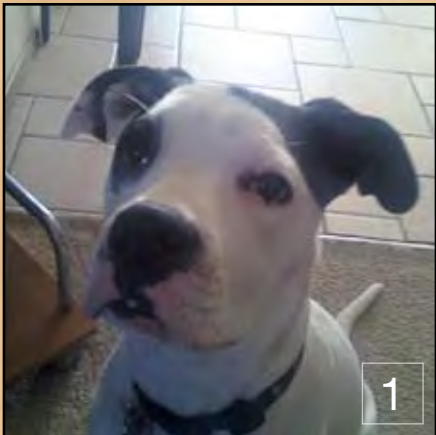
Leave a Reply

You must be [logged in](#) to post a comment.

ALL OF THESE DOGS ARE MIXED BREED DOGS

CAN YOU GUESS THE MIX OF BREEDS?

EACH OF THESE DOGS WAS GIVEN A BLOOD-BASED DNA TEST* TO DETERMINE MIX OF BREEDS
ONLY THREE OF THESE DOGS ARE "PIT BULL" MIXES



*Tested with Mars Wisdom Panel™ MX by their owners: www.wisdompanel.com
Significant 50% or more, Some 25%-49%, Distant 12.5%-24%

1. significant Boxer with some Bulldog 2. distant traces of Smooth Fox Terrier 3. significant Chihuahua with some Cocker Spaniel 4. some Rottweiler and Boston Terrier 5. some German Shepherd Dog and distant traces of Affenpinscher 6. some Chinese Shar-Pei and distant traces of Rottweiler 7. some American Staffordshire Terrier and Australian Cattle Dog 8. distant traces of Basset Hound, Dalmatian and Pug 9. significant American Staffordshire Terrier and distant traces of Boxer 10. some German Shepherd Dog and distant traces of Basset Hound, Norwegian Elkhound and Samoyed 11. distant traces of Basset Hound, Dalmatian, Glen of Imaal Terrier, Staffordshire Bull Terrier and Wire Fox Terrier 12. some Rottweiler and distant traces of Clumber Spaniel, German Wirehaired Pointer and Newfoundland 13. some Boston Terrier and distant traces of Bulldog 14. distant traces of Borzoi, Brussels Griffon, Dachshund, English Cocker Spaniel and Samoyed 15. some Boxer and distant traces of Bernese Mountain Dog, Briard, Dalmatian and Welsh Springer Spaniel 16. distant traces of Beagle, Boxer, Bulldog, Chesapeake Bay Retriever, Dalmatian, Mastiff and Whippet

Pick the Pit

Details

- Stats

So you think you know what a pit bull is?

One of the pictures below is of an American pit bull terrier. The others are of other specific, registered breeds. No mixes, no mutts.

As you will see with this quiz, there are lots of breeds of dogs who look like what people think of as a pit bull. When they're mixes, it's even harder to differentiate them.

So, what exactly is a "pit bull?" Nobody really knows. The United Kennel Club lists American Pit Bull Terriers as an official breed, but the American Kennel Club doesn't. It only lists a related breed: the American Staffordshire Terrier. (And the United Kennel Club doesn't list Am Staffs.)

When people talk about pit bulls, they're generally talking about any breed or mix that looks like what they think of as being a "pit bull."

DNA tests of pit bull-looking dogs often come up with some surprising results. One dog, who looked to all intents and purposes like a pit bull, turned out to be 40 percent poodle!

That's a funny thought, but for the dogs it's a real problem. Many cities and counties – even whole countries – have laws that ban pit bulls. Law enforcement officers can go into people's homes and take away any dog who has the appearance of a pit bull." Even if they're 40 percent poodle. They can be taken to the pound and then killed.

That's why so many of us don't like these breed discrimination laws. In the right hands, any dog is a good dog. In the wrong hands, any dog is a bad dog. Breed or type has nothing to do with it.

So see if you can pick the pit. How many tries will it take you?

You haven't found the Pit yet. The dog most commonly picked first is the American Pit Bull Terrier, and the average time is 29 minutes 57 seconds with 8 attempts.















- StubbyDog
- NinnyPants

"Find the Pit Bull" game is loaded

Ready to play

Click to start game

PIT BULL FACTS: DID YOU KNOW?

"Pit Bull" is not a breed, it is a term used to describe three different breeds with similar characteristics:

- American Pit Bull Terrier (APBT)
- American Staffordshire Terrier (AMSTAFF)
- Staffordshire Bull Terrier (STAFFY)

1 of 4 | next fact





WINNING THE CASE AGAINST CRUELTY

[About the Fund](#)
[Cases & Campaigns](#)
[Resources](#)
[Press Room](#)
[Blog](#)
[Shop](#)
[Donate](#)

Press Room

 Like

 Tweet

 Email

 Print
[Press Releases](#)
[ALDF in the News](#)
[ALDF Experts & Executive Team](#)
[Events](#)
[Images & Videos](#)

Pit Bull Bans: The State of Breed-Specific Legislation

Posted on July 31, 2009



When animal control officers in Kansas City, Kansas, seized Mike and Amy Johnson's dog Niko in 2007 for violating the city's ban against harboring pit bulls, it took eight months of legal wrangling and a DNA test on Niko before the city agreed with what the Johnsons and their paperwork had been saying all along—that Niko was a boxer mix. During that time Niko waited in an animal control kennel, separated from his family, losing weight and fur, and picking up a cough. It's hard not to draw comparisons between the Innocence Project, which has used DNA evidence to free from prison hundreds of wrongly convicted persons, and the case of Niko the dog. The case of the wrongly accused Niko and his eight-month imprisonment for being judged as something he was not provides a good illustration of many of the controversies currently surrounding the topic of "breed" bans, also known as "pit bull bans" or "breed-specific legislation" (BSL).

What Problems Prompted BSL?

Dealing with dangerous dogs is a problem that has perplexed communities for ages, leading some of them to resort to passing laws banning certain breeds perceived as especially prone to dangerous behavior, usually after a well-publicized attack on a human. In fact, a spokesman for the KCK Kennels where Niko was held said the ban is there to protect people, adding that a pit bull had attacked and killed an elderly woman about a year before Niko was seized. These efforts to purge certain breeds are perhaps the easiest ways to attempt to reduce the probability of an attack by simply reducing the mere presence of certain types of dogs in a community. Other communities place restrictions on the owners of certain breeds without completely banning the breeds.

The American Kennel Club (AKC), the nation's largest dog-breed registry, does not recognize a "pit bull" breed per se. The AKC-recognized breeds most commonly included within current BSL are Bull Terriers, American Staffordshire Terriers, and Staffordshire Bull Terriers. Also frequently included are Rottweilers, Chow Chows, Mastiffs, and Presa Canarios. But the focus of public and government concern has not always been pit bulls; in the 1970s the concern was over German Shepherds, and in the 1980s, Doberman Pinschers.

Who Has Passed BSL?

Hundreds of municipalities of all sizes and geographic locations throughout the

Stay Connected
Sign up for our newsletter

Recent

The Lost

February Blog

This week Club, we a the True S Luna, by M Chisholm.

[Read More](#)

ALDF Announces False Advertisements Against BSL

February Press Release

The Cotati nonprofit Animal Legal Defense Fund (ALDF) announced a false-advertisement lawsuit against a business owner of Jucy Eggs ("Jucy Eggs") for advertising a "Jucy Eggs" dog as a "Jucy Eggs" dog. [Read More](#)

NYC Creates New Dog Breed Abuser Fee

February Blog

On February 10, the City Council voted to override the veto and create a new dog breed abuser fee.

country have adopted BSL. (One of the most comprehensive, up-to-date lists of BSL jurisdictions can be found at www.understand-a-bull.com.) Still other towns are repealing existing bans, such as Edwardsville, Kansas, which removed its pit bull ban after the nearby Niko case ended.

In 2019 new statewide BSL bills were introduced in Hawaii, Montana, and Oregon, where there are two BSL bills pending. One would ban "pit bulls" from Oregon unless a person has obtained a permit within 90 days of the bill's passage; the other would require minimum liability insurance coverage of \$1 million for pit bull owners. Although other jurisdictions, as well as insurance companies, have also implemented provisions requiring minimum liability insurance coverage for owners of certain breeds, Oregon's bill may be the first to cross the million-dollar threshold if it passes. Because some dog owners will be unable to obtain such insurance owing to the cost or the nature of their dog, these requirements act as an indirect restriction on ownership of certain breeds.

Interestingly, 12 states have passed laws prohibiting the passage of BSL by local governments: Florida and Pennsylvania (although bills are currently pending to repeal this prohibition in both states), California, Colorado, Illinois, Maine, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Oklahoma, Texas, and Virginia. Like the other 11 states, California has ruled that no specific dog breed mix shall be declared potentially dangerous or vicious as a matter of breed, but it does allow BSL related to mandatory spay/neuter programs, meaning it requires dogs of certain breeds to be "fixed." The city of Denver has perhaps the most tortured history with BSL.

Denver passed BSL in 1989, but the Colorado State Legislature outlawed BSL in 2004. Denver later reinstated BSL after the city challenged the state's BSL prohibition, and a judge ruled that Denver's BSL could be allowed to stand as a home rule exception.

Just two weeks before President George W. Bush left office, the U.S. Army issued a memo detailing pet policy changes for privatized housing on military installations; the memo bans American or English Staffordshire Bull Terriers, Rottweilers, Chow Chows, Doberman Pinschers, and wolf hybrids as well as a host of other pets and exotic animals including reptiles, rats, hedgehogs, ferrets, and farm animals. The policy, which went into effect immediately, grandfathered in existing pets and contains a clause allowing for certain exceptions but lists no criteria for the exceptions. Some military families have lamented online and in the media that the nature of military service requires frequent moves from base to base, making the grandfather clause nearly meaningless. The Obama administration has promised to look into the military's breed ban but has not yet rendered an opinion on whether it would be allowed to stand.

BSL in the Courts

Court cases challenging BSL have focused on constitutional concerns such as substantive due process, equal protection, and vagueness. Most BSL will survive the minimum scrutiny analysis allowed by the due process clauses of the Constitution's Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments because there is no fundamental right at issue. This analysis requires that the law being challenged must be rationally related to a legitimate government goal or purpose. Because state and local jurisdictions enjoy broad police powers, including protecting the public's safety and welfare, courts have not had trouble finding that BSL is rationally related to the goal of protecting the public from allegedly dangerous breeds.

Challenges based on equal protection arguments are similarly difficult to sustain. Here courts are looking at whether there is a rational purpose for treating pit bull breeds differently from other dog breeds. Dog owners have attacked the rational purpose requirement by arguing either that BSL is over-inclusive, because it bans all dogs of a breed when only certain individuals within the breed have proven to be vicious, or under-inclusive, because many types of dogs have injured people and

abuser registry across the five boroughs.

[Read More »](#)

Join Us

Follow ALDF on these networks:



the BSL fails to include those other breeds. However, again under minimum scrutiny review, BSL will survive as long as the government can establish that the BSL is rationally related to its purpose, even if the law is found to be over-inclusive or under-inclusive.

Cases that BSL is unconstitutionally vague have brought dog owners mixed success. Procedural due process requires that laws provide the public with sufficient notice of the activity or conduct being regulated or banned. Here owners of pit bulls or other banned breeds argue that the breed ban laws do not adequately define just what is a "pit bull" (or other banned breed) for purposes of the ban. Another argument is that the laws are too vague to help the dog-owning public or the BSL enforcement agency—such as animal control or police—to be able to identify whether a dog falls under the BSL if the dog was adopted with an unknown origin or is a mixed breed. In the Niko case it took a DNA test to resolve this issue, after which the charges based on the BSL were dropped.

Enforcement Issues

Enforcement of BSL naturally leads to the question: Who determines whether a dog is one of the banned or regulated breeds, and what is the procedure for that determination? Surprisingly, in places such as North Salt Lake, Utah, the city manager has sole authority to make that call. In other places it is the mayor or animal control officers. No special training in breed identification is required. Some jurisdictions have passed their BSL legislation without any input from a veterinarian, presumably the type of expert most capable of identifying dog breeds. Attorney Ledy VanKavage has spent the last decade studying BSL and is considered one of the country's foremost experts on the subject. She is now general counsel for Best Friends Animal Society after working for years as the senior director of legislation and legal training for the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA). She calls BSL "breed discrimination laws" and asserts that with the advance of DNA analysis for dogs becoming more available, the days of mere "canine profiling" and arbitrary enforcement are numbered. VanKavage believes that because the government has the burden of proving that a dog is one of the breeds banned or regulated by BSL, cities will have to seriously weigh whether they should pony up the high cost of DNA tests or simply give up trying to enforce BSL.

Is BSL Effective?

Extensive studies of the effectiveness of BSL in reducing the number of persons harmed by dog attacks were done in Spain and Great Britain. Both studies concluded that their "dangerous animals acts," which included pit bull bans, had no effect at all on stopping dog attacks. The Spanish study further found that the breeds most responsible for bites—both before and after the breed bans—were those breeds not covered by it, primarily German Shepherds and mixed breeds.

One of the few known instances in which a breed ban's effectiveness was examined and reported on in the United States occurred in Prince George's County, Maryland, where a task force was formed in 2003 to look at the effectiveness of its pit bull ban. The task force concluded that the public's safety had not improved as a result of the ban, despite the fact that the county had spent more than \$250,000 per year to round up and destroy banned dogs. Finding that other, non-breed-specific laws already on the books covered vicious animal, nuisance, leash, and other public health and safety concerns, the task force recommended repealing the ban.

In a different study looking at dog bite data, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Humane Society of the United States, and the American Veterinary Medical Association together produced a report titled "**Breeds of Dogs Involved in Fatal Human Attacks in the US between 1979 and 1998**," which appeared in the September 15, 2000, issue of the Journal of the American

Veterinary Medical Association. Among its findings, the study reported that during this 20-year period, more than 25 breeds of dogs were involved in 238 human fatalities. Pit bull-type dogs caused 66 of the fatalities, which averages out to just over three fatal attacks per year, and Rottweilers were cited as causing 39 of the fatalities. The rest were caused by other purebreds and mixed breeds. At the time the report was released, Dr. Gail C. Golab, one of the study's co-authors, was quoted as saying, "[s]ince 1975, dogs belonging to more than 30 breeds—including Dachshunds, Golden Retrievers, Labrador Retrievers, and a Yorkshire Terrier—have been responsible for fatal attacks on people."

The authors noted that the data in the report cannot be used to infer any breed-specific risk for dog bite fatalities, such as for pit bull-type dogs or Rottweilers, because to obtain such risk information it would be necessary to know the total numbers of each breed currently residing in the United States, and that information is unavailable.

A 2008 report on media bias by the National Canine Research Council (available on their website at <http://nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com/dog-bites/dog-bites-and-the-media/audience-interest>) compared the type of media coverage given for dog attacks that occurred during a four-day period in August 2007 with intriguing results:

- On day one, a Labrador mix attacked an elderly man, sending him to the hospital. News stories of his attack appeared in one article in the local paper.
- On day two, a mixed-breed dog fatally injured a child. The local paper ran two stories.
- On day three, a mixed-breed dog attacked a child, sending him to the hospital. One article ran in the local paper.
- On day four, two pit bulls that broke off their chains attacked a woman trying to protect her small dog. She was hospitalized. Her dog was uninjured. This attack was reported in more than 230 articles in national and international newspapers and on the major cable news networks.

It is not a stretch to see how such news coverage could influence calls for breed bans from the frightened public and its legislators.

Options Beyond BSL

The National Canine Research Council has identified the most common factors found in fatal dog attacks occurring in 2006:

- 97 percent of the dogs involved were not spayed or neutered.
- 84 percent of the attacks involved owners who had abused or neglected their dogs, failed to contain their dogs, or failed to properly chain their dogs.
- 78 percent of the dogs were not kept as pets but as guard, breeding, or yard dogs.

Stephan Otto, director of legislative affairs for the Animal Legal Defense Fund, notes that "if a person keeps a dangerous dog to guard their drugs or property or for fighting purposes, they'll just switch to a different breed and train that dog to be dangerous to get around a breed ban. The BSL accomplishes nothing in those cases." [See Stephan's article, "**Dealing with Aggressive Dogs: Community Solutions That Consider Each Dog, Not Their Breed.**"]

VanKavage points to all of the above factors as reasons for communities to focus on "reckless owners" rather than singling out specific breeds to be regulated, and she recommends improving dangerous dog laws generally, addressing the above factors without singling out any breeds. She cites St. Paul, Minnesota, and Tacoma, Washington, as both having passed model laws in 2007 that target troublesome pet owners.

The ASPCA has proposed a list of solutions for inclusion in breed-neutral laws that hold reckless dog owners accountable for their aggressive animals:

- Enhanced enforcement of dog license laws, with adequate fees to augment animal control budgets and surcharges on ownership of unaltered dogs to help fund low-cost pet sterilization programs. High-penalty fees should be imposed on those who fail to license a dog.
- Enhanced enforcement of leash/dog-at-large laws, with adequate penalties to supplement animal control funding and to ensure the law is taken seriously.
- Dangerous dog laws that are breed neutral and focus on the behavior of the individual dog, with mandated sterilization and microchipping of dogs deemed dangerous and options for mandating muzzling, confinement, adult supervision, training, owner education, and a hearings process with gradually increasing penalties, including euthanasia, in aggravated circumstances such as when a dog causes unjustified injury or simply cannot be controlled. (“Unjustified” typically is taken to mean the dog was not being harmed or provoked by anyone when the attack occurred.)
- Laws that hold dog owners financially accountable for failure to adhere to animal control laws, and also hold them civilly and criminally liable for unjustified injuries or damage caused by their dogs.
- Laws that prohibit chaining or tethering, coupled with enhanced enforcement of animal cruelty and fighting laws. Studies have shown that chained dogs are an attractive nuisance to children and others who approach them.
- Laws that mandate the sterilization of shelter animals and make low-cost sterilization services widely available.

Recently, VanKavage revealed that Best Friends Animal Society has developed an economic analysis tool (view it at their website, www.bestfriends.org) that would help cities determine the potential fiscal impact of enforcing BSL versus having a general non-breed-specific dangerous dog law in place. Armed with this tool, cities can now consider cost as one additional factor to weigh before deciding to enact BSL.

National animal organizations such as the American Veterinary Medical Association, Humane Society of the United States, Animal Legal Defense Fund, Best Friends Animal Society, American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the American Kennel Club, and the National Animal Control Association all oppose BSL. Otto sums up their position this way: “If the goal is dog-bite prevention, then dogs should be treated as individuals under effective dangerous dog laws and not as part of a breed painted with certain traits that may not be applicable to each dog. By doing so, owners of well-trained, gentle dogs are not punished by a breed ban, while dangerous dogs of all breeds are regulated and may have their day in court to be proven dangerous.”

As an example, consider the **2007 Michael Vick dogfighting case in Virginia**, in which 50 of the former pro football player’s fighting dogs were seized and about to be euthanized according to conventional wisdom that dogs trained to fight to the death are too dangerous to humans and other animals and cannot be retrained. However, in an unprecedented move, the court agreed with *amicus* briefs filed by animal welfare groups and appointed a special master, animal law professor Rebecca Huss, as a guardian for the dogs to oversee temperament evaluations to be done on each dog by a team of behaviorists. As a result, only one dog was destroyed owing to temperament; the other 49 were saved and shipped to rescue groups, where they were rehabilitated and are now enjoying media attention as scruffy dogs and beloved companions. Time will tell whether this unexpected outcome successfully turns on its head the argument that fighting dogs or certain breeds of dogs are inherently dangerous, untrainable, hopeless.

Conclusion

The number of places passing breed bans and prohibiting breed bans continues to fluctuate widely. Perhaps the most accurate way to sum up the state of BSL in the United States today is to say the laws are controversial, generating both howls of protest and vehement support wherever they have been considered.

Pit Bull Bans: The State of Breed-Specific Legislation. Published in GP Solo, Volume 26, Number 5, July/August 2009 © 2009 by the American Bar Association. Reproduced with permission. All rights reserved. This information or any portion thereof may not be copied or disseminated in any form or by any means or stored in an electronic database or retrieval system without the express written consent of the American Bar Association.

Tags: Animal Law

Previous Post: [ALDF Founder Joyce Tischler Honored for Advancement of Animal Law](#)

Next Post: [ALDF Celebrates 30 Years of Fighting Animal Abuse](#)

[Contact Information](#) / [Sitemap](#) / [Copyright Info](#) / [Privacy Policy](#) / [Home](#) / [Site Credit](#)



ALDF is a Better Business Bureau Accredited Charity, one of Great Nonprofit's Top-Rated organizations, and a Best in America charity according to Independent Charities of America, ensuring that we meet the highest standards of public accountability, program effectiveness, and cost effectiveness.

SHELTER MEDICINE: A COMPARISON OF VISUAL AND DNA IDENTIFICATION OF BREEDS OF DOGS

*Victoria L Voith DVM, PhD, DACVB
College of Veterinary Medicine
Western University of Health Sciences*

We are all aware of the newspaper articles, magazine stories, and TV segments that show pictures of dogs and then reveal DNA breed analyses of the dogs. Surprise – the DNA results are not what were expected based on the appearance of the dogs or the owners' beliefs. Those of us who walk through shelters and animal control facilities compare the posted breed descriptions of the dogs to what they look like to us – with frequent differences of opinions. Those who have worked at shelters and similar facilities are aware that as dogs move through the steps in admission or during their stay that their breed descriptions may change. It is my impression, when visiting animal control or adoption agencies, that most medium to large size dogs with straight, short/ medium length brown hair coats are cast as German shepherds or shepherd mixes, dogs with a black spot on their tongues are designated Chow mixes, and most medium sized, stocky, broad headed, small eared dogs with a short hair coats are pit-bulls or pit-bull mixes.

It is not easy to visually identify the breeds of dogs of unknown parentage accurately. Sometimes dogs just don't look like either parent. Scott and Fuller's work on the genetics and social behavior of dogs involved studying purebred dogs, F1 crosses of purebreds, backcrosses and F2 crosses.¹ Photographs of some of these F1 and F2 puppies depict that they do not resemble either purebred parent, nor do the photographs of the F2 generations dogs look like their mixed breed parents. We don't know how many of the offspring did look like their purebred ancestors, but clearly not all resembled parents or grandparents.

Shelter dog breed assignments may be based on what the dogs look like to someone at the shelter or because owners relinquishing their dogs have indentified the dogs as a specific breed. Newborn and young puppies may be identified as a certain breed because the mother dog resembled a purebred dog. In the latter case, the sire of the litter could have been any breed or several dogs could have fathered puppies in the same litter. When the puppies grow up they don't look anything like their mother or littermates. These breed or mixed breed identifications may eventually find their way into data bases – be it through population data, dog bites, serious dog attacks, behavior problems, or disease statistics.

Rarely are owners permitted to simply fill out forms that ask about the breed by only stating that the dog is a mixed breed or of unknown parentage. If they do so, the follow-up question often is "What is it mostly?", or "What is its most predominant breed?", or "What does it look like mostly?" This information may be solicited by insurance companies, landlords, housing associations, licensing agencies, mandatory dog bite reports, veterinary medical records, the media, and researchers trying to determine the likelihood of involvement of specific breeds in study populations. For example, in the methodology of one elegantly designed study, owners were asked "what breed they considered their dog: if more than one breed was specified, they were asked which breed they considered to be predominant."² This article became part of the impetus for many recommendations and restrictions intended to reduce dog bites.

High profile articles in JAMA and JAVMA have reported dog bite fatalities and listed breeds involved in such attacks.^{3,4} The data used was obtained by "combining data from the National Center for Health Statistics and computerized searching of news stories. Karen Delise has presented compelling arguments in her recent book, *The Pit Bull Placebo*, that undermines conclusions and implications of these reports.^{5,6}

A short report in press in the Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science indicates low agreement between the identification of breeds of dogs by adoption agencies and DNA identification.⁷ The dogs in this study were of unknown parentage and had been acquired from adoption agencies. In only a quarter of these dogs was at least one of the breeds proposed by the adoption agencies also detected as a predominant breed by DNA analysis. (Predominant breeds were defined as those comprised of the highest percentage of a DNA breed make-up.) In 87.5% of the adopted dogs, breeds were identified by DNA analyses that were not proposed by the adoption agencies. A breed must have been detected at a minimum of 12.5% of a dog's make-up to be reported in the DNA analysis.

Reports of DNA analyses of percentages of purebred dog breed ancestry, while accurate most of the time, are not infallible. The laboratories providing such analyses may have qualifiers in their reports stating that there is an 85% or 90% validity of the results and indicate which results have lower confidence levels. Different testing laboratories may report different results depending on which dogs were used to develop their standards and how the laboratories analyze the samples.⁸ As the tests are refined, the same laboratory may report slightly different results at different points in time.

The discrepancy between breed identifications based on opinion and DNA analysis , as well as concerns about reliability of data collected based on media reports, draws into question the validity and enforcement of public and private polices pertaining to dog breeds.

Dr Amy Marder, Animal Rescue League of Boston and Director for the Center for Shelter Dogs, has proposed that dogs adopted from shelters in the U.S. simply be identified as "American Shelter Dogs". This might solve a lot of problems, as well as promote pride and ownership of an "American Shelter Dog."

REFERENCES

1. J P Scott ,J L Fuller, (1965). *Genetics and the Social Behavior of the Dog*. The University of Chicago Press.
2. K A Gershman , J J Sacks, J C Wright J.C.(1994). Which Dogs Bite? A Case-Control Study of Risk Factors. *Pediatrics*, 93, 913-916
3. J J Sacks, R W Sattin,, S E , Bonzo, 1989). Dog-Bite related Fatalities from 1979 through 1988. *JAMA* . 262, 1489-1492.
4. J J Sacks, L Sinclair,, J Gilchrist, et al (2000). Breeds of dogs involved in fatal human attacks in the United States between 1979 and 1998. *JAVMA*, 217, 836-840.
5. K. Delise, *The Pit Bull Placebo: The Media, Myths, and Politics of Canine Aggression*, Anubis Publishing, Ramsey, New Jersey, 2007
6. J R Berkey, DOG BREED SPECIFIC LEGISLATION: THE COST TO PEOPLE, PETS AND VETERINARIANS, AND THE DAMAGE TO THE HUMAN ANIMAL BOND, Proceedings of Annual AVMA Meeting, July 11-13, 2009, Seattle.
7. V. Voith, E. Ingram, K Mitsouras, et al, "Comparison of Adoption Agency Identification and DNA Breed Identification of Dogs, *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science*, July 2009.
8. M Kochan,(2008, October). Can I see some I.D.? *Dogfancy*,38-41.

This is prepublished copy of article to appear in Proceedings of Annual AVMA Convention , July 11-14, 2009 Seattle Washington

Scientific & Academic Publishing

Paper Information

Next Paper

Previous Paper

Paper Submission

Journal Information

About This Journal

Editorial Board

Current Issue

Archive

Author Guidelines

Contact Us

American Journal of Sociological Research

p-ISSN: 2166-5443 e-ISSN: 2166-5451

2013; 3(2): 17-29

doi:10.5923/j.sociology.20130302.02

Comparison of Visual and DNA Breed Identification of Dogs and Inter-Observer Reliability

Victoria L. Voith¹, Rosalie Trevejo², Seana Dowling-Guyer³, Colette Chadik¹, Amy Marder³, Vanessa Johnson¹, Kristopher Irizarry¹

¹College of Veterinary Medicine, Western University of Health Sciences, Pomona, 91766, United States of America

²Oregon State University, Beaverton, 97006, United States of America

³Center for Shelter Dogs, Animal Rescue League of Boston, Boston, 02116, United States of America

Correspondence to: Victoria L. Voith, College of Veterinary Medicine, Western University of Health Sciences, Pomona, 91766, United States of America.

Email: vvoith@westernu.edu

Copyright © 2012 Scientific & Academic Publishing. All Rights Reserved.

Abstract

Until the recent advent of DNA analysis of breed composition, identification of dogs of unknown parentage was done visually, and visual identification is still the most common method of breed identification. We were interested in how often visual identification of dogs by people, assumed to be knowledgeable about dogs, matched DNA breed identification and how often these people agreed with each other (inter-observer reliability). Over 900 participants who engaged in dog related professions and activities viewed one-minute, color video-clips of 20 dogs of unknown parentage and were asked to identify the dogs' predominant breeds. For 14 of the dogs, fewer than 50% of the respondents visually identified breeds of dogs that matched DNA identification. Agreement among respondents was also very poor. Krippendorff's alpha was used to examine the reliability of the most predominant breed (selected across all dogs identified as mixed breeds) for all respondents, yielding alpha=0.23. For only 7 of the 20 dogs was there agreement among more than 50% of the respondents regarding the most predominant breed of a mixed breed and in 3 of these cases the most commonly agreed upon visual identification was not identified by DNA analysis.

Keywords: Inter-observer Reliability of Dog Breed Identification, Visual and DNA Identification of Mixed Breed Dogs

Cite this paper: Victoria L. Voith, Rosalie Trevejo, Seana Dowling-Guyer, Colette Chadik, Amy Marder, Vanessa Johnson, Kristopher Irizarry, Comparison of Visual and DNA Breed Identification of Dogs and Inter-Observer Reliability, *American Journal of Sociological Research*, Vol. 3 No. 2, 2013, pp. 17-29. doi: 10.5923/j.sociology.20130302.02.


Article Outline


1. Introduction
2. Methods
 - 2.1. Source of Participants
 - 2.2. Source of Dogs
 - 2.3. DNA Analysis
 - 2.4. Administration of Study Questionnaire
 - 2.5. The Survey and Quiz Questions
3. Results
 - 3.1. Profile of Respondents
 - 3.2. Comparison of Visual Identification and DNA Breed Identification
 - 3.3. Inter-Observer Reliability of Visual Identification of Most Predominant Breed of Dogs Identified as Mixed Breeds
4. Discussion
 - 4.1. Limitations of the Study
5. Conclusions

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

APPENDIX

1. Introduction

 Abstract

 Reference

 Full-Text PDF

 Full-text HTML

The breed by which a dog is identified has important implications and ramifications. Breed identification is used in public health journals, veterinary medical records, lost and found notices, licensing documents and animal shelter descriptions. How a dog is identified also influences how people interpret a dog's behavior. World-wide, public and private regulations and restrictions have been enacted that regulate dog ownership, euthanasia, availability of liability insurance, and access to housing. These rules may specify specific breeds, mixes of these breeds, or any dog that resembles these breeds. We were interested in how often visual identification of dogs by people assumed to be knowledgeable about dogs matched DNA breed identification, and how often these people agreed with each other (inter-observer reliability).

Estimates of the prevalence of specific breeds of dogs that engage in injurious behaviors appear in numerous published articles related to public health, canine behavior, and veterinary medicine. Data concerning dog breeds, particularly pertaining to human injuries, are frequently tabulated from newspaper accounts or retrospective reviews of hospital and animal control records [1-10]. Sometimes dogs in these reports are identified by owners according to what they believe is the most predominant breed of their dog [4],[6],[9] or from information entered in veterinary medical records based on the staffs' assessments [9],[11]. Generally, published reports supply no data on who identified the dogs' breeds [12]. Adding to the confusion, data are often published in a manner that combines dogs identified as purebreds with purebred crosses, e.g. the German Shepherd Dog and German Shepherd cross would be depicted as German Shepherds [4],[7]; all dogs identified as pit bull breeds and pit bull hybrids would be categorized as a pit bull [10]. Although such publications may include cautionary statements that the breed identifications were unverified, potentially inaccurate, and that data on the numbers and breeds of dogs in the source population were unknown [3-7], breed frequencies are still included in the publications.

With the intention of providing public safety, regional and national governments have attempted to regulate dog ownership, how a dog is maintained, and impose euthanasia policies based on the perceived breed composition of a dog, be it a purebred or mixed breed [12-20]. Insurance premiums and housing restrictions are also based on a dog's breed composition [8],[19],[20]. Until the recent advent of DNA analysis of breed composition [21-25] identification of dogs of unknown parentage was done visually, and visual identification is still the most common method of breed identification, even by law enforcement, animal care and control agencies, and veterinarians [19],[20],[26]. As examples, see the animal control ordinances of Prince George's County Maryland, Denver Colorado, and Victoria, Melbourne Australia [27-29].

Our personal observations of discrepancies among people who attempt to visually identify the breed composition of dogs prompted this study. We were interested in how often visual identification by people assumed to be knowledgeable about dogs was in agreement with DNA identification, and how often people agreed with each other (inter-observer reliability). We felt this was important because of the potential ramifications of misclassification of dog breeds in published databases which drive public and private policies as well as people's perceptions of the behavior of individual dogs.

People who engage in professions or services that involve dogs are one source of identification of dogs of unknown parentage. They are in a position to provide their opinion to owners about the possible breed or predominant breed of their dogs. They may also directly assign a breed identity to dogs and enter their opinions on office forms and/or records. Either way, these identifications have the potential to be entered into national databases which are used for prevalence statistics on dogs' breeds.

2. Methods

The protocol for the study was approved by the Institutional Review Board and Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee of the Western University of Health Sciences, Pomona California.

2.1. Source of Participants

The participants were recruited by contacting organizations involved in dog-related activities, such as veterinary medical groups, animal control/sheltering agencies, dog clubs, and regional and national conferences related to veterinary medicine and dog-related activities. Permission was requested to administer an anonymous, voluntary, dog breed identification quiz and survey (collectively referred to as the questionnaire), followed by an educational presentation. It was asked that the participants be at least 18 years old and able to understand and write English. At the time of the presentations, the participants were also informed that participation was anonymous, voluntary, could be discontinued at any time and that their responses were part of a research project. These sessions were administered in person, by either the Principle Investigator or a trained research assistant, at 30 locations in the following states: Arizona, California, Colorado, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Missouri, Ohio, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, and Washington. Many of these sites were at regional or national meetings with participants from several states.

2.2. Source of Dogs

Twenty privately-owned dogs of unknown parentage were selected for the study from a pool of dogs that had been volunteered by their owners to participate in dog breed identification studies [26]. Forty of 50 volunteered dogs met the entrance criteria of being mature enough to have fully erupted canine teeth, having been obtained from a shelter, rescue, animal control or similar adoption agency, and being available on a specific day to be videotaped and have blood drawn. The 40 dogs were assigned to one of 4 weight ranges: ≤ 20 lbs. (9.07 kg), 21-40 lbs. (9.52-18.14 kg), 41-60 lbs. (18.60- 27.22 kg), and > 60 lbs. (27.22 kg). Five dogs were randomly selected from each weight range and entered into the study. The study dogs included 7 castrated males, 12 spayed females and 1 intact female. They had been adopted from 17 different locations in North America but currently residing in Southern California. Figure 1 depicts each study dog against a white screen with a black-lined grid of one-foot squares. The pictures are freeze frames from the videotapes that were shown to the participants. Detailed descriptions of each dog are provided Table 1.



Figure 1. Pictures of the 20 study dogs against a backdrop of 1 foot square grid of 1 foot squares

Table 1. Descriptions of the 20 Study Dogs and Percent of Major and Minor Breeds Identified by DNA Analysis

Dog ID	Sex	Approximate Age	Weight – lbs. (kg)	Major Breeds Identified by DNA	Minor Breeds Identified by DNA
1	FS	3 Years	51 (23.1)	American Staffordshire Terrier**; Saint Bernard**	Chinese Shar-Pei*
2	FS	9 Years	31 (14.1)	American Eskimo Dog**; Golden Retriever**; Nova Scotia Duck-Tolling Retriever**; Rottweiler**	
3	MC	5 Years	60 (14.1)	English Springer Spaniel**; German Wirehaired Pointer**	
4	MC	2.5 Years	26 (11.8)	Lhasa Apso**	Australian Cattle Dog*; Bischon Frise*; Italian Greyhound*; Pekingese*; Shih Tzu*
5	FS	12 Years	51 (23.1)	Australian Shepherd Dog*; Chow Chow*; Dalmatian*; German Shepherd*; Siberian Husky*	
6	FS	5 Years	54 (24.5)	Chow Chow*; Dachshund*; Nova Scotia Duck-Tolling Retriever*	
7	MC	10 Months	15 (6.8)	American Water Spaniel*; Black Russian Terrier*; Pomeranian*; Shih Tzu*; Tibetan Terrier*	
8	FS	2 Years	41 (18.6)	Chow Chow**; French Bull Dog**	Clumber Spaniel* Dalmatian*; Gordon Setter*; Great Dane*
9	FS	7 Years	66 (30)	Dalmatian**	Boxer*; Chow Chow*; Newfoundland*
10	MC	5.5 Years	10 (4.5)	Australian Shepherd Dog**; Pekingese**	
11	MC	3 Years	62 (28.1)	American Staffordshire Terrier**; German Shepherd Dog**	Bull Terrier* Chow Chow*
12	FS	1.5 Years	52 (23.6)	Australian Shepherd Dog*; Boxer*; Dachshund*; Dalmatian*; Glen of Imaal Terrier*	
13	MC	3.5 Years	79 (35.8)	Alaskan Malamute*	
14	FS	3.5 Years	74 (33.6)	German Shepherd Dog**; Standard Schnauzer**	English Setter*
15	FS	7 Years	70 (31.8)	Chow Chow*; Golden Retriever*; Gordon Setter*; Saint Bernard*	
16	F	5.5 Months	20 (9.1)	Australian Shepherd Dog*; Boxer*; Golden Retriever*	
17	FS	2 Years	18 (8.2)	Cavalier King Charles Spaniel*; Chihuahua*; Shih Tzu*	
18	FS	10 Months	13 (5.9)	Miniature Pinscher***;	Dachshund*
19	FS	12 Years	36 (16.3)	Border Collie**	Basset Hound*; Cocker Spaniel*
20	MC	6 Years	21 (9.5)	Shih Tzu**	Cocker Spaniel*; Miniature Schnauzer* Pekingese*

Percent of breed composition detected by DNA: *12.5%; **25%; *** 50% FS, female spay; MC, male castrate; FI, female intact.

2.3. DNA Analysis

Two ml samples of heparinized blood from each dog were immediately refrigerated and sent on the same day on cold packs by overnight shipment to MARS VETERINARY™ Lincoln, Nebraska for DNA analysis. There were 130 American Kennel Club (AKC) registered purebreds in their database and the laboratory reported “an average of 84% accuracy in the first-generation crossbred dogs of known parentage”[22],[23]. Contributions of ancestral breeds less than 12.5% were not reported. The laboratory had in their database the AKC breed American Staffordshire Terrier but not any breeds identified as Pit Bull or American Pit Bull Terrier. Because of the common ancestry, historical reciprocal registrations, and similar morphology, we used visual identifications of American Staffordshire Terrier, Pit Bull, and American Pit Bull Terrier as matches to the DNA identification of American Staffordshire Terrier. For several years, the American Kennel Club (AKC) allowed dogs to be registered as Staffordshire Terriers (later changing the name to American Staffordshire Terrier) if the dogs were already registered as American Pit Bull Terriers in the United Kennel Club (UKC) or American Dog Breeders Association (ADBA) registries. Until 2010, the UKC permitted registration of AKC and ADBA dogs as American Pit Bull Terriers. AKC registered American Staffordshire Terriers are still allowed to be registered as American Pit Bull Terriers in the ADBA[30-33]. We are not, however, suggesting that they are identical.

For each dog, the breeds identified by DNA were classified as Major or Minor based on the relative percentage of the breed represented in that dog. Breeds reported at the highest percentage of DNA in a dog were classified as Major; breeds reported at lower percentages in that dog were classified as Minor. A dog could have more than one Major DNA breed identification, e.g., three breeds each represented at 25%. If only one breed was detected in a dog by DNA analysis, that breed was considered the Major breed, even if it was only 12.5% of the dog’s composition. Results of the DNA analyses of breed identification of each dog are in Table 1. None of the dogs were reported to be purebreds by DNA analysis.

2.4. Administration of Study Questionnaire

Administration of the questionnaire and following educational program took about 55 minutes. The participants were shown one minute, color video-clips of each of the 20 dogs which were allowed to move about in front of a white screen with a black-lined grid of one-foot squares. Full bilateral and frontal views and a close up of the head were depicted. The participants were told the age, weight, and sex of each dog as they viewed the videos. After each video-clip, the respondents were given as much time as they requested to write in their answers. The video-clips were not re-shown. The respondents were required to generate their answers. They did not have access to resource materials and were asked not to solicit breed identifications from each other. In our experience, most dogs are often visually identified quickly as either a single breed or a single breed mix, generally without

consulting resources. The video-clips were always shown the same order (Dog 1-20) which was the order that the owners, at their convenience, had brought their dogs to be videotaped.

2.5. The Survey and Quiz Questions

Participants were asked to indicate: their current and past professional activities; if they now or ever have been asked what breed a dog appears to be; if their opinions have ever been used to assign possible breed identities for the purpose of records (e.g. shelters, medical, licensing, other businesses); and personal descriptive questions such as their age and sex, how many dogs they have, and if they have ever competed in any dog related activities, such as showing, agility, hunting, etc.

For each dog, the respondents were asked:

-“Do you think this dog is probably a purebred?”

YES NO

-“If YES, (you think this IS probably a purebred)

What breed do you think it is?”

-“If NO, (you do NOT think this a purebred)

What do you think is the most predominant breed?”

-“What do you think is the second most predominant breed. (If you are unable to determine a second breed, write

“Mix” here. Otherwise, name a breed.)”

In this article, identification as “not a purebred” is used synonymously with “mixed-breed”. The answer to the most predominant breed of a Mixed Breed is referred to as the Primary Visual Identification (PVI) and an answer to the second most predominant breed is referred to as the Secondary Visual Identification (SVI).

Dogs of unknown parentage are generally designated by only one breed, e.g., Chow mix, German Shepherd mix [26]. We believe that when a dog is so identified, the assumption is that the named breed is the most predominant breed in the dog’s ancestry. Therefore, we wanted to know how often our respondents’ visual identification of the most predominant breed matched breeds identified at the highest percentage by DNA analysis. Secondly, we were interested in whether or not a breed visually identified as the most predominant matched any breed identified by DNA, regardless of the percentage of DNA composition. And thirdly, we examined whether any visual identification, either the first or second breed identified, matched any percentage of DNA breed identified.

3. Results

Nine hundred eighty six people completed all or part of a questionnaire. The questionnaires of 63 respondents were excluded from analysis for the following reasons: did not answer or answered “No” to the question “Are you now, or have you ever been asked what breed a dog appears to be.”; did not provide any information regarding their professions; or indicated they were less than 18 years old. Respondents were asked to indicate on the questionnaire if a specific dog was theirs or if they knew a dog’s DNA composition; data pertaining to these dogs were not included in the study, although data provided by the respondent pertaining to other dogs were included. All responses pertaining to a specific dog were tabulated, unless the answer was illegible.

3.1. Profile of Respondents

Most respondents indicated involvement in more than one dog-related profession/service, either sequentially or simultaneously. The majority of respondents were or had been in animal control/sheltering and/or veterinary medical fields, see Figure 2.

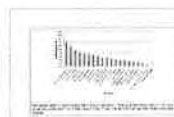


Figure 2. Percent of 923 respondents engaged in each profession/service activity

People in animal control and veterinary medical fields were significantly more likely to have their opinions of a dog’s breed used for record keeping purposes than not have their opinions so used ($p < 0.001$). Volunteers, veterinary medical students, and behavior counselors were significantly less likely to assign breed identities for record keeping ($p = 0.002$) rather than have their opinions used for record keeping. See Table 2.

Table 2. Comparison of Percent of Respondents That Assigned and Did Not Assign Breed Identities for Record Keeping Purposes Within Each Profession/Service

	All Respondents	GROUP A	GROUP B	Chi-Square*	p
Current or Past Profession		Opinions Used to Assign Breed Identities in Records	Opinions NOT used to Assign Breed Identities in Records	(comparing Group A to B)	
Kennel Worker	35.2%	40.7%	17.6%	39.295**	<0.001
Supervisor	13.2%	16.7%	2.3%	30.403**	<0.001
Field Officer	19.0%	24.1%	2.7%	49.907**	<0.001
Receptionist/Office Assistant (Animal Care)	15.4%	18.2%	6.3%	18.281**	<0.001
Volunteer	24.5%	22.1%	32.1%	9.176**	0.002
Other Animal Care	12.1%	14.1%	5.9%	10.653**	0.001
Veterinarian	10.1%	11.3%	6.3%	4.488**	0.034
Receptionist/Office Assistant (Vet Office)	13.2%	13.7%	11.8%	0.535	0.465
Registered Veterinary Technician (RVT)	7.3%	9.1%	1.4%	15.033**	<0.001
Veterinary Assistant	29.7%	31.2%	24.9%	3.206	0.073
Veterinary Student	20.6%	18.2%	28.1%	9.916**	0.002
Other Vet Medical	5.5%	5.1%	6.8%	0.886	0.346
Trainer	17.2%	17.0%	18.1%	0.155	0.693
Groomer	5.3%	5.3%	5.4%	0.008	0.927
Pet Store Employee	7.2%	7.7%	5.4%	1.296	0.255
Behavior Counselor	9.2%	10.8%	4.1%	9.170**	0.002
Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist	1.7%	1.7%	1.3%	0.01	0.920
Dog Show Judge	1.1%	1.0%	1.4%	0.204	0.652
Dog Breeder	9.3%	7.4%	15.4%	12.659**	<0.001
Other Dog-Related Profession	17.8%	16.5%	21.7%	3.105	0.078
Total Sample Size	923	702	221		

Notes: *statistical tests in this table compare the percentage of respondents selecting a profession as a current or past profession (shown) to those that did not (not shown) by respondent segment. **significant at the p=0.05 level.

Chi-Square tests, adjusted for all pairwise comparisons using the Bonferroni correction, were used to compare two segments of the respondents: Group A (n=702) those whose opinions, currently or in the past, were used for record keeping purposes (documentation) and Group B (n=221) those whose opinions were not so used. There were no significant statistical differences between Groups A and B regarding: the respondents' gender, if they participated in other dog related activities (such as dog shows, agility, hunting, etc.), or if they lived with or owned dogs ($p > 0.05$). A t-test indicated no significant difference regarding age. See appendix for comparisons of participants' personal demographics.

3.2. Comparison of Visual Identification and DNA Breed Identification

The DNA analysis indicated none of the dogs were purebreds and most respondents identified the study dogs as mixed breeds. See Table 3. However, 7 of the 20 dogs were visually identified as probably purebreds by ten percent or more (range 10% - 25.4%) of the respondents. An average of 9.2% (1701/18408) of the responses were "yes" to the question "Do you think this dog is probably a purebred?".

A positive match between visual and DNA identification occurred if (1) the respondent indicated that the dog was not a purebred and (2) also specified a breed identified by DNA. The following were NOT considered matched responses:

If the dog was visually identified as a purebred (even if the breed identified was one identified as part of the dog's composition by DNA analysis) OR if the dog was visually identified as not a purebred but identified as breed that was not reported by DNA analysis.

For each dog, the percent of respondents whose visual identification matched the DNA identification was calculated by dividing the number of matched responses for a dog (numerator) by the sum of matched and unmatched responses (denominator). For each dog, we looked at how often visual and DNA identification matched at the three progressively less stringent levels:

- Level 1: Respondent indicated that the dog was NOT a Purebred AND the most predominant breed (Primary Visual Identification/ PVI) matched at least one of the Major DNA Identifications for that dog.
- Level 2: Respondent indicated that the dog was NOT a Purebred AND the PVI matched any DNA Identification (Major or Minor) of that dog.
- Level 3: Respondent indicated that the dog was NOT a Purebred AND EITHER PVI or SVI (second most predominant breed) visual identification matched any DNA Identification of that dog.

There were few significant statistical differences between those who had their opinions used for record keeping purposes (Group A) and those who did not have their opinions so used (Group B) regarding the frequency with which visual and DNA identification matching occurred at any of the 3 levels of matching stringency. See appendix for comparisons of the two groups at the 3 levels of matching stringency. We concluded the few differences between groups A and B to be of no practical significance and combined the groups for subsequent analysis.

Table 3. Number and Percent of Respondents That Answered "Yes," They Thought the Dog was a Purebred

Dog ID	Yes/Total	Percent
1	18/918	2.0%
2	63/917	6.9%
3	92/917	10.0%
4	17/919	1.8%
5	120/920	13.0%
6	36/920	3.9%
7	79/919	8.6%
8	75/922	8.1%
9	234/921	25.4%
10	134/919	14.6%
11	116/922	12.6%
12	81/922	8.8%
13	71/921	7.7%
14	36/922	3.9%
15	59/921	6.4%
16	32/922	3.5%
17	48/921	5.2%
18	172/922	18.7%
19	25/919	2.7%
20	193/919	21.0%
Overall	1703/18403	9.2%

DNA analysis indicated that none of the dogs were purebred.

The combined data showed that as the stringency levels for matching decreased, the percentage of matches increased. However the agreement between visual and DNA identification was low at all three levels, see Table 4. There were no matches of visual and DNA identifications at Level 1 for five dogs, no matches for four dogs at Level 2, and at Level 3, the most liberal criteria, no matches for one dog. For 8 dogs, fewer than 5% of the respondents' visual identifications matched any DNA identification at Level 3; for only 6 dogs did more than 50% of the respondents' visual identifications match any DNA identification.

3.3. Inter-Observer Reliability of Visual Identification of Most Predominant Breed of Dogs Identified as Mixed Breeds

Agreement among the respondents was also very poor, see Table 5 and see appendix. There was agreement among more than 50% of the respondents regarding the most predominant breed of a mixed breed for only 7 dogs and for 3 of these dogs the visual identification did not match any (either major or minor) DNA breed identification

Krippendorff's alpha was used to examine the reliability of the most commonly visually identified predominant breed (selected across all dogs identified as mixed breeds) for all respondents, yielding alpha=0.23 which is generally considered to represent low levels of inter-observer reliability[34],[35].The data was treated dichotomously, the respondents either provided the same answer (breed) or not.

Table 4. Percent and Number of Respondents Whose Visual Identification Matched DNA Breed Identification for Each Dog at 3 Levels of Matching Stringency

Dog ID	LEVEL 1: PVI Matched a Major DNA Breed Identification		LEVEL 2: PVI Matched Any DNA Breed Identification		LEVEL 3: PVI or SVI Matched Any DNA Breed Identification	
	Percent	Yes / Total	Percent	Yes / Total	Percent	Yes / Total
1*	33.20%	290/873	35.70%	312/873	62.80%	550/876
2	43.00%	369/859	43.00%	369/859	53.10%	457/860
3	7.20%	62/863	7.20%	62/863	11.90%	103/863
4	0.10%	1/852	9.40%	80/852	12.40%	106/852
5	72.90%	633/896	72.90%	633/896	81.90%	734/896
6	0.00%	0/856	0.00%	0/856	0.10%	1/856
7	1.90%	17/872	1.90%	17/872	4.60%	40/872
8	0.00%	0/862	0.60%	5/862	1.90%	16/862
9	70.40%	639/908	70.50%	640/908	73.00%	664/909
10	0.00%	0/884	0.00%	0/884	0.10%	1/884
11*	53.70%	471/877	53.70%	471/877	64.50%	566/877
12	0.10%	1/831	0.10%	1/831	0.40%	3/831
13	0.00%	0/859	0.00%	0/859	0.00%	0/859
14	29.50%	260/880	29.50%	260/880	47.50%	418/880
15	0.20%	2/890	0.20%	2/890	0.70%	6/890
16	27.10%	218/805	27.10%	218/805	31.80%	256/805
17	56.60%	496/877	56.60%	496/877	75.30%	661/878
18	0.00%	0/869	0.00%	0/869	0.10%	1/869
19	10.80%	89/821	11.00%	90/821	14.60%	120/821
20	33.30%	283/849	38.20%	324/849	44.90%	381/849

PVI, Primary Visual Identification; SVI, Secondary Visual Identification; Any DNA Breed Identification, Major or Minor Breed relative representation in a dog. *American Staffordshire Terrier (AST), Pit Bull and Pit Bull Terrier visual identifications were considered matches to DNA analysis breed identification of AST. Percentages in bold indicate over 50% of the visual identifications matched DNA identifications.

Table 5. Breed of Dog Most Often Visually Identified as Primary (PVI) in Dogs Also Visually Identified as a Mixed Breed

Dog ID	Breed Identified by Greatest Percentage of Respondents	Percent Identifying That Breed	Number of Respondents
1	Labrador Retriever	39.9%	855
2	Golden Retriever	39.3%	796
3	Border Collie	45.7%	771
4	Pug	37.0%	835
5	GERMAN SHEPHERD DOG	69.1%	777
6	German Shorthaired Pointer	33.0%	820
7	CORGI	66.7%	793
8	PIT BULL/AST* (39.5%/12.1%)	61.6%	787
9	DALMATIAN	94.8%	674
10	Yorkshire Terrier	16.6%	751
11	GERMAN SHEPHERD DOG	61.2%	762
12	Labrador Retriever	16.4%	750
13	German Shorthaired Pointer	14.4%	790
14	German Shepherd Dog	30.8%	844
15	LABRADOR RETRIEVER	86.9%	831
16	Australian Shepherd Dog	23.9%	774
17	CHIHUAHUA	55.5%	831
18	Cairn Terrier	23.5%	697
19	Collie	14.6%	796
20	Shih Tzu	43.2%	657

*AST, American Staffordshire Terrier; PVI=Most Predominant Visual Identification. Breeds in UPPER CASE and bold indicate over 50% of the respondents were in agreement

4. Discussion

This study reveals a wide disparity between DNA and visual identification of the predominant breeds comprising a dog. It also indicates a low level of agreement among people regarding breed composition. Those of us in the animal care services have always remarked on the differences of opinions regarding what breed a dog is but few are aware of how little agreement there is or how often one's own opinion could be wrong.

The wide range of responses by the participants are compatible with research and theories pertaining to judgments of probability based on partial information[36-42]. Identification of the breed composition of a dog requires recognition and recall, both of which are influenced by a multitude of variables, such as perception, knowledge base, memory, recent or salient experiences with the subject matter, and cognitive abilities involving categorization, sorting, matching and recombination of features.

Identification is affected by what features (stimuli) a person notices and how much weight the person attributes to those features. For example, some people may attend to the hair coat and color pattern of a dog, while others focus on size, shape of head, or whether or not the tail is curled. The ease with which people notice a feature enhances recall and increases the weight that is placed on that feature. For example, so much significance is placed on any black pigmentation of a dog's tongue that, regardless of the morphology of the dog, it is usually identified as a Chow Chow or Chow mix. The frequency with which people are exposed to the names of specific breeds of dogs and their perception of the population of specific breeds will also influence prediction. Interestingly, the literature indicates that well educated professionals are as susceptible to judgmental biases as are the lay public[36],[37],[43],[44].

The low percentage of agreement between visual and DNA identification may be partially explained by perception biases. However, DNA identification of the proportion of purebred breeds in mixed breed dogs is not perfect either, nor do the laboratories that provide such analyses claim to be infallible. The average accuracy of identification of the breeds in an individual dog can be expected to decrease as the heterogeneity of its ancestors increases. Canine Heritage™ states that their accuracy of identification of known registered purebred dogs is 99% [45]. Wisdom Panel™ currently reports a 90% average accuracy of identification of F1 crosses of known registered purebred dogs[46].

After completing the quiz, the DNA results were revealed to the participants. However, it was not until we showed them pictures of the F1 and F2 crosses of registered purebred dogs[47] did the participants begin to realize that mixed breed dogs may not look like their purebred parents or grandparents. The mixed breeds bore little, if any resemblance, to their purebred parents or grandparents. Crosses of purebred dogs (particularly beyond the first generation) can result in unique combinations and a collage of features. In fact, the pictures of Scott and Fuller's dogs looked more like breeds other than their immediate ancestors. Many current breeds were derived by crossing existing breeds or by selecting for morphological variations within a breed until a "new" breed was established[25],[30]. It actually shouldn't be surprising that visual identification of mixed breeds does not always agree with DNA based breed identification. A recent genetic study in dogs determined that very few regions of the canine genome encode morphological traits associated with breed-defining physical traits[48]. Dogs have on the order of 20,000 to 25,000 genes and fewer than 1% of the dog's genes control the external morphological features associated with specific breeds of dogs, such as ear shape and size, whether the ears are floppy, length of the legs, length of the coat, coat color and shape of the head and length of muzzle. A dog could genetically be 50% a German Shepherd Dog and lack the genomic regions responsible for the German Shepherd Dog size, coat color, muzzle length and ear properties.

Even after Scott and Fuller's pictures were shown, there was reluctance to consider that the DNA results might be correct. This is compatible with observations that people often adhere to their beliefs even when data is present that contradicts their beliefs and the confidence with which people adhere to these beliefs may actually increase when presented with contradictory data[36],[44],[49].

Misidentification of a dog's breed composition is not a trivial matter. How a dog is identified can affect many people and dogs. Dog ownership is common worldwide[50-53]. In the United States approximately 40% of households have at least one dog, there is an increasing trend to obtain dogs from animal shelters/humane societies, and ownership of mixed breeds is increasing compared to purebreds[50],[51].

4.1. Limitations of the Study

It is possible that the breeds of these 20 dogs in this study are unusually difficult to identify visually. Similar studies should be conducted with other samples of dogs and by other researchers.

5. Conclusions

The disparities between visual and DNA identification of the breed composition of dogs and the low agreement among people who identify dogs raise questions concerning the accuracy of databases which supply demographic data on dog breeds, as well as the justification and ability to implement laws and private restrictions pertaining to dogs based on breed composition.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank Elizabeth Arps, Dan Estep, John R. Greenwood, Janis Joslin, and Katherine Mitsouras for their help. The DNA breed analysis was provided by MARS VETERINARY™ Lincoln, NE 68501-0839. This study was partially supported by the National Canine Research Council, LLC, 433 Pugsley Hill Rd, Amenia, NY 12501.

APPENDIX

Table 6. Comparisons of Respondents' Personal Demographics by Whether or Not Their Opinions Were Used to Assign Dog Breed

		All Respondents	GROUP A	GROUP B	Stat Test	p
			n=702	n=221	Result	
			Opinions Used to Assign Breed Identities in Records	Opinions NOT Used to Assign Breed Identities in Records	(comparing Group A to B)	
Respondent Gender	Female	75.7%	74.2%	80.8%	$\chi^2=3.687$	0.055
	Male	24.3%	25.8%	19.2%		
	N	875	677	198		
Respondent Age	Mean	37.6	37.3	38.9	$t=-1.427$	0.155
	Median	35.0	35.0	38.0		
	Standard Deviation	12.5	12.0	14.0		
	N	826	642	184		
Participation in Dog-Related Activities	Yes	30.3%	29.8%	31.7%	$\chi^2=0.279$	0.597
	No	69.7%	70.2%	68.3%		
	N	909	701	208		
Own/Reside with Dogs	Yes	82.9%	83.8%	79.8%	$\chi^2=1.806$	0.179
	No	17.1%	16.2%	20.2%		
	N	890	687	203		

χ^2 =Chi-Square. t =Student t-test. N= Number answering this question. Not all participants answered each of the questions

Table 7. Comparison and Percent of Level 1 Matches for Groups A and B

Dog ID	GROUP A	GROUP B	Chi-Square	p
	Opinions Used for Records % (n / N)	Opinions NOT Used for Records % (n / N)		
1*	33% (224 / 679)	33.2% (66 / 199)	0.002	0.963
2	40.8% (273 / 669)	48.7% (96 / 197)	3.907**	0.048
3	7.4% (50 / 674)	6.2% (12 / 193)	0.326	0.568
4	0% (0 / 664)	0.5% (1 / 202)	Fisher's Exact Test=0.233	
5	72.8% (500 / 687)	73.2% (153 / 209)	0.015	0.904
6	0% (0 / 669)	0% (0 / 192)	NA	
7	2.4% (16 / 671)	0.5% (1 / 205)	Fisher's Exact Test=0.142	
8	0% (0 / 672)	0% (0 / 194)	NA	
9	69.8% (484 / 693)	72.1% (155 / 215)	0.399	0.528
10	0% (0 / 679)	0% (0 / 210)	NA	
11*	51.6% (350 / 678)	59.6% (121 / 203)	4.002**	0.045
12	0.2% (1 / 653)	0% (0 / 192)	Fisher's Exact Test=1.000	
13	0% (0 / 671)	0% (0 / 196)	NA	
14	28.2% (192 / 680)	33.2% (68 / 205)	1.849	0.174
15	0.3% (2 / 684)	0% (0 / 210)	Fisher's Exact Test=1.000	
16	27.5% (176 / 640)	23.1% (42 / 182)	1.423	0.233
17	54.6% (371 / 680)	61.6% (125 / 203)	3.127	0.077
18	0% (0 / 671)	0% (0 / 203)	NA	
19	11.9% (77 / 647)	6.3% (12 / 190)	4.822**	0.028
20	32.4% (213 / 657)	35.9% (70 / 195)	0.82	0.365

*American Staffordshire Terrier (AST), Pit Bull and Pit Bull Terrier visual identifications were considered matches to DNA analysis breed identification of AST. n/N number of matches for that dog/Number of respondents that answered the question for that dog. **significant at p < 0.05 level

Table 8. Comparison and Percent of Level 2 Matches for Groups A and B

Dog ID	GROUP A	GROUP B	Chi-Square	p
	Opinions Used for Records % (n / N)	Opinions NOT Used for Records % (n / N)		
1*	35.9% (244 / 679)	34.2% (68 / 199)	0.209	0.647
2	40.8% (273 / 669)	48.7% (96 / 197)	3.907**	0.048
3	7.4% (50 / 674)	6.2% (12 / 193)	0.326	0.568
4	10.1% (67 / 664)	6.4% (13 / 202)	2.467	0.116
5	72.8% (500 / 687)	73.2% (153 / 209)	0.015	0.904
6	0% (0 / 669)	0% (0 / 192)	NA	
7	2.4% (16 / 671)	0.5% (1 / 205)	Fisher's Exact Test=0.142	
8	0.6% (4 / 672)	0.5% (1 / 194)	Fisher's Exact Test=1.000	
9	70% (485 / 693)	72.1% (155 / 215)	0.35	0.554
10	0% (0 / 679)	0% (0 / 210)	NA	
11*	51.6% (350 / 678)	59.6% (121 / 203)	4.002**	0.045
12	0.2% (1 / 653)	0% (0 / 192)	0.294	0.587
13	0% (0 / 671)	0% (0 / 196)	NA	
14	28.2% (192 / 680)	33.2% (68 / 205)	1.849	0.174
15	0.3% (2 / 684)	0% (0 / 210)	Fisher's Exact Test=1.000	
16	27.5% (176 / 640)	23.1% (42 / 182)	1.423	0.233
17	54.6% (371 / 680)	61.6% (125 / 203)	3.127	0.077
18	0% (0 / 671)	0% (0 / 203)	NA	
19	12.1% (78 / 647)	6.3% (12 / 190)	5.042	0.025
20	37.7% (248 / 657)	39% (76 / 195)	0.096	0.757

*American Staffordshire Terrier (AST), Pit Bull and Pit Bull Terrier visual identifications were considered matches to DNA analysis breed identification of AST. n/N number of matches for that dog/Number of respondents that answered the question for that dog. **significant at p < 0.05 level

Table 9. Comparison and Percent of Level 3 Matches for Groups A and B

Dog ID	GROUP A	GROUP B	Chi-Square	p
	Opinions Used for Records % (n / N)	Opinions NOT Used for Records % (n / N)		
1*	62.5% (425 / 680)	62.2% (125 / 201)	0.006	
2	52.2% (350 / 670)	54.3% (107 / 197)	0.263	
3	12.3% (84 / 674)	9.8% (19 / 193)	0.983	
4	13.4% (89 / 664)	8.4% (17 / 202)	3.587	
5	82.8% (569 / 687)	78.9% (165 / 209)	1.626	
6	0.1% (1 / 669)	0% (0 / 192)	Fisher's Exact Test=1.000	
7	5.4% (36 / 671)	2% (4 / 205)	Fisher's Exact Test=0.054	
8	2.1% (14 / 672)	1% (2 / 194)	Fisher's Exact Test=0.545	
9	72.6% (503 / 693)	74.5% (161 / 216)	0.319	
10	0.1% (1 / 679)	0% (0 / 210)	Fisher's Exact Test=1.000	
11*	63% (427 / 678)	68.5% (139 / 203)	2.052	
12	0.3% (3 / 653)	0% (0 / 192)	Fisher's Exact Test=1.000	
13	0% (0 / 671)	0% (0 / 196)	NA	
14	45.4% (309 / 680)	53.2% (109 / 205)	3.776	
15	0.6% (4 / 684)	1% (2 / 210)	Fisher's Exact Test=0.630	
16	31.9% (204 / 640)	28.6% (52 / 182)	0.721	
17	73.7% (502 / 681)	78.3% (159 / 203)	1.762	
18	0.1% (1 / 671)	0% (0 / 203)	Fisher's Exact Test=0.630	
19	15.9% (103 / 647)	8.9% (17 / 190)	5.813	
20	44.1% (290 / 657)	46.7% (91 / 195)	0.388	

*American Staffordshire Terrier (AST), Pit Bull and Pit Bull Terrier visual identifications were considered matches to DNA analysis breed identification of AST. n/N number of matches for that dog/Number of respondents that answered the question for that dog. **significant at p < 0.05 level

Table 10. The Top 5 Breeds/Types Most Often Visually Identified as “The Most Predominant” in Each of the 20 Dogs Identified as Mixed Breeds and Corresponding DNA Breed Identification

Dog ID	The five most frequently visually identified breeds/type and % of respondents indicating that breed	N	Major Breeds Identified by DNA	Minor Breeds Identified by DNA
1	Labrador Retriever 39.9%; Pit Bull 27.4%; Rhodesian Ridgeback 9.6%; American Staffordshire Terrier 6.5%; Chinese Shar-Pei 2.6%	855	American Staffordshire Terrier ** ; Saint Bernard **	Chinese Shar-Pei *
2	Golden Retriever 39.3%; Labrador Retriever 7.3%; Border Collie 7%; Australian Shepherd 6.8%; American Eskimo Dog 6.5%	796	Rottweiler ** ; American Eskimo Dog ** ; Golden Retriever ** ; Nova Scotia Duck-Tolling Retriever **	
3	Border Collie 45.7%; Flat-Coated Retriever 8.9%; Australian Shepherd 8%; English Springer Spaniel, Springer Spaniel 8%; Labrador Retriever 5.7%	771	English Springer Spaniel ** ; German Wirehaired Pointer **	
4	Pug 37%; Corgi 12.9%; Pekingese 9.1%; Chihuahua 8.5%; Beagle 6.1%	835	Lhasa Apso **	Bischoon Prise * ; Australian Cattle Dog * ; Italian Greyhound * ; Pekingese * ; Shih Tzu *
5	German Shepherd Dog 59.1%; Siberian Husky 24.5%; Shepherd Sheepdog 4.5%; Akita 4.2%; Australian Cattle Dog, Blue, Red, Queensland Heeler 2.7%	777	German Shepherd Dog * ; Australian Shepherd Dog * ; Siberian Husky * ; Chow Chow * ; Dalmatian *	
6	German Shorthaired Pointer 33%; Pointer, English Pointer 18.4%; Australian Cattle Dog, Blue, Red, Queensland Heeler 11.1%; Labrador Retriever 4.9%; Catahoula Leopard Dog 3.3%	820	Chow Chow * ; Dachshund * ; Nova Scotia Duck-Tolling Retriever *	
7	Corgi 56.7%; Chihuahua 14.1%; German Shepherd Dog 4.3%; Pembroke Welsh Corgi 3.5%; Shetland Sheepdog 2.4%	793	American Water Spaniel * ; Black Russian Terrier * ; Pomeranian * ; Tibetan Terrier * ; Shih Tzu *	
8	Pit Bull 39.5%; Labrador Retriever 13.7%; American Staffordshire Terrier 12.1%; Bulldog 9%; Jack Russell Terrier 5.3%	787	Chow Chow ** ; French Bull Dog **	Clumber Spaniel * ; Dalmatian * ; Gordon Setter * ; Great Dane *
9	Dalmatian 94.8%; Pit Bull 1.8%; Labrador Retriever 0.7%; Australian Cattle Dog, Blue, Red, Queensland Heeler 0.4%; Pointer, English Pointer 0.4%	674	Dalmatian **	Boxer * ; Chow Chow * ; New Foundland *
10	Yorkshire Terrier 16.6%; Schnauzer 10.4%; Terrier 9.6%; Chihuahua 9.1%; Cairn Terrier 8.9%	751	Australian Shepherd Dog ** ; Pekingese ** ;	
11	German Shepherd Dog 61.2%; Belgian Malinois 7.3%; Shepherd, Sheepdog 7.1%; Akita 2.8%; Belgian Sheepdog, Belgian Shepherd 2.3%	762	American Staffordshire Terrier ** ; German Shepherd Dog **	Bull Terrier * ; Chow Chow *
12	Labrador Retriever 16.4%; Pharaoh Hound 15.7%; German Shepherd Dog 12.8%; Basenji 8.9%; Greyhound 6.9%	750	Australian Shepherd Dog * ; Boxer * ; Dachshund * ; Dalmatian * ; Glen of Imaal Terrier *	
13	German Shorthaired Pointer 14.4%; Pointer, English Pointer 13.3%; American Foxhound, Foxhound 8.6%; Coonhound 7.5%; Treeing Walker Coonhound, Treeing Walker Hound 6.7%	790	Alaskan Malamute *	
14	German Shepherd Dog 30.8%; Australian Shepherd 27.1%; Australian Cattle Dog, Blue, Red, Queensland Heeler 8.4%; Catahoula Leopard Dog 7.6%; Rottweiler 5.2%	844	German Shepherd Dog ** ; Standard Schnauzer **	English Setter *
15	Labrador Retriever 86.9%; Rottweiler 5.1%; Border Collie 1.4%; German Shepherd Dog 1.2%; Australian Shepherd 0.8%	831	Chow Chow * ; Golden Retriever * ; Gordon Setter * ; St Bernard *	
16	Australian Shepherd 23.9%; Cocker Spaniel 8.5%; Border Collie 8.3%; Spaniel 7.5%; German Shepherd Dog 5%	774	Australian Shepherd Dog * ; Boxer * ; Golden Retriever *	
17	Chihuahua 55.5%; Beagle 9.1%; Jack Russell Terrier 7.6%; Cavalier King Charles Spaniel 4.2%; Pekingese 4%	831	Cavalier King Charles Spaniel * ; Chihuahua * ; Shih Tzu *	
18	Cairn Terrier 23.5%; Terrier 11%; Wire Fox Terrier 9.3%; West Highland White Terrier 8.5%; Yorkshire Terrier 6.7%	697	Miniature Pinscher ***	Dachshund *
19	Collie 14.6%; Beagle 13.9%; German Shepherd Dog 11.4%; Border Collie 11.2%; Smooth Coated Collie 9%	796	Border Collie **	Bassett Hound * ; Cocker Spaniel *
20	Shih Tzu 43.2%; Lhasa Apso 25.9%; Cocker Spaniel 4.4%; Maltese 3.2%; Terrier 3%	657	Shih Tzu **	Cocker Spaniel * ; Miniature Schnauzer * ; Pekingese *

* 12.5% breed composition by DNA. ** 25% breed composition by DNA. *** 50% breed composition by DNA. For calculations of inter-observer reliability of each dog, only the answers of respondents who indicated that the dog was not a purebred and committed to what they thought was the most predominant breed in that dog were used.

References

- [1] Online Available: https://www.avma.org/KB/Resources/Backgrounders/Documents/dog_bite_risk_and_prevention_bgnd.pdf
- [2] W.G. Winkler, “Human Deaths Induced by Dog Bites, United States, 1974-75”, Association of Schools of Public Health, Public Health Reports, vol.92, no.5, pp.425-429, 1977.
- [3] L.E. Pinckney, L.A. Kennedy, “Traumatic Deaths from Dog Attacks in the United States”, American Academy of Pediatrics, Pediatrics, vol.69, no.2, pp.193-196, 1982.
- [4] E.A. Lauer, W.C. White, B.A. Lauer, “Dog Bites: A Neglected Problem in Accident Prevention”, American Medical Association, American Journal of Diseases in Children, vol.136, no.2, pp.202-204, 1982.
- [5] J.J. Sacks, R.W. Sattin, S.E. Bonzo, “Dog Bite-related Fatalities from 1979 through 1988”, American Medical Association, Journal of the American Medical Association, vol.262, no.11, pp.1489-1492, 1989.

- [6] K.A.Gershman, J.J. Sacks, J.C. Wright, "Which Dogs Bite? A Case-Control Study of Risk Factors", *American Academy of Pediatrics, Pediatrics*, vol.93, no.6., pp.913-916, 1994.
- [7] J.J. Sacks, L. Sinclair, J. Gilchrist, G.C. Golab, R. Lockwood, "Breeds of Dogs Involved in Fatal Human Attacks in the United States Between 1979 and 1998", *American Medical Association, Journal of the American Medical Association*, vol.217, no.6, pp.836-840, 2000.
- [8] L. Cunningham in *The State of Animals IV: 2007*, D.J. Salem, A.N. Rowan, Eds. (Humane Society Press Washington DC, 2007), chap.2.
- [9] R. Trevejo, M. Yang, E.M. Lund, "Epidemiology of Surgical Castration of Dogs and Cats in the United States, American Veterinary Medical Association, *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, vol.238, no. 7, pp.898-904, 2011.
- [10] J.K. Bini, S.M. Cohn, S.M. Acosta, M.J. McFarland, M.T. Muir, J.E. Michalek, "Mortality, Mauling, and Maiming by Vicious Dogs", *Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, Annals of Surgery*, vol.253, issue 4, pp.791-797, 2011.
- [11] J. Schalamon, H. Ainoedhofer, G. Singer, T. Petnehazy, J. Mayr, K. Kiss, M.E.Höllwarth. "Analysis of Dog Bites in Children Who are Younger Than 17 Years", *American Academy of Pediatrics, Pediatrics*, vol.117, no.3, pp.374-379, 2006.
- [12] T. De Keuster, J. Lamoureux, A. Kahn, "Epidemiology of Dog Bites: A Belgian Experience of Canine Behaviour and Public Health Concerns", *Elsevier, The Veterinary Journal*, vol. 172, no.3, pp.482-487, 2006.
- [13] J. Berkey, "Dog Breed Specific Legislation: The Cost to People, Pets and Veterinarians, and the Damage to the Human-animal Bond", in *Proceedings of the 146th American Veterinary Medical Association Annual Convention*, 2009.
- [14] Online Available:www.animallaw.info/articles/aruslweiss2001.htm
- [15] Online Available:http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Breed-specific_legislation
- [16] Online Available:http://nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com/uploaded_files/tiny_mce/World-wide%20Failure%20of%20BSL.pdf
- [17] R.A. Ledger, J.S. Orihel, N. Clarke, S. Murphy, M. Sedlbauer, "Breed Specific Legislation: Considerations for Evaluating its Effectiveness and Recommendations for Alternatives", *Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, Canadian Veterinary Journal*, vol.46, no.8, pp.735-743, 2005.
- [18] G.J. Patronek, M. Slater, A. Marder, "Use of a Number-needed-to-ban Calculation to Illustrate Limitations of Breed-specific Legislation in Decreasing the Risk of Dog Bite-related Injury", *American Veterinary Medical Association, Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, vol.237, no.7, pp.788-792, 2010.
- [19] M. Wapner, J.F. Wilson, "Are Laws Prohibiting Ownership of Pit Bull-Type Dogs Legally Enforceable?" *American Veterinary Medical Association, Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, vol.216, no.10, pp. 1552-1554, 2000.
- [20] R.J. Simpson, K.J. Simpson, L. VanKavage, "Rethinking Dog Breed Identification in Veterinary Practice", *American Veterinary Medical Association, Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, vol.241, no.9, pp.1163-1166, 2012.
- [21] H.G. Parker, L.V. Kim, N.B. Sutter, S. Carlson, T.D. Lorentzen, T.B. Malek, G.S. Johnson, H.B. DeFrance, E.A. Ostrander, L. Kruglyak, "Genetic Structure of the Purebred Domestic Dog", *American Association for the Advancement of Science, Science*, vol.304, no.5674, pp.1160-1164, 2004.
- [22] "The WISDOM Panel™ MX MONOGRAPH", *Mars Veterinary™ Lincoln, Nebraska 68501-0839* (2007).
- [23] P. Jones, K. Chase, A. Martin, P. Davern, E.A. Ostrander, K.G. Lark, "Single-Nucleotide-Polymorphism-Based Association mapping of Dog Stereotypes", *Genetics Society of America, Genetics*, vol.179, no.2, pp.1033-1044, 2008.
- [24] A. Vaysse, A. Ratnakumar, T. Derrien, E. Axelsson, G.R. Pielberg, S. Sigurdsson, T. Fall, E.H. Seppälä, M.S.T. Hansen, C.T. Lawley, E.K. Karlsson, The LUPA Consortium, D. Bannasch, C. Vilà, H. Lohi, F. Galibert, M. Fredholm, J. Häggström, Å. Hedhammer, C. Andre´, K. Lindblad-Toh, C. Hitte, M.T. Webster. "Identification of Genomic Regions Associated with Phenotypic Variation Between Dog Breeds Using Selection Mapping", *Public Library of Science, PLoS Genetics*, vol.7, no.10, pp.1-21, 2011.
- [25] G. Larson, E.K. Karlsson, A. Perri, M.T. Webster, S.Y.W. Ho, J. Peters, P.W. Stahl, P.J. Piper, F. Lingaas, M. Fredholm, K.E. Comstock, J.F. Modiano, C. Schelling, A.I. Agoulnik, P.A. Leegwater, K. Dobney, J-D. Vigne, C. Vilà, L. Andersson, K. Lindblad-Toh, "Rethinking Dog Domestication by Integrating Genetics, Archeology, and Biogeography", *Stanford University's HighWire Press, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America Early Edition* pp.1-6, 2012.
- [26] V.L. Voith, E. Ingram, K. Mitsouras, K. Irizarry, "Comparison of Adoption Agency Breed Identification and DNA Identification of Dogs", *Taylor and Francis, Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science*, vol.12, no.3, pp.253-262, 2009.
- [27] Online Available:http://library.municode.com/HTML/10257/level4/TITIIREMUCO_CH8AN_ARTIIDOCA_DIV3PRAGAN.html#TITIIREMUCO_CH8AN_ARTIIDOCA_DIV3PRAGAN_S8-55PIBUPR
- [28] Online Available:<http://lis.princegeorgescountymd.gov/lis/data/TOC/Sec03.ASP>
- [29] Online Available:<http://www.gazette.vic.gov.au/gazette/Gazettes2011/GG2011S283.pdf>
- [30] American Kennel Club. *The Complete Dog Book: 20th Edition*, Ballantine Books, USA, 2006.
- [31] Online Available:<http://www.nyx.net/~mbur/apbtfagover.html>
- [32] J. Stahlkuppe. *The American Pit Bull Terrier Handbook*, 1st Edition, Barron's Educational Series, USA, 2000.
- [33] Online Available: http://www.adbadog.com/p_home.asp
- [34] A.F. Hayes, K. Krippendorff, "Answering the Call for a Standard Reliability Measure for Coding Data." *Taylor and Francis, Communication Methods and Measures*, vol.1, no.1, pp.77-89, 2007.

- [35] J.R. Landis, G.G. Koch, "The Measurement of Observer Agreement for Categorical Data", *The International Biometric Society, Biometrics*, vol.33, pp.159-174, 1977.
- [36] D. Kahneman, A. Tversky, "On the Psychology of Prediction", *American Psychological Association, Psychological Review*, vol.80, no.4, pp.237-251, 1973.
- [37] A. Tversky, D. Kahneman, "Judgment Under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases", *American Association for the Advancement of Science, Science, New Series*, vol.185, no.4157, pp.1124-1131, 1974.
- [38] A. M. Treisman, G. Gelade, "A Feature-Integration Theory of Attention", *Elsevier, Cognitive Psychology*, vol.12, no.1, pp.97-136, 1980.
- [39] A. Treisman, H. Schmidt, "Illusory Conjunctions in the Perception of Objects", *Elsevier, Cognitive Psychology*, vol.14, no.1, pp.107-141, 1982.
- [40] P.G. Schyns, "Diagnostic Recognition: Task Constraints, Object Information, and their Interactions", *Elsevier, Cognition*, vol.67, pp.147-179, 1998.
- [41] D.G. Goldstein, G. Gigerenzer, "Models of Ecological Rationality: The Recognition Heuristic", *American Psychological Association, Psychological Review*, vol. 109, no.1, pp.75-90, 2002.
- [42] N. Schwarz, L.A. Vaughn, "The Availability Heuristic Revisited: Ease of Recall and Content of Recall as Distinct Sources of Information. In Thomas Gilovich, Dale W. Griffin, Daniel Kahneman, Heuristics and Biases: The Psychology of Intuitive Judgment, Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom, 2002.
- [43] E. Stephan, G. Kiell, "Decision Processes in Professional Investors: Does Expertise Moderate Judgmental Biases? in Proceedings of the 29th European Marketing Academy Annual Conference, pp.416-420, 2000.
- [44] Online Available: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/23/magazine/dont-blink-the-hazards-of-confidence.html?pagewanted=all>
- [45] Online Available: http://www.canineheritage.com/general_faq.html
- [46] Online Available: <http://www.wisdompanelpro.com/faq.html>
- [47] J. P. Scott, J. L. Fuller, *Genetics and the Social Behavior of the Dog*. The University of Chicago Press, USA, 1965.
- [48] A.R. Boyko, P. Quignon, L. Li, J.J. Schoenebeck, J.D. Degenhardt, K.E. Lohmueller, K. Zhao, A. Brisbin, H.G. Parker, B.M. vonHoldt, M. Cargill, A. Auton, A. Reynolds, A.G. Elkahoun, M. Castelano, D.S. Mosher, N.B. Sutter, G.S. Johnson, J. Novembre, M.J. Hubisz, A. Slepel, R.K. Wayne, C.D. Bustamante, E.A. Ostrander, "A Simple Genetic Architecture Underlies Morphological Variation in Dogs", *Public Library of Science, PLoS Biology*, vol.8, no.8, 2010.
- [49] L.J. Sanna, N. Schwartz, E.M. Small, "Accessibility Experiences and the Hindsight Bias: I Knew it All Along Versus it Could Never Have Happened", *The Psychonomic Society, Memory & Cognition*, vol.30, no.8, pp.1288-1296, 2002.
- [50] Online Available: http://www.americanpetproducts.org/press_industrytrends.asp
- [51] American Veterinary Medical Association. *U.S. Pet Ownership & Demographics Sourcebook: 2012 Edition*. American Veterinary Medical Association, USA, 2012.
- [52] Online Available: http://www.wspa.org.uk/Images/Pet%20ownership%20and%20trade%20-%20Global%20report_tcm9-10875.pdf
- [53] Online Available: <http://www.pfma.org.uk/pet-population/>

Make MSN your homepage Skip to content
MSN news
site search Submit Query

Like 746k

Follow @msnnews

home
us
crime & justice
world
sci/tech
pop culture
in depth
offbeat
photos
video

Dog owners use DNA tests to fight mistaken breed identity



Dog owners are turning to DNA testing to prove their pets aren't banned breeds.

SHARE
139

TWEET
6

EMAIL

msn news 7/25/13 By Jodi Helmer of MSN News

Dog owners are turning to DNA testing in the hopes that pinpointing their canine companions' breeds could save them from death row.

A DNA test might have saved the life of a stray dog that ended up at the shelter in Lucas County, Ohio.

The dog warden picked up a dog and her litter of eight puppies in 2010. Based on visual identification, he decided the dog was a pit bull and ordered her to be euthanized.

"He had a mandate that all pit bulls must die," explains Jean Keating, executive director of local rescue group The Pit Crew.

The problem: The dog might not have been a pit bull at all.

Related: Missing service dog trained to work with vets found brutally beaten

A ban on euthanizing puppies less than 12 weeks old spared the lives of her litter. The Pit Crew took the puppies into rescue — and tested their DNA. The results showed that the litter was 50 percent American Staffordshire terrier, 25 percent English bulldog and 25 percent Wheaten terrier.

Under the statewide breed ban in place at the time (it was overturned in 2012) a dog needed to be at least 51 percent of a pit bull breed to be prohibited in Ohio.

"If the puppies had arrived at the pound a few weeks later, the entire litter would have been killed along with their mom because of the way they looked," Keating says.

A DNA test may have revealed that the puppies' mother was also a mix of several breeds — and the information could have saved her life.

Related: Pet flipping: Criminals cash in on stolen cats, dogs

FIGHTING BACK

More and more municipalities are beginning to move away from breed-specific legislation, which often forces owners of "bully" breeds like pit bulls, rottweilers, mastiffs, presa canarios and dobermans to adhere to strict licensing and insurance requirements and, in some cases, euthanize dogs based on their breed.

In the past 18 months, nearly twice as many municipalities have rejected or repealed such rules as those that have considered or enacted it, according to the National Canine Research Foundation. Sixteen states have preempted such laws from being passed at all, the foundation reports.

The widespread availability of dog DNA testing has given dog owners the technology to fight back as well.

The DNA tests, which cost between \$65 and \$200, use blood or tissue samples taken from canine cheek swabs to compare DNA sequences to specific dog breeds.

"Different breeds of dogs will have different combinations of DNA," explains Stephen Zawistowski PhD, science advisor to the ASPCA. "These differences account for the individual and breed differences that we see in dogs."

According to Wisdom Panel, a DNA dog test available through Mars Veterinary can identify up to 157 different dog breeds with 90 percent accuracy. Most vets can do the testing and DIY kits are available online through companies like Wisdom Panel.

The breed-specific legislation is enforced based on a visual determination of a dog's breed, usually done by animal control officers, which new data shows is problematic. If a dog owner could prove to the city that their dog isn't one of the banned or restricted breeds, they could avoid all the trouble associated with them.

Related: 3 California officers off street duty after shooting dog

A 2013 study published in the American Journal of Sociological Research asked 900 participants in dog-related professions to make breed identifications based on color video clips of 20 dogs. Less than half of their identifications matched the DNA results.

"The interpretation of breed is often left up to animal control officers who are, in many cases, not equipped to make an accurate breed identification. Even vet training doesn't give us a great background for identifying breeds," explains Rob Simpson, a veterinarian at Kingston Animal Hospital in Tennessee. "DNA testing [for dogs] is in its infancy but right now it's the best technology we have to accurately identify breed."

In addition to using DNA testing in the battle against breed-specific legislation, the results of canine cheek swabs and blood tests are also being used in criminal investigations.

In June, the owner of four pit bulls was arrested on murder charges in Littleton, Calif., after DNA evidence taken from his dogs showed the dogs were responsible for mauling a jogger. In Kentucky, DNA evidence collected after a series of attacks on local farm animals helped exonerate a local pit bull that was suspected of killing the animals.

"DNA testing has really shown people that you can't judge a dog based on how it looks," Keating says.

Join MSN News on social
Share your point of view with us on Facebook
Get the latest news and updates on Twitter
See photos and videos on Tumblr



Comparison of Adoption Agency Breed Identification and DNA Breed Identification of Dogs (Poster)

Authors

Author: V Voith, C Bond, E Ingram, K Irizarry, K Mitsouras, J Marilo

admin

Posted: College of Veterinary Medicine, Western University of Health Sciences, 309 E Second St., Pomona California 91766
Dec 13, 2011

Tags:

Abstract

Comments:

0

This study was undertaken to compare breed identification by canine adoption agencies with identification by DNA analyses of 20 dogs of unknown parentage.

Government legislation, housing associations, landlords, and insurance companies may prohibit ownership or impose constraints on ownership of specific breeds or mixed breeds. If people are unsure what breed a dog is, they are often forced to guess and asked to name "the breed the dog looks most like".

The 20 dogs in this study[1] had been adopted between ~ 6 weeks and 5 years of age from 17 different locations, and between 2.5 months and 11.5 years prior to the study. They were ~ 5.5 months to 12 years old at the time of the study. MARS VETERINARY™, Lincoln, Nebraska, performed the DNA analyses and reported to have "an average accuracy of 84% in first-generation crossbred dogs of known parentage". All of the breeds identified by the adoption agencies were in the MARS™ database. Breeds must have comprised at least 12.5% of the dog's make-up to be reported.

There was little correlation between the dog adoption agencies' identification of probable breed composition with the identification of breeds by DNA analysis. Only 25% (4/16) of the dogs identified by agencies as a specified breed mix were also identified as the same predominant breeds by DNA. In 15 of the 16 dogs, DNA analyses identified predominant breeds that were not proposed by the adoption agencies. In the 2 dogs identified only as "shepherd mixes" by adoption agencies, no German Shepherd Dog ancestry was reported by DNA. In the 3 dogs described as terrier mixes, a terrier breed was only identified by DNA in one dog.

[1] Voith VL, Ingram E, K Irizarry, K Mitsouras M, Irizarry K (2009). Comparison of Adoption Agency Breed Identification and DNA Breed Identification of Dogs. *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science*, 12:253-262.

[◀ The Cochrane Collaboration](#)

[up](#)

[The Role of Sentinel Practices in Evidence-Based Veterinary Research ▶](#)

[Log in to post comments](#)

About Us

The EBVMA is a non-profit professional organization with an international scope. It was founded to better organize the emerging research,

Latest Posts

[An EBM Anthem? Viva la Evidence](#)

[New International EBVM Initiatives](#)

Contact Info

EBVMA
Attn: Dr. Sandi Lefebvre, EBVMA
Secretary
c/o Banfield Pet Hospital*


training and practice of evidence-based medicine.


Evidence-based veterinary medicine is the formal strategy to integrate the best research evidence available combined with clinical expertise as well as the unique needs or wishes of each client in clinical practice. Much of this is based on results from research studies that have been critically-designed and statistically evaluated.

2013 Roy Montgomery Research Award

The Future of Evidence-Based Veterinary Medicine: Challenges & Opportunities

Latest Tweets

 **EBVMA Members** @ebvma 16h
From JAMA: "Evidence-Based Medicine: An Oral History". An excellent 47 minute video production worth seeing at jama.jamanetwork.com/multimediaPlay

 **EBVMA Members** @ebvma 13 Nov
Paywalls hide knowledge and stifle innovation, help map their impact and get the research you need. #oabuttonlaunch thndr.it/1atMFSK

8000 NE Tillamook St., Portland, OR 97213 (United States)

info@ebvma.org

LISTSERV®: (Members Only)

*Note: The EBVMA is an independent non-profit organization (United States 501(c)(3)) and not affiliated with Banfield Pet Hospital

Follow Us

Comparison of Visual and DNA Breed Identification of Dogs and Inter-Observer Reliability

V.L. Voith, R. Trevejoⁱⁱ, S. Dowling-Guyverⁱⁱⁱ, C. Chadik, A. Marderⁱⁱⁱ, V. Johnsonⁱ, K. Irizarryⁱ, J. Marilo

ⁱCollege of Veterinary Medicine, Western University of Health Sciences, Tomona, 91766; United States of America ⁱⁱOregon State University, Beaverton, 97006, United States of America ⁱⁱⁱCenter for Shelter Dogs, Animal Rescue League of Boston, Boston, 02118, United States of America

INTRODUCTION

A previous study¹ found little correlation between dog adoption agencies' identification of probable breed composition with identification of breeds by DNA analysis. Because these dogs may have been identified by only one person, we presented one-minute video clips of the same 20 dogs to over 900 people who were engaged in dog-related professions or services. We were interested in how often their visual identifications matched DNA identifications and how often the respondents agreed as to the most predominant breed of dogs that they identified as mixed breeds.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The Dogs: Twenty privately-owned dogs from a pool of dogs that had been volunteered by their owners to participate in a study. The dogs had been adopted from 17 different locations. There were 12 Spayed Females, 1 Intact Female, and 7 Castrated Males. All dogs had permanent canine teeth and were 0.5-12 years old. There were 5 dogs in each of the weight ranges: < 20 pounds, 21-40 pounds, 41-60 pounds, and > 60 pounds. All were identified as mixed breeds by DNA analysis.²

The Respondents: The 986 participants completed all or part of the identification quiz at 30 locations throughout the United States. Many of these sites were at regional or national meetings with participants from several states; 923 participants met the inclusion criteria of identifying their profession or dog-related service and indicated that they have been asked what breed a dog appears to be. The majority of respondents were or had been in animal control/sheltering and/or veterinary medical fields.

The Quiz: One-minute, color video clips of each dog, depicted in front of a screen with a grid of 1-foot squares, were shown to the participants. The dogs were allowed to move about and full bilateral, frontal views, and close-ups of the heads were always shown. Participants were asked if they thought the dogs were purebreds or not and if so, what breed or predominant breed(s).



VISUAL ID: Labrador Retriever (86.9% of 815 Respondents) DNA ID: 25% each: American Staff Terrier, Saint Bernard; 12.5%: Chinese Shar Pei



VISUAL ID: Golden Retriever (99.3% of 795 Respondents) DNA ID: 25% each: American Eskimo Dog, Golden Retriever, Nova Scotia Duck-Tolling Retriever, Rotweiler



VISUAL ID: Border Collie (85.7% of 777 Respondents) DNA ID: 25% each: English Springer Spaniel, German Wirehaired Pointer



VISUAL ID: Pit Bull (89.5%) American Staffordshire Terrier (12.1%) (51.6% of 787 Respondents) DNA ID: 25% each: Chow, French Bulldog, 12.5% each: Cocker Spaniel, Dalmatian, Gordon Setter, Great Dane



VISUAL ID: Shih Tzu (43.2% of 657 Respondents) DNA ID: 25%: Shih Tzu, 12.5% each: Cocker Spaniel, Pekinese, Miniature Schnauzer



VISUAL ID: Collie (14.6% of 795 Respondents) DNA ID: 25%: Border Collie, 12.5% each: Bassett Hound, Cocker Spaniel



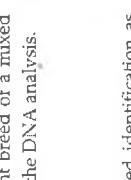
VISUAL ID: Cairn Terrier (23.5% of 697 Respondents) DNA ID: 50%: Miniature Pinscher, 12.5%: Dachshund



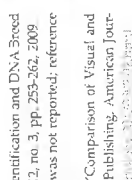
VISUAL ID: Chihuahua (55.5% of 831 Respondents) DNA ID: 12.5% each: Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, Chihuahua, Shih Tzu



VISUAL ID: Australian Shepherd Dog (23.9% of 774 Respondents) DNA ID: 12.5% each: Australian Shepherd Dog, Boxer, Golden Retriever



VISUAL ID: Labrador Retriever (86.9% of 831 Respondents) DNA ID: 12.5% each: Chow Chow, Golden Retriever, Gordon Setter, Saint Bernard



VISUAL ID: German Shepherd Dog (30.3% of 844 of Respondents) DNA ID: 25% each: German Shepherd Dog, Standard Schnauzer, 12.5%: English Setter



VISUAL ID: German Shorthaired Pointer (14.4% of 750 Respondents) DNA ID: 12.5% each: Australian Shepherd Dog, Boxer, Dachshund, Dalmatian, Glen of Imaal Terrier

RESULTS³

For 14 of the dogs, fewer than 50% of the respondents visually identified breeds of dogs that matched DNA identification. For only 7 of the dogs was there agreement among more than 50% of the respondents regarding the most predominant breed of a mixed breed and in 3 of those cases the visual identification did not match the DNA analysis.

CONCLUSIONS

This study reveals large disparities between visual and DNA breed identification as well as differences among peoples' visual identifications of dogs. These discrepancies raise questions concerning the accuracy of databases which supply demographic data on dog breeds for publications such as public health reports, articles on canine behavior, and the rationale for public and private restrictions pertaining to dog breeds.

REFERENCES

- V.L. Voith, E. Ingram, K. Mitsouras, K. Irizarry. "Comparison of Adoption Agency Breed Identification and DNA Breed Identification of Dogs." Taylor and Francis, Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science, vol. 12, no. 3, pp. 259-262, 2009
- MARS VETERINARY, Lincoln, NE USA 68501-0839. Breed composition less than 12.5% was not reported; reference data based on 130 AKC registered dogs an average of 84% accuracy in F1 purebred crosses.
- V.L. Voith, R. Trevejo, S. Dowling-Guyver, C. Chadik, A. Marder, V. Johnson, K. Irizarry. "Comparison of Visual and DNA Breed Identification of Dogs and Inter-Observer Reliability." Scientific and Academic Publishing, American Journal of Sociological Research, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 17-29, 2013. <http://www.scipub.com/doi/10.1155/2013/1729>



Adapted from the article "Comparison of Visual and DNA Breed Identification of Dogs and Inter-Observer Reliability" by Victoria L. Voith, et al. Copyright © 2013 Scientific and Academic Publishing.

College of Veterinary Medicine

Poster Copyright © 2013 Victoria L. Voith.



VISUAL ID: German Shepherd (61.2% of 762 Respondents) DNA ID: 25% each: American Staffordshire Terrier, German Shepherd, Bull Dog, 12.5% each: Bull Terrier, Chow Chow



VISUAL ID: Yorkshire Terrier (16.6% of 751 Respondents) DNA ID: 25% each: Australian Shepherd Dog, Pekinese



VISUAL ID: German Shepherd Dog (61.2% of 762 Respondents) DNA ID: 25% each: American Staffordshire Terrier, German Shepherd, Bull Dog, 12.5% each: Bull Terrier, Chow Chow



VISUAL ID: Dalmatian (94.8% of 676 Respondents) DNA ID: 25%: Dalmatian; Chow, Newfoundland



VISUAL ID: Corgi (56.7% of 793 Respondents) DNA ID: 12.5% each: American Water Spaniel, Black Russian Terrier, Pomeranian, Shih Tzu, Tibetan Terrier



VISUAL ID: Pit Bull (89.5%) American Staffordshire Terrier (12.1%) (51.6% of 787 Respondents) DNA ID: 25% each: Chow, French Bulldog, 12.5% each: Cocker Spaniel, Dalmatian, Gordon Setter, Great Dane



VISUAL ID: German Shepherd (61.2% of 762 Respondents) DNA ID: 25% each: American Staffordshire Terrier, German Shepherd, Bull Dog, 12.5% each: Bull Terrier, Chow Chow



VISUAL ID: German Shorthaired Pointer (14.4% of 750 Respondents) DNA ID: 12.5% each: Australian Shepherd Dog, Boxer, Dachshund, Dalmatian, Glen of Imaal Terrier

Pit Bull Identification in Animal Shelters

Kimberly R. Olson¹, BS; Julie K. Lew¹, DVM, PhD, DACVIM; Bo Norby², CMV, MPVM, PhD
¹Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program, University of Florida; ²Department of Large Animal Clinical Sciences, Michigan State University

Introduction:

Breed identification is used in dog adoption, lost and found, and regulation. In animal shelters, staff members usually assign breed according to what relinquishing owners report their dogs to be or based on appearance alone since most dogs arrive without a known pedigree.¹ Today, there is a negative public perception of pit bulls and labeling a dog as a pit bull can have a negative impact on its adoptability. Sometimes these negative impressions have resulted in bans on owning pit bulls in hopes of guarding public safety. To date, there is no universally accepted definition of a pit bull, nor is there a universally accepted method of breed identification.²

Hypothesis and Objective:

Shelter staff members and veterinarians routinely make subjective breed assessments, but the reliability and repeatability of their conclusions is unknown. The objective of this study was to test the hypothesis that agreement among shelter staff members regarding identification of pit bulls would be poor and there would be poor agreement between visual breed identification and DNA breed signatures.

Methods:

In this prospective cross-sectional study, 4 staff members at 4 different shelters each recorded the suspected primary breed of 30 dogs, for a total of 16 observers and 120 dogs. In this study, the terms American pit bull terrier, American Staffordshire terrier, Staffordshire bull terrier, and pit bull were included in the study definition of pit bull-type breeds. Blood was collected from each dog for DNA breed signature. Dogs were coded as "pit bull" if American Staffordshire terrier or Staffordshire bull terrier were identified to comprise at least 25% of the breed signature. Agreement among individual shelter staff members regarding identification of pit bulls was determined with the kappa statistic. The sensitivity and specificity of each staff member's identification of pit bulls with DNA breed signature as a gold standard was calculated.

Acknowledgements:

The authors would like to thank the Merial Summer Scholars Research and the Maddie's Shelter Medicine Programs at the University of Florida, Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program is underwritten by a grant from Maddie's Fund[®], The Pet Rescues Foundation (www.maddiesfund.org), helping to fund the creation of a top-bill nation. We thank the four animal shelters that participated in this study, Jacksonville Animal Care and Protective Services, the Jacksonville Humane Society, Marion County Animal Services, and Tallahassee Animal Services. Finally we thank Michael Cranford, Sylvia Tucker, Nieme Fabian, and Janine Wilson for their hard work and making this study possible.

Figure 1: Shelter staff sensitivity in identifying true pit bulls

Observer	Shelter 1				Shelter 2				Shelter 3				Shelter 4			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Observer 1	33%	67%	67%	67%	50%	50%	33%	33%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%
Observer 2	33%	67%	67%	67%	50%	50%	33%	33%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%
Observer 3	33%	67%	67%	67%	50%	50%	33%	33%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%
Observer 4	33%	67%	67%	67%	50%	50%	33%	33%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%

Table 1: Examples of staff breed designations and genetic breed designations for several study dogs

Dog	Photo	Staff 1	Staff 2	Staff 3	Staff 4	Genetic Breed
Dog 7		Lab/ Am. Staff	Am. Staff/ Lab	Am. Staff/ Lab	Pit Bull/ Lab	Irish Water Spaniel 25%; Siberian Husky, 25%; Boston Terrier, 25%
Dog 8		Boxer/ Lab	Am. Staff/ Chow	Boxer/ Lab	Am. Staff/ Greyhound	Boxer, 25%; Alaskan Malamute, 25%
Dog 9		Am. Staff	Am. Staff Milk	Pit Bull	Am. Pit Bull Terrier	Am. Bulldog, 50%; Am. Staff, 50%
Dog 11		Aust. Cattle Dog/ Border Collie	Catahoula/ Lab	Border Collie/ Aust. Cattle Dog	Border Collie/ Aust. Cattle Dog	Aust. Cattle Dog, 25%; Am. Staff, 25%
Dog 59		Pit Bull Mix	Pit Bull	Am. Pit Bull Terrier Milk	Pit Bull Mix	Am. Bulldog, 50%; Am. Staff, 50%
Dog 62		Jack Russell Terrier/ Hound	Beagle/ Lab	Shar-Pei/ Rat Terrier	Chihuahua Mix	Chow, 25%; Am. Staff, 25%; Siberian Husky, 25%

Results:

1. 120 total dogs: 25 "true" pit bulls by DNA analysis + 95 "non-pit bulls"
2. Shelter staff identified 55 out of the 120 dogs to be pit bull type breeds
3. Only 46% of these dogs actually were true pit bulls by DNA analysis.
4. Shelter staff missed identifying 5 (20%) of the 25 true pit bulls.
5. Only 8 (32%) of the 25 pit bulls were identified as a pit bull by all staff.
6. Accuracy in breed assignment varied among individuals, with sensitivity for pit bull-type breed identification ranging from 33% to 75% and specificity ranging from 52% to 100%.
7. The shelter staff agreement had a kappa value that was poor to fair (0.093-0.324).

Conclusions:

1. DNA analysis failed to confirm pit bull-type breeds in the pedigree in more than half of the dogs identified as pit bulls by shelter staff at the time of the study.
2. One in 5 dogs genetically identified as pit bulls were missed by shelter staff
3. One in 2 dogs labeled pit bulls by shelter staff lacked DNA breed signatures for pit bull terrier-type breeds.
4. Lack of consistency among shelter staff in breed assignment suggests that visual identification of pit bulls is unreliable.
5. Focusing on other attributes of dogs such as personality, behavior, and history instead of breed may help predict safety of individual dogs towards people and other animals.³
6. Public safety may be better preserved by recognition and mitigation of risk factors for dog attacks and on identification and management of individual dangerous dogs, rather than on exclusion of particular breeds.^{4,5}

References:

1. Voith VL, Ingram E, Mitsouras K, et al. Comparison of adoption agency breed identification and DNA breed identification of dogs. *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science* 2009;12:253-262.
2. DeLise K. *The Pit Bull Facebo: The media, myths, and politics of canine aggression.* http://nationalcaninerecognitioncouncil.com/uploaded_files/publications/230603165_Pit620Bull%20Facebo.pdf. Accessed July 23, 2011.
3. Bradley J. *Dog Bites: Problems and Solutions.* Baltimore, Animals and Society Institute, 2006.
4. Schuller CM, DeBess EE, Laplous JA, et al. Canine and human factors related to dog bite injuries. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* 2008;232:542-546.
5. Berkeley J. Dog breed specific legislation: The cost to people, pets and veterinarians, and the damage to the human-animal bond in Proceedings, Annual AVMA Convention 2009;1-5.



Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program
 UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

Media Library
 (http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/library/media-library/)

Tools, Tips & Fact Sheets
 (http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/library/tools-tips-fact-sheets/)

Job Board
 (http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/library/job-board/)

Dog Breed Identification: What kind of dog is that?

While many people like to know "What kind of dog is that?" just to satisfy their curiosity, dog breed designations have also been used in an attempt to predict future behavior, match pets to families, find lost dogs, and even to restrict the ownership of certain types of dogs.

Dogs come in all shapes and sizes, and frequently without pedigrees to describe their heritage. The breeds of dogs with unknown or mixed-breed lineages are frequently guessed based on their physical appearance, but it is not known how accurate these visual breed assessments are.

We conducted a national survey of dog experts to compare their best guesses for the breeds of dogs in a series of photographs. These visual assessments were compared to DNA breed profiles for the dogs.

More than 5,000 dog experts, including breeders, trainers, groomers, veterinarians, shelter staff, rescuers, and others completed the survey. You are invited to view pictures of the 100 dogs in our study, their actual DNA breed results, and what our survey responders guessed their breeds were.



See the results >> (<http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/library/research-studies/current-studies/dog-breeds/dna-results/>)

This study is being conducted by Dr. Julie Levy (<http://ufsheltermedicine.com/about-us/meet-the-team/dr-levy/>) with the assistance of Merial Veterinary Scholar Kathleen Croy and is made possible by a grant from the National Canine Research Council.

Tagged as: breed (<http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/tag/breed/>), canine (<http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/tag/canine/>), DNA (<http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/tag/dna/>), dog (<http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/tag/dog/>), dogs (<http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/tag/dogs/>), research (<http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/tag/research-2/>), survey (<http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/tag/survey/>)

Veterinarians ()	Veterinary Students ()	Shelter Professionals ()	How You Can Help ()	Quick Links ()
Online Certificate (http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/education/online-programs/online/)	On-Campus Certificate (http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/education/online-programs/on-campus-certificate/)	Disease Outbreak Response Assistance (http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/services/disease-outbreak-response-assistance/)	Donate Online or by Mail (http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/how-you-can-help/donate-online-or-by-mail/)	Contact Us (http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/about-us/about-us/)
Internship Program (http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/education/externship-program/)	Online Certificate (http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/education/online-programs/online/)	Shelter Health Assessment (http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/services/shelter-health-assessment/)	Make a Bequest (http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/how-you-can-help/bequests-trusts-estates/)	Meet the Team (http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/about-us/meet-the-team/)
Conference Presentations (http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/library/conference-presentations/)	Shelter Medicine (http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/library/conference-presentations/)	Ask a Shelter Vet (http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/education/externship-program/)	Give and Earn Income (http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/how-you-can-help/income-earning-gifts/)	Shelter Medicine News (http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/category/shelter-medicine-blog/)
Training & Workshops (http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/education/externship-program/)	Clinical Clerkships (http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/education/externship-program/)	Assessment/Request (http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/?page_id=446)	Support an Endowment (http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/how-you-can-help/stock/medts/)	Shelter Medicine Blog (http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/category/shelter-medicine-blog/)
Veterinary Forensics (http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/workshops/veterinary-forensic-sciences/)	Externship Program (http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/education/externship-program/)	Media Library (http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/library/)	Host an Extern (http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/education/externships/host-an-extern/)	Employment (http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/about-us/employment/)
Host an Extern (http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/education/externships/host-an-extern/)	Tools, Tips, & Fact Sheets (http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/library/tools-tips-fact-sheets/)	Tools Tips, & Fact Sheets (http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/library/tools-tips-fact-sheets/)	Support an Endowment (http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/how-you-can-help/stock/medts/)	What is Maddie's Fund® (http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/about-us/thanks-to-maddie/what-is-maddies-fund/)

Watch Webinar and Earn Credits on Genetics 101 Series

FAQ's

About Mars Veterinary™, Mars, Incorporated and WALTHAM®

- Who is Mars Veterinary?
- Why is Mars, Incorporated involved in canine genetics?
- When was Wisdom Panel™ *Professional* dog DNA test launched?
- What is the relationship between Mars, Mars Veterinary™ and WALTHAM®?

General questions about Wisdom Panel™ *Professional*

- What is Wisdom Panel™ *Professional*?
- How does Wisdom Panel™ *Professional* work and what type of information will it provide?
- How does this information help me and my dog?
- Can the test be used to identify health issues or disease predispositions?
- How accurate is Wisdom Panel™ *Professional*?
- Is it possible to get different results from Wisdom Panel™ *Professional* and other mixed-breed identification tests?
- Scientifically, how did we get to the point to where we can identify the breed makeup of mixed-breed dogs?
- Can Wisdom Panel™ *Professional* be used for a purebred dog?

- Are you collecting samples of purebred dogs to add more breeds to your test?
- Can I perform Wisdom Panel™ *Professional* testing on puppies?
- Is Wisdom Panel™ *Professional* FDA approved?
- Where did you get the dogs for your test development and scientific studies?
- Can you determine breed purity?
- Can you determine the sex of the dog tested?
- Do you plan to test the DNA for cats?

Questions about Breeds

- Can you test the breeds from a dog outside of the U.S.?
- Can you distinguish breed lines within a breed?
- Does Wisdom Panel™ *Professional* test for "Pit-bull?"
- Do you test for Jack Russell Terrier? What is the difference between the Jack Russell and the Parson Russell Terrier covered by your test?
- Do you identify UKC breeds with the Wisdom Panel™ *Professional* test?
- How do you report a mixed-breed dog's results? With percentages?

About the enhancements to the Wisdom Panel™ *Professional* test

- What is the difference between Wisdom Panel™ MX and Wisdom Panel™ *Professional*?
- What diseases or conditions does Wisdom Panel™ *Professional* test for?
- How are the health indicators analyzed?
- If my report shows a predisposition for a disease, will my dog get that disease?
- How is the size prediction analyzed?

Science Based Questions

- Is the breed detection analysis at all similar to the kind of DNA analysis people can undergo to find out their deep ancestry? Does mitochondrial DNA or Y-chromosome DNA come into play in the analysis? If so, how? If not, then how are the 321 genetic markers determined?
- Do breed signatures differ from commonly understood notions of recessive and dominant genes? That is, it seems that the presence of a breed signature doesn't necessarily imply a physical appearance?
- My dog looks nothing like the breeds detected in the Wisdom Panel™ *Professional* analysis. Can you explain how this can happen?

- Your Web site says that breed signatures are extremely similar and can be hard to differentiate. Who/what makes the final decision as to which breed is reported? Computer? Human? Combination?
- Many American Kennel Club (AKC) breeds are derived from other, older breeds. Would Wisdom Panel™ *Professional* sometimes mistakenly detect some of the originating breeds instead of the newer AKC recognized breed?
- Of the American Kennel Club (AKC) breeds not currently being identified and some other breeds not recognized by AKC (such as pit bull), would the test identify that the dog has a significant amount of an undetermined breed or would it just not say anything at all?
- Certain breeds in the U.S. have their ears cropped, their tails docked and their claws removed. Although this is a breed standard, why do your test results not show the phenotype (genes that control appearance) of these dog's traits, as well as these imposed standards, to help owners better understand the make-up of their pet?

Tough Questions

- Why would anyone want to pay for the mixed-breed test?
- Can this test be used by regulatory/animal control officials to determine whether breeds are legislated or banned in a particular community?
- Can shelters use this test to determine which dogs may be the least "adoptable", thereby putting certain dogs more at risk for euthanasia?
- Have you tested the same dog more than once to see if results are the same? If so, do the results come back the same each time?
- I recently did the Wisdom Panel™ MX test on my dog and now I see a new version of the test that promotes more breeds detected. Does this mean the test I did on my dog is wrong?
- Can I get the additional information provided by Wisdom Panel™ *Professional* on a dog that was tested with Wisdom Panel™ MX?
- Doesn't giving you the body condition of my dog give you the answer for the likely size of my dog?
- Can I use the size results to move into an apartment that has size limitations?

© 2014 Mars, Incorporated. All Rights Reserved.

[Legal](#) • [Privacy](#) • [Site Operator](#) • [Ad Choice](#) • [Mars.com](#)

POTENTIALLY PREVENTABLE HUSBANDRY FACTORS CO-OCCUR IN MOST DOG BITE-RELATED FATALITIES

A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY USING A NEW APPROACH

In December, 2013, *The Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association (JAVMA)* published the most comprehensive multifactorial study of dog bite-related fatalities (DBRFs) to be completed since the subject was first studied in the 1970's.¹ It is based on investigative techniques not previously employed in dog bite or DBRF studies and identified a significant co-occurrence of multiple potentially preventable factors.

“This study and its methodology offer an excellent opportunity for ... anyone concerned with the prevention of dog bite-related injuries, to develop an understanding of the multifactorial nature of both serious and fatal incidents.”

Experts have for decades recommended a range of ownership and husbandry practices to reduce the number of dog bite injuries.² The 2013 *JAVMA* paper confirms the multifaceted approach to dog bite prevention recommended by previous studies, as well as by organizations such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention³ and the American Veterinary Medical Association.⁴

The five authors, two of whom are/were on the staff of the National Canine Research Council,⁵ and one of whom (Dr. Jeffrey Sacks) was lead author on earlier studies of DBRFs, analyzed all the DBRFs known to have occurred during the ten-year period 2000 – 2009. Rather than rely predominantly on information contained in news accounts, as had previous studies of DBRFs, detailed case histories were compiled using reports by homicide detectives and animal control agencies, and interviews with investigators.

The case histories were compiled over a sufficiently long period of time – months or years, depending on the individual case – for the entire range of available facts surrounding an incident to come to light. The researchers found that their more extensive sources usually provided first-hand information not reported in the media, and often identified errors of fact that had been reported in the media.

**NATIONAL CANINE
RESEARCH COUNCIL**

A RESEARCH & POLICY THINK TANK

NATIONALCANINERESEARHCOUNCIL.COM

POTENTIALLY PREVENTABLE FACTORS

The researchers identified a striking co-occurrence of multiple, controllable factors: no able-bodied person being present to intervene (87.1%); the victim having no familiar relationship with the dog(s) (85.2%); the dog(s) owner failing to neuter/spay the dog(s) (84.4%); a victim's compromised ability, whether based on age or physical condition, to manage their interactions with the dog(s) (77.4%); the owner keeping dog(s) as resident dog(s), rather than as family pet(s) (76.2%); the owner's prior mismanagement of the dog(s) (37.5%); and the owner's abuse or neglect of dog(s) (21.1%). Four or more of these factors were present in 80.5% of cases; breed was not one of those factors.

The distinction between a resident dog and a family dog was first proposed years ago by National Canine Research Council Founder Karen Delise.⁶ 76.2% of the DBRFs in this study involved dogs that were not kept as family pets; rather they were only resident on the property. Dogs are predisposed to form attachments with people, to become dependent on people, and to rely upon their guidance in unfamiliar situations. While it is extremely rare that dogs living as either resident dogs or as family pets ever inflict serious injuries on humans, dogs not afforded the opportunity for regular, positive interaction with people may be more likely, in situations they perceive as stressful or threatening, to behave in ways primarily to protect themselves.

THE STUDY'S FINDINGS ON BREED

The authors of the 2013 *JAVMA* paper reported that the breed(s) of the dog or dogs could not be reliably identified in more than 80% of cases. News accounts disagreed with each other and/or with animal control reports in a significant number of incidents, casting doubt on the reliability of breed attributions and more generally for using media reports as a primary source of data for scientific studies. In only 45 (18%) of the cases in this study could these researchers make a valid determination that the animal was a member of a distinct, recognized breed. Twenty different breeds, along with two known mixes, were identified in connection with those 45 incidents.

The most widely publicized previous DBRF study⁷ which was based primarily on media reports, qualified the breed identifications obtained in their dataset, pointing out that the identification of a dog's breed may be subjective, and that even experts can disagree as to the breed(s) of a dog whose parentage they do not know. It has been known for decades that the cross-bred offspring of purebred dogs of different breeds often bear little or no resemblance to either their sires or dams.⁸ The previous DBRF study also did not conclude that one kind of dog was more likely to injure a human being than another kind of dog.

Lack of reliable breed identifications is consistent with the findings of Dr. Victoria Voith of Western University^{9,10} and of the Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program at the University of Florida's College of Veterinary Medicine.^{11,12} Both Dr. Voith and the Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program conducted surveys¹³ showing that opinions ventured by those working in animal-related fields regarding the breed or breeds in a dog of unknown parentage agreed with breed as detected by DNA analysis less than one-third of the time.¹⁴ Participants in the surveys conducted at both universities frequently disagreed with each other when attempting to identify the breed(s) in the same dog.

90% of the dogs described in this DBRF study's case files were characterized in at least one media report with a single breed descriptor, potentially implying that the dog was a purebred dog. A distribution heavily weighted

toward pure breed is in stark contrast to the findings of population-based studies indicating that ~46% of the dogs in the U.S. are mixed breed.¹⁵ Thus, either the designation of breed in the media reports for the cases under examination was done very loosely, and without regard to possible mixed breed status, or purebred dogs were heavily over-represented. The latter conclusion did not seem likely to these authors, particularly in light of the photographic evidence they were able to obtain. Finally, the news accounts erroneously reported the number of dogs involved in at least 6% of deaths.

The earlier, widely publicized study of DBRFs has been misunderstood, and misused to justify single-factor policy proposals such as breed-specific legislation (BSL), though the authors of that study did not endorse such policies. Failure to produce a reduction in dog bite-related injuries in jurisdictions where it has been imposed^{16,17} has caused the support for BSL to fade in recent years.¹⁸ The House of Delegates of the American Bar Association has passed a resolution urging all state, territorial and local legislative bodies and governmental agencies to repeal any breed discriminatory or breed specific provisions.¹⁹ In 2013, the White House, citing the views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, published a statement with the headline, "Breed-specific legislation is a bad idea."²⁰ BSL is also opposed by major national organizations, including the American Veterinary Medical Association, the National Animal Control Association, the Humane Society of the United States, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and Best Friends Animal Society.

UNDERSTANDING AND ADDRESSING HUSBANDRY FACTORS WILL LEAD TO BETTER PREVENTION

The trend in prevention of dog bites continues to shift in favor of multifactorial approaches focusing on improved ownership and husbandry practices, better understanding of dog behavior, education of parents and children regarding safety around dogs, and consistent enforcement of dangerous dog/reckless owner ordinances in communities. The findings reported in this study support this trend. The authors conclude that the potentially preventable factors co-occurring in more than 80% of the DBRFs in their ten-year case file are best addressed by multifactorial public and private strategies.

Further, they recommend their coding method to improve the quantity and quality of information compiled in future investigations of any dog bite-related injuries, not just DBRFs. This study and its methodology offer an excellent opportunity for policy makers, physicians, journalists, indeed, anyone concerned with the prevention of dog bite-related injuries, to develop an understanding of the multifactorial nature of both serious and fatal incidents.

UPDATED AUGUST 2015

SOURCES and NOTES:

1. Patronek, G.J., Sacks, J.J., Delise, K.M., Cleary, D.V., & Marder, A.R. (2013). Co-occurrence of potentially preventable factors in 256 dog bite-related fatalities in the United States (2000-2009). *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 243(12), 1726-1736.
2. American Veterinary Medical Association: Task Force on Canine Aggression and Human-Canine Interactions. (2001). A Community Approach to Dog Bite Prevention. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 218(11), 1732-1749.

3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2015). *Preventing Dog Bites*. Retrieved from: <http://www.cdc.gov/features/dog-bite-prevention/index.html>
4. American Veterinary Medical Association. (2015). *Dog Bite Prevention*. Retrieved from: <https://www.avma.org/public/pages/Dog-Bite-Prevention.aspx>
5. Karen Delise is the Founder & Director of Research. Donald Cleary was the Director of Communications & Publications in 2013, as well as Treasurer of Animal Farm Foundation, parent organization of National Canine Research Council.
6. Resident dogs are dogs, whether confined within a dwelling or otherwise, whose owners maintain them in ways that isolate them from regular, positive human interactions. Family dogs are dogs whose owners keep them in or near the home and also integrate them into the family unit, so that the dogs learn appropriate behavior through interaction with humans on a regular basis in positive and humane ways. See "Resident Dog vs Family Dog: What is the difference?"
7. Sacks, J.J., Sinclair, L., Gilchrist, J., Golab, G.C., & Lockwood, R. (2000). Breeds of dogs involved in fatal human attacks in the United States between 1979 and 1998. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 217(6), 836–840.
8. Scott, J.P. & Fuller, J.L. (1965). *Genetics and the Social Behavior of the Dog*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
9. Voith, V.L., Ingram, E., Mitsouras, K., & Irizarry, K. (2009). Comparison of adoption agency breed identification and DNA breed identification of dogs. *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science*, 12(3), 253-262.
10. Voith, V.L., Trevejo, R., Dowling-Guyer, S., Chadik, C., Marder, A., Johnson, V., & Irizarry, K. (2013). Comparison of Visual and DNA Breed Identification of Dogs and Inter-Observer Reliability. *American Journal of Sociological Research*, 3(2), 17-29.
11. Olson, K.R., Levy, J.K., & Norby, B. (2012). *Pit Bull Identification in Animal Shelters*. Retrieved from: <http://www.maddiesfund.org/Documents/Resource%20Library/Incorrect%20Breed%20Identification%20Study%20Poster.pdf>
12. Levy, J. & Croy, K. (2013). *Dog Breed Identification: What kind of a dog is that?* Retrieved from: <http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/library/research-studies/current-studies/dog-breeds/>
13. National Canine Research Council contributed funding to one of the surveys conducted by Western University and one conducted by the University of Florida's College of Veterinary Medicine.
14. DNA analysis of mixed breed dogs is not 100% accurate, nor do the companies offering such tests claim that it is. See: Wisdom Panel™ FAQ's. How accurate is Wisdom Panel™ Professional? Retrieved from: http://www.wisdompanel.com/why_test_your_dog/faqs/
15. American Veterinary Medical Association. (2012). *U.S. Pet Ownership & Demographics Sourcebook: 2012 Edition*. Schaumburg, IL: American Veterinary Medical Association.
16. Raghavan, M., Martens, P.J., Chateau, D. & Burchill, C. (2012). Effectiveness of breed-specific legislation in decreasing the incidence of dog-bite injury hospitalizations in people in the Canadian province of Manitoba. *Injury Prevention*, 19(3)
17. American Veterinary Medical Association: Animal Welfare Division. (2012). *Welfare Implications of The Role of Breed in Dog Bite Risk and Prevention*. Retrieved from: <https://www.avma.org/Advocacy/StateAndLocal/Documents/Welfare-Implications-of-the-role-of-breed.pdf>
18. For more information on the trends in breed-specific legislation see: www.NationalCanineResearchCouncil.com
19. American Bar Association. (2012). *Resolution 100: Adopted by the House of Delegates*. Retrieved from: http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/mental_physical_disability/Resolution_100.authcheckdam.pdf
20. The White House. (2013). *Breed-Specific Legislation Is a Bad Idea*. Retrieved from: <https://petitions.whitehouse.gov/response/breed-specific-legislation-bad-idea>

JANUARY 30, 2014

Pets by the Numbers

Pet ownership survey data and The HSUS's estimates on pets adopted from or euthanized in U.S. shelters in 2012 and 2013



The number of dogs and cats euthanized every year has gone down, but annually there are about 2.7 million healthy shelter dogs and cats who aren't adopted. iStockphoto

Pet ownership in the U.S. has more than tripled from the 1970s, when approximately 67 million households had pets, to 2012, when there were 164 million owned pets.

In other words, in 2012, 62 percent of American households included at least one pet.

That same year, according to the American Pet Products Association, Americans spent more than \$50 billion on their beloved cats, dogs, and other animal companions.

U.S. pet-ownership estimates from the APPA for 2012

Dogs

- 83.3 million—Number of owned dogs
- 47 percent—Percentage of households that own at least one dog
- 70 percent—Percentage of owners with one dog
- 20 percent—Percentage of owners with two dogs
- 10 percent—Percentage of owners with three or more dogs
- 1.47—Average number of owned dogs per household
- 20 percent—Percentage of owned dogs who were adopted from animal shelters
- \$231—Average annual amount spent by dog owners on routine veterinary visits
- 83 percent—Percentage of owned dogs who are spayed or neutered
- Even—Proportion of male to female owned dogs

Cats

- 95.6 million—Number of owned cats
- 46 percent—Percentage of owners with one cat
- 31 percent—Percentage of owners with two cats
- 24 percent—Percentage of owners with three or more cats
- 2.11—Average number of owned cats per household

- 26 percent—Percentage of owned cats who were adopted from an animal shelter
- \$193—Average annual amount spent by cat owners on routine veterinary visits
- 91 percent—Percentage of owned cats who are spayed or neutered
- 73 percent vs. 62 percent—The difference in number of owned female cats and owned male cats, respectively

Help provide affordable services to pet owners in communities without veterinary clinics and pet-supply stores by [volunteering for Pets for Life >>](#)

U.S. shelter and adoption estimates for 2012-13

There is no central data reporting system for U.S. animal shelters and rescues. These estimates are based on information provided by the (former) National Council on Pet Population Study and Policy.

Just as the U.S. has come a long way over the last few decades in terms of increased pet ownership, it's also progressed in terms of euthanasia. The number of dogs and cats euthanized each year in shelters has decreased, from 12–20 million to an estimated 3–4 million. However, there's still work to do: An estimated 2.7 million healthy shelter pets are not adopted each year, and only about 30 percent of pets in homes come from shelters or rescues.

- 3,500—Number of animal shelters
- 6 to 8 million—Number of cats and dogs entering shelters each year
- 25 percent—Percentage of purebred dogs in shelters
- 3 to 4 million—Number cats and dogs adopted from shelters each year
- 2.7 million—Number of adoptable cats and dogs euthanized in shelters each year
- 30 percent—Percentage of shelter dogs reclaimed by their owners
- 2 to 3 percent—Percentage of shelter cats reclaimed by owners



Animal Shelter Euthanasia

National euthanasia statistics are difficult to pinpoint because animal care and control agencies are not uniformly required to keep statistics on the number of animals taken in, adopted, euthanized or reclaimed. While many shelters know the value of keeping statistics, no national reporting structure exists to make compiling national statistics on these figures possible.

However, American Humane is one of the founding members of the National Council on Pet Population Study and Policy. The mission of the National Council is to gather and analyze reliable data that further characterize the number, origin and disposition of pets (dogs and cats) in the United States; to promote responsible stewardship of these companion animals; and based on the data gathered, to recommend programs to reduce the number of surplus/unwanted pets in the United States.

Unfortunately, the most recent statistics published by the National Council are from 1997, and only 1,000 shelters replied to the survey at that time. Using the National Council's numbers from 1997 and estimating the number of operating shelters in the United States to be 3,500 (the exact number of animal shelters operating in the United States does not exist), these estimates were made:

- Of the 1,000 shelters that replied to the National Council's survey, 4.3 million animals were handled.
- In 1997, roughly 64 percent of the total number of animals that entered shelters were euthanized -- approximately 2.7 million animals in just these 1,000 shelters. These animals may have been euthanized due to overcrowding, but may also have been sick, aggressive, injured or suffering from something else.
- 56 percent of dogs and 71 percent of cats that enter animal shelters are euthanized. More cats are euthanized than dogs because they are more likely to enter a shelter without any owner identification.
- Only 15.8 percent of dogs and 2 percent of cats that enter animal shelters are reunited with their owners.
- 25 percent of dogs and 24 percent of cats that enter animal shelters are adopted.

It is estimated that approximately 3.7 million animals were euthanized in the nation's shelters in 2008. This number represents a generally accepted statistic that is widely used by many animal welfare organizations, including the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA).

For more information on the studies done by the National Council, please visit www.petpopulation.org.

Practical solutions for reducing euthanasia numbers

American Humane believes that all dogs and cats adopted from public or private animal care and control agencies must be sterilized before being allowed to leave the shelter and supports passage of state laws mandating this practice.

American Humane supports the establishment and operation of low-cost spay/neuter clinics. The reduction in cost motivates those who cannot and those who will not pay the full cost for the operation and has proven successful in reducing euthanasia rates in communities across the nation.

American Humane believes the percentage of animals reunited with their owners would greatly increase if more pets were properly identified:

- Be sure your pet wears an identification tag, rabies license, and city license. Include your name, address, phone number and pet's name.
- Keep licenses current, as they help shelters locate pet owners.
- When moving, put a temporary tag on your pet. Include a phone number of someone who will know how to reach you and/or your cell number.
- Don't assume that your indoor pet doesn't need tags. Many strays in shelters are indoor pets that escaped.
- Purchase special cat collars with elastic bands to protect your cat from being caught in trees or on fences.
- In addition to ID tags, consider getting your pet microchipped. Always remember to keep this information current and provide an emergency contact.

[« Back](#)

"[A] unique and important book."

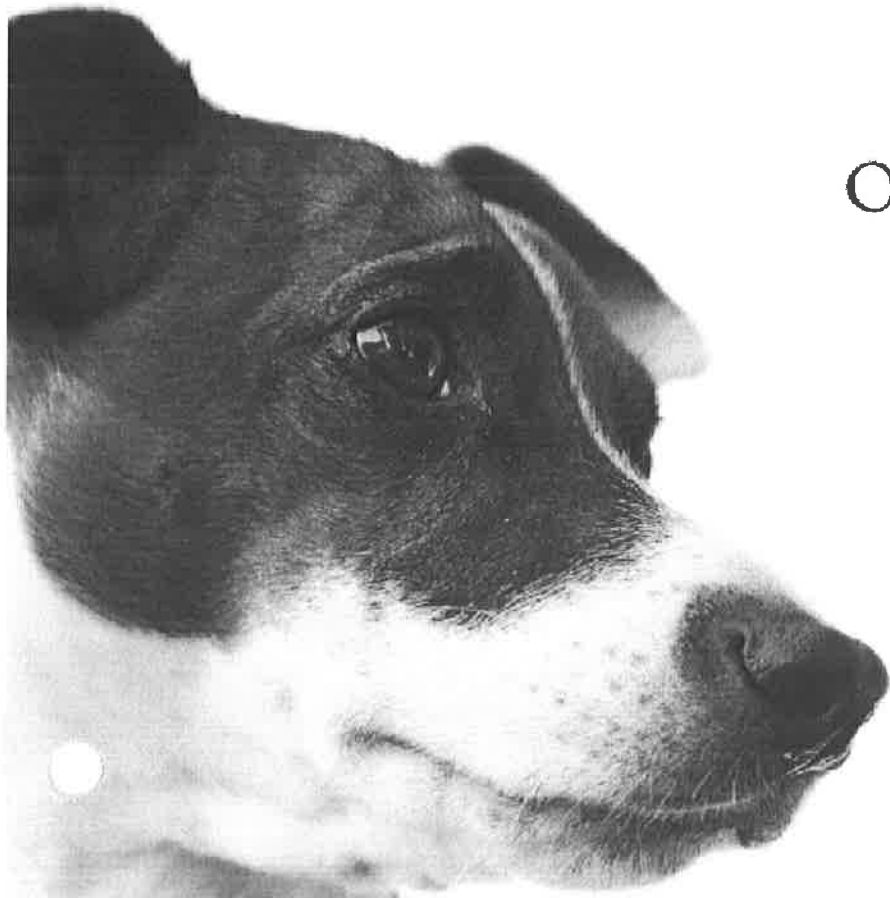
—LIBRARY JOURNAL

*"A passionate advocacy . . .
Highly recommended."*

—MIDWEST BOOK REVIEW



REDEMPTION



THE MYTH
OF PET
OVERPOPULATION
AND THE
NO KILL
REVOLUTION
IN AMERICA

Nathan J Winograd



- [Home](#)
- [About](#)
 - [Bio](#)
 - [No Kill Advocacy Center](#)
 - [Redemption](#)
 - [Irreconcilable Differences](#)
 - [All American Vegan](#)
 - [Friendly Fire](#)
 - [Huffington Post](#)
 - [Contact](#)
- [Bookstore](#)
- [Blog](#)
- [Appearances](#)
- [Shelter Tour](#)

search our site...



All Hail the Rescue Dog

April 22, 2011 by [Nathan J. Winograd](#)



The Honorable Micah Kellner, protector of shelter animals, champion of shelter volunteers, has just introduced legislation to make the “rescue dog” the official dog of New York State. Laws should not only prescribe what we expect, they should not only proscribe that which causes harm, they should set a bar of what we hope to aspire to as a society.

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK, REPRESENTED IN SENATE AND ASSEMBLY, DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. Legislative intent. Throughout history, art and literature have depicted humans in all walks of life and social strata with dogs, illustrating their widespread acceptance in everyday life. Some religions even incorporated the dog into their worship. Indeed, dogs have long been admired for the purity of their character traits, with military annals documenting the wartime bravery and courage of dogs in the K-9 Corps. Closer to home, our own culture is populated with examples of the well-established place dogs have found in our hearts and homes. People of all ages, but particularly the elderly and the young, enjoy their companionship. For single people, dogs offer a welcome relief from loneliness. For children, an animal in the home contributes warmth and unconditional love, and teaches responsibility and consideration for the needs of another creature. Those who suffer from disease or injury experience a therapeutic, even spiritual, benefit from their presence. Dogs do so much good for the community: they give us a sense of optimism, safeguard us from depression and loneliness, and break down the barriers that isolate us from one another. Their presence improves our health, protects us from danger, and teaches us about caring and responsibility. And they ask for so little in return.

Sadly, as many as 4 million dogs enter animal shelters in the United States each year. Over 90 percent of these dogs are savable. Most of them are simply victims of circumstance, ending up in a shelter through no fault of their own: a person moves, a couple divorces, a job is lost, someone gets ill or dies. Most of the dogs are healthy, well-behaved, and even housetrained.

Unfortunately, some people perceive rescue animals as “damaged,” concerned that the reason they are in the shelter is because something is wrong with them. Nothing could be further from the truth. But because of that perception, some people choose not to adopt. Tragically, roughly half of all dogs in shelters are killed. The deaths of these innocent animals can be prevented through adoption. Shelter and rescue animals are eager to become beloved members of a family, unconditionally loving and loyal pets, grateful for a second chance.

While some with special needs might need a little extra TLC, they can become members of loving homes, as many of the dogs saved from the horrific dog fighting operation in the Michael Vick case have proven. Adopting an animal from a shelter or rescue group eases the burden on the shelter or rescue group, enabling it to continue to serve the community by taking in other unwanted or needy animals. Generally, dogs adopted from shelters or rescue groups are neutered or spayed, thus reducing the number of homeless dogs in the state.

There are many benefits to adopting an animal from a shelter, ranging from the ownership support services that most shelters and rescues offer to the ability to adopt a dog that is already trained and housetrained. Many animal shelters and rescue organizations provide new owners with an array of material concerning their new pet’s personality, temperament, habits and other general qualities, and relating to training, common behavior problems, feeding, general care and more. In addition, there is the satisfaction of knowing that through adoption, a life has been saved.

As with the designation of other state symbols, such as the state flower or state tree, designating the rescue dog as official state dog will serve an important educational function. The state will promote humane education, providing opportunities for children in particular to learn about adopting rescued animals, as well as about the importance of measures such as spaying and neutering pets, providing them with microchip identification implants, and providing responsive pet care—all of which have been proven to reduce the number of animals arriving in shelters.

The legislature hereby finds and declares it necessary and in good policy of the state to promote and encourage the adoption of animals from animal shelters and animal rescue organizations and to recognize the services these entities provide.

Section 2. The state law is amended ... to read as follows:

STATE DOG. THE RESCUE DOG SHALL BE THE OFFICIAL DOG OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK. AS USED IN THIS SECTION "RESCUE DOG" MEANS A DOG OF ANY BREED OR MIXTURE OF BREEDS RESCUED AND ADOPTED FROM AN ANIMAL SHELTER OR RESCUE GROUP LOCATED IN THE STATE.

For more information, [click here](#).

Assembly Member Linda Rosenthal has indicated she wants to introduce legislation for an official state cat and "is thinking something feral, something that runs the streets." Bravo!



Mr. Picklechips, a rescue dog, urges a "Yes" vote on A.B. 6681

Bloggable, Share!

+ MORE

Tweet 13 Like 144 0

Filed Under [Blog Posts](#)

Tagged:

Comments

Comments are closed.

Follow

Facebook and Twitter icons followed by a button that says "Sign up for our mailing list" with a right-pointing arrow.

• Recent Posts

- [Protests Welcome!](#)
- [You're Invited!](#)
- [Redemption: The Film](#)


[HOME](#)
[OUR NO KILL MISSION](#)
[WHAT WE DO](#)
[GET INVOLVED](#)
[THE SANCTUARY](#)
[ADOPT A PET](#)

OUR WORK

[Email](#) [Print](#)


Nearly 30 years ago, when Best Friends helped pioneer the no-kill movement, more than 17 million homeless pets were dying each year in our nation's shelters, according to the Shelter Pet Project (consisting of Humane Society of the United States, Maddie's Fund, and the Ad Council.). Today, that number is around four million unnecessary deaths annually - that is tremendous progress, but Best Friends is committed to reducing that number to zero. By implementing targeted spay/neuter and TNR programs to reduce the number of animals who enter shelters, and by increasing the number of people who adopt pets, we know we can end the killing. We know we can Save Them All.

In Los Angeles, Best Friends is leading No-Kill Los Angeles (NKLA), a citywide initiative, fueled by a coalition of 50 local organizations, including Los Angeles Animal Services, with the goal of making the country's second largest and most diverse city into a no-kill community.

In Utah, a statewide coalition headed by Best Friends has the entire state on the threshold of no-kill.

In Jacksonville, San Antonio and Albuquerque, we sponsor effective programs with city government and local organizations to reduce the number of animals entering shelters and ultimately achieve no-kill communities.

Through our No More Homeless Pets Network Partner program, which consists of animal welfare organizations across the country who are teaming up with Best Friends to save lives in their own communities, we extend funding, resources, legislative support and know-how to every corner of the United States.

Meanwhile, our national initiatives focus on the animals most likely to enter America's shelter system - cats, castoffs from puppy mills, and pit-bull-terrier-type dogs. More than 70 percent of cats who enter our nation's animal shelters are killed, and many of them are outdoor community cats who should have been fixed and allowed to live out their lives, instead of being taken to a shelter. An estimated 25 percent of all dogs entering shelters are pure breeds from puppy mills, and the vast majority of dogs killed in shelters are pit-bull-terrier-type dogs.

Our national initiatives keep community cats safe and out of shelters with trap/neuter/return, battle commercial breeding operations, and fight discrimination against pit bull terriers.

Join us. Together we can Save Them All.

OUR MISSION TO SAVE LIVES



Initiatives

By participating in one of our initiatives, you can save lives, and help make our goal to Save Them All a reality.

Adoptions

Encouraging adoption is a common thread that runs through nearly all the work we do. Be a part of our life-saving work.

Related Links

- [No-Kill Resource Library](#)
- [Upcoming Events](#)
- [Why Adopt Rather Than Buy?](#)

EXPLORE BEST FRIENDS

[Our No Kill Mission >](#) [Sanctuary Map >](#) [Local Programs >](#)

Follow us on:



OUR NO KILL MISSION

WHAT WE DO

Our Work

[Save Them All](#) | [Initiatives](#) | [Adoptions](#) | [Spay & Neuter](#)

Events

[Upcoming Events and Promotions](#) | [Pet Super Adoptions](#) | [Workshops](#) | [Host an Event](#) | [Strut Your Mutt](#) | [Best Friends National Conference](#)

Network Partners

Local Programs

[Best Friends - Utah](#) | [Best Friends - New York](#) | [Best Friends - L.A.](#) | [Model Programs](#)

GET INVOLVED

Donate

[Donate Now](#) | [Monthly Giving](#) | [Sponsor an Animal](#) | [Golden Circle Society](#) | [Give a Tribute Gift](#) | [Create a Fundraiser](#) | [Planned Giving](#) | [Workplace Giving](#) | [Wish List](#) | [Other Ways to Give](#)

Volunteer

[At the Sanctuary \(Kanab\)](#) | [Across the Country](#) | [Featured Opportunities](#) | [Search Opportunities](#) | [Log In to Volunteer](#)

Become a Guardian Angel

[Guardian Angel Home](#) | [About Guardian Angel](#) | [Become a Guardian Angel](#) | [View All Current Animals](#) | [View Guardian Angel Alumni](#)

Action Alert Sign Up

Connect with Us

THE SANCTUARY

Explore the Sanctuary

[Sanctuary Map](#) | [Dogtown](#) | [Cat World](#) | [Horse Haven](#) | [Marshall's Piggy Paradise](#) | [Bunny House](#) | [Parrot Garden](#) | [Wild Friends](#) | [Angels Rest](#)

Visiting

[Travel Advisory 2014](#) | [Tours](#) | [Directions & Parking](#) | [Places to Stay](#) | [Things to Do](#) | [Sleepovers](#) | [Outings](#)

How the Sanctuary Works

[Information & Admission Policies](#) | [Behind the Scenes](#)

ADOPT A PET

Sanctuary Animals

[All](#) | [Cat](#) | [Dog](#) | [Rabbit](#) | [Horse](#) | [Pig](#) | [Birds](#) | [Small & Furry](#) | [Barnyard](#) | [Adoption Promotion](#)

Best Friends-Utah

Best Friends-L.A.

Near You

How to Adopt

Adoption Promotion

Recently Adopted



© 2012 Best Friends. All Rights Reserved - 5001 Angel Canyon Rd, Kanab, UT 84741

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms & Conditions](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Careers](#) | [Site Map](#) | [For the Media](#)



CONNECTICUT MILITARY DEPARTMENT

Home About Us Programs & Services Publications Contact Us



- Facilities Directory
- Employment Opportunities
- Connecticut Military History
- Request for and/or Release of Records
- State Militia Units
- Policy Statements
- Bid Contracts
- Publications
- Forms
- Employee Recognition Program

FLAG STATUS
US FULL CT FULL

RECOVERY

Receive Updates by E-mail
Sign-Up for E-alerts

Regulations of CT State Agencies

access health CT

VETERANS ct.gov

Connecticut Recovers

CT Alert
WE CAN'T ALERT YOU IF WE CAN'T REACH YOU

Connecticut Military History

Stubby's Obituary

This article was printed by the "New York Times", 4 April 1926

STUBBY OF A.E.F. ENTERS VALHALLA

Tramp Dog of No Pedigree Took Part In the Big Parade in France

Stubby is dead. He was only a dog and unpedigreed at that, but he was the most famous mascot in the A.E.F. Stubby took part in four major offensives, was wounded and gassed. He captured a German spy and won more medals than any other soldier dog. He led the American Legion parades and was known to three Presidents. He was, indisputably, a fighting dog. His Arlington is to be the Smithsonian Institution.

Early in life Stubby longed for a career. Realizing the value of education, the brindled and white "bull terrier" abandoned his nomadic life for that of a student. Selecting Yale University as his alma mater, he was soon recognized there as a prodigy. His progress, however, was interrupted.

America entered the war and the First Connecticut Regiment, later merged into the 102d Infantry, Twenty-sixth Division, was ordered to Yale field for training. Though delighted with his intellectual environment and his frolics in the huge Bowl, Stubby came to the conclusion that he ought to do his bit by his country. It was hard, after five peregrinating years, during which he had often been hungry and cold, to leave the only scene of peace and hospitality he had ever found. But in such a time, when men were parting from mothers and wives to defend the honor of Uncle Sam, was he, a mere wanderer without dependents, to think of self?

Stubby joined up. One morning a bugle sounded the departure from camp. Crammed into a train loaded with equipment, he was started South. He knew not where he was speeding. His recent contacts with scholasticism, however, stood him in good stead. Tennyson had said something memorable—"His not to reason why, his but to do and die".

At Newport News the soldiers were hustled aboard a transport. Here difficulties arose. Stubby was not on the roster. He had no enlistment

Corporal J. Robert Conroy perceived his hangdog look and was touched. Wrapping him into the greatcoat slung on his arm and admonishing him to be quiet, he smuggled him up the gangway. Stubby lay still, with bated breath, until released into a coal bunker. Without diminishing allegiance to all his comrades, Stubby from that moment adopted Conroy as his master.

On Feb. 5, 1918, he entered the front lines of the Chemin des Dames sector, north of Soissons, where he was under fire night and day for more than a month. The noise and strain that shattered the nerves of many of his comrades did not impair Stubby's spirits. Not because he was unconscious of danger. His angry howl while a battle raged and his mad canter from one part of the lines to another indicated realization. But he seemed to know that the greatest service he could render was comfort and cheerfulness.

When he deserted the front lines it was to keep a wounded soldier company in the corner of a dugout or in the deserted section of a trench. If the suffering doughboy fell asleep, Stubby stayed awake to watch.

In the Chemin des Dames, Stubby captured a German spy and saved a doughboy from a gas attack. Hearing a sound in the stillness of the night, the dog, who guarded sleeplessly, stole out of the trenches and recognized—a German. Attempts by the German to deceive the dog were futile. Seizing his prisoner by the breeches, Stubby held on until help arrived.

Stubby, on other leaves, visited Nice, Monte Carlo and Nancy. At Neufchateau, the home of Jeanne d'Arc, he was presented with the first of the many medals he subsequently won in dog shows and Victory loan drives. Upon his return to the front he found himself in the thick of the Meuse-Argonne fray, which was to end the war.

After armistice Stubby spent his time congratulating and being congratulated. Traversing the streets of Paris, he was recognized by hundreds of French, English, Australian and American soldiers. And then on Christmas Day, at Mandres-en-Basigny, he met President Wilson. Stubby the dog to whom rank insignia made no difference, offered his paw. Little had he expected that he was to be known and greeted by three Presidents.

Back in his native land he was demobilized at Camp Devens, Mass., April 20, 1919. Parading with his famous division in Boston, he was reviewed by Governor Calvin Coolidge. An acquaintance was started which was renewed at the American Legion convention at Kansas City in 1921, attended by Vice President Coolidge, and at the convention in Omaha 1926, attended by President Coolidge.

On parade Stubby always wore the embroidered chamolais blanket presented to him by admiring Frenchwomen and decorated with service chevrons, medals, pins, buttons and a galaxy of souvenirs. On the end of his modernly bobbed tail a German iron cross was appended, the possession of which Stubby never explained.

Conroy's decision to study law at Georgetown University brought him and Stubby to Washington. There Conroy became secretary to Representative E. Hart Fenn of Connecticut and Stubby met Representative William P. Connery Jr. of Massachusetts and B. Carroll Reece of Tennessee, old friends from the Twenty-sixth Division, in Congress. His buddies were coming into prominence. One day Stubby encountered Major M. D. Arnold and Captain J. W. Boyer, both of the old Y. D.

Besides being painted by Charles Ayer Whipple, artist of the Capitol, Stubby had the distinction of being photographed with General Pershing.

card. The officers were stern and unknown to him.

Content Last Modified on 7/16/2003 7:58:37 AM

[Printable Version](#)

Governor William A. O'Neill State Armory 360 Broad Street Hartford, CT 06105-3706 / Phone: (860) 524-4953

[Home](#) | [CT.gov Home](#) | [Send Feedback](#) | [Employee E-Mail Access](#) | [Login](#) | [Register](#)
State of Connecticut [Disclaimer](#), [Privacy Policy](#), and [Web Site Accessibility Policy](#). Copyright © 2002-2014 State of Connecticut.



The story of a famous character and his pet pit bull



By *Jasmine Grimm*

Perhaps you've heard of Buster Brown. Created by Richard Felton Outcault for a comic strip in the "New York Herald" in the early 1900s, Buster was an upper class child with a blonde pageboy haircut. He wore a wide saucer-brimmed hat, short brown pants and a cropped Victorian jacket. New Yorkers enjoyed following Buster's adventures, as he roamed the city always getting into some kind of tomfoolery.

But I suspect you don't know the story behind his faithful companion, Tige.

Tige was a famous cartoon version of the American Pit Bull Terrier in his day. He was also one of the first dogs to anthropomorphically speak in a comic strip.

Together, Buster Brown and Tige would run around and get in all sorts of trouble. When Buster signed up for the Boy Scouts, Tige became an honorary Dog Scout.

When a burglar robbed the pair, Tige just sat and watched the culprit take off, commenting that he was a "polite gentleman."



Buster Brown and Tige weren't just funny little scallywags; their comic strip ventured into racy topics. According to a feature on National Public Radio, one story line was a social commentary about "race suicide": Caucasians who used birth control would not be able to keep up with the increasing immigrant population of the early 1900s. In another strip, Buster went to the zoo and asked a stork to give him a little sister. When she arrives on his doorstep in the beak of the bird, Buster's mother says, "Shoo! Get out – we don't want it." Buster Brown replied, "Oh, I'll take care of her." Faithful Tige just sat there and watched, a pit bull with two young children to raise.

By the early 1900s, silent movies featuring the pair delighted children of all ages. There were hoards of young boys sweeping the country, decked out like Buster Brown and clamoring to have a pit bull like Tige by their side.

"Buster Brown and Tige puts a Balloon Vender Out of Business [sic]" is one of their silent films, a slapstick comedy featuring smaller pit bull type dogs jumping up and popping the vendor's balloons. In subsequent films, Buster Brown found himself in even more jams where faithful Tige had to come to the rescue. "Buster's Dog To The Rescue," a YouTube video of a 1904 movie featuring the ragtime music of Scott Joplin, shows Tige rushing into the room to save Buster Brown when the boy receives a spanking after he tried to steal some cookies that were placed high on a shelf.

William "Major" Ray, who travelled with the Sells Brothers Circus before settling in Missouri to open a general store, portrayed the most prominent version of the Buster Brown character. He was only 44 inches tall and convinced Outcault that he would make a better version of the comic strip child than an actual child. Outcault bought into it, and Ray and his pit bull type dog reached celebrity status.



In 1904, Outcault sold licenses of the characters at the "Meet Me In St. Louis" World's Fair. The Brown Shoe company purchased the Buster Brown name and took a series of actors on the road, dressed as the characters. Of course, Tige came along for the ride. Buster and Tige made debuts in theaters, and

department and shoe stores, as entire towns gathered to see the performances. Pit bull type dogs toured the country delighting audiences for 26 years.

Before long, Smilin' Ed McConnell and the Buster Brown Gang debuted on a West Coast NBC radio network. By 1951, Smilin' Ed – and Tige too – moved to television, where their show ran until 1954.

This means that for decades, pit bulls had graced every form of media in a positive light.

In 1999, the Brown Shoe company created a children's brand called Buster Brown & Co. The branding featured none other than Tige, the pit bull.

In the end, Tige and his best friend, Buster Brown, made history. The scallywag companions became celebrities on all major fronts: from the "Meet Me In St. Louis" World's Fair to the silver screen and troops of performances in between. Youth clamored to have a dog like Tige by their side. Tige was America's dog of yesteryear, and today his legacy lives on in American-made shoes, as well as nostalgia of times long forgotten.

This article was originally published on November 15, 2011.

« « [Turning Tragedy to Triumph](#) | [Ruby's Tale: From Starvation to Stardom](#) » »

About

StubbyDog is a non-profit, 501(c)(3), focused on changing public perceptions of pit bulls.

Sign up for our newsletter!

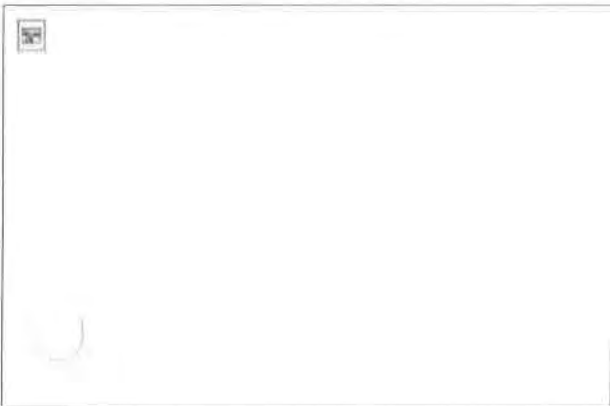
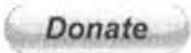
Email*

First Name

Last Name

* = required field

PayPal





Make a tax-deductible donation to the center here: [Donate](#)

Articles

Add this

[Share](#) |

Dog Fighting Detailed Discussion

Table of Contents

- I. [Introduction: What is Dogfighting?](#)
 - [A. The Dogs](#)
 - [B. The Training](#)
 - [C. The Fight](#)
- II. [The History of Dogfighting](#)
- III. [The Scope of Dogfighting](#)
- IV. [The Culture of Dogfighting](#)
- V. [The Victims of Dogfighting](#)
 - [A. The Animals](#)
 - [B. The Children](#)
 - [C. The Community](#)
- VI. [The Sociology of Dogfighting](#)
- VII. [The Criminal Link: Peripheral Criminal Activity Typically Associated with Dogfighting](#)
- VIII. [Legal Status of Dog-Fighting](#)
 - [A. State Laws](#)
 - [B. National Laws](#)
- IX. [Legal Issues](#)
 - [A. Investigation and Prosecution](#)
 - [B. Spectator Issues](#)
 - [C. Keeping of Fighting Dogs](#)
- X. [Conclusion](#)

- **Hanna Gibson**
- **Animal Legal and Historical Center**
- **Publish Date:** 2005
- **Place of Publication:** Michigan State University College of Law

I. Introduction: What is Dogfighting?

Dog fighting is an insidious underground organized crime that deserves much legal and political scrutiny. The blood sport, once sanctioned by aristocracy, embraced by medieval gentry and later promoted by colonial and Victorian miscreants, is now completely outlawed in the United States. Notwithstanding the absolute prohibition in America, it has reached epidemic proportions in all urban communities and continues to thrive in many rural areas as well. The collective American conscience has long been repulsed by the undeniable brutality within the culture of dogfighting, but the law enforcement community has been regrettably lax in appreciating the full scope and gravity of the problem. Historically, the crime was erroneously classified as an isolated animal welfare issue, and as such has been predominately disregarded by law enforcement. The communities that have been morally, socially and culturally scarred by the menacing pestilence of dogfighting have paid dearly for the apathy of the legal community. From a very early age, children are routinely exposed to the unfathomable violence that is inherent within the blood sport. Even seasoned law enforcement agents are consistently appalled by the atrocities that they encounter at dog fights, yet the children that grow up exposed to it are conditioned to believe that the violence is normal; they are systematically desensitized to the suffering, and ultimately become criminalized. Dog fighters are violent criminals that engage in a whole host of peripheral criminal activities. Many are heavily involved in organized crime, racketeering, drug distribution, or gangs, and they arrange and attend the fights as a forum for gambling and drug trafficking. Within the last decade, enlightened law enforcement agencies and government officials have become cognizant of the clandestine culture of dog-fighting and its nexus with other crimes and community violence. Many individuals continue to deny the existence or scope of dogfighting in America, or they maintain that it is merely an isolated animal welfare issue; however, it is increasingly difficult to defend such an archaic notion in the face of overwhelming legal and empirical evidence to the contrary.

This paper will examine the history of dogfighting as well as the cultural and sociological aspects of this crime. In addition to detailing the laws that directly prohibit dogfighting, an examination of the peripheral criminal activity and laws that can be used to directly curb dogfighting and its secondary effects are discussed. The paper concludes by analyzing the impediments to enforcement and how multi-jurisdictional task forces can be instrumental in eradicating this urban plague.

A. The Dogs

In the United States, there are several fighting breeds that are generically referred to as "pit bulls." The American Kennel Club does not recognize pit bulls, but registers breeds such as the American Staffordshire terrier, Staffordshire bull terrier, bull terrier, and bulldog. The United Kennel Club, American Dog Breeders Association, and National Kennel Club do recognize the American pit bull terrier as a unique breed, quite distinct from the aforementioned breeds. Quite recently, the United Kennel Club has recognized the American bulldog and Presa Canario, both of which are often mistakenly referred to as pit bulls as well. Breeders and professional level dogfighters are very particular about the pedigree of the dogs, but the great majority of the American

fighting dogs that are referred to as "pit bulls" tend to be an amalgamation of the various breeds. Regardless of the official title, these dogs are arguably among the most loyal and most abused of all dogs in American culture. They have been selectively bred as fighting dogs due to their unique capacity to fight to the death whereas most other dogs retreat once they have exhausted themselves. [1] The immensely powerful dogs are genetically predisposed to inflict maximum damage on an opponent and once incited do not respond to the natural signals to cease fighting. Generally, pit bulls are remarkably gentle and are fiercely loyal toward humans. This quality has made them particularly attractive to dog-fighters because they will withstand considerable abuse and neglect at the hands of their owners and will remain loyal and non-aggressive toward humans. As with all living creatures, these dogs have a threshold for abuse and neglect, albeit a very high one, and once that threshold is crossed they can become extremely aggressive to humans as well. The rising popularity of "super-breeds" such as Bullmastiffs and Presa Canarios, that are much larger than pit bulls and were traditionally bred to be tenacious guard dogs, should be of great concern when placed in the wrong hands. In some urban areas, these breeds have been crossed with pit bulls to create larger and more ferocious fighting dogs. Unfortunately, they do not share the pit bull's gentle demeanor toward humans and once trained to be aggressive could inflict grievous damage on both animals and humans.

B. The Training

All fighting dogs are conditioned from a very early age to develop what dog-fighters refer to as "gameness." The scope and method of training varies dramatically depending on the level and experience of the dog-fighter. The following implements and techniques are commonly used to train the dogs:

Treadmill: Dogs are run on the treadmills to increase cardiovascular fitness and endurance.

Catmill/Jenny: Apparatus that looks like a carnival horse walker with several beams jutting out from a central rotating pole. The dogs are chained to one beam and another small animal like a cat, small dog, or rabbit, is harnessed to or hung from another beam. The dogs run in circles, chasing the bait. Once the exercise sessions are over, the dogs are usually rewarded with the bait they had been pursuing.

Springpole/Jumpole: A large pole with a spring hanging down to which a rope, tire, or animal hide is affixed that the dogs jump to and dangle from for extended periods of time. This strengthens the jaw muscles and back legs. The same effect is achieved with a simpler spring loaded apparatus hanging from tree limbs. A variation of the springpole is a hanging cage, into which bait animals are placed. The dogs repeatedly lunge up toward the cage.

Flirtpole: A handheld pole with a lure attached. The dogs chase the lure along the ground.

Chains: Dogs have very heavy chains wrapped around their necks, generally in lieu of collars; they build neck and upper body strength by constantly bearing the immense weight of the chains.

Weights: Weights are often affixed to chains and dangled from the dogs' necks. This builds neck and upper body strength. Generally, dogs are permanently chained this way. However, sometimes the trainers run them with their weights attached.

Bait: Animals are tied up while the dogs tear them apart or sometimes they are confined in an area to be chased and mauled by the dogs. [2]

Drugs/Vitamins/Supplements: Dogs are given vitamins, supplements and drugs to condition them for or to incite them to fight. Commonly utilized vitamins, supplements, and drugs include: iron/liver extract; vitamin B-12; Provim; Magnum supplement; hormones (testosterone, Propionate, Repotest, Probiolic Oil); weight-gain supplements; creatine monohydrate; speed; steroids (Winstrol V, Dinabol, Equipose); and cocaine.

The dogs are trained against one another and against older, more experienced dogs. In the early stages of training, the dogs are incited to lunge at each other without touching and engage in quick, controlled fights called "rolls" or "bumps." Once the dogs appear match ready, they are pitted against stronger dogs to test their "gameness" [3] or tenacity in the face of exhaustion and impending defeat. If the dogs pass the test, they are deemed ready to fight.

C. The Fight

The dogs seemed to explode out of their restraints, two projectiles flying into the air toward the center of the pit. They met under the gas jets and, leaving a trail of spittle and hair, collapsed in an entangled, heaving heap onto the dirt...

The dogs tumbled on their sides and Crib broke free. He dove back onto Butts, catching the back of the brindled dog's head. Butts shook and jiggered, arched his back, tried to loosen Crib, the fine hair of his skull blushing gruesomely. Crib threw his head back, yanking Butts up. He whipped his head down. Butts hit the ground hard, his legs splaying like the splatter of an overturned pie. But Crib had lost his grip. Butts twisted his trunk around, swiveled onto his back, front paws revolving, back legs churning in the air. Crib leapt toward his exposed throat. The crowd bellowed, prepared for, anticipating, the blood...

The dirt was turning to syrup around the dogs' tethered heads. The bloody skulls thrashed in a terrible unison, Butts's muzzle gaping helplessly up at the gaslights, Crib grinding downward...

Now the crowd got what it came for. The blood cascaded down Crib's breast. Butts worked his jaws, deepening and widening the wound, aided by Crib's jerks and jumps. They lurched together across the pit to the atonal music of the surrounding chorus, Crib's muzzle propped on Butts's probing skull...

Stamping, applauding, whistling, yelling, the men demanded their due. Winners or losers, they hungered now for a glorious, fatal finish--a magnificent kill was imminent! [4]

Dog fights are stages in a variety of settings. In rural areas, they are often staged in barns or outdoor pits. In urban areas, fights are staged in garages, basements, warehouses and abandoned buildings. Professional fighters have very specific rules for the matches [5], while street fighters are far less organized. Among the professional and mid-level circuit, matches are arranged months in advance. The locations, referees and participants are carefully selected to ensure maximum secrecy, and spectators are closely scrutinized to weed out infiltrators. The pits themselves are generally 14 to 20 feet square and 2 to 3 feet high and are often wood but may be constructed from a variety of materials. Diagonal 'scratch lines' are drawn on opposite corners of the pits, behind which the dogs must remain until the referee commands them to be released. Before the match, the dogs are weighed and washed to ensure that they are not covered in poison. During the match, the dogs quietly maul each other until a 'turn' is called. A 'turn' refers to the act of one dog actually turning away from his opponent without trying to grab a hold of him. When this occurs, the dogs are separated briefly and returned to their handlers. The dogs are repositioned behind the 'scratch lines' and the match resumes once the referee orders that the dog that turned be released. The dog must then 'scratch' his opponent, or run to the opposite corner and attack the dog that is still being held by the handler. If this happens, the opponent is released and the fight continues, if not the match is over. The process of separating the dogs continues each time there is a turn or if both dogs fail to grab hold of each other for a specified amount of time. Matches end when a dog quits or dies, when a handler pulls a dog from the ring, if a dog jumps out of the pit, or if the

fight is raided by the police. The latter scenario does not deter the match permanently however; according to rule 19 of Cajun Rules, "Should the police interfere the referee [is] to name the next meeting place." [6]

II. The History of Dogfighting

Dogs have been the unwitting victims of exploitation for blood sports since ancient Roman times when they fought against other animals in the Coliseum. The practice of pitting dogs against other animals, such as bulls and bears, continued through medieval times in England until it was outlawed in 1835 by the Parliament in the Humane Act of 1835. Around that time, the Staffordshire Bull Terrier was developed and modern dog-fighting was born. The dog was brought to America in 1817 and dogfighting became part of American culture. [7] The "sport" was endorsed by the United Kennel Club, which actually formulated rules and sanctioned referees. Although dogfighting had become illegal in most states by the 1860's, it continued to flourish as an American pastime through the early twentieth century. [8] It was so popular in fact that in 1881 the Ohio and Mississippi railroads advertised special fares to a dog-fight in Louisville between Lloyd's Pilot, owned by 'Cockney Charlie' Lloyd and Crib, owned by Louis Krieger. [9] Public forums such as Kit Burns' Tavern, "The Sportsman's Hall" at 273 Water Street in Manhattan, regularly hosted matches [10] and the sadistic culture became immortalized in the annals of American history [11] and folklore. [12] By the 1930's and 1940's, the blood sport had been driven further underground as high profile organizations such as the United Kennel Club withdrew their endorsement. Although dogfighting was outlawed in all the states by 1976, it did not begin to receive serious law enforcement attention until recently. By all accounts, dogfighting continues to surreptitiously thrive in America; its prosperity due in large part to the chronic apathy of and denial by the legal system. Today, it is a felony in 48 states as well as the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico. [Ed. note: since the writing of this paper, dogfighting is now a felony in all 50 states.]

III. The Scope of Dogfighting

The Humane Society of the United States estimates that there are at least 40,000 dogfighters in America, though that number seems to underestimate the epidemic of street fighting in urban areas. In 2003, the city of Chicago alone recorded and responded to 1093 animal fighting complaints. Virtually all children in high crime urban areas are exposed to dogfighting in their own neighborhoods [13] while American hip/hop culture glorifies the blood sport. [14] Rap singers and urban clothing and toy manufacturers promote dogfighting through their products and advertisements. [15] Dog fighting occurs all over the United States and throughout the world. It has become quite popular in Eastern Europe, where the Russian Mafia has discovered the lucrative potential of the blood sport. [16] A 1999 article chronicling the rise of dogfighting in Russia highlights its popularity among "New Russians." Public fights take place around the country and for many, they are family events. "We mustn't hide bloodshed from our children," said one father who regularly brought his five year-old daughter to the fights, "Life is a battle and they must get used to it. The strong survive and the weak are killed." [17] Evidence of dogfighting has been reported in England, [18] Afghanistan, [19] South Africa, [20] Canada, [21] and Australia. [22] In Italy, dogfighting is a huge industry for the Italian Mafia. The nearly \$500 million a year enterprise is extremely abusive, "when dogs are young, they place them in a sack and beat them. The sack is later opened in front of a cat or small dog, which is attacked so the 'fighter' gets a taste of blood." [23] Many blame the loose regulations for the influx of dogfighting in Italy. [24] In Honduras, the blood sport is legal as well as in Japan, where it has been sanctioned for centuries by military leaders and aristocrats. [25] Although several countries have banned dog fighting, its pestilent influence, like many violent crimes and social diseases, continues to fester throughout the United States and worldwide.

IV. The Culture of Dogfighting

The culture of dogfighting is as diverse as America itself. Dogfighters come from virtually all walks of life and engage in the blood sport at vastly different levels. Some fighters operate on a national or even international level within highly clandestine networks. These fighters are professionals that breed generations of skilled "game dogs," take a great deal of pride in the lineage of their dogs and charge tremendous stud fees to breed their champions. They publish trade journals for distribution to dogfighting enthusiasts around the world. [26] The journals, with names like *Your Friend and Mine*, *Game Dog Times*, *The American Warrior*, and *The Pit Bull Chronicle*, include information on recent fights including the winners and losers, and advertisements for training equipment and puppies. [27] One of the largest and most widely recognized, *The Sporting Dog Journal*, circulates over 10,000 copies worldwide. [28] Because the professional fighters are so geographically dispersed, they also utilize the internet to communicate with one another. The "cyber-dogmen" maintain websites that to the untrained eye appear to be networks of breeders or "game dog" fanciers. They often go so far as to publish legal disclaimers on the websites, maintaining that they do not condone dogfighting and the information should be "viewed as fiction" and utilized "for entertainment purposes only." [29] The websites typically include specific information on the lineage of the dogs, historic accounts of dog-fighting that glorify anonymous, deceased, or 'retired' dog-men, and message boards for enthusiasts to discuss everything from buying and training champion fighting dogs to veterinary tips on treating wounded dogs. [30] Professional fighters are wealthy and experienced, often investing thousands of dollars on buying and training their dogs, and on transport to the fight venues. [31] The fights are extremely well organized and difficult for law enforcement to find. [32] Participants and spectators are often not told where the venues are until moments before the fight. "Gaining access to these circles is extremely hard," says Eric Sakach, Director of the West Coast Regional Office of the Humane Society of the United States. [33]

The professional fighters are demographically diverse and geographically diffuse, unlike the mid-level dog-fighters who operate primarily within specific regions. The mid-level fighters are considered hobbyists, [34] enthusiasts, or fanciers. They typically remain within a specific geographic network, are acquainted with one another, and tend to return to predetermined fight venues repeatedly. [35] There are both urban and rural networks of dogfighting enthusiasts and the fighting subcultures largely depend on the culture of the larger regional community. The enthusiasts, like the professional dogfighters, typically have extensive criminal backgrounds, but they may appear to be highly respected community figures. [36] Spectators at the fights range from hard core criminals [37] to high profile public figures [38] and from law enforcement agents [39] to families with children. [40] The fights themselves are generally of the depraved carnival variety, set in remote barns or warehouses. Refreshments, entertainment, and gambling provide a backdrop for the bloody main event. Drug dealers distribute their illicit merchandise, wagers are made, weapons are concealed, and the dogs mutilate each other in a bloody frenzy as crowds cheer on. The gambling that is inherent at dog fights amplifies the already violent atmosphere. Violence often erupts among the usually armed gamblers, as debts must be collected and paid. [41]

No type of dog fighters are more violent however than the third group, the street fighters. [42] Dog fighting is an extremely common blood sport in all urban areas. Dog fighters are violent criminals, often gang members, who conduct and attend organized fights as a forum for gambling and drug trafficking. "Drugs, gangs, dope, dogs...they all go together." [43] Within the gang community, fighting dogs compete with firearms as the weapon of choice; indeed, their versatile utility arguably surpasses that of a loaded firearm in the criminal underground. To the gang members, the dogs are an extension of each member's status; the fights are championship matches that aggrandize the gang leader's supremacy and intimidate younger members. It is extremely easy for urban criminals to acquire fighting dogs. They buy fighting dogs for a few hundred dollars or more commonly, they breed their own or steal them.

Dogfighting is an insidious underground organized crime and all dog fighters, regardless of their level, embrace many peripheral crimes and gang activities including drug dealing and consumption, gambling, theft, and violence against humans. [44] Dogfighting is an incredible source of income for gangs and

drug traffickers. In fact, the average dog fight could easily net more money than an armed robbery, or a series of isolated drug transactions. Organized dog fights are staged by leaders of the drug trade as forums to distribute narcotics. Many recent dog fighting raids, include those in Flint, MI (2003), Buffalo, NY (2004), Port St. Lucie, FL (2004), Jones County, GA (2004), and Oklahoma City, OK (2004), have resulted in the infiltration of major drug distribution networks, and the arrest of the drug kingpins who regularly organized and attended the dog fights. [45]

Fighting dogs are clandestine security devices for drug traffickers. Drugs are often stashed in containers to which the dogs are chained in yards or vacant fields. The dogs also provide excellent security inside drug houses and warehouses. Where once the presence of dogs was utilized as an overt warning to potential invaders, it is now increasingly common for criminals to have the dogs debarked (vocal cords severed), to act as silent alarm and attack systems against unsuspecting invaders. The presence of the silent killers poses a significant threat to law enforcement personnel entering these premises. With the increasing popularity hybrid human-aggressive fighting dogs, such as Presa Canarios, the law enforcement community has had to confront the urgency of cracking down on criminals who harbor fighting dogs. These dogs truly are loaded weapons, when placed in the wrong hands.

Criminals also use dogfighting to yield large profits through illegal gambling. Participants and spectators wager excessive sums on the fights. "It's so much money. You would not believe the money floating around left and right." [46] Purses for a single fight range anywhere from several hundred dollars to tens of thousand of dollars, and up. (A recent raid in Georgia in 2004, which resulted in 123 arrests, was an event with a \$50,000 pot.) Bets also include cars, property titles, weapons, drugs, jewelry, and other valuables. For many, dogfighting is a lucrative money making enterprise, but the price that the victims of the bloody sport must pay is simply too high to be ignored. [47]

V. The Victims of Dogfighting

A. The Animals

His face is a mass of deep cuts, as are his shoulders and neck. Both of his front legs have been broken, but Billy Bear isn't ready to quit. At the referee's signal, his master releases him, and unable to support himself on his front legs, he slides on his chest across the blood and urine stained carpet, propelled by his good hind legs, toward the opponent who rushes to meet him. Driven by instinct, intensive training and love for the owner who has brought him to this moment, Billy Bear drives himself painfully into the other dog's charge... Less than 20 minutes later, rendered useless by the other dog, Billy Bear lies spent beside his master, his stomach constricted with pain. He turns his head back toward the ring, his eyes glazed (sic) searching for a last look at the other dog as (sic) receives a bullet in his brain. [48]

It is extremely easy to acquire fighting dogs. Street fighters can buy fighting dogs for a few hundred dollars or, more commonly, they breed their own or steal them. The professional fighters often have large sums of disposable cash and easily spend a few thousand dollars for proven champions. The dogs are extremely difficult for law enforcement to trace because they are never licensed and they disappear frequently. The average life span of the fighting dog is very, very short. For most fighters, the dogs are considered disposable, [49] a fact that is painfully obvious when the fights are over and everyone has left the crime scene. Inevitably, the mutilated carcasses of the losers of the evening's match will be left behind. In the world of urban dogfighting, where an individual's fighting dog is an extension of his or her own identity, defeat in a fight is unacceptable [50] A dog that loses a fight also loses a lot of money and compromises the reputation of his owner. The end result, if the losing dog survives the fight, is immediate death if he is lucky, or torture and mutilation if the owner is embarrassed or irate. [51] For many, this ritual is a way to regain the respect of their peers. There is no reverence for life or concern for the animals. The abuses that the dogs endure - both in and out of the ring - is so gruesome that even seasoned investigators are consistently shocked by the barbarities they discover at raids. In commenting on a recent raid in South Carolina (2004), First Circuit assistant solicitor, Richard Lackey said, "It's a gruesome scene...I've never seen anything like this before." Newton County Sheriff, Joe Nichols described a 2004 raid in Georgia as, "one of the most horrible things I have experienced."

B. The Children

The systematic desensitization of each new generation in high crime inner cities starts early on; there, most children are routinely exposed to dogfighting and are forced to accept the inherent violence as normal. The routine exposure of the children to unfettered animal abuse and neglect is a major contributing factor in their later manifestation of social deviance. "In many neighborhoods where gangs are strong, you now have 8-, 9-, 10-year-olds conducting their own dogfights. Or being spectators at the fights people are holding," said Sgt. Steve Brownstein of Chicago's Animal Abuse Control Team. [52] Indeed, for gangs, dog-fighting is a valuable tool to initiate young members into a culture of violence: "You want to find the perfect way to desensitize a kid so he'll kill that anonymous gangbanger from three blocks over? Give him a puppy and let him raise it. Then let him kill it. I guarantee that will desensitize that kid." [53] This early exposure to and participation in dog-fighting is of concern to law enforcement, not only as a child endangerment issue, but also because children that become desensitized to violence become criminalized and perpetuate that cycle of violence.

C. The Community

Dogfighting is tremendously widespread and has reached epidemic levels in America's urban communities. We have over two centuries of well documented research addressing the devastating impact of social, economic and racial injustice in these communities. America's finest legal minds, political activists and social advocates have painstakingly dissected the culture of poverty in an attempt to understand the disproportionately high rates of crime, drug use, and social deviance in inner-city communities. We have identified several hundred factors that contribute to these social ills, and understand intrinsically that no single contributing factor exists in a vacuum; all are interrelated and all must be addressed. Shockingly, one of the most obvious and avoidable contributing factors has been largely ignored - animal legal injustice. Although dogfighting is outlawed in all fifty states and is a serious felony in most jurisdictions, it has been largely ignored by law enforcement in the urban communities where it is most pervasive. When we, as a society, fail to hold perpetrators criminally liable for violating dogfighting and other animal cruelty statutes, we not only condone their behavior, but send a message that our legal system is weak and inconsistent. The plight of the animals in inner-city areas is so blatantly obvious; even those who are not themselves immediately involved with dogfighting are routinely exposed to the abuse and neglect of the animals. The legislators clearly understand the extreme violence inherent in the blood sport, and the corresponding drug use, gambling, and violence against humans. They have enacted comprehensive laws and very stiff penalties to deter and punish those engaged in dogfighting, yet in urban communities where those laws are shockingly under-enforced, the legal system has made a mockery of the laws.

VI. The Sociology of Dogfighting

It is extremely difficult for anyone besides dogmen to justify dogfighting. Law enforcement officials that penetrate the clandestine subculture are routinely shocked by the macabre blood sport. American culture has criminalized dogfighting and stigmatizes those deviant enough to engage in it. Our collective American consciousness is repulsed by dog-fighting with much the same disdain that we feel for child molesters. One study, published in *Society and Animals*, attempted offer a rare glimpse into the psyche of the prototypical dogman and to rationalize the behavior that to the rest of us is incontrovertibly perverse. [54] According to the study, there are five major techniques that dogmen employ to justify dogfighting: (1) denial of the victim; (2) denial of responsibility; (3) denial of injury; (4) appeal to higher loyalties; and (5) condemnation of the condemners. [55]

(1) **Denial of the Victim:** Most dogmen adamantly deny that the dogs are victimized by the culture of dogfighting. The dogs are glorified as fighting machines with insatiable blood-just. High profile boxer-turned-convict, Will Grigsby, maintained that the dogs he fought were no more victims than the athletes in his profession. "To me, it's just like boxing. It's cruel if you put a pit bull on a poodle, or a pit bull on another pit bull that don't want to fight. But if you have two dogs that weigh the same amount in an organized dog fight, well, that's just like boxing." [56] There is a perception that in the fighting circuit, the dogs get whatever they deserve. If a dog shows 'gameness' and wins several matches, he earns titles such as 'Champion' or 'Grand Champion' and the respect of the 'fanciers.' If a dog quits or loses, he is considered a 'cur.' There is no place for 'curs' in dogfighting, they are a humiliation to the trainers, handlers, and to those that bet on them.

(2) **Denial of Responsibility:** In an interview, one archetypal 'dogman' found moral vindication through denial, "We're not hurting anybody and the dog's love to fight, so what's the harm? If you could see the way the animals love it...you wouldn't think it was cruel." [57] Fighting is portrayed as something that comes naturally to the dogs - that they're born with an undeniable propensity to kill. "This dog GAR, when he was nine months old, I let him kill a female that had no place on this yard...He was a pup born by himself and had to be taken away from his mother at near five weeks. He was a fight crazy dog from just a puppy...He was a wild eyed dog that showed the eye of the Beast to all that he looked at." [58]

(3) **Denial of Injury:** Many fighters claim that the dogs are treated well, both before and after the fights, [59] and what happens in the pit - well, "they enjoy fighting." [60] Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, some dogmen insist that "[i]t's not the blood and gore that people have been led to believe." [61] Many proponents of dogfighting claim that the bloodsport is no more violent than boxing. [62]

(4) **Appeal to a Higher Authority:** The culture of dogfighting perpetuates itself by glorifying its own history and aggrandizing those who are heavily involved. "Old timers" are lauded as warriors, [63] heroes, and role models. [64] "The old timers know all the champions and the great bloodlines. They have produced most of the champion dogs. If they don't like you, you are not going anywhere in dogfighting. You have got to show them the respect they deserve." [65] Dogfighting literature, publications, and websites are replete with dogmen fondly recalling their early experiences of becoming indoctrinated into the "fraternity" by men that they idolized. "In dogfighting you start at the bottom and...work your way up to be an old timer. If they accept you, an old timer will take you on like an apprentice. An old timer...got me started....He saw dogfighting was important to me, and brought me into this insider circle. I would not have made it without him." [66] Many fighters maintain that dogfighting is a rich tradition with cultural and historical significance that is proudly passed from generation to generation. "When I reach the other world and stand in front of my father once again, we will surely discuss my accomplishments of this world. I would consider it the greatest honor if my father would feel that I had become a conditioner capable of competing with Mayfield. My battle quote for this issue goes out to all dog men or competitors of any kind. It is from our late President Theodore Roosevelt and says, 'Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered by failure, than to rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy much nor suffer much because they live in the gray twilight that knows neither victory nor defeat.'" [67]

(5) **Condemnation of the Condemners:** Dogfighters often see themselves as a misunderstood group, victims of cultural genocide. "Dogfighting is a part of this culture. You don't change culture. It dies but it does not change. Dogfighting, cockfighting, fishing, hunting are all parts of our heritage. We have seen many intruders try to change us, it's always outsiders...but we are just ordinary folk who are different in some ways." [68] Dogfighting literature is often replete with juxtapositions of the bloodsport, religion, and patriotism: "God protect us against those enemies, foreign and DOMESTIC who would steal our Constitutional rights and our liberty! FREEDOM!" [69] Some dogmen even go so far as to maintain that they're "truth seekers," ordained by God to control all living beings and to preserve the "game" of dogfighting. [70] Dogfighters perceive their behavior as normal and often try to portray humane organizations and other anti-dogfighting groups as extremists and as true animal abusers. One website, Gamedogs.com, has an entire section devoted to news of "abuses" committed by humane workers, or "humaniacs" as the dogmen often refer to them.

II. The Criminal Link: Peripheral Criminal Activity Typically Associated with Dogfighting

Dogfighting does not exist in a vacuum, rather it occurs in conjunction with a host of peripheral criminal activities. Law enforcement agents that respond to dogfighting complaints should be prepared to encounter any or all of the following crimes: (California State laws are used as an example only; each jurisdiction has equivalent statutes that should be referenced.)

Animal Cruelty - California Penal Code § 597

- Dog Fighting - California Penal Code § 597.5
- Animal or Cock Fighting - California Penal Code § 597(b)
- Owning, Possessing, Keeping or Training Animals for Use in a Fighting Exhibition- California Penal Code § 597(c)
- Owning, Possessing, Keeping or Training Birds for Use in a Fighting Exhibition- California Penal Code § 597(i)
- Live Animals: Attaching to a Propelled Device to be Pursued by Dogs- California Penal Code § 597(h)
- Prevailing Upon Any Person to Visit a Place of Illegal Gambling -California Penal Code § 318
- Bookmaking or Pool Selling - California Penal Code § 337(a)(1)
- Keeping or Occupying Any Place with Paraphernalia - California Penal Code § 337(a)(2)
- Stake Holding in Bookmaking or Pool Selling- California Penal Code § 337(a)(3)
- Recording Wagers - California Penal Code § 337(a)(4)
- Permitting Unlawful Use of a Room or Enclosure (Bookmaking or Pool Selling) - California Penal Code § 337a (5)
- Making or Accepting Wagers - California Penal Code § 337(a)(6)
- Prior Convictions, Punishment, Application - California Penal Code § 337(a)(6)(a)(b)
- Criminal Profiteering - California Penal Code § 186.2
- Unlawful Assembly - California Penal Code §§ 407, 408
- Participation in a Criminal Street Gang - California Penal Code §§ 182.5, 186.22, 12021.5
- Conspiracy - California Penal Code § 182
- Accessory to a Felony - California Penal Code § 32
- Controlled Substances: Possession or Purchase for Sale - California Penal Code §§ 11351, 11054, 11055
- Controlled Substances: Transportation, Sale, Giving Away, etc. - California Penal Code §§ 11352, 11054, 11055, 11056
- Contributing to the Delinquency of a Minor - Controlled Substances: Adult Inducing a Minor to Violate Provisions -California Penal Code § 11353, 11550, 11054, 11055, 11056.
- Soliciting, Inducing, Encouraging, or Intimidating Minor to Commit Certain Felonies - California Penal Code § 653(j) - Child Endangerment
- Willful Injury or Harm; Endangering Person or Health of Child - California Penal Code § 273a
- Degrading, Vicious, or Immoral Practices in Presence of Children - California Penal Code § 273g
- Commission of Felony with Firearm - California Penal Code § 12022
- Possession of Firearm; General Manufacture, Sale, or Possession of Short-Barreled Shotgun or Short-Barreled Rifle - California Penal Code § 12001.5
- Manufacture, Import, Sale, Supply or Possession of Certain Weapons and Explosives - California Penal Code § 12020
- Armed Criminal Action - California Penal Code § 12023

- Carrying Concealed Weapon: In Vehicle or on Person - California Penal Code § 12025

The notion that dogfighting is simply an animal welfare issue is clearly erroneous. Until the past decade, few law enforcement officials or government agencies understood the scope or gravity of dogfighting. As these departments have become more educated about the epidemic of dogfighting and its nexus with gang activity, drug distribution rings, and gambling networks, many have implemented well designed, sophisticated task forces. The magnitude of criminal activity concurrently taking place at the average dogfight is of such a scope as to warrant the involvement of a wide range of agencies, including local, regional, and federal law enforcement agencies and their specialized divisions such as organized crime units, SWAT teams, and vice squads, as well as animal control agencies and child protective services.

VIII. Legal Status of Dog-Fighting

A. State Laws

Dogfighting is illegal in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. In 48 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands dogfighting is a felony. In Idaho, it is classified as a misdemeanor and, in Wyoming, it is classified as a "high misdemeanor." In forty-six states, and the District of Columbia, the dogfighting statutes specifically include a provision making possessing, owning or keeping of fighting dogs illegal. Forty-eight states and the District of Columbia, have provisions within the dogfighting statutes that explicitly prohibit attendance as a spectator at a dogfighting exhibition. Refer to the [Chart of Dog-Fighting Laws](#) for specific laws and penalties by jurisdiction. [Ed. note: since the writing of this paper, dogfighting is now a felony in all 50 states.]

Whatever the jurisdiction, it is imperative to be familiar with all the statutes concerning animal cruelty and dogfighting and to charge a defendant with the appropriate crime. Courts have denied convictions where the defendant was charged for animal cruelty rather than the more specific crime of dogfighting. [71] Similarly, a defendant that paid an entrance fee to watch a dog-fight could not be convicted under a statute that did not specifically proscribe being a spectator. [72]

In some cases, individuals may be charged for both violations of the general animal welfare statutes as well as the more specific dog-fighting statutes. In [Silver v. United States](#), [73] the court held that animal cruelty is not a lesser included offense of dog-fighting and so the two charges do not merge. According to the court, "[e]ngaging in animal fighting requires the instigation, promotion, carrying on or attendance at an animal fight and premeditation by the animal's owner or custodian. No such proof is required under the cruelty to animals statute. A defendant may therefore commit the offense of animal fighting by planning and promoting an animal fight, even if no harm has yet come to an animal. Conversely, the cruelty to animals statute requires the actual infliction of cruelty, and no such completed act is required to prove a violation of the prohibition against animal fighting. [I]n many cases... conduct which constitutes animal fighting also runs afoul of the cruelty to animals statute. Nevertheless, each crime requires proof of an element which the other does not." [74]

B. National Laws

The [Federal Animal Welfare Act](#) prohibits the interstate transportation of dogs for fighting purposes. A pending federal bill, S. 382, would create the Animal Fighting Prohibition Enforcement Act of 2005. The Act would amend the United States Code, making it a crime for any person to knowingly sponsor or exhibit an animal in an animal fighting venture if any animal in the venture was moved in interstate or foreign commerce. Additionally, it would be unlawful for any person to knowingly sell, buy, transport, or deliver, or receive for purposes of transportation, in interstate or foreign commerce, any dog or other animal for purposes of having the dog or other animal participate in an animal fighting venture. Finally, it would be a crime for any person to knowingly use the mail service of the United States Postal Service or any instrumentality of interstate commerce for commercial speech promoting an animal fighting venture except as performed outside the limits of the states of the United States. Penalties for violations of the Act would include a fine, up to two years imprisonment, or both. The Act would repeal any conflicting provisions of the [Animal Welfare Act](#). [Ed. note: this act was passed in 2007 and became effective in 2008. See [Sec. 2156](#) for codification.]

IX. Legal Issues

A. Investigation and Prosecution

i. Presence of Dog-Fighting

Law enforcement agents may encounter suspicious activity as a result of a citizen complaint, an unrelated investigation, a deliberate investigation or completely by chance. Field agents must be trained to recognize the indicators of potential dogfighting activity. It is extremely common for agents to come across any or all of the following, often in plain view, when there is a presence of dogfighting:

(1) Dogs: Certainly not all pit bulls are fought, but officers should be watchful of signs that pit bulls on the premises are being trained or bred for fighting or have been fought. Multiple dogs are generally housed in one location. More sophisticated operations may look more like a kennel; in fact many individuals who breed and fight dogs do so under the auspices of a kennel to deflect suspicion. Less sophisticated dog-fighters, especially the urban street fighters generally have several dogs chained in back-yards, often behind privacy fences, or in basements or garages. Dogs that have been fought have fresh wounds or scars, in various stages of healing, on the head, chest and legs.

(2) People: A dogfighting data-base should be maintained to track suspicious and known dog-fighters. They will often lead you to other dog-fighters and to multiple locations where dogs are kept and fought. Dog-fighters move their dogs frequently, so it is important for law enforcement to pay close attention to whether a suspect has multiple residences, including out-of-state. Detailed records should be kept of the individuals that come and go from suspicious locations. Surveillance is especially important on nights and weekends, when large numbers of dog-fighters may come together.

(3) Signs of Training or Matches: The presence of a pit is a sure sign of fighting, but agents should pay close attention to blood spattered on any surface. Dogs may be fought or trained in basements, garages, barns, and vacant buildings, so spatters of blood on any interior walls or floors should be closely documented. Dogs are often trained outside, so agents should watch for blood spattered outside, especially near training equipment. When live animals are used as bait, there are generally remains of the animals on site. Agents should look for patches of fur, bones, or decomposed bodies.

Agents should be able to identify the training devices and implements such as: treadmills, catmills (jennys), springpoles (jumpoles), flirtpoles, chains/weights, and any implements used to hang or harness bait animals. Pry bars, bite sticks, or breaking sticks are used to pry a dog's jaws open when he has gripped onto another animal. Investigators should be trained to recognize these, as they would be quickly overlooked by the untrained eye.

(4) Signs of Transport: Large numbers of portable dog-kennels on site may indicate that the dogs are frequently transported to and from matches and between multiple locations. Adult pit bulls frequently appearing and disappearing from a certain location with no explanation may be involved in fighting.

(5) Vitamins, Drugs, Food Supplements and Veterinary Implements: Most dog-fighters do not take their animals to a veterinarian for treatment for fear of exposure; as a result, it is extremely common to encounter veterinary supplies and manuals during an investigation.

(6) Physical Evidence of Bookmaking/Contest: Agents should watch for trophies recognizing match winners, or conferring the titles 'Champion' or 'Grand Champion.' Other physical evidence to look for include: ledger slips, match results, stats of an individual animal's performance in matches, photos of dogs or matches

7) Technology: Matches are often filmed, and the tapes can be an excellent source of intelligence gathering. Dog-fighters are increasingly utilizing digital cameras, so when possible, computers should be checked for digital evidence. Many dog-fighters also utilize the internet to maintain contact with other 'fanciers,' post match stats, to order and sell supplies and dogs, solicit veterinary advice, etc. So, a thorough search should probe both computer files and the internet history. The newspaper can also be utilized to identify potential breeding and selling of fighting dogs. Often classified advertisements for fighting dogs include a reference to 'game bred' dogs, or some will actually advertise that the bitch or sire is a 'Champion' or 'Grand Champion'.

(8) Publications: Agents may find the following publications:

- *The Sporting Dog Journal*
- *Your Friend and Mine*
- *American Game Dog Times*
- *The Scratch Line*
- *Face Your Dogs*
- *The Pit Bull Chronicle*
- *The Pit Bull Reporter*
- *The American Warrior*

ii. Gathering Evidence

SEARCH WARRANT:

Generally, a search warrant is required to seize the animals or to enter private property to gather photographic or physical evidence. The Fourth Amendment prohibits government officials from entering an individual's property without probable cause and mandates that search warrants specifically describe the location to be searched and items to be seized:

The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

Probable Cause: The "probable cause" requirement may be satisfied through the first-hand knowledge of the investigating officer, or it may be satisfied by reports of other individuals (hearsay), as long as the officer can verify the reliability of the informant's statements. To obtain a valid warrant, the investigating officer must present specific facts to justify the issuance of a warrant. If the warrant is based upon information provided by witnesses or informants, the investigating officer should be very specific with the details, including:

1. Names, addresses, telephone numbers and birth dates of witnesses and informants and relation to the suspect(s) (if they are willing to be identified)
2. Date of the statements
3. Detailed account of a witness's observations (if informants, how they obtained the information)

Specifically Describe the Location to be Searched: The description should be specific enough for the officer executing the warrant to identify the location. Otherwise valid prosecutions are often challenged based on the validity of the search warrant, so it is imperative to be very accurate with the description and to include a description of all buildings to be searched if there are multiple buildings on the premises. A thorough description should include the following details:

1. Street address of the property and where it is identified on the property
2. Major crossroads
3. Directional location of the property (i.e. North side of the street, and SE of major crossroad)
4. Type of property/facility (i.e. vacant lot, residential building, industrial building, etc.)
5. If multiple dwelling unit, residential or commercial, that should be specified and the exact unit(s) to be searched must be identified
6. Physical description of house, facility, or unit (i.e. color, construction material, entrance location, fence, identifying characteristics, etc.)

(Note: You must have probable cause for each separate building to be searched.)

Specifically Describe the Persons or Things to be seized: The Humane Society of the United States maintains a list of items that should be included when preparing the search warrant:

All American pit bull terriers, fighting dogs, guard dogs, and dogfighting paraphernalia, to wit: treadmills, catmills, exercise wheels, hides or other material used as hanging devices to strengthen or condition dogs; collars, leashes, chains, and other devices used to exercise or restrain fighting dogs; wooden sticks or handles used to pry open dogs' jaws; magazines, photographs, film, videotapes, or writings that depict or promote dogfighting or training or conditioning of dogs for dogfighting; any still cameras or movie or video cameras used to record dogfighting activity; all portable carrying cases and pens; antibiotics, drugs, or vitamins used to treat injured dogs or to enhance their performance; needles and syringes used for the administration of such drugs; suture kits and other veterinary supplies; weapons, handguns, shotguns, or rifles used to protect the premises upon which illegal dogfighting occurs; computers and computer diskettes or other removable media containing information related to dogfighting; registration papers or other materials showing written materials showing ownership of pit bull dogs or other fighting dogs, including bills of sale, pedigrees, breeding records, and veterinary records; any dogfighting records, including name and telephone number lists of persons suspected of being dogfighters; any awards, trophies, plaques, or ribbons promoting or relating to dogfighting; any constructed enclosures or components of any pits or arenas used for the purpose of dogfighting or training dogs for fighting; any carpeting or other materials used on the floor of such pits; weight scales; any washtubs, buckets, pails, and sponges used to wash dogs; any rules, contracts, or other written agreements concerning the fighting of dogs. [75]

Most jurisdictions have specific requirements for the time period within which a search must be executed once a warrant is signed. [76] The warrants should generally be executed as soon as possible because the likelihood of animal suffering is very high and the animals are usually moved very quickly if the suspects anticipate a search. Some jurisdictions require the presence of a veterinarian during the execution of a search warrant, [77] so agents should ensure the presence of a veterinarian where practical or necessary. Ideally, a team of police officers, animal control officers/humane agents, and where necessary, veterinarians would all be present during the execution of a warrant. Under no circumstances should unarmed humane agents execute a warrant alone. The charts of Dogfighting Raids illustrate the standard protocol for dog-fighting raids: The police department is ALWAYS the lead agency in

major raids. Animal control officers and humane agents are simply not equipped to deal with the high caliber crimes and criminals involved with dogfighting. [78] Humane agents should always be on site, however, to impound animals and to assist with gathering of evidence.

WARRANTLESS SEARCH:

A search warrant may not always be necessary to investigate suspicious activity and to seize dogfighting implements. In the context of dogfighting, there are three scenarios that occur frequently:

1. Search Pursuant to Valid Consent
2. Search of Open Fields
3. Seizure of Items in Plain View

(1) Search Pursuant to Valid Consent

It is surprisingly common to get valid consent from individuals in urban areas to conduct wellness checks of dogs, even in homes where dogfighting regularly occurs. One reason may be that among urban dogfighters, the dogs are routinely housed by individuals other than the actual owner. The individuals that give consent to check the dogs often believe that they have nothing to lose because the dogs are not their own property; however most states do have dogfighting statutes that forbid the keeping or housing of fighting dogs. In rural areas and among higher level serious and professional dogfighters it is much more difficult to obtain valid consent to search property or to see the dogs. Furthermore, the investigating officer must be careful that the consent actually be valid. In *Minter-Smith v. State*, [79] the court reversed a dogfighting and drug conviction because the evidence was obtained illegally through an invalid consent to search. In that case, the police told a young woman that resided in the home that "we need to treat the house as a crime scene and we need to look in the house for evidence." [80] Since the woman merely acquiesced to the authority of the police who told her that they needed to search rather than affirmatively consenting to a request to search, the consent was not voluntarily given and thus invalid. [81] Because of the highly mobile character of the dogs and fighting paraphernalia, it is important that investigating officers not ask consent to search unless they are either likely to receive consent or would be able to secure the area long enough to obtain a valid warrant in the event that the resident does not consent to a search. Typically, the dogs and paraphernalia can be moved within a matter of minutes once the suspects have reason to believe that they are under investigation.

(2) Search of Open Fields

The United States Supreme Court in *U.S. v. Dunn* [82] reaffirmed the "open fields" doctrine by holding that Fourth Amendment protection does not extend to the undeveloped areas outside the curtilage of a private home. "There is no constitutional difference between police observations conducted while in a public place and while standing in an open field." In *Rogers v. State* [83], the court relied on the "open field" doctrine in holding that a warrant was not necessary to search a dog pit located in an open section of the woods, nearly 400 yards from the appellant's mobile home.

(3) Seizure of Items in Plain View

The plain view doctrine allows police to seize contraband in plain view when 1) the seizing officer is in a location he has a legal right to be; 2) the incriminating character of the evidence is immediately apparent; and 3) the seizing officer has a lawful right of access to the object. [84] It is extremely common for officers to encounter evidence of dogfighting in plain view. In urban areas, fighting dogs can often be seen from a public vantage point and dogfighting paraphernalia is often kept in plain view in yards, garages and homes, such that the items are often easily encountered when officers are on the premises for unrelated business, such as drug raids, domestic violence complaints or execution of arrest warrants. It is extremely important that agents are trained to readily identify dogfighting paraphernalia and other signs of dogfighting, so that they can legally seize such items under the plain view doctrine. In *Minter-Smith v. State*, [85] the court reversed a dogfighting and drug conviction because the evidence, which was obtained without a warrant, was not legally seized under the plain view doctrine. The State was unable to show that a broomstick with bite marks and an exacto knife with a heavily taped handle were immediately recognizable as dogfighting paraphernalia, in order to satisfy the second prong of the test. In that case, the investigating officers could not readily identify the incriminating nature of the seized items; rather an expert later confirmed that they were in fact implements utilized for dogfighting. [86] The case may have been decided in the alternative had the investigating officers been adequately trained and were able to testify that they immediately recognized the "incriminating nature" of the evidence.

COLLECTING AND DOCUMENTING EVIDENCE

The whole site should be videotaped or photographed prior to removing animals and other evidence.

Dogs: The dogs are both abused animals and extremely valuable evidence of dogfighting; in many cases, they may be stolen property as well. [87] They must be confiscated for their own protection and for use as evidence. Unfortunately, humane officers often lose sight of the fact that the animals are evidence and frequently leave the animals on site if they do not feel that they are in immediate danger. This is extremely common, generally destroys a case, and is fatal for the dogs. Dogs that are left behind are moved or destroyed, as would be any other evidence (like drugs or weapons) left behind at a crime scene. Dogs should always be confiscated pursuant to a valid warrant or without a warrant under the exigent circumstances exception. [88] The dogs should be photographed individually and identified in the photograph with an assigned evidence number. General impound photos should be shot from the front and each side of every dog. Careful attention should be paid to identifying all injuries that are consistent with dogfighting, such as bite wounds, lacerations and scars. Injuries and markings should be individually documented and photographed. It is useful for agents to utilize standardized checklists and diagrams. The following information should be recorded for each animal:

1. Breed
2. Sex
3. Color
4. Identifying Features/Marks
5. Injuries
6. Owner Information (name, address, etc.)
7. Location of Confiscation (address and specific location of the property)
8. Date
9. Dog's Evidence Number
10. Case Number
11. Confiscating Agent

The dogs should be thoroughly examined by a veterinarian that is familiar with diagnosing injuries that are consistent with animal fighting. The veterinarian will likely need to testify in court and should be prepared to qualify a diagnosis that the animals were victims of animal fighting. Detailed daily medical records should be kept of the animals from the time of confiscation through the duration of the impoundments. Fighting dogs must not be housed together and should be kept under extremely tight security. It is not uncommon for fighting dogs to be stolen from shelters once they have been confiscated. Dead animals must be documented and confiscated in the same manner as the live ones. The examining veterinarian must perform a necropsy on all deceased animals and the bodies should be preserved for trial.

Other Dogfighting Evidence: All other evidence must be carefully documented with detailed descriptions. See the [Humane Society's List of Items to Include in a Search Warrant](#) for items that would typically be seized in a dogfighting raid. The following drugs, supplements and veterinary supplies are used by dog-fighters (although they have legitimate uses as well) and may be encountered during a search:

Drugs:

1. Solu-Delta-Cortef + Dexamethazone (Azium) (Prednisolone or Flumethasone) (anti-inflammatory/anti-shock injectables)
2. Epinephrine (injectable adrenaline for heart failure)
3. Lactated Ringers (IV solution)
4. Speed (pills or injectables)
5. Pain Killers (Lidocaine, Talivin, Dilaudid, codeine)
6. Antibiotics (injectables, tablets or capsules, including: Ampicillin, Amoxicillin, Penicillin Procain, Albacillian, Baytril)
7. Lassix
8. Hormones (including: androstenedione, testosterone, Propionate, Repotest, Probolic Oil)
9. Androgenic steroids (including: Winstrol V, Dinabol, EquiPoise)
10. Furosemide
11. Nitrofurazone (antibiotic gel)
12. Prednisone

Vitamins/Supplements:

1. Vitamin K (injectable) (promotes blood clotting)
2. CytoMax
3. Canine Peak Condition or Peak Performance
4. Magnesium
5. Provim
6. Vitamin B-12 (injectable)
7. Vitamin B-15 (increases blood's oxygen carrying capacity by 25%)
8. Stress-Dex (electrolyte)
9. Liver and Iron extract
10. Canine Red Cell
11. Clovite conditioner
12. Energy Plus

Veterinary Supplies

1. Veterinary manuals, publications for dogmen (i.e. *The Healthy Bulldog*)
2. Catheter IV, needles, syringes
3. Gauze and leg tape
4. Hydrogen Peroxide
5. Blood stop powder (i.e. styptic powder)
6. Tourniquet
7. Betadine
8. Sutures, suture needles, needles holders
9. Staple gun and removers
10. Scalpel, surgical razor or scissors, forceps
11. Gloves, thermometer, Vaseline or KY jelly, sponges
12. Super glue

iii. Evidence Sufficient to Support a Conviction for Dog-Fighting

The courts have found the following types of evidence sufficient to support a conviction of dogfighting:

1. Testimony by law enforcement agents that had witnessed a dogfight. [89]
2. Testimony by law enforcement agents that had witnessed people gathered around a pit with wounded dogs inside. [90]
3. Testimony by law enforcement agents regarding seized items and their utility in dogfighting. [91]
4. Testimony by a veterinarian confirming the consistency of the injuries with those incurred in training or fighting. [92]
5. Evidence of a large amount of money in the possession of an individual present at an alleged dogfight. [93]

iv. Evidence Insufficient to Support a Conviction for Dog-Fighting

In some instances, it is more practical to charge a dogfighter under the general anti-cruelty statutes than to charge him or her under the state's dog-fighting statute. Sometimes, particularly in circumstances where the fighters are especially sophisticated and elusive, the investigating officers are unable to gather sufficient evidence to charge the suspect with dogfighting. As a practical matter, it is often difficult for investigators to gather evidence and conduct surveillance over a long period of time, when suspects move frequently and keep the animals in multiple locations. Lack of other evidence notwithstanding, fighting dogs are generally kept in egregious conditions and are often in need of medical treatment. Where there is insufficient evidence to charge an individual with dogfighting, and the circumstances warrant immediate action rather than long-term surveillance, the prosecution should bring appropriate cruelty or neglect charges. In [Stephens v. State](#) [94], the defendant was convicted of 17 counts of cruelty toward animals for keeping several fighting dogs in unsanitary conditions and without appropriate shelter. The investigation yielded the discovery of a fighting pit on the defendant's property as well as bite sticks and other training implements. Charges were not brought for dogfighting; however, the defendant was sentenced to 6 months for each of the 17 counts -135 days incarceration and the remainder probation. [95]

Sometimes, the evidence of peripheral criminal activities such as drug distribution or gambling is so overwhelming that it is simply more efficient to prosecute the dogfighters for those crimes. In [People v. Lee, et al.](#), [96] the defendants were suspected and known dogfighters that were ultimately convicted of conspiracy to deliver or possess with intent to deliver 650 or more grams of a controlled substance. Each defendant was sentenced to a prison term of 30 to 60 years for their involvement with drug distribution; as such, the dogfighting charges were ultimately unnecessary for the apprehension of the criminals.

Ownership and Culpability

If asked, dogfighters will typically deny ownership of the fighting dogs. Establishing ownership is further complicated by the fact that the dogs are generally not licensed. Most jurisdictions have statutes that encompass all levels of participation in dogfighting, so failure to establish ownership is generally not a bar to a successful dogfighting prosecution. Many jurisdictions make it illegal to "own, possess, keep, use or train"... a dog "for the purpose of fighting,

baiting or injuring another such animal, for amusement, sport or gain." [97] Under such a statute, the prosecution theoretically need not establish that the defendant owns the animal in question; rather, it would be sufficient to show that the defendant was in possession of the dog, the dog was kept on the defendant's property or that the dog was otherwise maintained by the defendant. Many statutes simply prohibit "causing or allowing a dog to fight another dog for sport or gaming purposes." [98] In Hargrove v. State, [99] the court interpreted the term "allow" to include any act which "contributes to the cause of" or "furthers the success of the enterprise of" a dogfight for sport or gaming purposes. Thus, if a person participates, on any level, in the "planning or financing of the event, including paying an admission, providing a location or wagering on the event or if a person encourages the event by applause or cheering, such person violates the statute." [100] In that case, the 3 defendants were convicted for (1) "refereeing" in the dogfight; for (2) supplying paraphernalia that was used for the fight and being present in the pit; and for (3) owning the property upon which the pit was erected. [101]

Some jurisdictions specifically prohibit knowingly or intentionally allowing one's property to be used for dogfighting. In Rogers v. State [102], the State was not required to establish that the defendants owned the dogs. Under Texas law, [103] "[a] person commits an offense if he intentionally or knowingly uses or permits another to use any real estate, building, room, tent, arena, or other property for dog fighting." The defendant was convicted, sentenced to 4 years imprisonment, and assessed a \$4,000 fine for knowingly allowing dogfights to take place on her property, although she was not in the immediate vicinity of the pit during the time of arrest. The relevant legal issue was whether the property was hers, not whether the dogs were, or whether she had caused them to fight. [104]

Actual ownership of fighting dogs is important to establish in cases involving culpability for "owners" of fighting dogs that injure other persons or animals. [105] Under those statutes, the "owners" may be criminally liable for injuries inflicted by their dogs regardless of whether the owners are in actual possession of the dogs at the time of the attack. In People v. Beam, [106] the court found that the owner of fighting dogs could be held criminally liable under M.C.L. § 750.49(10) [107] for a fatal mauling by his dogs although he was incarcerated at the time of the attack and the animals were in temporary custody of a third party. According to the court, an "owner" is an individual with the "legal right of possession" and actual possession is not necessary to establish ownership. [108]

vii. Dogs: Confiscation, Custody, and Euthanasia

Once the dogs have been confiscated, several legal and constitutional issues arise regarding their post-confiscation care and custody. Generally, there is a significant amount of time between the seizure of the dogs and the disposition of the criminal charges against the defendant. It is exceedingly difficult for animal shelters to house large numbers of confiscated dogs pending a trial. The animals must be individually housed and cared for by individuals that are trained in handling fighting dogs. The costs to maintain the animals for several months pending a trial can be very high, and in some areas, the dogs may usurp an inordinate amount of shelter space, thereby rendering a shelter unable to accommodate other animals. In most instances, it is most practical and humane to euthanize or re-home the confiscated animals prior to the trial. The dogs are considered property (of the defendant or another) and as such, their disposition may largely depend on each jurisdiction's statutory rules on the forfeiture of seized property. [109]

Some states require the conviction of an individual prior to the forfeiture of objects used in the commission of the crime, in this case, the dogs. Other states do not require a conviction as a prerequisite to forfeiture proceedings. Although the ownership of the dog may not be a serious hurdle for the prosecution to overcome in a criminal dog-fighting conviction, it may become much more relevant when the courts must determine the final disposition of the dogs. An individual that seeks to challenge the forfeiture of property, in this case, the dogs, has the burden of establishing a property interest. [110] Where the defendant denies ownership of the dogs, this burden becomes particularly difficult for him to meet. Even where the defendant claims ownership of the dogs, he still has the burden of establishing ownership during the forfeiture proceedings. In some instances, claiming ownership of the dogs may implicate an individual in criminal proceedings, so the counsel for the defendant must apply for a stay of civil forfeiture proceedings pending the completion of the criminal proceedings. If the defense does not do so, it loses the right to raise this due process issue on appeal. [111]

The final disposition of the dogs may be further complicated by the fact that they are sentient property, protected by anti-cruelty statutes. Thus, an owner may legally be able to recover seized property under the relevant rules of civil procedure, but may not be able to recover the dogs under an anti-cruelty statute that proscribes the return of the dogs. Some courts have broadly interpreted statutes allowing for the forfeiture and euthanasia of seized animals to include forfeiture and euthanasia of fighting dogs that are wounded or deemed dangerous. In 32 Pit Bulldogs and Other Property, [112] the Missouri Supreme Court relied on subsection (3) of the criminal dog fighting statute, [113] to affirm a lower court order to euthanize 18 of the 32 seized pit bulls prior to the disposition of the defendant's criminal charges. [114] According to the statute, a court may order that dogs be euthanized, prior to the final disposition of the charges, if the dog is not likely to survive or by reason of the physical condition of the dog. [115] The Court broadly interpreted the statutory language "physical condition of the dog" to mean "not only how many scars and injuries it might have but its physical condition with reference to vicious or aggressive behavior, its propensity to fight or to inflict serious injury or death on other animals, including humans." [116]

viii. Mens Rea Requirement: Intentional vs. Unintentional Fight

Defendants will often deny culpability by maintaining that their injured or scarred dogs broke loose and fought on their own, were too aggressive during breeding, were attacked by stray dogs, or were injured while in the custody of another. [117] Essentially they maintain that despite overwhelming physical evidence of a fight, they did not engage in any wrongdoing and to punish them would violate their due process rights. Most statutes therefore make otherwise innocent conduct criminal by including an intent requirement. Thus, the prosecution must generally be prepared to show that an individual "knowingly" or "intentionally" engaged in the proscribed dogfighting activity. In Moody v. State, [118] the court determined that the statute in question required "knowing and consensual involvement" in dogfighting and required the intent "to engage in dog-fighting for sport or gaming purposes." In Jones v. State, [119] the State established that the defendant "owned, possessed, kept, and/or trained the dogs with the intent that the dogs be engaged in an exhibition of fighting with another dog" through the testimony of the investigating officer that was present when the defendant had his two dogs fight.

ix. Constitutional Issues

Much of the recent case law on dog-fighting has probed a variety of constitutional issues. Typically, constitutional issues arise in two different contexts: (1) Constitutionality of the Statute; (2) Due Process Taking.

(1) CONSTITUTIONALITY OF THE STATUTE:

Appellants often challenge the constitutionality of the dogfighting statute under which they were convicted. Generally, appellants argue that the statutes are unconstitutionally vague, or overbroad. Such arguments are routinely rejected by the appellate courts.

Void for Vagueness Doctrine: [120]

In State v. Gaines, [121] the appellant, who was convicted of promoting or engaging in dogfighting and the sale, purchase, possession or training of a dog for dogfighting, challenged the constitutionality of Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 959.16. [122] The appellant argued that the statute was unconstitutionally vague or that it violated the void for vagueness doctrine because it did not define the term "dog-fighting" such that a person of common intelligence would understand exactly what conduct is proscribed by the statute. The court, relying on State v. Smith, [123] found that although the legislature did not specifically define the term "dogfighting", the statute was not unconstitutionally vague because it was both broad enough to encompass a variety of criminal conduct and also sufficiently specific to provide a warning to men of common intelligence that certain kinds of behavior were prohibited. [124]

Similarly, in *Hargrove v. State*, [125] the appellants, who were convicted of dogfighting, gambling, and commercial gambling, challenged the constitutionality of O.C.G.A. § 16-12-37, [126] which makes it a crime for any person to "allow" a dogfight to occur. The appellants argued that such proscribed conduct is impossible to define such that "men of common intelligence are not given fair notice of the conduct which is forbidden" [127] by the statute. The court interpreted the term "allow" as used in the statute to mean "any act which contributes to the cause of a dogfight for sport or gaming purposes or furthers the success of the enterprise of a dogfight for sport or gaming purposes." In rejecting the appellants argument, the court found that a person of common intelligence would be on notice that it is illegal to knowingly participate, on any level, in the planning, financing, coordination or execution of a dogfighting event or to contributes to the success of the event. [128]

Overbreadth Doctrine: [129]

In *People v. Parker, et al.*, [130] several appellants that were charged with knowingly attending an animal fight and knowingly organizing, promoting, or collecting money for the fighting of an animal challenged the constitutionality of MCL 750.49(2)(e)(f). [131] They asserted that the language of the statute that prohibited "presence" at any "premises" utilized for dogfighting or at a dogfighting "exhibition" could be interpreted to punish the accidental or unintentional witnessing of or presence at a dogfight. According to the appellants, such punishment of innocent behavior would violate the overbreadth doctrine. The court rejected their argument stating that, "the statute does not prohibit the mere witnessing of a dogfight, but "punishes attendance as a spectator at an event legitimately prohibited by law." [132]

Similarly, in *State v. Gaines*, [133] The appellant, who was convicted of promoting or engaging in dogfighting and the sale, purchase, possession or training of a dog for dogfighting, challenged the constitutionality of Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 959.16, [134] utilizing the overbreadth doctrine. The appellant asserted that certain provisions of the statute, which made it a crime to "knowingly" "promote" dogfighting or to "use, train, or possess a dog for seizing, detaining, or mistreating a domestic animal" violated the overbreadth doctrine because they "prohibit constitutionally protected conduct such as a lobbyist's petitioning the legislature to repeal the statute, [135] or the training of dogs for detaining domesticated animals such as sheep. [136]" The court rejected the appellant's argument stating that it was "readily apparent" that the appellant was promoting dogfighting and training dogs to fight and was not engaging in innocent or constitutionally protected behavior. [137]

(2) DUE PROCESS TAKING:

The second context under which constitutional issues often arise is the seizure and subsequent forfeiture of fighting dogs. Defendants often maintain that the State infringed upon their "property" interests in violation of procedural due process. When analyzing such procedural due process claims, the United States Supreme Court employs a two-step analysis. [138] The first area of inquiry deals with whether there exists a "life, liberty, or property" interest, protected under the Fourteenth Amendment, with which the state has interfered. In the context of state seizure and forfeiture of fighting dogs, which are considered a property interest, the first step of the analysis would be satisfied. The second prong of the inquiry would be to determine whether the entity responsible for the alleged deprivation instituted constitutionally sufficient procedural protections. In other words, the owner of the dogs should generally have adequate notice and an opportunity to be heard by an impartial tribunal regarding the merits of the deprivation of the "property." In *Commonwealth v. Gonzalez*, [139] the court determined that the provisions of Pennsylvania's animal cruelty statute, 18 Pa.C.S.A. § 5511(h.1), [140] which allow the police or humane society to destroy animals without offering the owner a pre-deprivation or post-deprivation hearing violated due process requirements. In that case, the defendant was charged with and convicted of 23 counts of animal cruelty under the statute for cockfighting. The roosters were confiscated and destroyed pending the trial; however the court found that the defendant was unconstitutionally deprived of an opportunity to be heard prior to the deprivation. Although the court recognized that due process requirements do not necessarily dictate when an opportunity to be heard must be afforded to an individual, it noted that in the case of "the complete, albeit humane, destruction of animals," the only "meaningful opportunity to ensure a fair process of decision-making" is generally going to be before the actual "deprivation" occurs. [141]

3. Spectator Issues

i. Laws

Most jurisdictions have statutes that impose criminal liability for being a spectator at a dogfight. See, [Chart of Dog-Fighting Laws](#) for specific laws by jurisdiction. The statutes all include a knowledge requirement, such that an individual must intentionally engage in wrongful conduct, and cannot be held criminally liable for accidentally witnessing or unintentionally encountering a dogfighting exhibition. Individuals charged under the criminal spectator statutes often deny any intentional participation in the dogfight. Several investigative techniques may be utilized to refute such claims. Officers should look for evidence linking the defendant to the exhibition, such as entrance fees paid to attend, wagers placed on the dogs, verbal instigation of the fights. Sometimes photographic or video evidence gathered at the scene may include footage of the defendant attending that or other fights as a spectator. [142] In other cases, the intent requirement may be satisfied through circumstantial evidence such as showing that the defendant was present at the fight for a certain amount of time, thereby negating any defense of accidentally encountering the exhibition. [143]

ii. Constitutional Issues

Typically the constitutional challenges to the spectator statutes are the same as those to the general dogfighting statutes. Defendants often appeal their criminal convictions by arguing that the statutes are either unconstitutionally vague such that a person of ordinary intelligence could not determine what behaviors the statute proscribes or overbroad, such that the statute criminalizes innocent or constitutionally protected actions.

Void for Vagueness Doctrine: [144]

In *Commonwealth v. Craven*, [145] the court rejected a constitutional challenge to a Pennsylvania statute that prohibits being a "spectator" at a fight. [146] The trial court had erroneously found that the statute was unconstitutionally vague in that it did not clearly indicate whether there was a mens rea requirement for culpability or whether the statute sought to create a strict liability crime for any individual present at a dogfight. In rejecting the trial court's findings, the appellate court stated that "under its plain language, the statute only criminalizes attendance at an animal fight 'as a spectator'." [147] It therefore "criminalizes a person's conscious decision to attend an illegal animal fight as a spectator and by doing so, puts individuals on sufficient notice as to what conduct is proscribed." [148]

Similarly, in *State v. Arnold*, [149] the appellant, who was convicted of participating as a spectator at an exhibition featuring dog fighting, challenged the constitutionality of a North Carolina statute, [150] which creates criminal liability for any "person who participates as a spectator at an exhibition featuring the fighting or baiting of a dog," on the grounds of vagueness. The court had little trouble rejecting the appellant's argument. It simply interpreted the key words in question: "participates," "spectator," and "exhibition," by utilizing their plain meaning according to the American Heritage Dictionary. "Participate" means "to take part; join or share with others." An innocent passerby, who accidentally or unintentionally noticed the dogfight and immediately continued on his way, would therefore not be included in the definition according to the court. A "spectator" is "an observer of an event." Finally, to "exhibit" is defined as "to show externally; display." Therefore, the court held that "the plain language of the statute is not vague and is adequate to convey a clear understanding of what conduct is unlawful." [151]

Overbreadth Doctrine: [152]

In *Moody v. State*, [153] the fifty-nine appellants, who were indicted for dogfighting in violation of O.C.G.A. § 16-12-37, [154] challenged the constitutionality of that statute, which makes it a criminal offense for any person to cause or allow a dog to "fight another dog for sport or gaming purposes"

or maintain or operate "any event at which dogs are allowed or encouraged to fight one another." The appellants argued that the statute was overbroad in that it did not clearly define permissible and impermissible conduct, such that an individual could be punished for unintentional conduct or for the actions of others. For example, they asserted that under the statute, one who negligently allowed his dog to roam which resulted in a fight could be found guilty of dogfighting, thus criminalizing innocent conduct. [155] The court patently rejected the appellant's argument, citing its prior holding in *Hargrove v. State*, [156] that the statute "requires knowing and consensual involvement" with dogfighting, and does not attempt to punish innocent or constitutionally protected conduct.

In *State v. Weeks*, [157] however, the court did find that an animal fighting statute contained a provision that was impermissibly overbroad. In that case, the appellant had been convicted of being "present thereat" or "witnessing" a cockfight in violation of Ohio's animal fighting statute. [158] He appealed his conviction on the grounds that the final provision of the statute, which prohibits being "present thereat" any "place kept for" "cockfighting, bearbaiting or pitting of an animal against another," was impermissibly overbroad in that it did not make clear whether it was unlawful to assemble in a place used for animal fighting when there were no fights going on. The court determined that the provision could be interpreted to outlaw such lawful assembly in violation of the First Amendment. As such, the court held that that provision of the statute was "constitutionally infirm" but severable from the remainder of the statute and ultimately upheld the appellant's conviction. [159]

C. Keeping of Fighting Dogs

It is much more common for law enforcement agents to encounter pit bulls kept for fighting than it is for them to happen upon a fight in progress. Although it is much easier to gather evidence of dogfighting when the defendants are attending or coordinating a fight in progress, law enforcement agents do have legal recourse when dogs are being kept for fighting.

i. Laws

Many jurisdictions prohibit the keeping or possession of dogs trained or used for fighting. As such, criminal liability attaches for simply harboring the fighting dogs rather than for coordination of or attendance at a dogfight. See, [Chart of Dog-Fighting Laws](#) for specific laws by jurisdiction.

ii. Cases

In *Ash v. State*, [160] the defendant was convicted in a jury trial of "promoting or engaging in dog fighting or possessing a dog for that purpose" [161] although she was not actually present during the dog fight or raid. In that case, the defendant knew that her husband fought dogs, knew that a structure was built on her property to house the fighting dogs and included a pit to be used as a forum for the fights, and knew that large numbers of people came to her property occasionally and brought their pit bulls. She denied any knowledge of fights occurring on her property but admitted that she saw nothing wrong with dogfighting or with her 12 year old son attending the dogfights. In fact, she conceded that she and her husband had moved from California to Arkansas because dogfighting had been outlawed in California. [162] She challenged her conviction by arguing that since she was not actually present during the fight, there was insufficient evidence to show that she "promoted" dogfighting. Under the statute, however, criminal liability did not attach as a result of actual presence at a dogfight, rather it attached for simply "promoting" dogfighting, which the court interpreted to mean, "further, encourage, [or] advance." [163] The appellate court sustained her conviction because the appellant's knowledge of and acquiescence to dogfighting on her property and harboring of the fighting dogs "promoted," "furthered," "encouraged," and "advanced" dogfighting. [164]

Likewise, in *State v. Scott*, [165] the appellant had been charged with and pled guilty to animal fighting, cruelty to animals, and the keeping of unvaccinated dogs, although the State had no evidence of the defendant actually attending any dogfights. Instead, the State presented evidence that the appellant trained dogs on his property with a treadmill and a carousel, and that the dogs that were confiscated from his property had scars and wounds that were consistent with dogfighting. Finally, the State showed that the appellant had business cards advertising himself as a dog fighter and that he kept a notebook listing the people who owed him money. [166] Under Tenn. Code Ann. § 39-14-203(c)(1), [167] it is unlawful for any person to "own, possess, keep, use or train" dogs for fighting or to "permit any such acts...to be done on any premises under the person's charge or control, or aid or abet such act." It is not necessary that an individual ever be present at a dogfight to be held criminally liable under the statute.

X. Conclusion

We are in the midst of a dog fighting epidemic in America. We are in the midst of a violent crime epidemic as well; the correlation is not a difficult one to draw. In recent years social, political, and legal forces have effectuated remarkable changes in their perception of and reaction to the blood sport. The clandestine culture of dog fighting is no longer shrouded in ignorance and apathy, and law enforcement and legal advocates are equipped with stringent laws to protect the victims and to prevent the indoctrination of future generations of criminals into the culture of dogfighting. Where only a few decades ago, dog fighting prosecutions were literally unheard of, there is now a growing body of case law to assist prosecutors in building and presenting their cases and judges are becoming more cognizant of the gravity of this type of violent crime. National efforts are currently underway to strengthen federal anti-dogfighting legislation, through the Animal Fighting Prohibition Enforcement Act of 2005.

Progressive law enforcement agencies throughout the nation have identified the overwhelming correlation between dog fighting and other criminal activity and many have developed specially trained units to aggressively combat dog fighting. The commitment of agency resources to the apprehension of dog fighters is not a sacrifice of those resources from other areas of law enforcement. On the contrary, the individuals that are apprehended by dog fighting units are the same gang members, drug-dealers, robbers, and violent criminals that the vice, narcotics, and gang units actively seek to apprehend. Dog fighting raids tend to result in mass arrests for multiple offenses whereby serious and habitual criminals, that may otherwise be unattainable, are easily and efficiently apprehended. Additionally, dog fighting search warrants inevitably result in the discovery of evidence of other criminal activity that would often not be detected without costly investigations and surveillance. Furthermore, as most urban youth are routinely exposed to dog fighting and its peripheral crimes, they are desensitized to violence and suffering and ultimately become criminalized. Without dedicated law enforcement intervention, these children would grow up to be the next generation of social deviants that compromise community safety and drain resources from an already drastically underfunded penal system. As many law enforcement agencies have already discovered, preventing their exposure to violence early on ultimately prevents the desensitization and future criminalization of children and saves future law enforcement resources.

Many local, state, and national agencies have implemented well designed, sophisticated task forces [168] utilizing local and regional law enforcement bureaus, including special agents, organized crime units, SWAT teams, drug enforcement agents, animal control officers, and child protective services. Legal institutions and individual attorneys are vital components of the task forces as well; they contribute legal expertise in prosecuting the dog-fighting cases and in developing public policies and legislative initiatives to combat dog fighting. Community based government, social and educational organizations assist the task forces through community outreach, education, intelligence gathering, and animal rescue. Many major cities have prominent officials that have developed and implemented dog-fighting initiatives; the prodigious success has garnered nationwide attention and spurred regional and state wide initiatives:

CHICAGO: One high profile success is Chicago's Animal Abuse and Control Team (AACT), formed under Mayor Daley and led by Sergeant Steve Brownstein, which consists of 2 teams each with 1 sergeant and 5 officers. The Chicago Police Department and the Cook County Attorney's Office sponsor DAWG, a court advocacy program to monitor dogfighting and other animal abuse cases.

Recently, Mayor Daley developed a city-wide public service "Born to Lose" campaign, targeting dog-fighting. In 2002 Chicago designated an emergency code for animal fighting and in 2003, the city received and responded to 1093 animal-fighting complaints. The city's success with AACT prompted the creation of a state wide Illinois Illegal Animal Fighting Task Force who's members include law enforcement, animal control, judiciary, legislature, public health and education committees.

BOSTON: Boston's Operation Dog Tag, launched in District Eleven in 1996 under the leadership of Captain Robert P. Dunford, is considered a national model in progressive law enforcement. Dog Tag dispatches teams of city police officers, animal control officers, and armed special agents to dog-fights. Additionally, "gang investigations, drug investigations, intimidation complaints, robbery, and assaults are just some of the areas in which the Task Force has been used," said Sergeant Tom Flanagan, Supervisor of the Boston Police Community Services Office. "We never dreamt of the success we have had."

LOS ANGELES: Recently, the City of Los Angeles made history by announcing an unprecedented alliance between the Los Angeles Police Department and Animal Services to combat dog-fighting. With the support and guidance of the L.A. City Attorney's Office, and under the leadership of Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, LAPD's Chief Bratton, Assistant Chief Papa, and the Los Angeles City Council, a dedicated blood sport and animal cruelty unit has been developed and is being implemented in 2005.

From an institutional perspective, the combined efforts of the legal and law enforcement community to eradicate the culture of dogfighting are significant, success is inevitable. The reality however, is that society is merely beginning to confront the violent culture of dog fighting that has infiltrated every facet of American life for generations. For the victims, the people and animals that live in the communities that are scarred by the unfettered growth of blood sport, the situation remains desperate. Despite weekly reports of dog fighting raids and prosecutions from around the country, countless dog fights occur every night and go unnoticed, unreported, uninvestigated or unprosecuted. It will take years, perhaps decades for the current efforts to eradicate dog-fighting to have any tangible impact in the communities that are most afflicted. In the mean time, the legal, political, and law enforcement communities have the formidable task of preventing another generation from being indoctrinated into the violent underworld of dog fighting.

[1] According to the dogfighters, "[y]ou're looking for dogs that'll die when fighting -- that'll fight to the death." Eileen Loh-Harrist, *Fight Clubs*, Gambit Weekly, July 10, 2001, available at http://www.bestofneworleans.com/dispatch/2001-07-10/cover_story.html.

[2] See, Ri'Chard Magee, *Pit Bull Bait-The Short Sad Life of Dancer (AKA Dozier)*, YO! Youth Outlook Vol. 5, No. 2 March/April 1996 (a personal account of a dog lost to the underworld of dog-fighting and used as bait).

[3] "Game is the dog that won't quit fighting, the dog that'll die in the ring, the dog that'll fight with two broken legs." Eileen Loh-Harrist supra note 1.

[4] Joshua Brown, *The Hungry Eye, Episode 3*, Common-Place, Vol. 2 No. 2, January 2002, at <http://www.common-place.org/vol-02/no-02/brown/brown-8.shtml> (Excerpts of a fictional account of a dog-fight staged by well known dogman, Kit Burns).

[5] There are a few variations of the rules. The following are "Cajun Rules":

RULE 1: Size of pit, optional; to be square with sides 2 feet high, scratch line 12 feet apart.

RULE 2: Referee to be chosen before the dogs are weighed in or washed and referee to conduct the contest according to these rules and his decision to be final.

RULE 3: Referee to see the dogs weighed at time agreed on and if either dog is over top weight agreed on he loses the forfeit money.

RULE 4: Parties to toss coin to see who shall wash first, each party to furnish two clean towels and a blanket.

RULE 5: If requested to do so the referee shall search the person named to wash the dogs and then have him bare his arm to the elbow and wash both dogs in the same warm water and rinse them each in his half of the warm clean water provided for that purpose.

RULE 6: As the dogs are washed clean and dried they shall be turned over to their handlers and at once taken to their corners of the pit as designated by the referee and the referee must search handlers for means of foul play and see that he bares his arms to the elbow before he receives his dog and must keep his arms bare in such a manner during the contest.

RULE 7: The dog's owner or his representative shall be allowed at all times to be near his dog and watch to see that no harm is done him, and each owner shall be allowed to name a man or himself watch his opponent's dog and handler at all times to see he is given no unfair advantage.

RULE 8: Either dog's owner, handler, or watcher if he sees anything wrong must at once appeal to the referee and get his decision. And if any handler, watcher or owner violates any of these rules and thereby favors either dog the dog so favored must at once be declared the loser.

RULE 9: The interested parties shall choose a timekeeper at the pit side.

RULE 10: The dogs are placed in their corners of the pit, opposite corners, faces turned from each other and only the dogs and their handlers inside the pit. Then the referee shall say, "Face you dogs". Each handler must always show his dog full head and shoulders between his legs. The referee says, "Let go", but the handlers must never push or shove their dogs and handlers shall not leave their corners until the dogs are together.

RULE 11: Now when one of the dogs turns his head and shoulders away from his opponent after the fight is on it is a turn, whether they are in holds or free, and the handler must claim the turn and the referee must allow the claim if he believes it is a turn or the referee must call the first fair turn he sees whether the handler claims it or not and when the referee calls a turn he shall say, "Handle your dogs", and each handler must pick up his dog as soon as he can without breaking a hold. Handlers carry their dogs to their respective corners the referee shall say, "Face your dogs". Then the handlers must show their dog's head and shoulders between their legs, facing the center of the pit. The dog that turned first must scratch first. In five seconds more the referee shall say, "Let go", then the dog that made the first turn must be turned loose by his handler and this dog must go across and mouth the other dog. If, when he is turned loose he refuses to start at once or is he stops on the way over, or if he fails to reach his opponent must declare his opponent the winner. A handler is allowed to release his dog at anytime he sees fit after the dog whose turn it is to cross has started over. He must turn him loose when the dogs touch each other. He is not compelled to until then.

RULE 12: (a) If neither dog has made a turn and they cease to fight after 60 seconds of no action the down dog is to scratch first, if he makes his scratch the fight is on and they shall scratch in turns until the contest is decided.(b) If the down dog fails to scratch the other dog is to scratch to win. If he fails to scratch the contest shall be declared a draw by the referee.(c) No handler is to handle his dog until ordered by referee, if he does, it shall be called a foul and he is to forfeit the contest to his opponent.(d) No flash pictures or hitting on pit side shall be allowed unless agreed upon by the two contestants.

RULE 13: After the dogs are together this time either handler is allowed to pick up his dog when they are not in holds, if ordered by referee. If he tries for a pick up and either dog has a hold he must turn him loose at once. If he catches his dog up free both handlers must handle their dogs at once. Take their dogs to their corners and proceed same as at the first turn, except this time the dog which went across before is allowed to remain in his corner while his opponent makes a scratch, or goes across, and they alternate or take it turn about in this manner until one of them is declared the winner under these rules. The referee pays no attention to the turns after the first scratch.

RULE 14: If one of the dogs fangs himself, that is, if he gets his teeth hung in his own lip, his handler is allowed to unfang him. If the dogs have to be eparated for this they are turned loose again, both at the same time within two feet of each other in the center of the pit.

RULE 15: No sponging shall be allowed, and no towels or anything else taken into the pit by the handlers except a bottle of drink for his dog and a fan to cool him with. The handlers must taste their dogs drink before the referee to show that it contains no poison.

RULE 16: If the handler of either dog is seen to take anything from anyone on the outside of the pit he is to lose the battle. Each party shall have the right to put a man near his opponent's corner to watch the handler. Should he see the handler put anything on his dog he may appeal to the referee and if the referee finds anything on the dog he is to lose the battle.

RULE 17: Should either handler leave the pit with his dog before the referee renders his decision he is to lose the battle.

RULE 18: The handlers shall be allowed to encourage their dogs by voice or hand-clapping or snapping of fingers, but must not touch their dogs or use foul, dirty methods, by saving their dogs from hard fall or keeping the other handler away from his dog, or in any other way act unfairly. The referee must decide the battle against the one who does so.

RULE 19: Should the police interfere the referee to name the next meeting place.

G.A. (Gaboon) Trahan, available at: <http://members.fortunecity.com/dim67/cajun.html>

[6] *The Final Round: Illegal Animal Fighting Manual*, Humane Society of the United States, at 44.

[7] See, Mike Homan, *The Complete History of Fighting Dogs* (Ringpress Books, 1999).

[8] On December 8, 1876, the *Long Island Star* ran the story, "Two Bulldogs Chew Each Other Up," detailing a highly publicized \$1,000 championship fight. *ASPCA History: Regarding Henry*, at http://www.aspc.org/site/PageServer?pagename=about_history. Kit Burns was one of the most notorious early dogmen. He was closely followed by early humane organizations, but dog fighting convictions were scarce in a time when the blood sport was largely condoned by judges and other high profile figures. Id.

[9] *Facts and Fun: Pitbulls*, The Humane Society of Weld County online forum, at <http://www.weldcountyhumane.org/facts%20and%20fun.htm>.

[10] *Dog Fight on the Western Front*, The Bull Terrier Times, <http://www.bullterriertimes.co.uk/dogfight.htm>.

[11] James Dabney McCabe, *Secrets of the Great City* (Philadelphia: Jones Brothers, 1868). (An excerpt from chapter 44, describes the nightly scenes at Kit Burns's: "Notice is given that at such a time there will be a dog fight at "Sportsman's Hall," and when that time arrives the rougns and bullies of the neighborhood crowd the benches of the amphitheatre. A more brutal, villainous-looking set it would be hard to find. They are more inhuman in appearance than the dogs. Two huge bull-dogs, whose keepers can hardly restrain them, are placed in the pit, and the keeper or backer of each dog crouches in his lace, one on the right hand, the other on the left, and the dogs in the middle. At a given signal, the animals are released, and the next moment the combat agins. It is simply sickening. Most of our readers have witnessed a dog fight in the streets. Let them imagine the animals surrounded by a crowd of brutal wretches whose conduct stamps them as beneath, the struggling beasts, and they will have a fair idea of the scene at Kit Burns's...").

[12] Joshua Brown, supra, note 4. "Padlin stepped into the heart of Kit Burns's Dog-paradise, the packed and heaving fighting amphitheater. Seventy-five, one hundred, a horde of men (peppered with a selection of the establishment's whores) squatted on tiered bleachers, bodies cascading down to a low plank fence. Padlin was greeted by their vocal flatulence, full-throated and unreserved, bellowing bets and threats into the pit. He stopped in the narrow passageway between the bleachers, his head even with the top seats, arses squirming to his right and left. Listening to the encouragement impossibly mixed with abuse, he watched the two creatures wriggling in the dirt..." Id.

[13] The author interviewed several classes of 9th graders at Pontiac Northern High School, Pontiac Michigan. In every class, all but a few indicated that they had personally witnessed a dog-fight. Sadly, the children were desensitized to the violence, as only a few indicated that they felt that there was anything wrong with it.

[14] Nike recently unveiled an advertising campaign that glorified the concept of dog fighting to promote its shoes. The company denied that the ads, which show two dogs lunging at one another, attempting to fight, promote dog fighting. According to Celeste Alleyne, a company spokesperson, "The ad isn't about dog fighting, because the dogs never make contact with one another. It's just about the compelling need to win, to beat your opponent and win at all odds... People have to understand the youth culture we cater to. Our market is the urban, edgy, hip-hop culture—that's who we try to reach." Mark Gross, *Nike Draws Ire of Animal Welfare Community With "The Battle," Speak!*, at <http://students.seattleu.edu/grossm/>.

[15] See Eileen Loh-Harrist supra, note 1. Rapper DMX recently released a video for his song, "What's My Name," with two dogs lunging at each other to fight. He also alludes to dog fighting in his song, "Dog Match": "First time I had a match and didn't scratch... Place your bets/You can imagine what the bloodline is like... All my pups is crazy, 'cause off the leash/They can eat, stand a match for three hours at least." A toy company called "**Homies**" produces Latino action figures that are sold throughout the country in stores such as Rite Aid. Two such figures, "Mr. Pit" and "Big Loco" sport their fighting dogs, posed between their legs, ready to fight.

[16] Gloria Campisi, *Pit bulls are New Export: Dogfighting Gains Popularity in Europe*, Philadelphia Daily News, July 10, 2000.

[17] *Dogfighting latest Hobby of 'New Russians'*, Russia Today (Moscow), February 08, 1999.

[18] See, *In Brief: Dog Fight Club Unearthed*, The Guardian (London), May 28, 2005. Dogfighting is illegal in the UK under the Protection of Animals Act of 1911, Ch. 27, § 1.

[19] See, *Dog Fighting*, Wikipedia, at <http://www.answers.com/topic/dog-fighting>. Dog-fighting is prevalent, especially in Kabul, where fights draw thousands, including children. Though banned under the Taliban, it has resurged in recent years. Id. See also, Catherine Philip, *Pashtun Tribal Leaders Grow Rich on Conflict*, Times Newspapers Limited, December 1, 2001 (discussing the former Governor of Kandahar, Gul Agha Sharzai's involvement with dogfighting).

[20] *Dog Fight on the Western Front*, supra note 10.

[21] Id.

[22] See, <http://www.allaboutpetswa.com/Dog%20fighting.htm> (Australian website about dogfighting). See also, Kevin Meade, *Low-Lifes Steal Pets for Fights*, The Australian, September 25, 1998 (discussing the scope of dog fighting in Australia and efforts to raise penalties for violating the anti-fighting laws).

[23] Adolfo Sansolini, *Italian Mafia Finds New Cash Cow-Fighting Dogs*, San Francisco Chronicle, September 15, 2000.

[24] Id. Violators are not subject to any prison time for dog-fighting and the maximum penalty is \$5,000. Id.

[25] *Dog Fighting*, supra, note 19. Though legal throughout Japan, dog-fighting is illegal within Tokyo. The Japanese fighting dogs are Tosa, a large breed from Kochi. Id. See also, <http://www.pskochi.co.jp/senkyo.html> (Japanese dog-fighting website in Japanese).

[26] See, Doug Simpson, *Leashing a Blood Sport*, The Washington Times, January 13, 2004, available at <http://www.washtimes.com/culture/20040112-115320-5139r.htm>. (Noting that there are about a dozen regularly published journals).

[27] Joe Mandak, *Men Charged in Publication of Dog Fighting Magazine*, Boston.com, July 26, 2004, at http://www.boston.com/news/nation/articles/2004/07/26/men_charged_for_dog_fighting_magazine/. In 2004, authorities in Pennsylvania charged two men, James Jay Fricchione of Westtown, New York and John Kelly of Jefferson, Georgia for the publication and distribution of *The Sporting Dog Journal*, which began in 1972. Id. Other journals include: *The Scratch Line* and *Face Your Dogs*. Gary Cartwright, *Bred To Die*, The Readers Digest, January, 2003, at 83. *The Pit Bull Reporter* and the *American Pit Bull Terrier Gazette* are two other dogfighting publications. Loh-Harrist, supra, note 1. See also, <http://www.pbreporter.com/index.htm>.

[28] Id.

[29] An Internet search quickly yields hundreds of websites of kennels that highlight in detail specific dogs' performances in fights with disclaimers like 'this kennel will not participate in any activities conflicting with the Animal Welfare Act of 1976.' The kennels often promote and sell dogs from the lineage of prize-winning fighting dogs; they take great pride in the "gameness" of their dogs. See, Simpson, supra, note 26. (defining "gameness" as "an eagerness to attack despite ripped flesh, dehydration, exhaustion or broken bones"). Some websites have photos of their champion dogs posing with their trophies, though these trophies were not earned at dog-shows. See, Joe Mandak, supra, note 27. (Quoting Attorney General Jerry Pappert, "Just as the American Kennel Club bestows the title of champion on show dogs, the Sporting Dog Journal would confer the title of champion upon a pit bull that won three fights. Five wins could bring the title grand champion.")

[30] Several states mandate that veterinarians report evidence of dogfighting. See for example, ARS 32-2239: Mandatory Reporting Law for Veterinarians. Professional dog-fighters either treat the dogs themselves, utilizing veterinary drugs, or take injured dogs to dog-fighting colleagues for treatment, or they take the dogs to veterinarians that are aware of their 'profession'. See, Ric Kahn, *City Targets Dog-Fighting Operations; Pit Bull Trainer is Probed*, The Boston Globe, July 14, 1997 (reporting on the arrest of Javier Ruperto Medina, aka 'Dr. Dog', a well known figure in the dog-fighting circuit, who trained and treated fighting dogs under the guise of operating a kennel). See also, Cartwright, supra note 27 (discussing the grizzly raid of the home of a veterinary technician that was a well-known dog-fighter and "staple-man").

[31] Susan E. Davis, *Blood Sport*, California Lawyer, November 1997 at 46. In a 1995 raid in San Francisco, police officers confiscated \$57,000 in cash at the fight and the suspects that were arrested all posted cash bail that evening. San Francisco prosecutor, John Farrell commented that he'd "never seen so many people who were able to pay in one day. Most of them had private lawyers too." Id. at 84.

[32] Davis, supra note 31. "These events are so hidden they're nearly impossible to find," said San Francisco Animal Care and Control Deputy Director Lori Hazell. "This was a once-in-a-lifetime chance." Id. (describing a historic 1995 raid in San Francisco of one of the most prestigious fights in the country at that time).

[33] Id. According to Sakach, "Often they expect you to fight a dog before you're really accepted. In those cases there's a real risk of entrapment." Id.

[34] *The Final Round: Illegal Animal Fighting Manual*, Humane Society of the United States at 7.

[35] See for example, *Two Macomb Residents Arrested In Statewide Dog Fight, Drug Network*, News-Star.com (Shawnee, Oklahoma), May 26 2004, available at http://www.onlineshawnee.com/stories/052604/Tri_30.shtml (describing the geographic distribution of several suspects arrested in a major dog-fighting/drug raid; all were residents of 5 counties in Oklahoma).

[36] See for example, Lara Bricker, *Newton Man Faces 76 Charges in Dog Fighting Gambling Operation*, The Rockingham News, January 18, 2002, available at http://www.seacoastonline.com/2002news/rock/r1_18a.htm. (describing the arrest and arraignment of Christopher DeVito, a high level professional dog-fighter that lived in a "plush neighborhood" in Newton, New Hampshire. His wife was a high school teacher and DeVito was a computer systems analyst on medical leave from Harvard.). See also, Nelson Taylor, *Dogs of War*, www.BostonMagazine.com, November 2002, available at <http://www.bostonmagazine.com/ArticleDisplay.php?id=169&print=yes> (detailing the infamous DeVito raid).

[37] See for example, *Criminal Profile of the Urban Dog-Fighter Chart*.

[38] See for example, *Former NFL Running Back Charged In Dogfighting Ring* (ABC television broadcast, July 12, 2004), available at <http://www.ktul.com/news/stories/0704/158756.html> (describing the 2004 dog-fighting arrest of LeShon Johnson, a former National Football League running back). See also, *Pacers Lock Up Tinsley*, St. Petersburg Times (Florida), October 30, 2004, at 12C (discussing the suspension of the Trail Blazers' forward, Qyntel Woods, after allegations of dog-fighting).

[39] See for example, Bill Douthat, *Deputies Cited for Watching Dog Fight*, Palm Beach Post (Florida) July 18, 2000. See also, *Dogfight: 2 Cops, 86 Others Face Trial for Cruelty*, Philadelphia Daily News, July 11, 2000.

[40] See for example, *Dog Fighting/Drug Distribution Ring Dismantled*, Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs Control Press Release (May 25, 2004) (Agent Mark Woodward describes several undercover videos of fights, "Frequently, you'd see 20 to 60 people at these fights, including entire families with small children, cheering as these dogs are tearing each other apart.").

[41] See for example, *State v. Woods* 2001 WL 224519 (Ohio App. 10 Dist.) (The case, though reversed and remanded for legal issues, provides a narrative of a dogfight that resulted in a fatal shooting, purportedly over a gambling debt).

[42] *The Final Round: Illegal Animal Fighting Manual*, supra, note 34.

[43] Cmdr. Gerard Simon, Organized Crime and Gangs Division, Detroit, MI, Commenting on the departments six month long investigation, resulting in a major dog-fighting raid in Detroit, 2003.

[44] See *Criminal Profile of the Urban Dog-Fighter Chart*.

[45] See, [Raid Charts](#) for drugs confiscated at recent raids.

[46] Eileen Loh-Harrist, *supra* note 1 (quoting a self-proclaimed "fancier" on the money-making potential of dogfighting).

[47] See, [Raid Charts](#) for monetary amounts confiscated at recent dog-fighting raids.

[48] C.M. Brown, *Pit*, Atlanta Magazine, 1982, at 66.

[49] But see also, California Jack, *How to Save Your Dog After a Match*, available at <http://members.fortunecity.com/dim67/save.htm> (instructions for dogfighters on how to save their injured dogs after a fight).

[50] See, R. Evans, D.K. Gauthier, and C.J. Forsyth, *Dogfighting: Symbolic expression and validation of masculinity*, *Sex Roles*, 39 (11/12) 825-838 (1998). "I don't care how long my dog fights, if he's still able to keep going and choose to quit, he's not coming home with me. He's a dead dog." *Id.*

[51] See, William Hageman, *Spring Brings Rise in Dogfights Staged by Kids for Fun*, Chicago Tribune, May 11, 2004.

[52] William Hageman, *Spring Brings Rise in Dogfights Staged by Kids for Fun*, Chicago Tribune, May 11, 2004.

[53] *Id.* (quoting Gene Mueller, President Anti Cruelty Society).

[54] Craig J. Forsythe and Rhonda D. Evans, *Dogmen: The Rationalization of Deviance*, *Society and Animals: Journal of Human Animal Studies*, Vol. 6 No. 3, 1998, available at <http://www.psyeta.org/sa/sa6.3/forsyth.html>.

[55] *Id.* See also, G.M. Sykes & D. Matza, *Techniques of Neutralization: A Theory of Delinquency*, 22 *American Sociological Review* 6, 664.

[56] Mike Mosedale, *The Pugilist at Rest*, *City Beat* (Minneapolis/St. Paul) Vol. 24, Issue 1199, November 26, 2003.

[57] Forsyth, *supra* note 54.

[58] <http://www.donmayfield.com/1024/index.htm>.

[59] This particular viewpoint is especially difficult to comprehend because the cruelty and abuse are undeniable: "[One officer] remembers when he received a call in June, 2002, from a terrified elderly couple who said a pit bull was on their front porch. When [he] arrived to take the dog, he found an animal with bite marks and dried scabs on her head. The dog had been doused with a flammable liquid, set on fire and flames had ravaged one-third of her body. Shriveled and burnt like a hamburger fallen through a grill, the pit bull's skin was weak, but it clung to her bones. When she sat down, the bones in her leg pierced through her charbroiled skin... The dog was no doubt a loser in a dogfight... and the owner expressed his anger by setting her on fire." Adam Gibbs, *Illegal Dog Fighting Rings Difficult to Catch*, *Daily Kent Stater*, February 18, 2003. "[Another officer] remembers a call from an older couple who found an injured pit bull in their back yard. [He] arrived to find an animal, still alive, with 'a huge gaping hole in its skull.' It was breathing through its head with an audible hiss. 'It was pretty clear that it had been hit in the skull with a bat, which we heard that a lot of times they do after they lose a fight,' Olivier says. 'And its eyes were swollen, and it looked like a human fighter but much worse. Cuts and bleeding wounds all over its body and its legs, all the typical signs.'" Eileen Loh-Harrist, *supra* note 1.

[60] M. Danos, *Pit Bull Fighters*, *Times Picayune*, April 22, 1982, at S I, 8.

[61] *Dogfighting: Supporters, Opponents Go Into the Pit*, *Morning Advocate*, June 25, 1982, at C8.

[62] "You're not forcing the dogs to do what they don't want to do. It's bred into the dog. You can't force Mike Tyson and another fighter to fight. They've got to want to do it." Eileen Loh-Harrist, *supra* note 1 (quoting a dogfighter's rhetoric on the boxing comparison).

[63] In *A Tribute to a Warrior!*, one dogman recalls his indoctrination by Bobby Smith "one of the true Texas old timers." "I pulled up at his place and found my way over to the barn where everyone seemed to be gathered. He made all the introductions. A number of well known fanciers were there including Coy and L. Keyes. After we all had our fill of the Bar BQ it was time to start weighing some dogs. The first contest was about to begin when he noticed me standing off kinda behind the crowd, keeping to myself. He pulled up a 5 gallon bucket and set it next to the pit wall and said to me "Son, get over here, I gotta job for you" at the same time handing me a stopwatch. That's right, not only was I there but I was keeping time! That night I saw some good ones go, including some off Red Rock, & Banjo and BB Red before they reached their Grand Champion fame... When the night finally came to a close at about 1:00 am and all was said and done, my life as a dogman was forever changed. I owe that part of my journey to him. He was honest, trusting and never badmouthed a dog or a dogman. He was probably the only man in America that didn't know "Dogfighting" was against the law! The fraternity definitely suffered a setback with his early and untimely death. To this day I still miss being able to call him up and talking dogs." <http://www.gamedogs.com/bobbysmith.htm>.

[64] "To be great, one must learn from the greats." Norman Kemmer on old timer Don Mayfield, available at: http://www.gamedogs.com/Don_Mayfield.htm.

[65] Forsyth, *supra* note 54.

[66] *Id.*

[67] Kemmer, *supra* note 64 (A tribute to old timer Don Mayfield. "He was the King. I will pass his information to my children and they will hear his name spoken with reverence in my house.")

[68] Forsyth, *supra* note 54.

[69] <http://www.gamedogs.com>.

[70] <http://www.donmayfield.com/1024/index.htm>.

[71] *Maloney v State*, 532 P2d 78 (Okla. Crim. 1975).

[72] *State v Caillet*, 518 So 2d 1062 (La. App. 1 Cir. 1987).

[73] *Silver v. United States*, 726 A.2d 191 (D.C. 1999).

[74] *Id.* at 194.

[75] *The Final Round*, *supra* note 34, at 23.

[76] See for example, Fed. R. Crim. P. 41(c)(1).

[77] See for example, Vermont R. of Crim. P. Title 13, Section 354(2).

[78] In Los Angeles, for example, as of 2004, the Animal Services officers legally had the power of arrest, but were not provided with handcuffs or vehicles to transport detainees. They were also unarmed, save for rifles that they were only allowed to discharge on animals under very limited circumstances. In many jurisdictions, animal control officers do not have the power of arrest, are unarmed, and have received very limited criminal justice training.

[79] Minter-Smith v. State, 864 So. 2d 1141 (2003)

[80] *Id.* at 1143.

[81] *Id.* at 1143-44. "A consent to search is valid when the consent is freely and voluntarily given and the search is conducted within the scope of the consent." *Id.*

[82] 480 U.S. 294, 107 S. Ct. 1134, 94 L. Ed. 2d 326 (1987).

[83] Rogers v. State, 760 S.W.2d 669 (Tex. App. 1988).

[84] Minter-Smith v. State, *supra* note 79, at 1144. (Citing the doctrine as defined by the court in Pagan v. State, 830 So. 2d 792 (Fla. 2002).

[85] Minter-Smith v. State, *supra* note 79.

[86] *Id.* at 1144.

[87] Some states have laws that increase the penalty if the animal that has been fought is stolen. See, for example, Arizona H2573, signed on May 3, 2004 (increased the penalty for fighting a stolen animal to a Class 6 felony). See also, Eileen Loh-Harrist, *supra* note 1.

"Anna knows more about dog thefts than she ever wanted... Anna had adopted India from the streets. For months the dog was a terrific pet, affectionate and playful. Last year, India disappeared from Anna's yard, and Anna agonized that the dog was being fought, mistreated, and she'd never see her again. What happened later confirmed Anna's fears: India was returned. A neighbor saw some kids walking India back to Anna's house. One of them told the neighbor his brother had stolen the dog. 'They bred her and tried to fight her, and realized she wouldn't accomplish anything,' Anna recalls. 'You could tell she had given birth, and she had a big scar on her butt...She came back and she was malnourished, anemic, and she had no hair.' That wasn't the worst part. India's personality, like her appearance, had also changed dramatically. 'India was sweet, and when she came back, she was just vicious,' Anna says. 'She would attack my other dog ... she would snap and growl at people.' She also had begun jumping up on the tabletop to snatch food, leading Anna to believe the animal had competed with other dogs for scraps. In the end, the dog posed a danger to Anna's other pets, and she had to give India away." *Id.*

[88] 'Exigent Circumstances', or situations that warrant immediate action to preserve evidence or to protect a victim, arise often in the context of dogfighting. Examples of exigent circumstances include: encountering a dog-fight in progress or dogs that are severely wounded in a dog-fight and require immediate treatment. Because there is always a great likelihood that the evidence will be destroyed (or moved) if an agent leaves the dogs to get a warrant to seize them, the dogs should never be left unattended if there is probable cause sufficient enough to obtain a warrant. If there are two agents, one could secure the premises long enough for the other to obtain a warrant. If there is only one officer and a warrant cannot be obtained over the phone, the dogs should be seized. The probable cause requirement must still be met to avoid Fourth Amendment challenges. See, Dressler, Joshua, *Understanding Criminal Procedure*, Matthew Bender & Co., Inc. (Second Edition 1997) at 177 (offering a general overview of exigent circumstances).

[89] Ash v State, 290 Ark 278, 718 SW2d 930 (1986). See also, Silver v. United States, 726 A.2d 191 (D.C. 1999) (Defendant's conviction for animal cruelty and dog-fighting was supported by testimonial evidence by a police officer that witnessed two dogs fighting in an alley, surrounded by a crowd, while the dog's owners incited them.)

[90] Barton v State, 253 Ga 478, 322 SE2d 54 (1984).

[91] Hargrove v State, 253 Ga 450, 321 SE2d 104 (1984).

[92] Jones v State, 473 So 2d 1197 (Ala. App. 1985).

[93] Hargrove v State, *supra* note 91.

[94] Stephens v. State, 247 Ga. App. 719 (2001).

[95] *Id.* at 719.

[96] People v. Lee, et al. 2004 WL 2914207 (Mich. App.).

[97] T.C.A. § 39-3-105(a)(1). See also, Ala. Code § 3-1-29.

[98] Hargrove v. State, *supra* note 91.

[99] *Id.*

[100] *Id.* at 452.

[101] *Id.* at 454.

[102] Rogers v. State, 760 S.W.2d 669 (Tex. App. 1988).

[103] Tex. Penal Code Ann. § 42.111(a)(4)

[104] Rogers v. State, *supra* note 102, at 671.

[105] See for example, People v. Berry, 1 Cal. App. 4th 778 (1991) (The case, which was appealed for unrelated legal issues involved a manslaughter conviction where a dog kept for fighting killed a 2 year old child.)

[106] People v. Beam, 244 Mich.App. 103 (2000).

[107] M.C.L. § 750.49(10) reads in relevant part:

"If an animal trained or used for fighting or an animal that is the first or second generation offspring of an animal trained or used for fighting attacks a person without provocation and causes the death of that person, the owner of the animal is guilty of a felony and shall be punished by imprisonment for a maximum term of not more than 15 years."

[108] People v. Beam, supra note 106, at 109.

[109] All jurisdictions are subject to the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments' due process restraints on forfeiture of property. The Fifth Amendment provides, in pertinent part, that no person shall "be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law." The Fourteenth Amendment provides, in pertinent part, " . . . nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law." For purposes of this annotation, the requirements of either one or both of these provisions are generally referred to as "federal constitutional due process." The due process requirements are generally satisfied by notice and an opportunity to be heard prior to forfeiture of the property.

[110] See, for example, 5A Federal Procedure, L Ed, Bonds, Civil Fines, and Forfeitures § 10:37; and 13 Federal Procedure, L Ed, Food, Drugs, and Cosmetics § 35:641.

[111] See, Daniel A. Klein, J.D., *Annotation: Supreme Court's Views As To Due Process Requirements, Under Federal Constitution's Fifth And Fourteenth Amendments, Concerning Forfeitures Of Property To Government As Result Of Unlawful Conduct*, 126 L. Ed. 2d 799. The Supreme Court has held that the standard of proof required in forfeiture proceedings is preponderance of the evidence. *Id.* Furthermore, the Court has held that there is no constitutional bar to transferring forfeited property to third parties. *Id.*

[112] 32 Pit Bulldogs and Other Property v. County of Prentiss, 808 So.2d 971 (2002).

[113] Miss.Code Ann. § 97-41-19(3) (2000).

[114] 32 Pit Bulldogs and Other Property, supra note 112, at 975.

[115] Miss.Code Ann. § 97-41-19(3) (2000). "Upon the certification of a licensed veterinarian or officer of the humane society or animal welfare agency that, in his professional judgment, a dog which has been seized is not likely to survive the final disposition of the charges or that, by reason of the physical condition of the dog, it should be humanely euthanized before such time, the court may order the dog humanely euthanized...." *Id.*

[116] 32 Pit Bulldogs and Other Property, supra note 112, at 974.

[117] See for example, People v. McCree, 2002 WL 276134 (Cal.App. 3 Dist.) (2002) (The defendant maintained that dogs had been injured and scarred while in the custody of the previous owners. He was convicted in a jury trial by circumstantial evidence that linked him to the dogfighting.)

[118] Moody v. State, 253 Ga. 456 (1984).

[119] Jones v State, 473 So 2d 1197 (Ala. App. 1985).

[120] See, Connally v. General Constr. Co., 269 U.S. 385, 391 (1926) (The Supreme Court explained that an unconstitutionally vague statute is "a statute which either forbids or requires the doing of an act in terms so vague that men of common intelligence must necessarily guess at its meaning and differ as to its application violates the first essential of due process of law.")

[121] State v. Gaines, 64 Ohio App. 3d 230 (1990).

[122] Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 959.16 provides in relevant part that:

"(A) No person shall knowingly do any of the following:

"(1) Promote, engage in, or be employed at dogfighting;

"(2) Receive money for the admission of another person to a place kept for dogfighting;

"(3) Sell, purchase, possess, or train a dog for dogfighting;

"(4) Use, train, or possess a dog for seizing, detaining, or maltreating a domestic animal;

"(5) Purchase a ticket of admission to or be present at a dogfight;

"(6) Witness a dogfight if it is presented as a public spectacle.

[123] State v. Smith (June 10, 1981), Licking App. Nos. CA-2772, CA-2777 and CA-2780, unreported, 1981 WL 6315.

[124] State v. Gaines, supra note 121 at 234.

[125] Hargrove v. State, supra note 91.

[126] Ga. Code Ann. § 16-12-37 provides that:

"(a) A person commits the offense of dogfighting when he causes or allows a dog to fight another dog for sport or gaming purposes or maintains or operates any event at which dogs are allowed or encouraged to fight one another.

"(b) A person convicted of the offense of dogfighting shall be punished by a mandatory fine of \$5,000.00 or by a mandatory fine of \$5,000.00 and imprisonment for not less than one year nor more than five years."

[127] Hargrove v. State, supra note 91, at 4.

[128] *Id.*

[129] See, Broadrick v. Oklahoma, 413 U.S. 601, 93 S.Ct. 2908, 37 L.Ed.2d 830 (1973); Grayned v. City of Rockford, 408 U.S. 104, 92 S.Ct. 2294, 33 L.Ed.2d 222 (1972) (The over breadth doctrine forbids any statute that criminalizes constitutionally protected or innocent behavior.).

[130] People v. Parker, et al., 1999 WL 33435342 (Mich.App.).

[131] MCL 750.49(2)(e)(f) reads in relevant part:

"(2) A person shall not knowingly do any of the following:

(e) Organize, promote, or collect money for the fighting, baiting, or shooting of an animal as described in subdivisions (a) to (d).

(f) Be present at a building, shed, room, yard, ground, or premises where preparations are being made for an exhibition described in subdivisions (a) to (d) [i.e., the fighting, baiting or shooting of an animal as a test of marksmanship], or be present at the exhibition, knowing that an exhibition is taking place or about to take place."

[132] People v. Parker, et al., supra note 130, at 8. See also, People v. Cumper, 83 Mich. App. 490 (1978).

[133] State v. Gaines, supra note 121.

[134] Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 959.16 provides in relevant part that:

"(A) No person shall knowingly do any of the following:

"(1) Promote, engage in, or be employed at dogfighting;

"(2) Receive money for the admission of another person to a place kept for dogfighting;

"(3) Sell, purchase, possess, or train a dog for dogfighting;

"(4) Use, train, or possess a dog for seizing, detaining, or maltreating a domestic animal;

"(5) Purchase a ticket of admission to or be present at a dogfight;

"(6) Witness a dogfight if it is presented as a public spectacle.

[135] Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 959.16 (A)(1).

[136] Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 959.16 (A)(4).

[137] State v. Gaines, supra note 121, at 235.

[138] Kentucky Department of Corrections v. Thompson, 490 U.S. 454 (1989).

[139] Commonwealth v. Gonzalez, 403 Pa. Super. 157 (1991).

[140] 18 Pa.C.S.A. § 5511(h.1) reads in relevant part:

"(j) Seizure of animals kept or used for animal fighting. -- Any police officer or agent of a society or association for the prevention of cruelty to animals incorporated under the laws of this Commonwealth, shall have power to seize any animal kept, used, or intended to be used for animal fighting. When the seizure is made, the animal or animals so seized shall not be deemed absolutely forfeited, but shall be held by the officer or agent seizing the same until a conviction of some person is first obtained for a violation of subsection (h.1). The officer or agent making such seizure shall make due return to the justice of the peace before whom the complaint is heard, of the number and kind of animals or creatures so seized by him, and it shall be the duty of the justice of the peace hearing the complaint, in case of a conviction, to make the forfeiture of such animals or creatures seized a part of the sentence. Where an animal is thus seized, the police officer or agent is authorized to provide such care as is reasonably necessary, and where any animal thus seized is found to be disabled, injured or diseased beyond reasonable hope of recovery, the police officer or agent is authorized to provide for the humane destruction of the animal. The cost of the keeping, care and destruction of the animal shall be paid by the owner thereof . . ."

[141] Commonwealth v. Gonzalez, supra note 139, at 173.

[142] Commonwealth v. Craven, 572 Pa. 431 (2003) (The State showed that the defendants attended animal fights as spectators by presenting video evidence of two fights where defendants stood above the fighting ring with their arms crossed.).

[143] State v. Arnold, 147 N.C. App. 670 (2001) (The defendants claim that he was brought to the crime scene without any knowledge of the dogfight, and did not actually witness any dogs fighting was refuted by evidence that he was on the second floor of the barn, where the dogfights were staged, long enough to have participated as a spectator.)

[144] See, Connally v. General Constr. Co., 269 U.S. 385, 391 (1926) (The Supreme Court explained that an unconstitutionally vague statute is "a statute which either forbids or requires the doing of an act in terms so vague that men of common intelligence must necessarily guess at its meaning and differ as to its application violates the first essential of due process of law.").

[145] Commonwealth v. Craven, supra note 142.

[146] 18 Pa.C.S. § 5511(h.1) states that:

A person commits a felony of the third degree if he:

(1) for amusement or gain, causes, allows or permits any animal to engage in animal fighting;

(2) receives compensation for the admission of another person to any place kept or used for animal fighting;

(3) owns, possesses, keeps, trains, promotes, purchases or knowingly sells any animal for animal fighting;

(4) in any way knowingly encourages, aids or assists therein;

(5) wagers on the outcome of an animal fight;

(6) pays for admission to an animal fight or attends an animal fight as a spectator; or

(7) knowingly permits any place under his control or possession to be kept or used for animal fighting.

[147] Commonwealth v. Craven, supra note 142, at 437

[148] *Id.*

[149] State v. Arnold, supra note 143.

[150] N.C. Gen. Stat. § 14-362.2 provides in pertinent part that:

"A person who participates as a spectator at an exhibition featuring the fighting or baiting of a dog is guilty of a Class H felony."

[151] State v. Arnold, supra, note 143, at 674.

[152] See, Broadrick v. Oklahoma, 413 U.S. 601 (1973); Grayned v. City of Rockford, 408 U.S. 104 (1972) (The over breadth doctrine forbids any statute that criminalizes constitutionally protected or innocent behavior.).

[153] Moody v. State, 253 Ga. 456 (1984).

[154] O.C.G.A. § 16-12-37 reads in pertinent part:

"A person commits the offense of dogfighting when he causes or allows a dog to fight another dog for sport or gaming purposes or maintains or operates any event at which dogs are allowed or encouraged to fight one another."

[155] Moody v. State, supra note 153, at 456.

[156] Hargrove v. State, supra note 91.

[157] State v Weeks, 1992 Ohio App. LEXIS 1090 (1992).

[158] R.C. 959.15 states in relevant part that:

"No person shall knowingly engage in or be employed at cockfighting, bearbaiting, or pitting an animal against another; no person shall receive money for the admission of another to a place kept for such purpose; no person shall use, train, or possess any animal for seizing, detaining, or maltreating a domestic animal. Any person who knowingly purchases a ticket of admission to such place, or is present thereat, or witnesses such spectacle, is an aider and abettor."

[159] State v. Weeks, supra note 157 at 8.

[160] Ash v. State, 290 Ark. 278 (1986)

[161] Ark. Stat. Ann. §§ 41-2918.1 and -2918.2 (Supp. 1985). 1981 Ark. Acts 862 prohibits persons from promoting dog fighting, engaging in dog fighting, being present at a dog fight, or committing various acts connected with dog fighting.

[162] Ash v. State, supra note 160, at 282.

[163] *Id.*

[164] *Id.* at 283.

[165] State v. Scott, 2001 Tenn. Crim. App. LEXIS 561 (2001).

[166] *Id.* at 13.

[167] Tenn. Code Ann. § 39-14-203(a)(1) (1997) states in relevant part:

"(a) It is unlawful for any person to:

(1) Own, possess, keep, use or train any bull, bear, dog, cock or other animal, for the purpose of fighting, baiting or injuring another such animal, for amusement, sport or gain;

(3) Permit any such acts stated in subdivisions (a)(1) and (2) to be done on any premises under the person's charge or control, or aid or abet such act"

[168] Other local and regional task forces include:

NATIONAL ILLEGAL ANIMAL FIGHTING TASK FORCE: Nationwide coalition, cooperating agencies include United States Department of Agriculture, Humane Society of the United States, and more than 150 local, state, and federal police departments.

ILLINOIS ILLEGAL ANIMAL FIGHTING TASK FORCE: Statewide extension of Chicago's AACT. Members include law enforcement, animal control, judiciary, legislature, public health and education committees.

OHIO DOG-FIGHTING TASK FORCE: Governor Bob Taft formed the task force in August, 2001, led by the State Department of Agriculture, includes law enforcement agencies statewide, based out of Cleveland.

TOLEDO DOG-FIGHTING INVESTIGATIONS: Toledo Police Gang Squad members double as dog-fighting force and regularly respond to dog-fights.

PALM BEACH COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE ANIMAL CRUELTY UNIT: Established in 1998, 4 deputies are assigned to the Unit and regularly investigate dog-fighting.

BROWARD COUNTY (FL) ANIMAL CRUELTY UNIT: Specialized sheriff's unit investigates dog-fighting, teaches classes to law enforcement agencies statewide on recognizing evidence of dog-fighting, investigating dog-fighting complaints, coordinating raids, and case preparation for prosecution.

NORTH CAROLINA STATEWIDE DOG-FIGHTING TASK FORCE: Includes law enforcement and other agencies from Orange County, Wake County, and Durham County, as well as contributing agencies statewide

SOUTHERN FLORIDA DOG-FIGHTING TASK FORCE: Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach, and Martin counties are in the process of uniting their individual task forces to create a unified regional dog-fighting task force for police officer training, cross-reporting, and coordinated multi-agency raids. The strong statewide effort to combat dog-fighting prompted Governor Bush to stiffen animal fighting laws in Florida.

SOUTH CAROLINA ANTI-DOG FIGHTING TASK FORCE: Organized by Attorney General Henry McMaster and Chief Robert Stewart of SLED, statewide coalition of law enforcement agencies, state and local government agencies, and other state and local groups.

RHODE ISLAND ANIMAL FIGHTING COALITION: Members include investigators, animal control officers, shelter representatives and rescue groups for cross-training, education and networking.

NEW ENGLAND ANIMAL FIGHTING TASK FORCE: Regional network of dog-fighting task forces from New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Vermont and Maine, to train law enforcement, educate the public, improve cross-reporting and communication among the agencies, strengthen animal fighting legislation and enforcement.

PONTIAC (MI) DOG-FIGHTING INVESTIGATIONS UNIT: Pilot program implemented in 2003 by Chief of Police Rollie W. Gackstetter. 4 vice squad members were assigned to dog-fighting investigations. Prior to the beginning of the detectives' assignment, extensive intelligence was gathered, including identification of approximately 150 suspected and known dog-fighters, their criminal histories, and locations. The detectives under the leadership of Detective Mike Story, have since conducted several successful drug and dog-fighting raids, arrested many known dog-fighters, including one major dog-fighter and drug distributor who was wanted in 2 states for absconding parole, and was allegedly conspiring to transport 100+ fighting dogs and copious quantities of narcotics across state lines. In July, 2004 the City's Animal Control Department was being taken over by the Pontiac Police Department. The City of Pontiac, like all urban areas, has been plagued by dog-fighting, gang activity, violent crime and drug abuse for decades, however since 2003, the city is setting national standards of excellence in law enforcement for identifying the correlation between these crimes, developing an innovative "dog-fighting" database as a cross reference for detectives, implementing the multi-agency task force, and conducting several successful raids since the programs implementation. Update: there is a new mayor, Clarence E. Phillips, and a new Chief of Police, Valard Gross, under whose leadership Pontiac has reverted to the same state that it was in prior to the laudable efforts of Chief Gackstetter and Detective Mike Story. There is no longer a dogfighting taskforce and dogfighting is thriving in Pontiac.

OTHER TASK FORCES: Pittsburg, PA, Rochester, NY, Vermont, New Orleans, LA

[Top of Page](#)

- [Site Information](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [Make a Donation](#)
- [Home](#)

© 2014 Michigan State University [College of Law](#). This site is not a law firm and cannot offer legal advice.

Search AWIC

Search all USDA
Advanced Search

Public Law 94-279 Animal Welfare Act Amendments of 1976

Summary: Enacted April 22, 1976, Public Law 94-279 is primarily refining previous regulations on animal transport and commerce. "Carrier" and "Intermediate Handler" are defined. Health certification prior to transport of sale is required and must be performed by a veterinarian. Licenses, method of payment, and penalties for violations are discussed. This amendment also introduces and defines "animal fighting ventures" to the Act. Animals used in hunting waterfowl, foxes, etc. are exempt. It is illegal to exhibit or transport via interstate or foreign commerce animals used in fighting ventures such as dogs or roosters.

Browse By Subject

Alternatives
Companion Animals
Farm Animals
Government and
Professional Resources
Humane Endpoints and
Euthanasia
Literature Searching and
Databases
Pain and Distress
Research Animals
Zoo, Circus and Marine
Animals

Public Law 94-279**94th Congress, S. 1941****April 22, 1976**

Note: In this HTML version of the amendment, brackets, [], indicate notes found in the corresponding margin of the hardcopy document.

To amend the Act of August 24, 1966, as amended, to increase the protection afforded animals in transit and to assure humane treatment of certain animals, and for other purposes.

[Animal Welfare Act Amendments of 1976. 7 USC 2131 note. 7 USC 2131 note. 7 USC 2131.] Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That this Act may be cited as the "Animal Welfare Act Amendments of 1976".

SEC. 2. Section 1 of the Act of August 24, 1966 (80 Stat. 350, as amended by the Animal Welfare Act of 1970, 84, Stat. 1560; 7 U.S.C. 2131-2155) is amended to read as follows:

"Section 1. (a) This Act may be cited as the 'Animal Welfare Act'.

"(b) The Congress finds that animals and activities which are regulated under this Act are either in interstate or foreign commerce or substantially affect such commerce or the free flow thereof, and that regulation of animals and activities as provided in this Act is necessary to prevent and eliminate burdens upon such commerce and to effectively regulate such commerce, in order--

"(1) to insure that animals intended for use in research facilities or for exhibition purposes for use as pets are provided humane care and treatment;

"(2) to assure the humane treatment of animals during transportation in commerce; and

"(3) to protect the owners of animals from the theft of their animals by preventing the sale or use of animals which have been stolen.

The Congress further finds that it is essential to regulate, as provided in this Act, the transportation, purchase, sale, housing, care, handling, and treatment of animals by carriers or by persons or organizations engaged in using them for research or experimental purposes or for exhibition purposes or holding them for sale as pets or for any such purpose or use".

[7 USC 2132.] SEC. 3. Section 2 of such Act is amended--

(1) by striking out subsection (c) and (d) thereof and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

[Definitions.] "(c) The term 'commerce' means trade, traffic, transportation, or other commerce--

"(1) between a place in a State and any place outside of such State, or between points within any territory, possession, or the District of Columbia;

"(2) which affects trade, traffic, transportation, or other commerce described in paragraph (1).

"(d) The term 'State' means a State of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, or any other territory of possession of the United States;"

(2) by striking out the term "affecting commerce" in subsections (e) and (f) and inserting in lieu thereof "In commerce";

(3) by revising paragraph (f) thereof to read as follows:

"(f) The term 'dealer' means any person who, in commerce, for compensation or profit, delivers for transportation, or transports, except as a carrier, buys, or sells, or negotiates the purchase or sale of, (1) any dog or other animal whether alive or dead for research, teaching, exhibition, or use as a pet, or (2) any dog for hunting, security, or breeding purposes, except that this term does not include--

"(i) a retail pet store except such store which sells any animals to a research facility, an exhibitor, or a dealer; or

"(ii) any person who does not sell, or negotiate the purchase or sale of any wild animal, dog, or cat, and who derives no more than \$500 gross income from the sale of other animals during any calendar year;"

(4) by deleting "and" at the end of paragraph (g) and inserting in lieu thereof the following: "With respect to a dog, the term means all dogs including those used for hunting, security, or breeding purposes;" and

(5) by deleting the period at the end of paragraph (h) and inserting a semicolon in lieu thereof.

[7 USC 2132.] SEC. 4. Section 2 of such Act is further amended by adding thereto two new paragraphs to read:

["Intermediate handler."] "(i) The term 'intermediate handler' means any person including a department, agency, or instrumentality of the United States or of any State or local government (other than a dealer, research facility, exhibitor, any person excluded from the definition of a dealer, research facility, or exhibitor, an operator of an auction sale, or a carrier) who is engaged in any business in which he receives custody of animals in connection with their transportation in commerce; and

["Carrier."] "(j) The term 'carrier' means the operator of any airline, railroad, motor carrier, shipping line, or other enterprise, who is engaged in the business of transporting any animals for hire."

[7 USC 2134, 2141, 2142.] SEC. 5. Sections 4, 11, and 12 of such Act are amended by striking out "affecting commerce" and inserting in lieu thereof "in commerce."

[7 USC 2136.] SEC. 6. Section 6 of such Act is amended by inserting after the term "research facility" a comma and the term "every intermediate handler, every carrier."

[7 USC 2139.] SEC. 7. Section 9 of such Act is amended by inserting after the term "section 12 of this Act," the term "or an intermediate handler, or a carrier" and by deleting the term "or an operator of an auction sale as well as of such person." at the end of section 9 and substituting therefor the following term: "operator of an auction sale, intermediate handler, or carrier, as well as of such person."

[7 USC 2140. Record retention.] SEC. 8. Section 10 of such Act is amended by deleting the phrase "upon forms supplied by the Secretary" from the first sentence and by inserting between the second and third sentences thereof the following: "At the request of the Secretary, any regulatory agency of the Federal Government which requires records to be maintained by intermediate handlers and carriers with respect to the transportation, receiving, handling, and delivery of animals on forms prescribed by the agency, shall require there to be included in such forms such information as the Secretary may require for the effective administration of this Act. Such information shall be retained for such reasonable period of time as the Secretary may prescribe. If regulatory agencies of the Federal Government do not prescribe requirements for any such forms, intermediate handlers and carriers shall make and retain for such reasonable period as the Secretary may prescribe such records with respect to the transportation, receiving, handling, and delivery of animals as the Secretary may prescribe."

[7 USC 2143. Standards. Rules and regulations.] SEC. 9. Section 13 of such Act is amended by designating the provisions thereof as subsection (a) and by adding, after the second sentence therein, new sentences to read: "The Secretary shall also promulgate standards to govern the transportation in commerce, and the handling, care, and treatment in connection therewith, by intermediate handlers, air carriers, of animals consigned or other person, or any department, agency, or instrumentality of the United States or of any State or local government, for transportation in commerce. The Secretary shall have authority to promulgate such rules and regulations as he determines necessary to assure humane treatment of animals in the course of their transportation in commerce including requirements such as those with respect to containers, feed, water, rest, ventilation, temperature, and handling."

[7 USC 2143.] SEC. 10. Section 13 of such Act, as amended, is further amended by adding at the end thereof new subsections (b), (c), and (d) to read:

"(b) No dogs or cats, or additional kinds or classes of animals designated by regulation of the Secretary, shall be delivered by any dealer, research facility, exhibitor, operator of an auction sale, or department, agency, or instrumentality of the United States or of any State or local government, to any intermediate handler or carrier for transportation in commerce, or received by any such handler or carrier for such transportation from any such person, department, agency, or instrumentality, unless the animal is accompanied by a certificate issued by a veterinarian licensed to practice veterinary medicine, certifying that he inspected the animal on a specified date, which shall not be more than ten days before such delivery, and, when so inspected, the animal appeared free of any infectious disease or physical abnormality which would endanger the animal or animals or other animals or endanger public health: *Provided, however,* That the Secretary may by regulation provide exceptions to this certification requirement, under such conditions as he may prescribe in the regulations, for animals shipped to research facilities for purposes of research, testing or experimentation requiring animals not eligible for such certification. Such certificates received by the intermediate handlers and the carriers shall be retained by them as provided by regulations of the Secretary, in accordance with section 10 of this Act.

[7 USC 2140.] "(c) No dogs or cats, or additional kinds or classes of animals designated by regulation of the Secretary, shall be delivered by any person to any intermediate handler or carrier for transportation in commerce except to registered research facilities if they are less than such age as the Secretary may by regulation prescribe. The Secretary shall designate additional kinds and classes of animals and may prescribe different ages for particular kinds or classes of dogs, cats, or designated animals, for the purposes of this section, when he determines that such action is necessary or adequate to assure their humane treatment in connection with their transportation in commerce.

"(d) No intermediate handler or carrier involved in the transportation of any animal in commerce shall participate in any arrangement or engage in any practice under which the cost of such animal or the cost of the transportation of such animal is to be paid and collected upon delivery of the animal to the consignee, unless the consignor guarantees in writing the payment of transportation charges for any animal not claimed within a period of 48 hours after notice to the consignee of arrival of the animal, including, where necessary, both the return transportation charges and an amount sufficient to reimburse the carrier for all out-of-pocket expenses incurred for the care, feeding, and storage of such animals."

[7 USC 2145.] SEC. 11. Section 15 of such Act is amended by inserting after the term "exhibition" in the first sentence, a comma and the term "or administration of statutes regulating the transportation in commerce or handling in connection therewith of any animals", and by adding the following at the end of the sentence: "Before promulgating any standard governing the air transportation and handling in connection therewith, of animals, the Secretary shall consult with the Secretary of Transportation who shall have the authority to disapprove any such standard if he notifies the Secretary, within 30 days after such consultation, that changes in its provisions are necessary in the interest of flight safety. The Interstate Commerce Commission, the Civil Aeronautics Board, and the Federal Maritime Commission, to the extent of their respective lawful authorities, shall take such action as is appropriate to implement any standard established by the Secretary with respect to a person subject to regulation by it."

[7 USC 2146.] SEC. 12. (a) Subsection (a) of section 16 of such Act is amended by inserting the term "intermediate handler, or carrier" in the first sentence after the term "exhibitor," each time the latter term appears in the sentence; by inserting before the period in the second sentence, a comma and the term "or (5) such animal is held by an intermediate handler or a carrier"; and by deleting the term "or" before the term "(4)" in the second sentence.

(b) Subsection (c) of section 16 of such Act is amended by striking the words "sections 19(b) and 20(b)" in the last sentence and inserting in lieu thereof the words "section 19(c)."

[7 USC 2149.] SEC. 13. Section 19 of such Act is amended to read as follows:

[*License suspension and revocation. 7 USC 2142. Notice, hearing.*] "(a) If the Secretary has reason to believe that any person licensed as a dealer, exhibitor, or operator of an auction sale subject to section 12 of this Act, has violated or is violating any provision of this Act, or any of the rules or regulations or standards promulgated by the Secretary hereunder, he may suspend such person's license temporarily, but not to exceed 21 days, and after notice and opportunity for hearing, may suspend for an additional period as he may specify, or revoke such license, if such violation is determined to have occurred.

[*Civil penalty. Notice, hearing. Civil action. Penalty.*] "(b) Any dealer, exhibitor, research facility, intermediate handler, carrier, or operator of an auction sale subject to section 12 of this Act, that violates any provision of this Act, or any rule, regulation, or standard promulgated by the Secretary thereunder, may be assessed a civil penalty by the Secretary of not more than \$1,000 for each such violation, and the Secretary may also make an order that such person shall cease and desist from continuing such violation. Each violation and each day during which a violation continues shall be a separate offense. No penalty shall be assessed or cease and desist order issued unless such person is given notice and opportunity for a hearing with a penalty and making a cease and desist order shall be final and conclusive unless the affected person files an appeal from the Secretary's order with the appropriate United States Court of Appeals. The Secretary shall give due consideration to the appropriateness of the penalty with respect to the size of the business of the person involved, the gravity of the violation, the person's good faith, and the history of previous violations. Any such civil penalty may be compromised by the Secretary. Upon any failure to pay the penalty assessed by a final order under this section, the Secretary shall request the Attorney General to institute a civil action in a district court of the United States or other United States court for any district in which such person is found or resides or transact business, to collect the penalty, and such court shall have jurisdiction to hear and decide any such action. Any person who knowingly fails to obey a cease and desist order made by the Secretary under this section shall be subject to a civil penalty of \$500 for each offense, and each day during which such failure continues shall be deemed a separate offense.

[*Review. 7 USC 2142.*] "(c) Any dealer, exhibitor, research facility, intermediate handler, carrier, or operator of an auction sale subject to section 12 of this Act, aggrieved by a final order of the Secretary issued pursuant to this section may, within 60 days after entry of such an order, seek review of such order in the appropriate United States Court of Appeals in accordance with the provisions of section 2341, 2343 through 2350 of title 28, United States Code, and such court shall have exclusive jurisdiction to enjoin, set aside, suspend (in whole or in part), or to determine the validity of the Secretary's order.

[*Penalties.*] "(d) Any dealer, exhibitor, or operator of an auction sale subject to section 12 of this Act, who knowingly violates any provision of this Act shall, on conviction thereof, be subject to imprisonment for not more than 1 year, or a fine of not more than \$1,000, or both. Prosecution of such violations shall, to the maximum extent practicable, be brought initially before United States magistrates as provided in section 636 of title 28, United States Code, and sections 3401 and 3402 of title 18, United States Code, and, with the consent of the Attorney General, may be conducted, at both trial and upon appeal to district court, by attorneys of the United States Department of Agriculture."

[*Repeal. 7 USC 2150.*] SEC. 14. Section 20 of such Act is hereby repealed.

[*7 USC 2154. Infra. Effective date.*] SEC. 15. Section 24 of such Act is amended by inserting the following at the end of the section: "Notwithstanding the other provisions of this section, compliance by intermediate handlers, and carriers, and other persons with those provisions of this Act, as amended, with respect to intermediate handlers and carriers, and such regulations shall be promulgated no later than 9 months after the enactment of the Animal Welfare Act Amendments of 1976; and compliance by dealers, exhibitors, operators of auction sales, and research facilities with other provisions of this Act, as so amended, and the regulations thereunder, shall commence upon the expiration of 90 days after enactment of the Animal Welfare Act Amendments of 1976: *Provided, however,* That compliance by all persons with paragraphs (b), (c), and (d) of section 13 and with section 26 of this Act, as so amended, shall commence upon the expiration of said ninety-day period. In all other respects, said amendments shall become effective upon the date of enactment."

[7 USC 2155.] SEC. 16. Section 25 of such Act is amended by deleting from subsection (2) the word "and" where it last appears, deleting the period at the end of subsection (3) and inserting "; and" in lieu thereof, and by inserting after subsection (3) the following new subsection:

"(4) recommendations and conclusions concerning the aircraft environment as it relates to the carriage of live animals in air transportation."

SEC. 17. Such Act is amended by adding at the end thereof the following new section:

[*Animal fighting venture, prohibition. 7 USC 2156.*] "SEC. 26. (a) It shall be unlawful for any person to knowingly sponsor or exhibit any animal in any animal fighting venture to which any animal was moved in interstate or foreign commerce.

"(b) It shall be unlawful for any person to knowingly sell, buy, transport, or deliver to another person or receive from another person for purposes of transportation, in interstate for foreign commerce, any dog or other animal for purposes of having the dog or other animal participate in an animal fighting venture.

[*Penalties.*] "(c) It shall be unlawful for any person to knowingly use the mail service of the United States Postal Service or any interstate instrumentality for purposes of promoting or in any other manner furthering an animal fighting venture except as performed outside the limits of the States of the United States.

"(d) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (a), (b), or (c) of this section, the activities prohibited by such subsection shall be unlawful with respect to fighting ventures involving live birds only if the fight is to take place in a State where it would be in violation of the laws thereof.

"(e) Any person who violates subsection (a), (b), or (c) shall be fined not more than \$5,000 or imprisoned for not more than 1 year, or both, for each such violation.

[*Investigation. Warrant. Costs, recovery.*] "(f) The Secretary or any other person authorized by him shall make such investigations as the Secretary deems necessary to determine whether any person has violated or is violating any provision of this section, and the Secretary may obtain the assistance of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Department of the Treasury, or other law enforcement agencies of the United States, and State and local governmental agencies, in the conduct of such investigations, under cooperative agreements with such agencies. A warrant to search for and seize any animal which there is probable cause to believe was involved in any violation of this section may be issued by any judge of the United States or any State court of record or by a United States magistrate within the district wherein the animal sought is located. Any United States marshal or any person authorized under this section to conduct investigations may apply for and execute any such warrant, and any animal seized under such a warrant shall be held by the United States marshal or other authorized person pending disposition thereof by the court in accordance with this paragraph (f). Necessary care including veterinary treatment shall be provided while the animals are so held in custody. Any animal involved in any violation of this section shall

be liable to be proceeded against and forfeited to the United States at any time on complaint filed in any United States district court or other court of the United States for any jurisdiction in which the animal is found and upon a judgement of forfeiture shall be disposed of by sale for lawful purposes or by other humane means, as the court may direct. Costs incurred by the United States for care of animals seized and forfeited under this section shall be recoverable from the owner of the animals if he appears in such forfeiture proceeding or in a separate civil action brought in the jurisdiction in which the owner is found, resides, or transacts business.

[*tions.*] "(g) For purposes of this section--

"(1) the term 'animal fighting venture' means any event which involves a fight between at least two animals and is conducted for purposes of sport, wagering, or entertainment except that the term for 'animal fighting venture' shall not be deemed to include any activity the primary purpose of which involves the use of one or more animals in hunting another animal or animals, such as waterfowl, bird, raccoon, or fox hunting;

"(2) the term 'interstate or foreign commerce' means--

"(A) any movement between any place in a State to any place in another State or between places in the same State through another State; or

"(B) any movement from a foreign country into any State;

"(3) the term 'interstate instrumentality' means telegraph, telephone, radio, or television operating interstate or foreign commerce;

"(4) the term 'State' means any State of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and any territory or possession of the United States;

"(5) the term 'animal' means any live bird, or any live dog or other mammal, except man; and

"(6) the conduct by any person of any activity prohibited by this section shall not render such person subject to the other sections of this Act as a dealer, exhibitor, or otherwise.

"(h)(1) The provisions of this Act shall not supersede or otherwise invalidate any such State, local, or municipal legislation or ordinance relating to animal fighting ventures except in case of a direct and irreconcilable conflict between any requirements thereunder and this Act or any rule, regulation, or standard hereunder.

[*Ante*, p. 421.] "(2) Section 3001(a) of title 39, United States Code, is amended by adding immediately after the words 'title 18' a comma and the words 'or section 26 of the Animal Welfare Act'."

[7 USC 2153.] SEC. 18. Section 23 of such Act is amended by inserting immediately before the period at the end of the third sentence "; *Provided*, That there is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of Agriculture for enforcement by the Department of Agriculture of the provisions of section 26 of this Act an amount not to exceed \$100,000 for the transition quarter ending September 30, 1976, and not to exceed \$400,000 for each fiscal year thereafter".

[7 USC 2144.] SEC. 19. Section 14 of such Act is amended by inserting in the first sentence after the term "standards" the phrase "and other requirements".

Approved April 22, 1976.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY: HOUSE REPORTS: No. 94-801 accompanying H.R. 5808 (Comm. on Agriculture) and No. 94-976 (Comm. of Conference). SENATE REPORTS: No. 94-580 (Comm. on Commerce) and No. 94-727 (Comm. of Conference). CONGRESSIONAL RECORD: Vol. 121 (1975): Dec. 18, considered and passed Senate Vol. 122 (1976): Feb. 9, considered and passed House, amended, in lieu of H.R. 5808. Apr. 6, House agreed to conference report. Apr. 7, Senate agreed to conference report. 90 STAT. 423

THE PIT BULL PAPARAZZI



A study by the National Canine Research Council reveals biased reporting by the media, its devastating consequences for dogs and the toll it takes on public safety.

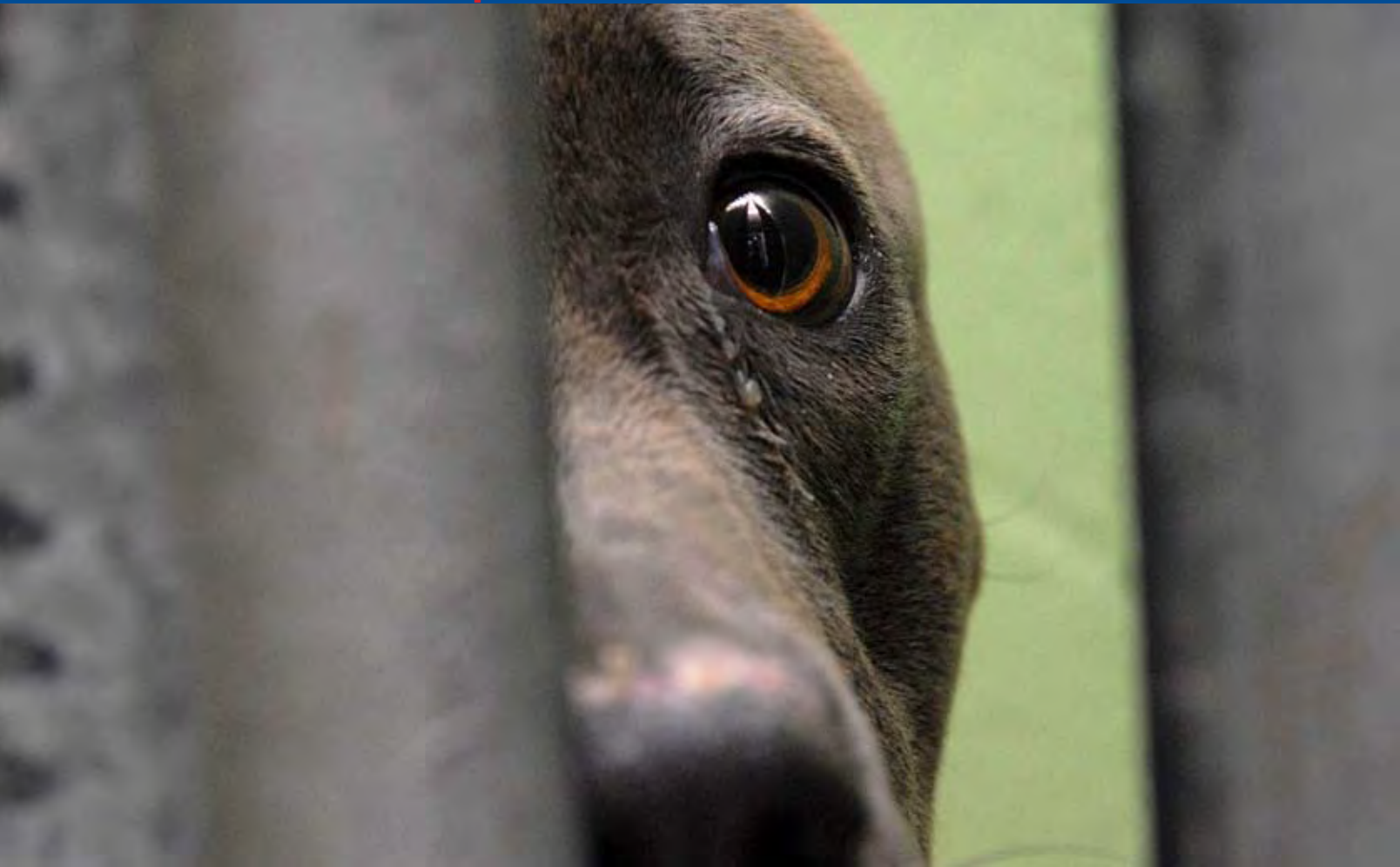
Consider how the media reported four incidents that happened in 2007 between August 18th and August 21st:

- August 18, 2007 - A dog reported to be a Labrador mix bit a 70-year-old man sending him to the hospital in critical condition. Police officers arrived at the scene and the dog was shot after charging the officers. **This incident was reported in one article and only in the local paper.**
- August 19, 2007 - A 16 month old child received fatal head and neck injuries from a mixed-breed dog. **This incident was reported two times by the local paper only**
- August 20, 2007 - A 6-year-old boy was hospitalized after receiving severe bites to the head by a medium-sized mixed-breed dog. **This incident was reported in one article and only in the local paper.**
- August 21, 2007 - A 59-year-old woman received severe injuries requiring hospitalization from an incident in her home involving two dogs reported to be "pit bull" dogs. **This incident was reported in over two hundred and thirty articles in national and international newspapers, as well as major television news networks, including CNN, MSNBC and FOX.**

"Clearly a dog bite-related fatality by an unremarkable Breed is not as newsworthy as a non-fatal incident involving a "pit bull" dog."

-Karen Delise, founder and Director of Research, NCRC

People routinely cite media coverage as "proof" that "pit bull" dogs are more dangerous than other dogs. Costly and ineffective public policy decisions are being made on the basis of such "proof." While this biased reporting is not only lethal to an entire population of dogs; sensationalized media coverage endangers the public by misleading them about the real factors in canine aggression.



Wrong End of the Leash

Breed-specific laws target symptoms, not causes

► **By Sandy Miller**

She was a bright spot in the troubled lives of the six teenage boys living in a group home in Denver.

Trinity, a gentle chocolate brown-and-white American Staffordshire terrier, greeted the boys at the door when they came home from school. She rolled around on the floor with them. Gave them big, sloppy kisses. With her, they were able to forget the past, forget all the horrible memories of abuse and abandonment.

"She just loved them," says Myriam Reynolds, then the group home's clinical coordinator and Trinity's person. "There was a hierarchy in the house, but she was equal opportunity. She loved both the cool kids and the kids who weren't so cool."

Trinity reached a place inside of these young men that no human therapist could even get close to. Quite simply, Trinity

worked magic. That is, until one October evening in 2003 when the doorbell rang at Reynolds' Denver home.

Her husband, Robert Wright, opened the door, Trinity sitting calmly at his side, and looked into the face of an animal control officer. Their dog, the officer informed the family, was one of the banned breeds under a city and county pit-bull ban ordinance. The man was there to take Trinity to the local animal shelter.

Reynolds had no idea that Trinity wasn't welcome in Denver. "He took her and issued my husband a summons," Reynolds says. "She was wagging her tail as the animal control officer walked her to the truck."

The thought of Trinity sitting alone inside a shelter kennel was almost too much for the family to bear. Reynolds had to sign a piece of paper agreeing that Trinity was one of Denver's banned breeds, which also include

American pit bull terriers, Staffordshire bull terriers and any dog exhibiting the majority of physical traits of those breeds.

Luckily for Trinity, it was her "first strike." Had she been picked up by animal control before, she would have been euthanized. This dog who had never hurt anyone, this dog who had worked such magic with those teenage boys, was forced to leave her home and family simply because of her breed. The Reynolds/Wright family called friends living outside of Denver who promised to take Trinity.

Denver is just one of a number of places across the country that have banned or placed severe restrictions on certain breeds of dogs. Though the bully breeds are most often singled out in breed bans and restrictions, more than 20 other breeds of dogs have been targeted as well, according to a study done by the Canine Research Institute.

These bans stem from fear, from ignorance, from irresponsible owners. The dogs pay the price of being the wrong breed, in the wrong place, at the wrong time.

Recipe for disaster

Denver's war on pit bulls began more than 20 years ago with a preventable tragedy.

It was an autumn day in 1986 when three-year-old Fernando Salazar wandered away from his home in southwest Denver and came upon an unspayed female pit bull chained underneath a neighbor's carport. The dog attacked and killed him.

An unsupervised child coupled with an unspayed, tethered dog who hadn't been socialized was a recipe for disaster. Studies have shown that 90 percent of fatal dog attacks are by unaltered dogs, and chained dogs are almost three times more likely to become aggressive. And 81 percent of fatal dog attacks are by dogs who were isolated, neglected and not maintained as part of the family, says Karen Delise, founder of the National Canine Research Council, which has been researching fatal dog attacks for 18 years.

Delise examined more than 540 fatal dog attacks that had occurred over four decades and found some critical common factors. Dogs who had killed weren't pets but "resident dogs" who served other functions, such as guard dogs, status symbols, fighting dogs or breeding animals. Their owners had failed to humanely control their dogs and had often abused and neglected them, keeping them chained or allowing them to run loose. Children were often left unsupervised around unfamiliar dogs. Unneutered and unspayed dogs, who are more likely to roam, were overwhelmingly represented in those fatal attacks. In fact, there is no documented case of a single spayed or neutered pit bull maintained as a companion animal being involved in a fatal attack on a person, Delise says.

Those factors certainly contributed to the death of Fernando Salazar. It wasn't the first time the neighbor's dogs had attacked a child, according to Delise. Just three years before, another one of the neighbor's dogs had seriously injured an eight-year-old boy. The dog owner was sued, charged and placed on probation. Still, he was able to acquire more dogs, including the dog who killed

Fernando Salazar. Following the Salazar killing, the owner was sentenced to 180 days in jail. It was too little too late.

Had Denver had a strongly enforced dangerous-dog ordinance in place, such as the one that was recently adopted in Cedar City, Utah, Fernando Salazar might be alive today.

Owners are responsible

Dogs almost never kill people. Janis Bradley, author of the book *Dogs Bite: But Balloons and Slippers Are More Dangerous*, says that a child is more likely to die from choking on a marble or a balloon, and an adult is more likely to die in a bedroom slipper-related accident. Your chance of being killed by a dog is roughly one in 18 million. You are five times more likely to be killed by a bolt of lightning, according to Bradley.

And when it comes to preventing non-fatal dog bites, good dangerous-dog ordinances (non-breed-specific ordinances) go a lot further in keeping communities safe.

Continued on page 44



Continued from page 23

These ordinances encourage responsible dog ownership and hold owners accountable for the actions of their dogs, no matter what their breed.

Officials in Cedar City, Utah, a town of about 25,000 residents, began discussing a breed ban a year and a half ago after a pit bull attacked a young girl. But after researching the issue, the city council realized that there are two serious flaws with a pit bull ban, says Randall McUne, assistant Cedar City attorney. First of all, it's too broad. It targets all pit bulls, even those who have never shown any kind of aggression and who live in homes with responsible owners. Second, people often misidentify other breeds as pit bulls. "It's hard to determine what's a pit bull and what's not, even for trained animal control officers," McUne says.

As part of their interview process for the position of Cedar City police lieutenant, nine police officer candidates researched breed-specific laws and gave oral presentations on the issue to a city interviewing board. They also had to identify a pit bull from a number of dog photos. Almost none of them could correctly identify the pit bull. After researching the issue, every single one of the job candidates came out against breed bans in their oral presentations, McUne says.

The inability to distinguish a pit bull

from other breeds of dogs has been one of the main arguments in court challenges to breed bans.

Russ Mead, legal counsel for Best Friends, also told the city council that a breed ban wouldn't do anything to make the community safer. Mead pointed out that only 8 percent of dog bites in Cedar City in 2006 were by pit bulls or pit bull mixes. If they banned those dogs, they still would not be protecting the public from 92 percent of the dogs who bite or attack.

In April of last year, Cedar City dropped its plans for a breed ban in favor of a non-breed-specific ordinance. Its ordinance recognizes different levels of aggressive dogs; fines increase with those levels, and double with repeat offenses. Owners can be required to get their dogs spayed or neutered, build outdoor kennels, and keep their dogs muzzled and leashed when out in the community. Dogs labeled "vicious" (dogs who've bitten more than one person or bitten just one person seriously) cannot remain in the city, and their owners face a minimum \$1,000 fine and up to six months in jail. Dog owners who consistently break the rules can be prohibited from having pets.

Cedar City realized that breed bans just don't work, for several reasons. As mentioned above, breed bans target every single dog of a particular breed, whether or not they present

a danger, instead of addressing all dogs who bite or attack. By including dogs who pose no danger to anyone, breed bans actually punish rather than encourage responsible owners. It has also been shown repeatedly that it's very difficult to identify banned breeds. And, banning one breed simply leads to the rise of another breed as the preferred "bad" dog.

Denver's not alone

A number of communities across the country have banned or restricted more than 20 breeds of dogs. The city of Fairfield, Iowa, for example, restricts any breed of dog weighing more than 100 pounds.

Ohio is the only state that has declared pit bulls "vicious" for no other reason than their breed. In August 2007, the Ohio Supreme Court reversed the Ohio Court of Appeals' finding that the state law and a Toledo city law were unconstitutional because they defined vicious dogs to include pit bulls. The term "vicious" otherwise refers to dogs who have killed or seriously injured a person or another dog. Ohio's pit bulls were labeled "vicious" just because they were, well, pit bulls.

Ohio state representatives Shawn Webster and Carol Ann Schindel recently introduced House Bill 366, which, if passed, would repeal the portion of the Ohio state law that defines pit bulls as vicious simply because of their breed.

Mark Kumpf, director of the Montgomery County Animal Resource Center near Dayton, Ohio, didn't want to comment specifically on the Ohio law because it's part of his job to enforce it, but he did comment on breed-specific legislation in general.

"A dog should only be deemed vicious after a predicate act has occurred," Kumpf says. "Laws should be dog-specific rather than breed-specific. We need to put the responsibility where it belongs: on the owner's shoulders."

Delise calls breed bans "lazy legislation. It's an easy way out, a seemingly quick fix." She says all the time and money Denver and other places put into enforcing and defending their breed bans could instead be used to look at the whole picture: what causes attacks.

"That would have involved looking into human behavior," she says, "which is more complicated and time-consuming. It's so much easier to blame a breed of dog rather than to examine our own behavior."

Breed bans can also put a drain on city and county coffers. A task force in Prince



George's County, Maryland, estimated that the cost to enforce the county's pit bull ban in 2001 and 2002 was at least \$560,000, but the county only collected \$35,000 in pit-bull registration fees during that two-year period. (The fees were for registering pit bulls who were "grandfathered" in, who lived in the county before the breed ban took effect.) The task force has recommended that the county repeal its breed ban and adopt a good non-breed-specific ordinance instead.

Challenging breed-specific legislation

One early morning in late November 2003, 40-year-old Jennifer Brooke walked outside her Elbert County home to feed her horses. That's when three roaming pit bulls attacked and killed her.

It wasn't the first time the dogs had attacked someone. The dogs' owner had a history of allowing his dogs to roam, harass, attack and injure their neighbors, according to Delise's study.

Elbert County is in Colorado representative Debbie Stafford's territory. That attack led her to introduce House Bill 1279, which increases owners' potential liability when their dog bites someone, and allows victims to pursue civil action and recover damages. "Irresponsible owners need tougher consequences," Stafford says.

The law also prohibits local jurisdictions from having breed bans, which Stafford says violate citizens' civil rights.

In making her argument for H.B. 1279 to



signed H.B. 1279 into law, and Denver suspended its pit bull ban. That very same day, Stafford went down to the Denver Municipal Animal Shelter, news crews at her heels, and demanded that the shelter release pit bulls back to their owners.

("Gryffie" for short) and, a few weeks later, drove him to Denver and Sonya – and a brand new life filled with hugs and treats. Dias, who works for a mortgage company, checked to make sure Denver allowed pit bulls and, at the time, it did. What she didn't know was that the city was challenging the state ban on breed-specific legislation in district court, arguing that the state law violated Denver's home-rule rights. The court later ruled on the side of the city, saying it had a right to pass and enforce ordinances on matters of local concern.

On April 8, 2005, the city and county of Denver announced it would resume enforcement of its pit bull ban beginning May 9. Dias picked up her phone, called her real estate agent and put her turn-of-the-century loft on the market. Gryffie was family, and if he had to go, then she was going with him. But her loft didn't sell overnight and, for a while, she and Gryffie lived in hiding. They went for walks in the dark early morning hours when they'd have less chance of being seen. Whenever her real estate agent called to say she was bringing someone over to look at the loft, Dias and Gryffie snuck out to a park in a nearby city.

"It was horrible and stressful," Dias says

By including dogs who pose no danger to anyone, breed bans actually punish rather than encourage responsible owners.

her fellow lawmakers, Stafford gave them the same "pick out the pit bull" test that the Cedar City police officers took. They failed miserably. "That's what finally gained enough votes to get the bill out of the legislature," Stafford says.

The passing of H.B. 1279 in April 2004 put Colorado in the company of a number of states (California, Florida, Illinois, Maine, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Texas and Virginia) that prohibit local municipalities from passing breed-specific legislation.

On April 21, 2004, Governor Bill Owens

Denver vs. Colorado

It was two days before Christmas in 2004 and Sonya Dias was visiting her sister in Atlanta. One day, she went with her sister to a small Georgia town to deliver some food and gifts to a family in need, and that's where she first saw the little brown-and-white Staffordshire, chained to the backyard fence. His scars led her to believe he might have been used as a bait dog for fighting dogs. When her eyes met his, she says, "his whole body wagged." It was love at first sight.

Sonya's sister talked his owners into selling him to her, named him Gryffindor



there for a couple of months until Dias sold her loft, moved outside the city and brought Gryffie home to a place where he was “legal.”

Many pit bulls ended up on “Pit Bull Row” at the Denver Municipal Animal Shelter. It might as well have been called death row.

Between May 9, 2005, and September 30, 2007, the city impounded 2,318 pit bulls and euthanized 1,668 of them, according to Doug Kelley, the shelter’s director.

Others were taken in by rescue organizations or returned to their owners – if they hadn’t been picked up by Denver animal control before. As with Trinity, the dogs were microchipped, and their owners had to sign affidavits agreeing that their dogs were among the banned breeds. They had to promise to take them out of the city.

Kelley says he’d like to see the city enact a more proactive dangerous-dog ordinance that includes preventive measures to keep dogs from biting in the first place. He says, “I’m for anything that provides better protection for our constituents.”

But he adds that such an ordinance wouldn’t necessarily replace the city’s pit bull ban. “There is no way,” he says, “the pit bull ordinance is going anywhere unless we find something else that’s tried and true.”

Sadly, there are still dogs on Pit Bull Row. Linda Garcia has been working at the Denver shelter, and on Pit Bull Row, for eight years. “Some days you just come in and love them,” she says. “I try not to get too attached. These dogs are so sweet. I don’t know why they...” She didn’t finish the sentence.

Looks that kill

Dias and other dog owners have filed a class action lawsuit in U.S. District Court against the city and county of Denver alleging that Denver’s ordinance violates their Fourteenth Amendment rights to liberty and property and to due process of law.

“Dogs aren’t just property like a chair,” says the Progressive Law Center’s Karen Breslin, one of the attorneys representing the plaintiffs. “There’s an emotional attachment to the property that’s protected in Colorado law.”

Among other things, the plaintiffs claim that the city and county violate citizens’ rights to due process by seizing animals without a prior hearing, summarily executing dogs whose owners have one previous violation of the ordinance, and coercing dog owners to waive their rights to due process before they’re allowed to remove their seized dogs from the shelter. Owners must sign a waiver agreeing that their dog is one of the banned breeds before being allowed to take the dog out of the shelter to a safe place outside the city.

But who makes the determination that a dog belongs to a banned breed? In Denver, it’s animal control officers, supervisors and veterinary staff who’ve had a half-day of classroom training. Before being certified, they must also assess three dogs under the supervision of an “expert.” Kelley says decisions are based solely on a dog’s physical traits, using standards established by the American Kennel Club and United Kennel Club.

Denver’s law bans American Staffordshire terriers, American pit bull terriers, Staffordshire bull terriers, and any dog exhibiting 51 percent or more of the characteristics of one or more of those breeds. Breslin says a statistician determined there could be more than 3,000 potential characteristics.

“The principle at stake here is how much justification should the government have under the Constitution before they can seize and kill a companion animal and, in

of that time. “I’d panic every time someone knocked on the door.” She had good reason to panic. After all, it wasn’t unusual for animal control officers to knock on someone’s door and take their dog away, just like they’d taken Trinity away two years before.

Dias says it’s irresponsible owners, not the dogs, who should be held accountable. “They’re targeting the wrong end of the leash.”

Run for your life

As soon as Denver announced it was resuming its pit bull ban, dog owners rushed to find safe havens for their pets. Pit bulls were found tied to the front doors of local rescue organizations. Owners farmed their pets out to friends and neighbors outside the city. Some people surrendered their dogs to the local animal shelter while others just abandoned them in the streets.

Dias found a safe place for Gryffie at Mariah’s Promise, a sanctuary in the mountains of Divide, Colorado, run by Toni Phillips and her husband, Mike. Gryffie stayed

Not Just the Pits: Other Dog Breeds Outlawed by Breed-Specific Legislation



American Staffordshire Terrier



Akita



Alaskan Malamute



American Bulldog



Boerboels



Cane Corso



Chow Chow



Doberman Pinscher



English Mastiff

this case, simply because of how it looks,” Breslin says.

And even if it could be proven that a dog is one of the banned breeds, it’s still unfair that the dogs are judged on breed alone, says Christine Garcia, who lives in nearby Commerce City, which also has a breed ban. Her four pit bulls were grandfathered in when the city passed the law, but she had to build an outdoor kennel, purchase an insurance policy and put a pit bull sign on her fence. “Judging a dog by his breed is like judging a human by the color of their skin,” Garcia says. “It’s racial profiling for dogs.”

Myths and statistics

Denver assistant city attorney Kory Nelson, the lead attorney in the city and county’s challenge to the state law that prohibited breed bans, says Denver’s pit bull ban is working.

Nelson points out that there hasn’t been another fatal attack by a pit bull in Denver since the breed ban went into effect. But, the city of Portland, Oregon, which also had a fatal pit bull attack in 1986, hasn’t had another either, and Portland has never imposed a breed ban.

Nelson says the problem with pit bulls is not that they’re more likely to bite than other breeds, but that when they do bite, they do more damage.

There are a lot of misconceptions about pit bulls. Much of the problem is that they often end up in the wrong hands – with irresponsible and abusive owners, dog fighters and people who breed them for aggression. And although some pit bulls can be dog-aggressive and, like many other breeds, aggressive toward small animals, they don’t tend to be human-aggressive.

Still, pit bulls aren’t the dog for everyone. The Anti-Cruelty Society in Chicago has a specialized pit-bull adoption program that screens potential owners and follows up on the dogs after adoption.

“We look for people who understand

the breed and their physical and emotional needs,” says Elliot Serrano, community outreach specialist for the society. “Pit bulls are ‘high-drive.’ They need someone who can give them mental stimulation.”

But do some breeds of dogs bite more than others? That depends on whose statistics you look at. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Canine Research Council and the American Canine Foundation have all done studies on dog bites. And they all come up with different numbers because they get their information from different sources.

“Statistics can be misleading,” says Richard Molinari, the animal control supervisor for the city of Las Vegas. “I see it as one thing and someone else might look at it another way.” Between January and November 2007, there were 902 domestic animal bites reported in Las Vegas, and 216

of them – about 25 percent – were by pit bulls and pit bull mixes, Molinari says. But when people look at numbers, they don’t see the reasons behind the bites, he adds. For instance, some people get bitten trying to break up dog fights. The dogs didn’t attack them.

He says another thing to take into account when looking at his city’s bite numbers is that there are more pit bulls than any other breed in Las Vegas. “They’re the trendy dog,” Molinari says.

Because pit bulls are so popular, and because more people are breeding them for profit, more and more of them are filling up the kennels at city and county shelters. According to Merritt Clifton, editor of *Animal People*, a newspaper that covers animal welfare issues, in many big cities, pit bulls account for half of all canine admissions and have the highest euthanasia rates.



Fila Brasileiro



German Shepherd



Irish Wolfhound



Presa Mallorquin



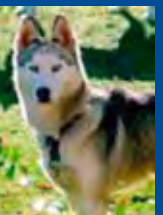
Presa Canario



Rottweiler



Scottish Deerhound



Siberian Husky



Tosa Inu



Calgary's number of dog bites (199 last year, with very few serious bites) and reduced the number of animals impounded: 4,800 last year. And that's not all.

"Our return-to-owner rate has doubled, and our euthanasia rate has been cut in half," says Bruce, who added that the city does not euthanize animals who are healthy and adoptable.

Bruce says it all comes down to common sense. "This is not rocket science," he says. "If we can put a man on the moon,

we can do this."

And they did it all without a breed ban. "Breed bans don't work," Bruce says. "It's not a dog problem. It's a people problem."

Meanwhile, back in Colorado, Stafford is hoping the Denver City Council, which has some new members, will rethink its pit bull ban. "I wish someone had the guts to stand up and say, 'Enough is enough,'" Stafford says. "You pray to God they get some forward thinking on that council."

It has now been two years since Reynolds and Wright saw Trinity. By the time Denver announced it was resuming its pit bull ban, the couple had two small children and couldn't afford to uproot their family. They decided the best thing for everyone concerned was to give Trinity to a good family in nearby Aurora. They thought it best to cut ties with Trinity completely, though it was terribly painful for them.

After Denver resumed its pit bull ban, Aurora rushed to pass its own ban, prohibiting not only pit bulls, but seven other breeds as well. Reynolds and Wright have no idea what happened to Trinity. One place she's not is at the Denver group home, putting smiles on the faces of troubled teenagers.

Myriam Reynolds still finds it hard to talk about the dog who brought such joy to so many. "I don't know that we're going to have a dog again for a while," she says. 🐾

Targeting the right end of the leash

In 2006, the City of Calgary Animal and Bylaw Services introduced the Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw in an effort to make the community safer for both people and animals. It centers around responsible pet ownership. "We target the right end of the leash," says Bill Bruce, director of Animal and Bylaw Services.

Pet owners are encouraged to license and permanently identify their pets, spay or neuter them, provide for their physical and emotional needs, and not allow their pets to become a threat or nuisance to the community.

Responsible pet ownership is supported through education, support and, when necessary, enforcement. Fines were raised to reflect the seriousness of noncompliance. The program punishes bad owner behavior and rewards responsible owner behavior. For instance, a person who doesn't license his dog faces a \$250 fine, yet people who spay or neuter their animals get discounts on licensing.

The program's annual \$4 million budget is completely funded by license, impound, adoption and enforcement fees. It seems to be money well spent. The program has reduced

Fear vs. Fact

Fear: Pit bulls have "locking jaws."

Fact: "We found that the American pit bull terriers did not have any unique mechanism that would allow these dogs to lock their jaws. There were no mechanical or morphological differences ..."

— Dr. I. Lehr Brisbin, University of Georgia

Fear: Pit bulls have massive biting power measuring thousands of pounds of pressure per square inch.

Fact: On average, dogs bite with 320 pounds of pressure per square inch. The bite pressure of a German shepherd, an American pit bull terrier and a Rottweiler were tested. The American pit bull terrier had the least amount of bite pressure of the three dogs tested.

— Dr. Brady Barr, National Geographic

Fear: Family pet pit bulls turn on their people.

Fact: There is no documented case of a single spayed or neutered pit bull maintained as a companion animal being involved in a fatal attack on a person.

— Karen Delise, founder of the National Canine Research Council

Fear: Pit bulls attack without warning.

Fact: After doing temperament tests on 1,000 dogs, the institute found that "pit bulls signal like other dogs."

— Institute of Animal Welfare and Behavior, University of Veterinary Medicine, Hannover, Germany

Fear: While there are some pit bulls with good temperaments, they are the exception, not the rule.

Fact: The American Temperament Test shows that pit bulls consistently score above average for all breeds tested, year in and year out.

— American Temperament Test Society

Fear: Pit bulls are more dangerous than other dogs.

Fact: "A dog is only as dangerous as his owner allows him to be."

— Diane Jessup, Founder of LawDogsUSA



BMJ Group Journals Jobs Education Decision support Quality improvement Community BMJ

This site uses cookies. By continuing to browse the site you are agreeing to our use of cookies. Find out more here

Injury Prevention

Injury Prevention

injuryprevention.bmj.com

Inj Prev doi:10.1136/injuryprev-2012-040389

Original article

Effectiveness of breed-specific legislation in decreasing the incidence of dog-bite injury hospitalisations in people in the Canadian province of Manitoba

OPEN ACCESS

Malathi Raghavan^{1,2}, Patricia J Martens^{1,3}, Dan Chateau^{1,3}, Charles Burchill³

Author Affiliations

Correspondence to

Dr Malathi Raghavan, 260-727 McDermot Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3E 3P5, Canada; malathi.raghavan@med.umanitoba.ca

Contributors MR: study design, data assembly, model specification, data analysis, interpretation of data and models, writing and editing of the manuscript, final approval of the version to be published. PJM: obtained funding, administrative, technical and material support and supervision, interpretation of data and models, editing of manuscript and final approval of the version to be published. DC: contributed statistical expertise, model specification and interpretation, final approval of the version to be published. CB: data assembly, administrative and technical support including mapping, interpretation of data, final approval of the version to be published.

Accepted 4 June 2012

Published Online First 30 June 2012

Abstract

Background The city of Winnipeg was the first among several jurisdictions in Manitoba, Canada, to introduce breed specific legislation (BSL) by banning pit-bull type dogs in 1990. The objective of the present work was to study the effectiveness of BSL in Manitoba.

Methods Temporal differences in incidence of dog-bite injury hospitalisations (DBIH) within and across Manitoba jurisdictions with and without BSL were compared. Incidence was calculated as the number of unique cases of DBIH divided by the total person-years at risk and expressed as the number per 100 000 person-years. Year of implementation determined the pre-BSL and post-BSL period for jurisdictions with BSL; for jurisdictions without BSL to date, the entire study period (1984–2006) was considered as the preimplementation period. The annual number of DBIH, adjusted for total population at risk, was modelled in a negative binomial regression analysis with repeated measures. Year, jurisdiction and BSL implementation were independent variables. An interaction term between jurisdiction and BSL was introduced.

Results A total of 16 urban and rural jurisdictions with pit-bull bans were identified. At the provincial level, there was a significant reduction in DBIH rates from the pre-BSL to post-BSL period (3.47 (95% CI 3.17 to 3.77) per 100 000 person-years to 2.84 (95% CI 2.53 to 3.15); $p=0.005$). In regression restricted to two urban jurisdictions, DBIH rate in Winnipeg relative to Brandon (a city without BSL) was significantly ($p<0.001$) lower after BSL (rate ratio (RR)=1.10 in people of all ages and 0.92 in those aged <20 years) than before (RR=1.29 and 1.28, respectively).

Conclusions BSL may have resulted in a reduction of DBIH in Winnipeg, and appeared more effective in protecting those aged <20 years.

Dog-bite injuries are, to an extent, a preventable cause of injuries in people, especially children.^{1–4} To reduce the frequency of occurrence of this multifactorial public health issue, regulatory measures such as dog-control legislation are sometimes introduced.^{5–8}

Breed-specific legislation (BSL) is usually a law or ordinance pertaining to a specific breed of dogs such as pit-bull type dogs.⁷ There are two general forms of BSL: specific restrictions and outright bans.⁹ Past evaluations of different forms of regulations have led to conclusions that BSL is ineffective in reducing dog-bite injuries of varying severities.^{10–14} However, methodological shortcomings such as short-term observational periods or analysis of cross-sectional data limit the usefulness of inferences made from these studies and necessitate further assessment of population-level outcomes using stronger observational study designs that take into account period and cohort effects. A longer-term, population-level descriptive Catalonian study demonstrated a decline in dog-bite injury hospitalisations (DBIH) over a 12-year period as a result of stricter government regulations on potentially dangerous dogs and dog breeds.¹⁵

In 1990, Winnipeg, the capital city of the Canadian province of Manitoba, was the first major jurisdiction among several Canadian and international jurisdictions to implement BSL by banning pit-bull (terrier) type dogs from the city.^{5, 16} 'Pit-bull' was defined as covering pit bull terriers, Staffordshire bull terriers, American Staffordshire terriers, American pit bull terriers or any dogs with the appearance and physical characteristics predominantly conforming to the standards for any of the above breeds.¹⁶ The rural municipality (RM) of Macdonald followed with a similar ban of its own in 1992, while the northern city of Thompson restricted pit-bull type dogs in 1994.^{5, 17, 18} The lack of a province-wide legislation afforded a unique opportunity to compare temporal differences in trends in DBIH within and across specific Manitoba jurisdictions.

Bites from pit-bull type dogs are thought to be more often associated with fatal or serious injuries as a consequence of their size, build and musculature.^{3, 19–21} At a level 1 trauma centre in Texas, USA, people attacked by pit-bull dogs were associated with significantly higher Injury Severity Scores, poorer Glasgow Coma Scale scores, higher hospital charges and higher risk of death compared with people attacked by other dog breeds.²¹ Assuming that serious, non-fatal dog-bite injuries were more likely to be hospitalised, we hypothesised that frequency of DBIH gradually decreased with the implementation of a 'pit-bull' BSL. For study purposes, implementation was defined as introduction of legislation or by-law on paper. Having identified the jurisdictions that had BSL assessed. Since being bitten or injured by a dog (among other terrestrial mammals) continues to be cause for seeking rabies post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP),^{22–26} we also studied the effectiveness of BSL in decreasing the frequency of PEP in Manitoba, and compared and contrasted the patterns between DBIH and PEP in Manitoba. As PEP is administered for dog bites of all severities from unknown or unvaccinated dogs and for bites from other mammals, we hypothesised that BSL would have little effect, if any, on trends in PEP. As children are more likely to be victims of dog attacks, and legislation is usually recommended to protect children from dog-bite injuries,²⁷ we hypothesised that BSL would have little effect on trends in dog-bite injuries in jurisdictions with BSL.

The primary objective of the present study was to determine the incidence of DBIH over time for jurisdictions with and without BSL in Manitoba. The secondary objectives of the study were to report, for jurisdictions with and without BSL, trends in PEP and trends in age at DBIH and PEP.

Methods

Apart from Winnipeg, Macdonald and Thompson, 16 additional jurisdictions with some form of a pit-bull clause were further identified by: (1) contacting the Association of Manitoba Municipalities (AMM); (2) individually emailing or telephoning 203 member municipalities of the AMM and receiving responses from 80 (39.4%) of those contacted; (3) conducting an internet-based search for municipal-level animal control or dog-control by-laws with pit-bull specific text; and, (4) verifying the text of the local animal-control or dog-control by-laws for the 15 largest non-responding municipalities of Manitoba (by population numbers). That is, 19 municipalities with pit-bull BSL were identified and classified into 1 of 2 types of jurisdiction under study: those with a form of ban against pit-bull type dogs and those without a ban. The former jurisdictions contained words and phrases such as 'banned', 'prohibited', 'restricted animal', or 'no person shall harbour or keep' in

their by-laws. In all, 16 such jurisdictions were identified and considered together as jurisdictions with BSL or 'experimental' jurisdictions (table 1; see also additional figure 1 available online). Breed-specific language did not necessarily exclude restrictive language regarding other dangerous dogs. The remaining three jurisdictions not included in the 'experimental' list were: (1) the town of Hartney (population: 400) as a pit-bull specific ban was implemented first in the year 2007, the year after the period under study; (2) the RM of Coldwell and (3) the RM of Mountain, as they merely imposed restrictions such as high license fees on owners of pit-bull type dogs and not outright bans. These three jurisdictions along with all remaining Manitoba municipalities were considered together as jurisdictions without BSL or 'control' jurisdictions for study purposes. Winnipeg and Brandon, the second largest city in Manitoba, were the only jurisdictions considered urban; all other Manitoba jurisdictions were defined as rural.²⁷

View this table: In this window In a new window

1
Jurisdictions that implemented 'pit-bull' bans in Manitoba during the years 1984–2006

Hospitalisation and PEP data were extracted for all postal code regions of Manitoba from administrative health databases in the Population Health Research Data Repository housed at the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy (MCHP).²⁸ This repository contains deidentified but person-level medical records for virtually all of Manitoba's residents, linkable across records and across time through an encrypted health number.

All-cause hospitalisations from year 1984/85 are contained in the Hospital Separation Abstracts Database. This database, which contains inpatient and outpatient admissions to hospitals, was searched for DBIHs from 1984/85 through 2006/07. Dog-bite injuries were identified by the *International Classification of Diseases*, 9th edition, Clinical Modification (ICD-9-CM) code E906.0 and the ICD-10 Canada (ICD-10-CA) code W54.²⁹

'Physician billing claims' in the Medical Services Database and The Manitoba Immunisation Monitoring System (1984/85–2006/07) (MIMS) were searched to identify rabies post-exposure vaccine tariff codes, given as AB-Post Rabies Vaccine 8751 and IG-Rabies Immune Globulin 8768, Tariff codes from the past (8752, 8753, 8754, 8755) for Rabies Inactive Human Diploid Vac (Post Exposure) second to fifth dose (INIT series) were also identified for analysis. Diagnostic codes available in physician billing claims were searched to report on the various indications leading to PEP. Children's vaccinations were more likely to be recorded in MIMS. However, MIMS did not contain diagnostic codes.

All three databases are encounter-based databases that capture each encounter or billing arising per person on a separate row in the database. To eliminate potential duplicate hospitalisations or PEP series administrations for the same injury, only the first DBIH and first encounter for PEP per unique individual occurring in a month's time was analysed.

Using postal codes derived from residential addresses of individuals requiring hospitalisations or PEP, the number of unique hospitalisations and PEP series administrations were summarised by year and jurisdiction and used as numerator data while calculating incidence. The population database was accessed to provide population counts for years 1984–2006. Population counts were summarised by year and jurisdiction to provide denominator data for incidence. Each person under study for 1 year contributed 1 person-year to the study. Incidence was defined as the number of cases, whether DBIH or PEP, in a specified time period, divided by the total person-years at risk during that period, and expressed as the number per 100 000 person-years.³⁰ The 95% CIs were calculated using the approach for Poisson distribution.^{31, 32}

Year of BSL implementation was used to determine pre-BSL and post-BSL period for jurisdictions with BSL (table 1). For all other jurisdictions without BSL to date, the entire study period (1984–2006) was considered as preimplementation period in a quasiperimental manner.^{33–35} Age at DBIH and PEP were compared between pre-BSL and post-BSL periods using the non-parametric Wilcoxon rank sum test and the χ^2 test.

The annual number of cases of DBIH or PEP that occurred in a jurisdiction, adjusted for total population at risk, was modelled using a negative binomial regression (NBR) with jurisdiction as a repeated subject (generalised estimating equations).^{36–40} These NBR models provide regression coefficients ' β ', which when exponentiated are the rate ratios (RRs).^{41, 42} The RR indicates the magnitude of difference in rate of outcomes associated with each unit increase in explanatory variable when all other variables are held constant. Time (calendar year), place (jurisdiction with or without BSL; urban or rural jurisdiction) and intervention (ie, whether BSL in effect or not in calendar year) were entered as the independent variables.⁴³ As legislation is non-random and may represent localised conditions and necessities, an interaction term between jurisdiction and intervention was introduced. A negative β associated with the interaction term was expected if implementation of BSL was hypothesised to decrease incidence. Because of the presence of the interaction term, β associated with jurisdiction alone represents the preintervention effect due to jurisdiction. To get the postintervention effect associated with jurisdiction, the β associated with interaction term was added to the preintervention effect by using an estimate statement.⁴³

Data were accessed at MCHP and analysed using SAS V.9.2 in a windowing environment (SAS, Cary, North Carolina, USA).⁴⁴ The study was approved by the University of Manitoba Health Research Ethics Board and by Manitoba's Health Information Privacy Committee (HIPC). Due to HIPC concerns regarding privacy and confidentiality, case counts <6 are not reported in this study (unless they are 0). As the number of cases of DBIH and PEP were small in several jurisdictions, only aggregated data are reported. Data for the two largest urban centres of Manitoba (the Cities of Winnipeg and Brandon) and two northern mid-sized towns (The Pas and the Town of Flin Flon) are presented individually in the descriptive tables so that incidence can be compared between similar jurisdictions with and without BSL. Brandon has had dangerous dog legislation without any breed references since 1994.⁴⁵

Results

Description of cases of DBIH

In the years 1984–2006, 838 unique dog-bite injuries in 830 individuals required hospitalisations in Manitoba. That is, 822 individuals were hospitalised once and 8 individuals were hospitalised twice. The median (minimum, maximum) time period between the first and second hospitalisations in these eight individuals was 11.5 months (1 month, 39 months). Among 838 DBIHs, 721 (86%) required an overnight stay; the median (maximum) number of days of hospital stay for these 721 hospitalisations was 3 (75). A total of 467 (55.7%) of the hospitalised individuals were male. The city of Winnipeg, the largest jurisdiction had the highest number of DBIHs (table 2).

View this table: In this window In a new window

Table 2
Description of study population in the years 1984–2006

Description of cases of rabies PEP

During the study period, PEP series were initiated or completed in 1903 individuals (table 2); 518 individuals were identified through the physician billing claims; 553 through MIMS; 632 were identified through both databases. A total of 982 (51.6%) PEP initiations were in males. Most common diagnostic codes accompanying first encounter for PEP and captured in physician billing claims were: contact with or exposure to communicable disease 'V01' (43.4%); need prophylactic vaccine certain viral disease 'V04' (10.4%); open wound other and unspecified site no limbs '879' (10.1%); open wound hand except finger alone '882' (2.7%).

In jurisdictions with BSL, there were no significant differences in incidence of DBIH between pre-BSL and post-BSL implementation (table 3). However, statistically significant differences were observed at the provincial level when comparing across Manitoba jurisdictions with and without BSL in a quasiperimental manner (percentage change in incidence was -18.1%). Despite a trend to suggest a post-BSL lag effect in Winnipeg, no significant differences were observed in DBIH rates in Winnipeg relative to Brandon (see additional figure 2 available online). The incidence of PEP increased significantly in jurisdictions with BSL with the exception of The Pas (see supplementary table 1, available online). However, incidence of PEP increased in all of Manitoba and as such its increase was relatively low in jurisdictions with BSL.

View this table: In this window In a new window

Table 3
Incidence of hospitalised cases of dog-bite injuries in the preimplementation and postimplementation period of BSL in the province of Manitoba

With the exception of the very young (0 to <2 years old), it appeared that those aged <20 years were less likely to be hospitalised due to dog-bite injuries or to receive PEP in Manitoba post-BSL compared with pre-BSL implementation (see supplementary table 2, available online). The median (minimum, maximum) age at DBIH in post-BSL Manitoba was 22 years (0, 95), and this was significantly higher than in pre-BSL Manitoba at 11 years (0, 98) (p=0.0007). The median (minimum, maximum) age at PEP in post-BSL Manitoba (29.6 (0.04, 97.3) years) was higher but by only about 3 years than in pre-BSL Manitoba (26.1 (0.01, 90.4) years; p=0.003).

Patterns of incidence of DBIH were similar in Manitobans aged <20 years as in Manitobans of all ages (table 4). That is, although significant differences were observed at the provincial level when comparing across Manitoba jurisdictions and periods with and without BSL and the percentage change in incidence was -25.5%, in jurisdictions with BSL there were no significant differences in incidence of hospitalisations between pre-BSL and post-BSL implementation. Again, incidence of PEP increased significantly in jurisdictions with BSL but was significantly lower when including jurisdictions without BSL in the comparison (see supplementary table 3, available online).

View this table: In this window In a new window

Table 4
Incidence of hospitalised cases of dog-bite injuries in people aged 0 to <20 years in the preimplementation and postimplementation period of BSL in the province of Manitoba

Talk medicine from BMJ
Discover and listen to the latest podcasts from your favourite journals.
in and enjoy Talk medicine today...

In the NBR model, hospitalisation RRs of jurisdictions with BSL, relative to jurisdictions without BSL, were not significantly different from one in the period after BSL (table 5). However, relative rates of hospitalisations were significantly lower in urban jurisdictions, represented by Winnipeg and Brandon. In regression restricted to the urban jurisdictions, β associated with interaction term between Winnipeg and intervention had a negative sign in model with people of all ages ($\beta = -0.15$; $p < 0.0001$) and with those aged < 20 years ($\beta = -0.33$; $p < 0.0001$). The rate of DBIH in Winnipeg relative to Brandon was lower in the period after BSL than in the period before BSL in people of all ages (1.10 vs 1.29) and in people < 20 years of age (0.92 vs 1.28) (table 6). Generally, the rate of PEP in Winnipeg was lower relative to Brandon, but higher RRs were observed in the period after BSL than in the period before BSL in people of all ages (0.73 vs 0.76) and in people < 20 years of age (0.66 vs 0.81). In other words, while DBIH rate in Winnipeg (relative to Brandon) was lower in the period after BSL than in the period before BSL, rate of PEP was higher in the period after BSL than before.

View this table: In this window In a new window

Analysis of dog-bite injury hospitalisations in Manitoba, Canada, 1984–2006*

View this table: In this window In a new window

Table 6
Analysis of dog-bite injury hospitalisations or rabies post-exposure prophylaxis in urban jurisdictions of Manitoba, Canada, 1984–2006*

Discussion

DBIH rate in Manitoba was somewhat lower than in the USA (3.9 and 5.1 per 100 000 population),⁴³⁻⁴⁸ Australia (7.7),⁴ New Zealand (6.9–7.2)⁴⁵ and somewhat higher than in Catalonia, Spain (1.1–1.8)¹³ and previously estimated national-level data in Canada (1.57 and 2.6).^{50, 51} When jurisdictions were used as their own controls in a pre-BSL versus post-BSL comparison of incidence of DBIH, no significant reduction in the period after BSL implementation was observed. However, low power to detect an effect may have been an issue. When temporal and geographical variations were introduced in a generalised estimating equations model comparing urban jurisdictions alone, hospitalisation rate in Winnipeg relative to Brandon was lower after BSL. The effectiveness of BSL in decreasing the incidence of DBIH was more pronounced in younger people than in people of all ages.

The impact of BSL on the younger population was specifically studied because medically attended dog bites were reported to affect children younger than 15 years old, especially those 5–9 years old, more so than other age groups.^{3, 4, 16} Children younger than 9 years were reported to be at higher risk of DBIH than were adults.⁴⁷ In this study, due to concerns with small numbers, data were analysed for those < 20 years old.

Our results support the findings from another population-based study that a significant decline in DBIH over a 12-year period was associated with stricter government regulations on dog ownership in Catalonia.¹⁵ Other studies evaluating the impact of dangerous dog regulations (with or without breed-specific clauses) on dog-bite injuries of varying severities in different countries concluded differently.¹⁰⁻¹⁴ However, data were analysed in a longitudinal, pre/post manner in only two studies^{10, 12}; in three studies, researchers employed cross-sectional study designs.^{11, 13, 14} In both longitudinal studies, evaluation was based on shorter periods of observation (3 months and 5 years).^{10, 12} Also, dog-bite injuries of interest ranged in severity from those not requiring medical attention to those attended to in emergency departments (with a small proportion of the latter requiring hospitalisations). Our finding that DBIH rates are higher in rural areas is also consistent with previous reports.^{10, 15}

As hypothesised, the pattern observed in the secondary, 'comparison' outcome, namely PEP, was different. The incidence of PEP increased in Winnipeg relative to Brandon in the period after BSL. This was consistent with our expectation that BSL will have little or no impact on PEP received for bites of all severities from all mammals including dogs. If pit-bull type dogs are thought to disproportionately cause serious injuries requiring hospitalisations, then elimination of such dogs was expected to reduce incidence of DBIH alone and not of PEP.

The empirical setting for the present study included 23 years of population-based data from all Manitoba jurisdictions. Longer periods under observation have the potential to be influenced by period effects or confounding factors such as changes in the number of pet dog populations, changes in the popularity and ubiquity of breeds, changes in number of dog-owning households, parallel and related ordinances, and public safety educational campaigns. While numbers specific to Manitoba are not known, the number of dogs and dog-owning households has been steadily growing in the USA over the years.^{52, 53} A higher penetration of dogs in Manitoba households and neighbourhoods could be one reason why a pre/post comparison with potential for confounding from period effects may not have yielded a significant finding. None of these factors were directly accounted for in this study. Instead, we attempted to overcome this problem by comparing with incidence in surrounding communities that may have been subject to the same confounding factors but not to BSL.

Still, our study has several major limitations. Manitoba jurisdictions were largely grouped together as those with and without BSL. Such a grouping neither considered general heterogeneity within each group nor across the two groups. Enforcement of by-law, known to differ across the different BSL jurisdictions and over the years, was not accounted for in this study. While a specific health outcome such as DBIH was studied with justification, neither the decline in the number of bites from the banned breeds nor the proportion of DBIH that can be attributed to the banned breed have been determined. Other differences between jurisdictions with and without BSL have the potential to influence the study results. As quasi-experimental study designs can inform discussions of cause and effect but cannot definitely establish a link, the results of our finding should be interpreted cautiously.³³

Similarly, as the proportion of PEP attributed to dog bites of varying severities is not known, our use of PEP as a comparative outcome may have limited value. While the primary reservoir of rabies in Manitoba is the striped skunk, spillover into domestic animals has been established.^{54, 55} Among 512 animals submitted for rabies testing and diagnosis from Manitoba in 2006, 139 (27.1%) were dogs.⁵⁶ In 17 jurisdictions in the USA in 2006, 33% (range: 8% to 82%) of PEP was for exposure to dogs.²⁴ In Pennsylvania in 1995, 30% of PEP was for exposure to dogs.²³ Therefore, we tentatively estimate that no less than 30% of the PEP reported in this study may be attributed to dog bites, although it could be much higher than that. Dogs account for 80% to 90% of all bites injuries in humans.⁵⁷ Still, the proportion of PEP attributed to dog bites versus other mammalian bites, expected to vary across geography and time in Manitoba, remains unknown here. Also, some PEP could be attributed to bites from banned breeds and if this proportion is large enough we would theoretically expect the incidence of PEP to also be affected by BSL, contrary to assumptions made here. Our aim to demonstrate that BSL has little effect on incidence of PEP was achieved within the context of such data limitations and uncertainties in assumptions. Perhaps a more ideal comparative outcome for the purposes of this study would be dog bites of all severities. However, such data were not available to us.

In addition, although care was taken through different avenues to identify all major jurisdictions that implemented BSL, the possibility of misclassification of a small municipality with current or past BSL as a control jurisdiction in the study cannot be ruled out. However, any residual misclassification is expected to affect only a small proportion of Manitoba's population as classification of the 15 largest jurisdictions was carefully verified.

In conclusion, the strengths of the present study include use of population-based data, assessment of longer-term effectiveness, adjustment for temporal, period and geographic effects, and appropriateness of the model selected to study count data, namely NBR. Despite the study limitations listed, trends in population-level outcomes studied collectively suggest that BSL in Manitoba may have decreased DBIH in people, especially in those younger than 20 years. Our study adds to the limited body of evaluation literature that shows a decline in DBIH as a result of government regulation.

What is already known on this subject

- Few studies have employed longitudinal data analytic methods in the area of dog-bite injuries.
- Fewer studies have assessed the effectiveness of dog-control legislation in decreasing the number of hospitalizations due to dog-bite injuries in people.
- Breed-specific legislation is an area of considerable controversy that would benefit from long-term evaluation studies in which data from surrounding unlegislated areas are used for comparative purposes.

What this study adds

Talk medicine from BMJ

When jurisdictions were used as their own controls in a pre/post comparison of incidence of dog-bite injury hospitalisations, no significant reduction in incidence was observed in the period after breed-specific legislation (BSL) was implemented.

Discover and listen to the latest podcasts from your favourite journals.

Effectiveness of BSL in decreasing the incidence of dog-bite injury hospitalisations was more pronounced in younger people than in people of all ages.

3 min and enjoy Talk medicine today...



Acknowledgments

The authors acknowledge the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy for use of data contained in the Population Health Research Data repository under project number (HIPC number: 2009/2010-08). The results and the conclusions are those of the authors and no official endorsement by the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy, Manitoba Health, or other data provider is intended or should be inferred.

Footnotes

Funding This study was made possible by funding from the CIHR/PHAC Applied Public Health Chair Award (2007–2012) to PJM

↑ interests None

Ethics approval Ethics approval was provided by Manitoba Health Information Privacy Committee and University of Manitoba Health Research Ethics Board

Provenance and peer review Not commissioned; externally peer reviewed

Data sharing statement The dataset created for the purpose of this analytical study is available from MR. Almost all the analyses performed are presented in the manuscript

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial License, which permits use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, the use is non-commercial and is otherwise in compliance with the license. See: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/2.0/> and <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/2.0/legalcode>

References

- Presutti RJ. Prevention and treatment of dog bites. *Am Fam Physician* 2001;63:1567–72. [Medline] [Web of Science]
- Gilchrist J, Sacks JJ, White D, et al. Dog bites: still a problem? *Inj Prev* 2008;14:296–301. [Abstract/FREE Full text]
- Overall KL, Love M. Dog bites to humans—demography, epidemiology, injury, and risk. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 2001;218:1923–34. [CrossRef] [Medline] [Web of Science]
- Ozanne-Smith J, Ashby K, Stathakis VZ. Dog bite and injury prevention—analysis, critical review, and research agenda. *Inj Prev* 2001;7:321–6. [Abstract/FREE Full text]
- CBC News/CBC Marketplace. 'Dangerous dog' bylaws Across Canada. <http://www.cbc.ca/marketplace/pre-2007/files/health/dangerousdogs/bylaws.html> (accessed 15 Feb 2012).
- Straka A. Vancouver City Council: Agendas, Reports, Minutes. *Dangerous Dogs: Protection Strategy*. <http://vancouver.ca/cycle/ric/clerk/20050217/pe2.htm> (accessed 15 Feb 2012)
- Ledger RA, Orihel JS, Clarke N, et al. Breed specific legislation: considerations for evaluating its effectiveness and recommendations for alternatives. *Can Vet J* 2005;46:735–43. [Medline]
- AVMA Task Force on Canine Aggression and Human-Canine Interactions. A community approach to dog bite prevention. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 2001;218:1732–49. [CrossRef] [Medline] [Web of Science]
- Burstein D. Breed specific legislation: unfair prejudice and ineffective policy. *Animal Law* 2004;10:313–61. Search Google Scholar
- Rosado B, Garcia-Belenguer S, Leon M, et al. Spanish dangerous animals act: effect on the epidemiology of dog bites. *J Vet Behav* 2007;2:166–74. [CrossRef]
- Cornelissen JM, Hopster H. Dog bites in The Netherlands: a study of victims, injuries, circumstances and aggressors to support evaluation of breed specific legislation. *Vet J* 2010;186:292–8. [CrossRef] [Medline] [Web of Science]
- Klaassen B, Buckley JR, Esmail A. Does the dangerous dogs act protect against animal attacks: a prospective study of mammalian bites in the accident and emergency department. *Injury* 1996;27:89–91. [CrossRef] [Medline]
- Bandow JH. Will breed-specific legislation reduce dog-bites? *Can Vet J* 1996;37:478–81. [Medline] [Web of Science]
- De Keuster D, Lamoureux J, Kahn A. Epidemiology of dog bites: a Belgian experience of canine behavior and public health concerns. *Vet J* 2006;172:482–7. [CrossRef] [Medline] [Web of Science]
- Villalbi JR, Cléries M, Bouis S, et al. Decline in hospitalisations due to dog bite injuries in Catalonia, 1997–2008. An effect of government regulation? *Inj Prev* 2010;16:408–10. [Abstract/FREE Full text]
- Winnipeg. *By-law no. 2443/79. The Pound By-Law*. 17 October 1979. <http://www.winnipeg.ca/CLKDMIS/DocExt/ViewDoc.asp?DocumentTypeId=1&DocId=428> (accessed 31 Jan 2012)
- Rural Municipality of Macdonald. *By-Law no. 15/09 Dog by-law*. 9 June 2009.
- City of Thompson. *By-Law No. 1500–994 Dog licensing and animal control by-law*. 26 September 1994.
- Hess G. Pro canine breed-specific legislation. *Can Vet J* 1996;37:712. [Medline] [Web of Science]
- Shuler CM, DeBess EE, Lapidus JA, et al. Canine and human factors related to dog bite injuries. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 2008;232:542–6. [CrossRef] [Medline]
- Bini JK, Cohn SM, Acosta SM, et al. Mortality, mauling, and maiming by vicious dogs. *Ann Surg* 2011;253:791–7. [CrossRef] [Medline]
- Grill AK. Approach to management of suspected rabies exposures: what primary care physicians need to know. *Can Fam Physician* 2009;55:247–51. [Abstract/FREE Full text]
- Moore DA, Sisco WM, Hunter A, et al. Animal bite epidemiology and surveillance for rabies postexposure prophylaxis. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 2000;217:190–4. [CrossRef] [Medline]
- Christian KA, Blanton JD, Auslander M, et al. Epidemiology of rabies post-exposure prophylaxis—United States of America, 2006–2008. *Vaccine* 2009;27:7156–61. [CrossRef] [Medline] [Web of Science]
- Manitoba Health Communicable Disease Control. *Protocol for Management of Animal Exposures to Prevent Human Rabies*. 2006. http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/ccd/protocol/rabies_protocol.pdf (accessed 29 Jan 2012)
- Blanton JD, Bowden NY, Eidson M, et al. Rabies postexposure prophylaxis, New York, 1995–2000. *Emerg Infect Dis* 2005;11:1921–7. [Medline]
- Concept: Urban/Rural Definitions. *Concept Description*. <http://mchp.appseiv.cpe.umaniitoba.ca/viewConcept.php?printer=Y&conceptID=1253> (accessed 29 Feb 2012)
- Manitoba Centre for Health Policy. *Population Health Research Data Repository*. http://umanitoba.ca/proxy1.lib.umanitoba.ca/faculties/medicine/units/community_health_sciences/departmental_units/mchp/resources/repository/index.html (accessed 2 Mar 2011)
- World Health Organization. *International Classification of Diseases*. <http://www.who.int/classifications/icd/en/> (accessed 2 Mar 2011)
- Last JM. *A Dictionary of Epidemiology*. 3rd edn. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. Search Google Scholar
- Texas Department of State Health Services. *Report of Birth Defects Among the 1999–2008 Deliveries*. http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/birthdefects/data/BD_Data_99-08/Report-of-Birth-Defects-Among-1999-2008-Deliveries/ (accessed 29 Jan 2012)
- Lianglois P. Boost your confidence intervals with SAS. *Proceedings of the 2010 Meeting of the South Central SAS Users Group*. <http://www.sas.com/proceedings/sugi30/1001/1001.pdf> (accessed 29 Jan 2012).
- Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat. *Program evaluation methods: Measurement and Attribution of program results 3rd edition*. Ministry of Public Works and Government Services, Public Affairs Branch, 1998. <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/ce/pubs/mef/mefm-map-eng.pdf> (accessed 29 Jan 2012)
- Shadish KA, Cook TD, Greenberg ME. *Quasi-Experimental Methods: Research to Practice*. Counselor, 1999. <http://www.counselormagazine.com/columns-mainmenu-55/48-research-to-practice/471-the-quasi-experimental-method> (accessed 29 Jan 2012)
- Shadish KA. Quasi-experimental evaluations. *Practical Evaluation Methods*. *Child Trends*. Washington, DC: The Atlantic Philanthropies, 2008. http://www.childtrends.org/Files/CHILD_Trends_2008_01_16_Evaluation6.pdf (accessed 29 Jan 2012)
- Camden A, Bulling R, Rohman L, et al. The impact of pedestrian countdown signals on pedestrian-motor vehicle collisions: a quasi-experimental study. *Inj Prev*. Published Online First: 25 February 2012. doi:10.1136/injuryprev-2011-040173

37. Gardner W, Mulvey EP, Shaw EC. Regression analyses of counts and rates: Poisson, overdispersed Poisson, and negative binomial models. *Psychol Bull* 1995;118:392-404. [CrossRef] [Medline] [Web of Science]
38. Chang LY. Analysis of freeway accident frequencies: negative binomial regression versus artificial neural network. *Saf Sci* 2005;43:541-57. [CrossRef]
39. McDonald TL, Erickson WP, McDonald LL. Analysis of count data from before-after control-impact studies. *J Agric Biol Envir Stat* 2000;6:262-79. [CrossRef]
40. Pedan A. *Analysis of Count Data Using the SAS System. Statistics, Data Analysis, and Data Mining (Paper 247-26)*. <http://www2.sas.com/proceedings/sugi26/p247-26.pdf> (accessed 29 Jan 2012).
negative binomial regression. *UCLA: Academic Technology Services, Statistical Consulting Services, Statistical Consulting up*. http://www.ats.ucla.edu/stat/output/stata_nbreag_output.htm (accessed 29 Jan 2012).
42. Nichols DP. *Using categorical variables in regression*. *UCLA Academic Technology Services, Statistical Consulting Group*. 1995. <http://www.ats.ucla.edu/stat/spss/library/calreg.htm> (accessed 31 Jan 2012).
43. *Proc Genmod*. Cary, NC: SAS Institute, Inc, 2008.
44. SAS Institute Inc. *SAS/STAT User's Guide, Version 9.2*. Cary, NC: SAS Institute Inc., 1999.
45. City of Brandon. *By-Law no. 5900/57/91. Animal control by-law*. 17 June 1991.
46. Weiss HB, Friedman DI, Coben JH. Incidence of dog bite injuries treated in emergency departments. *JAMA* 1998;279:51-3. [CrossRef] [Medline] [Web of Science]
47. Castrodale L. Hospitalizations resulting from dog bite injuries—Alaska, 1991–2002. *Int J Circumpolar Health* 2007;66:320-7. [Medline] [Web of Science]
48. Quinlan KP, Sacks JJ. Hospitalizations for dog bite injuries. *JAMA* 1999;281:232-3. [CrossRef] [Medline] [Web of Science]
49. Marsh L, Langley J, Gauld R. Dog bite injuries. *N Z Med J* 2004;117:1043-9. Search Google Scholar
50. Flores J, Brown J, Mackenzie SG, et al. Innovative CHIRPP project focuses on dog bites. *CHIRPP News* 1997;11:3-7. Search Google Scholar
51. Health Surveillance and Epidemiology Division (Public Health Agency of Canada). *Injuries associated with non-fatal dog bites: Canadian Hospitals Injury Reporting and Prevention program (CHIRPP) database, 1990-2003 (cumulative to January 2005)*. All ages, 13,921 records. http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/injury-bites/chirpp/pdf/CHIRPP_INJURY_BRIEF_DOG_BITE_update.pdf (accessed 20 Jun 2012).
52. Shepherd AJ. Results of the 2006 AVMA survey of companion animal ownership in US pet-owning households. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 2008;232:665-6. [CrossRef] [Medline]
53. PRWeb. *New survey reveals pet ownership at its highest level in two decades and pet owners are willing to pay when it comes to pet's health*. *American Pet Products Association Press Release, Greenwich, CT (Vocus/PRWEB) April 04, 2011*. <http://www.prweb.com/releases/2011/4/prweb6252684.htm> (accessed 2 Feb 2012).
54. Kush J, Prins S, Olson W. Rabies diagnosis in western Canada, January 1 to June 30, 1995. *Can Vet J* 1995;36:776. [Medline]
55. Prins B, Loewen KG. Rabies diagnosis in western Canada, 1985-1989. *Can Vet J* 1991;32:487-91. [Medline] [Web of Science]
56. Fehner-Gardiner C, Muldoon F, Nadin-Davis S, et al. Laboratory diagnosis of rabies in Canada for calendar year 2006. *Can Vet J* 2008;49:359-61. [Medline]
57. Griego RD, Rosen T, Orengo IF, et al. Dog, cat, and human bites: a review. *J Am Acad Dermatol* 1995;33:1019-29. [CrossRef] [Medline] [Web of Science]



talking about this article?



See more details

-  Tweeted by **9**
-  On **2** Facebook pages
-  **4** readers on Mendeley
-  **0** readers on CiteULike

Talk medicine from BMJ

Discover and listen to the latest podcasts from your favourite journals.

in and enjoy Talk medicine today...

BMJ



Welfare Implications of
***The Role of Breed in Dog Bite
Risk and Prevention***

(April 17, 2012)

BREEDS IMPLICATED IN SERIOUS BITE INJURIES

In a range of studies, the breeds found to be highly represented in biting incidents were German Shepherd Dog,^{1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16} pit bull type,^{5,9,13,16,17,18,19,20,21} mixed breed,^{1,4,6,8,10,11,12,22} Rottweiler,^{15,19,21,23} Chow Chow,^{7,20} Jack Russell Terrier,^{18,23} and others (Collie,³ Springer Spaniel¹⁴ Saint Bernard,¹⁷ and Labrador Retriever²). If you consider only the much smaller number of cases that resulted in very severe injuries or fatalities,^{17,19} pit bull-type dogs are more frequently identified. However this may relate to the popularity of the breed in the victim's community, reporting biases and the dog's treatment by its owner (e.g., use as fighting dogs¹⁷). It is worth noting that fatal dog attacks in some areas of Canada are attributed mainly to sled dogs and Siberian Huskies,⁴³ presumably due to the regional prevalence of these breeds. See Table 1 for a summary of breed data related to bite injuries.

CONTROLLED STUDIES

The prevalence of particular dog breeds can also change rapidly over time, often influenced by distinct peaks of popularity for specific breeds. It seems that increased popularity is sometimes followed by increases in bite reports in some large breeds. For example there was a distinct peak in American Kennel Club registration of Rottweilers²⁴ between 1990 and 1995, and they come at the top of the list of 'biting breeds' for the first time in studies of bites causing hospitalization in the late 90s and early 2000s.^{21,23,15,46} While it must be noted that other fad breeds such as Dalmatians and Irish setters do not seem to make similar appearances, any estimate of breed-based risk must take into account the prevalence of the breed in the population at the time and place of serious biting events.²⁵

For example, researchers may compare well-documented bite cases with matched control households. Using this method, one study found that the breeds disproportionately involved in bite injuries requiring medical attention in the Denver area (where pit bull types are not permitted) were the German Shepherd Dog and Chow Chow.⁵²

Other studies use estimates of breed prevalence that do not relate specifically to the households where the bites occurred, such as general community surveys, breed registries, licensed dogs or animal shelter populations (See Table 2.). These studies implicate the German Shepherd Dog and

This information has been prepared as a service by the American Veterinary Medical Association's Animal Welfare Division. Mention of trade names, products, commercial practices or organizations does not imply endorsement by the American Veterinary Medical Association.

© 2012 American Veterinary Medical Association

crosses^{48,49,50,51,52} and various other breeds (mixed breed,^{50,51} Cocker spaniel,^{49,53} Chow Chow,^{52,53} Collie,⁴⁹ Doberman,⁴⁸ Lhasa Apso,^{35,53} Rottweiler,³⁸ Springer Spaniel,³⁴ Shih Tsu,³⁴ and Poodle⁵⁰).

AGGRESSIVE BREEDS

Based on behavioral assessments and owner surveys the breeds that were more aggressive towards people were small to medium-sized dogs such as the collies, toy breeds and spaniels.^{26,27,28,29} For example, a survey of general veterinary clientele in Canada (specifically practices in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island) identified Lhasa Apso, Springer spaniel and Shih Tsu as more likely to bite.³⁴

While small dogs may be more aggressive their size means they are less likely to inflict serious bite injury except on vulnerable individuals or as part of a pack attack.³⁰ Referrals for aggression problem more closely approximate the breeds implicated in serious bite attacks, probably because owners are more likely to seek treatment for aggression in dogs that are large enough to be dangerous. Larger dogs (regardless of breed) are implicated in more attacks on humans³¹ and other dogs.³²

Certain large breeds are notably under-represented in bite statistics such as large hounds and retrievers (e.g., Labrador Retrievers and Golden Retrievers)^{28,34}—although even these breeds may have known aggressive subtypes.³³ Results relating to German Shepherd Dogs are mixed,^{29,34} suggesting there may be particularly high variability in this breed, perhaps depending on regional subtypes or ownership factors.

PIT BULL TYPES

Owners of pit bull-type dogs deal with a strong breed stigma,³⁵ however controlled studies have not identified this breed group as disproportionately dangerous. The pit bull type is particularly ambiguous as a “breed” encompassing a range of pedigree breeds, informal types and appearances that cannot be reliably identified. Visual determination of dog breed is known to not always be reliable.³⁶ And witnesses may be predisposed to assume that a vicious dog is of this type.

It should also be considered that the incidence of pit bull-type dogs’ involvement in severe and fatal attacks may represent high prevalence in neighborhoods that present high risk to the young children who are the most common victim of severe or fatal attacks. And as owners of stigmatized breeds are more likely to have involvement in criminal and/or violent acts³⁷—breed correlations may have the owner’s behavior as the underlying causal factor.

BREED BANS

While some study authors suggest limiting ownership of specific breeds might reduce injuries (e.g., pit bull type,³⁸ German Shepherd Dog³⁹) it has not been demonstrated that breed-specific bans affect the rate or severity of bite injuries occurring in the community.⁸ Factors that are reliably associated with serious dog bite injury (requiring hospital treatment) in the United States are the victim being a young child and the dog being familiar (belonging to the family, a family friend or neighbor).^{40,41} Strategies known to result in decreased bite incidents include active enforcement of dog control ordinances (ticketing)⁴².

CONCLUSION

Maulings by dogs can cause terrible injuries⁴⁰ and death—and it is natural for those dealing with the victims to seek to address the immediate causes. Serious bites occur due to a range of factors in which a dog's size and temperament are known to be the risk factors. Also important are dog management factors such as neutering and tethering, and child care factors such as supervision around animals.

Given that pit bull-type dogs are not implicated in controlled studies, and the potential role of prevalence and management factors, it is difficult to support the targeting of this breed as a basis for dog bite prevention. If breeds are to be targeted a cluster of large breeds would be implicated including the German shepherd and shepherd crosses and other breeds that vary by location.

SEE ALSO:

National Animal Control Association Guideline Statement: *"Dangerous and/or vicious animals should be labeled as such as a result of their actions or behavior and not because of their breed."*

SUMMARY TABLES

Table One

Studies of Serious Dog Bite Injury by Breed

Period	Data Source	N	Country	Top Two Breeds Identified	Ref
1971	US Dept. Health	843	United States (VA)	mixed breed German Shepherd Dog	1
1971-1974	Hospital records	50	South Africa	German Shepherd Dog Labrador Retriever	2

This information has been prepared as a service by the American Veterinary Medical Association's Animal Welfare Division. Mention of trade names, products, commercial practices or organizations does not imply endorsement by the American Veterinary Medical Association.

© 2012 American Veterinary Medical Association

1973-1976	US Dept. Health	2618	United States (AL)	German Shepherd Dog Collie	3
1979-1982	Health Dept. Severe attacks	16	United States (SC)	pit bull type Saint Bernard	17
1981-1983	US Reservations	772	United States	mixed breed unspecified pedigree	22
1982-1989	Hospital records	146	United Kingdom	pit bull type Jack Russell Terrier	18
1987-1988	HASS	487	United Kingdom	mixed breed German Shepherd Dog	4
1979-1998	Fatalities	27	United States	pitt bull type Rottweiler	19
1989	Hospital records	168	United States	German Shepherd Dog pit bull type	5
1989	Hospital records	75	United Kingdom	German Shepherd Dog mixed breed	6
1991	Animal control records	357	United States	German Shepherd Dog Chow Chow	7
1991+1994	Hospital records	198	United Kingdom	German Shepherd Dog mixed breed	8
1989-1996	Hospital records	1109	United States (CA)	pit bull type German shepherd	9
1990-2007	Fatalities	28	Canada	mixed breed husky "sled dog"	43
1995	Patients receiving rabies post-exposure prophylaxis	~8000	United States (PA)	German Shepherd Dog mixed breed	10
1991-2000	Hospital records	654	Spain	German Shepherd Dog mixed breed	11
1996	Hospital records	1916	Australia	German Shepherd Dog Bull Terrier	44
1995-1997	Animal control	?	United States	pit bull type Chow Chow	20
1997	Hospital records	385	Canada	German Shepherd Dog Cocker Spaniel	11 ⁴⁵
1998-2002	Hospital records	72	Canada	Rottweiler German Shepherd Dog	46

This information has been prepared as a service by the American Veterinary Medical Association's Animal Welfare Division. Mention of trade names, products, commercial practices or organizations does not imply endorsement by the American Veterinary Medical Association.

© 2012 American Veterinary Medical Association

1991-2004	Hospital records	25	South Africa	pit bull type German Shepherd Dog	47
1994-2005	Hospital records	341	Austria	mixed breed German Shepherd Dog	12
1997-2003	Hospital records	11	United States	Rottweiler German Shepherd Dog	15
2001-2002	ACC claims	3020	New Zealand	German Shepherd Dog pit bull type	13
2000-2004	Hospital records	593	United Kingdom	Rottweiler Jack Russell Terrier	23
2001-2005	Hospital records	551	United States	pit bull type Rottweiler	21
2002-2005	Veterinary referral	111	United States (PA)	Springer Spaniel German Shepherd Dog	14

Table Two

Studies of Serious Dog Bite Injury by Breed taking into Account Breed Prevalence

Period	Data Source	Prevalence estimate	N	Country	Breeds Identified as Higher Risk	Ref
1974-1975	Animal control	Licensed dogs	?	United States (MD)	German Shepherd Dog and shepherd crosses Doberman Pinscher	48
1976-1977	US Bases	Relative risk versus mixed breed	529	United States (IL, MO)	Collie German Shepherd Dog Cocker Spaniel	49
1982	Pediatric practice	Non-biting pets of other patients	194	United States (MO)	German Shepherd Dog and shepherd crosses mixed breed over 30lb Poodle	50
1986-1987	Health Unit	Licensed dogs	318	Canada	German Shepherd Dog mixed breed	51
1991	Plastic surgery cases	Prevalence in community	146	Australia	German Shepherd Dog	39
1991	Animal control	Case controls	178	United States (CO)	German Shepherd Dog Chow Chow	52
1990-1993	Hospital records	Survey	356	Australia	Doberman Pinscher German Shepherd Dog Rottweiler	38
1993	Shelter animals quarantined for biting	General shelter admissions	170	United States (WI)	Chow Chow Cocker Spaniel Lhasa Apso	53
1996	Owner self-report (biters)	Owner self-report (non-biters)	3226	Canada	Lhasa Apso Springer Spaniel Shih Tsu	34

REFERENCES

This information has been prepared as a service by the American Veterinary Medical Association's Animal Welfare Division. Mention of trade names, products, commercial practices or organizations does not imply endorsement by the American Veterinary Medical Association.

© 2012 American Veterinary Medical Association

- ¹ Morton C. Dog bites in Norfolk, VA. *Health Serv Rep*, 1973;88:59-65.
- ² Chait LA, Spitz L. Dogbite injuries in children. *S Afr Med J* 1975;49:718-720.
- ³ Maetz, M. Animal bites, a public health problem in Jefferson County, Alabama. *Public Health Rep* 1979;94: 528-534.
- ⁴ Levene S. Dog bites to children. *BMJ* 1991;303:466.
- ⁵ Avner JR, Baker MD. Dog bites in urban children. *Pediatrics*. 1991;88:55-57.
- ⁶ Jarrett P. Which dogs bite? *Arch Emerg Med* 1991;8:33-35.
- ⁷ Patrick GR, O'Rourke KM. Dog and cat bites: epidemiologic analyses suggest different prevention strategies. *Public Health Rep* 1998;113:252-257.
- ⁸ Klaassen B, Buckley JR, Esmail A. Does the Dangerous Dogs Act protect against animal attacks: a prospective study of mammalian bites in the accident and emergency department. *Injury* 1996; 27: 89-91.
- ⁹ Meade, P. Police and domestic dog bite injuries: What are the differences? What are the implications about police dog use? *Injury Extra* 2006;37:395-401.
- ¹⁰ Moore DA, Sicho WM, Hunter A, et al. Animal bite epidemiology and surveillance for rabies postexposure prophylaxis. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 2000;217:190-194.
- ¹¹ Mendez Gallart R, Gomez Tellado M, Somoza Argibay I, Liras Munoz J, Pais Pineiro E, Vela Nieto D. Dog bite related injuries treated in a pediatric surgery department: analysis of 654 cases in 10 years. *An Esp Pediatr*. 2002;56:425-429.
- ¹² Schalamon J. Analysis of dog bites in children who are younger than 17 years. *Pediatrics* 2006;117:374-379.
- ¹³ Wake AF. *The Aetiology of Dog Bites in New Zealand*, [MSc thesis], Palmerston North: Massey University, 2005.
- ¹⁴ Reisner, IR. Assessment, management, and prognosis of canine dominated-related aggression. *The Veterinary Clinics of North America Small Animal Practice* 1997;27:479-495.
- ¹⁵ Benson LS, Edwards SL, Schiff AP, et al. Dog and cat bites to the hand: treatment and cost assessment. *J Hand Surg [Am]* 2006; 31: 468-473.
- ¹⁶ Ashby K. Dog bites. Victorian Injury Surveillance System. *Hazard* 1996; 26: 7-13.
- ¹⁷ Wright JC. Severe attacks by dogs: characteristics of the dogs, the victims, and the attack settings. *Public Health Rep* 1985;100:55-61.
- ¹⁸ Shewell PC, Nancarrow JD. Dogs that bite. *BMJ* 1997;303:1512-13.
- ¹⁹ Sacks JJ, Sinclair L, Gilchrist J, Golab GC, Lockwood R. Breeds of dogs involved in fatal human attacks in the United States between 1979 and 1998. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 2000; 217: 836-840.
- ²⁰ Blocker DE. Dog bite rates and biting dog breeds in Texas, 1995-1997. Masters Thesis 2000.
- ²¹ Kaye AE, Belz JM, Kirschner RE. Pediatric Dog Bite Injuries: A 5 Year Review of the Experience at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. *Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery* 2009;124:551-558.
- ²² Daniels TJ. A study of dog bites on the Navajo reservation. *Public Health Rep* 1986;101:50-59.
- ²³ Thompson P. Aggression Effects - From a Human Perspective and Solutions. *Urban Animal management Conference Proceedings* 2004.
- ²⁴ Herzog H. Forty-two Thousand and One Dalmatians: Fads, Social Contagion, and Dog Breed Popularity. *Society and Animals* 2006;4:383-398.
- ²⁵ Cunningham, L. The Case Against Dog Breed Discrimination By Homeowners' Insurance Companies. *Connecticut Insurance Law Journal* 2004;11:61.
- ²⁶ Fatjó J, Amat M, Mariotti VM, Torre JLR, Manteca X. Analysis of 1040 cases of canine aggression in a referral practice in Spain. *J Vet Behav* 2007; 2:158-65.
- ²⁷ Duffy, DL., Hsu, Y. Serpell, JA. Breed differences in canine aggression. *Appl Anim Behav Sci* 2008;114:441-460.
- ²⁸ Draper, T.W., Canine analogs of human personality factors. *J Gen Psych* 1995;122: 241-252.
- ²⁹ Lund JD, Agger JF, Vestergaard KS. Reported behaviour problems in pet dogs in Denmark: age distribution and influence of breed and gender. *Preventative Vet med* 1996;28:33-48
- ³⁰ Kneafsey B, Condon KC. Severe dog-bite injuries, introducing the concept of pack attack: A literature review and seven case reports. *Injury*. 1995;26:37-41.
- ³¹ Harris D, Imperato PJ, Oken B. Dog bites—an unrecognized epidemic. *Bull NY Acad Med* 1974;50:981-1000.
- ³² Roll, A., Unshelm, J. Aggressive conflicts amongst dogs and factors affecting them. *Appl Anim Behav Sci*. 1997;52:229-242.
- ³³ van den Berg, L., Schilder, M.B.H., Knol, B.W. Behaviour genetics of canine aggression: behavioural phenotyping of Golden Retrievers by means of an aggression test. *Behav Gen* 2003;33:469-483.
- ³⁴ Guy, N, Canine household aggression in the caseload of general veterinary practitioners in Maritime Canada, Master of Science thesis, Atlantic Veterinary College, University of Prince Edward Island, 1999
- ³⁵ Twining, H., Arluke, A. Patronek, G. Managing stigma of outlaw breeds: A case study of pit bull owners. *Society and Animals* 2001;8:1-28.

This information has been prepared as a service by the American Veterinary Medical Association's Animal Welfare Division. Mention of trade names, products, commercial practices or organizations does not imply endorsement by the American Veterinary Medical Association.

© 2012 American Veterinary Medical Association

- ³⁶ Voith VL, Ingram E, Mitsouras K. Comparison of adoption agency breed identification and DNA breed identification of dogs. *J Appl Anim Welf Sci* 2009;12:253–262.
- ³⁷ Ragatz L, Fremouw W, Thomas T, McCoy K. Vicious dogs: the antisocial behaviors and psychological characteristics of owners. *Journal of Forensic Sciences* 2009;54:699-703
- ³⁸ Thompson PG. The public health impact of dog attacks in a major Australian city. *Med J Aust* 1997;167:129-32.
- ³⁹ Greenhalgh C, Cockington R, Raftos I. An epidemiological survey of dog bites presenting to the emergency department of a children's hospital. *J Paediatr Child Health* 1991; 27: 171-174.
- ⁴⁰ Loewe CL, Francisco JD, Bechinski J. Pitbull mauling deaths in Detroit. *The American Journal of Forensic Medicine and Pathology* 2007;28:356-360.
- ⁴¹ Monroy A, Behar P, Nagy M, Poje C, Pizzuto M, Brodsky L. Head and neck dog bites in children. *Otolaryngol. Head Neck Surg* 2009;140:354–357
- ⁴² Clarke NM. A survey of urban Canadian animal control practices : the effect of enforcement and resourcing on the reported dog bite rate, Master of Science – MSc 2009
- ⁴³ Raghavan M. Fatal dog attacks in Canada, 1990–2007. *Can Vet J.* 2008;49:577–581.
- ⁴⁴ Ashby K. Dog bites. Victorian Injury Surveillance System. *Hazard* 1996; 26: 7-13.
- ⁴⁵ Flores J, Brown J, Mackenzie SG. Innovative CHIRPP project focuses on dog bites. *CHIRPP News* 1997;11:3–7.
- ⁴⁶ Lang ME, Klassen T. Dog bites in Canadian children: a five-year review of severity and emergency department management. *Can J Emerg Med.* 2005;7:309–314.
- ⁴⁷ Dwyer JP, Douglas TS, van As AB. Dog bites injuries in children—a review of data from a South Africa paediatric trauma unit. 2007;97:597–600.
- ⁴⁸ Berzon DR. The animal bite epidemic in Baltimore, Maryland: review and update. *Am J Public Health.* 1978;68:593-595.
- ⁴⁹ Hanna, TL, Selby LA. Characteristics of the human and pet populations in animal bite incidents recorded at two Air Force bases. *Public Health Rep.* 1981;96:580-584.
- ⁵⁰ Lauer EA, White WC, Lauer BA. Dog bites: a neglected problem in accident prevention. *AJDC.* 1982;136:202-204.
- ⁵¹ Szpakowski NM, Bonnett BN, Martin SW. An epidemiological investigation into the reported incidents of dog biting in the City of Guelph. *Can Vet J* 1989;30:937–942.
- ⁵² Gershman KA, Sacks JJ, Wright JC. Which dogs bite: a case-control study of risk factors. *Pediatrics* 1994;93:913-917.
- ⁵³ Castelein C, Klouda J, Hirsch H. The bite case scenario—it is not what you think. In: *WFHS newsletter.* Madison, Wis: Wisconsin Humane Society, 1996;Sep:12–14. Cited in: Overall KL, Love M. Dog bites to humans: demography, epidemiology, injury, and risk. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 2001;218:1923-1934.

This is an unofficial version of the revised ADA regulations. The official text will be published in the Federal Register.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

28 CFR Part 36

CRT Docket No. 106; AG Order No.

RIN 1190-AA44

Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disability by Public Accommodations and in Commercial Facilities

AGENCY:

Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division.

ACTION:

Final rule.

SUMMARY:

The Department of Justice (Department) is issuing this final rule in order to adopt enforceable accessibility standards under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) that are "consistent with the minimum guidelines and requirements issued by the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board" (Access Board), 42 U.S.C. 12186(c), and to update or amend certain provisions of the title III regulation so that they comport with the Department's legal and practical experiences in enforcing the ADA since 1991. The Department has conducted the periodic review that is required by the Regulatory Flexibility Act and has made a regulatory assessment of the costs and benefits of any significant regulatory action as required by the Regulatory Flexibility Act, as amended by the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act of 1996. This rule adopts ADA Chapter 1, ADA Chapter 2, and Chapters 3 through 10 of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Architectural Barriers Act Accessibility Guidelines (2004 ADA/ABA Guidelines), which were published by the Access Board on July 23, 2004, and are codified at 36 CFR part 1191, app. B and D (2009). Because the Department is adopting ADA Chapter 1, ADA Chapter 2, and Chapters 3 through 10 of the 2004 ADA/ABA Guidelines as part of the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design (2010 Standards), on the effective date of the final rule, these guidelines will cease to be mere guidance and instead will have legal effect.

Concurrently with the publication of the final rule for title III, the Department is publishing a final rule amending its ADA title II regulation. The title II regulation covers State and local government entities, adopts ADA Chapter 1, ADA Chapter 2, and Chapters 3 through 10 of the 2004 ADA/ABA Guidelines as its standards for title II entities, makes amendments to the title II regulation for consistency with the title III regulation, and makes amendments that reflect the Department's experience of years of enforcement of the ADA.

EFFECTIVE DATE:

[INSERT DATE SIX MONTHS AFTER THE DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER]

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Janet L. Blizard, Deputy Chief, or Christina Galindo-Walsh, Attorney Advisor, Disability Rights Section, Civil Rights Division, U.S. Department of Justice, at (202) 307-0663 (voice or TTY). This is not a toll-free number. Information may also be obtained from the Department's toll-free ADA Information Line at (800) 514-0301 (voice) or (800) 514-0383 (TTY).

This rule is also available in an accessible format on the ADA Home Page at www.ada.gov. You may obtain copies of this rule in large print or on computer disk by calling the ADA Information Line listed above.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

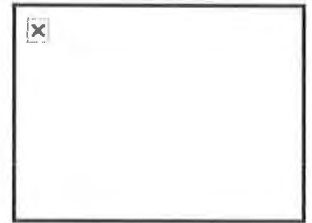
- [About Us](#)
- [Responsible Pet Ownership](#)
- [Breed ID](#)
- [Dog Legislation](#)
- [Search](#)
- [Submit](#)
- [Injurious Dog Bites](#)
- [Publications](#)
- [Press Center](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [Blog](#)

[Nurturing the Human-Canine Bond](#)

- [Home](#)
- [Dog Legislation](#)
- [Breed-specific Legislation \(BSL\) FAQ](#)

Breed-specific Legislation (BSL) FAQ

Featured Video



NCRC Video Interview with Janis Bradley

[READ MORE](#)

Send to Friends

Publications

- [Visual Breed ID Poster: German Shepherd Mixes](#)
- [Visual Breed ID Poster: Labrador retriever Mixes](#)
- [Visual Breed ID Poster: "Pit Bull" Mixes](#)
- [Dog Bites: Problems & Solutions](#)
- [The Problem of Dog-Related Incidents and Encounters](#)
- [The Pit Bull Placebo](#)

[READ ALL PUBLICATIONS »](#)

View Points

Humane Communities are Safe. Safe Communities are Humane.
by Cynthia Bathurst

Click [here](#) to read entire Viewpoint

- [1. WHAT IS BREED-SPECIFIC LEGISLATION?](#)
- [2. WHAT BREEDS OF DOGS HAVE BEEN TARGETED BY BSL?](#)
- [3. WHAT POSITION DO THE LEADING ANIMAL-RELATED ORGANIZATIONS TAKE ON BSL?](#)
- [4. AREN'T CERTAIN BREEDS OF DOGS MORE LIKELY TO INJURE OR BITE THAN OTHERS?](#)
- [5. DOES BSL REDUCE DOG BITES?](#)
- [6. HOW COSTLY IS IT TO IMPLEMENT AND ENFORCE BSL?](#)
- [7. WHAT IS THE TREND IN BSL?](#)
- [8. WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO REDUCE DOG BITE-RELATED INCIDENTS IN A COMMUNITY?](#)

Q: What is breed-specific legislation?

Breed-specific legislation (BSL), also referred to as breed-discriminatory legislation (BDL), is a law or ordinance that prohibits or restricts the keeping of dogs of specific breeds, and/or dogs presumed to be mixes of one or more of those breeds. The most drastic form of BSL is a complete ban; but BSL also includes any laws or governmental regulations that impose separate requirements or limitations, including but not limited to: mandatory spay-neuter, mandatory muzzling, special liability insurance requirements, special licensing, property posting requirements, confinement requirements, breed-specific pet limits, sale or transfer notification requirements, and prohibitions in government and military housing. BSL, in all of its forms, results in the destruction of many pet dogs.

Q: What breeds of dogs have been targeted by BSL?

Various breeds have been or currently are targeted by BSL. Until the law was repealed in 2009, Italy regulated the keeping of 17 breeds. In the United States, jurisdictions have either banned or put discriminatory restrictions on one or all of the following: American Bulldog, American Staffordshire Terrier, American Pit Bull Terrier, Bull Terrier, Cane Corso, Chihuahua, Chow Chow, Doberman Pinscher, Dogo Argentina, German Shepherd Dog, Miniature Bull Terrier, "Pit bull" (please note that "pit bull" is not a breed of dog), Presa Canario, Staffordshire Bull Terrier, Rottweiler, and wolf-hybrids. These ordinances also target dogs suspected of being mixes of one or more of the named breeds.

Q. What position do the leading animal-related organizations take on BSL?

All of the following national organizations oppose BSL: American Animal Hospital Association, American Dog Owner's Association, American Humane Association, American Kennel Club, American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, American Veterinary Medical Association, Association of Pet Dog Trainers, Best Friends Animal Society, Canadian Kennel Club, Humane Society of the United States, International Association of Canine Professionals, National Animal Control Association, National Animal Interest Alliance, and National Association of Obedience Instructors. In addition, many state and local-level veterinary medical associations and humane organizations oppose BSL.

Q. Aren't certain breeds of dogs more likely to injure or bite than others?

No. There is no scientific evidence that one kind of dog is more likely than any other to injure a human being.^[1] In fact, there is evidence to the contrary.^[2] A recent survey of the controlled study of dog bites covering 40 years and two continents concluded that no group of dogs should be considered disproportionately dangerous.^[3]

Q. Does BSL reduce dog bites?

No. BSL has not succeeded in reducing dog bite-related injuries wherever in the world it has been enacted.



- An analysis published in the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* explains why BSL does not reduce serious dog bites. The authors calculated the absurdly large numbers of dogs of targeted breeds who would have to be completely removed from a community in order to prevent even one serious dog bite-related injury. For example, in order to prevent a single hospitalization resulting from a dog bite, the authors calculate that a city or town would have to remove more than 100,000 dogs of a targeted group. To prevent a second hospitalization, double that number.^[4]

- Denver, CO enacted a breed ban in 1989. Citizens of Denver continue to suffer a higher rate of hospitalization from dog bite-related injuries after the ban, than the citizens of breed-neutral Colorado counties.^[5]

- A study published in the *Journal of Veterinary Behavior* (2007), compared medically treated dog bites in Aragon, Spain for 5 years prior to and following enactment of Spain's "Law on the legal treatment of the possession of dangerous animals" (sometimes referred to Spain's Dangerous Animal Act) (2000). The results showed no significant effect in dog bite incidences when comparing before and after enactment of the BSL.^[6]

- The Netherlands repealed a 15-year-old breed ban in 2008 after commissioning a study of its effectiveness. The study revealed that BSL was not a successful dog-bite mitigation strategy because it had not resulted in a decrease in dog bites.^[7]

- The Province of Ontario in Canada enacted a breed ban in 2005. In 2010, based on a survey of municipalities across the Province, the Toronto Humane Society reported that, despite five years of BSL and the destruction of "countless" dogs, there had been no significant decrease in the number of dog bites.^[8]

- Winnipeg, Manitoba enacted a breed ban in 1990. Winnipeg's rate of dog bite-injury hospitalizations is virtually unchanged from that day to this, and remains significantly higher than the rate in breed-neutral, responsible pet ownership Calgary.^[9]

Q. How costly is it to implement and enforce BSL?

About

Reading Suggestions



The Relevance of Breed in Selecting a Companion Dog

Janis Bradley is author of *Dogs Bite, but Balloons and Slippers are More Dangerous* and *Dog Bites: Problems and Solutions*. She explores the relevance of breed in selecting a companion dog in this publication.

READ NOW »

Us Responsible Pet Ownership Breed ID Dog Legislation Injurious Dog Bites Publications Contact Us Sitemap

© 2013 National Canine Research Council, LLC. Trade/service marks are the property of National Canine Research Council. All rights reserved.

Website Design by Blue Fountain Media

BSL is very costly, penalizes responsible pet owners, diverts resources, and is open to challenge.

- Use the Best Friends Fiscal Impact Calculator: <http://bestfriends.querrillaeconomics.net/> to calculate an estimate of the additional expenses for your community (and you as a taxpayer) that will result from BSL: costs for enforcement, kenneling, euthanasia and litigation, among others.

- Miami-Dade County banned "pit bulls" in 1989. The ban did not reduce dog bites, but has generated litigation costs. Hearing officer proceedings, as well as a circuit court case, have questioned the enforceability of the law.

- The Department of Justice guidelines for the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) state that it is contrary to the Act to deny a disabled person equal access to public facilities based upon the presumed breed of their service dog. This has exposed municipalities with BSL to litigation costs when they have attempted to deny such access based the presumed breed of a person's service dog.

Q: What is the trend in BSL?

There is a growing awareness that BSL does not improve community safety and penalizes responsible dog owners and their family companions. Both the Netherlands and Italy have repealed their BSL in recent years. From January 2012-May 2013, three times as many American communities have either considered and rejected a breed- specific ordinance, or repealed an existing one, as have enacted BSL. Massachusetts, Nevada, Connecticut and Rhode Island have recently enacted state laws that prohibit their towns and counties from regulating dogs on the basis of breed. Sixteen states now prohibit BSL. The Obama Administration has announced its opposition to BSL, stating that "research shows that bans on certain types of dogs are largely ineffective and often a waste of public resources."[10]

Q. What is the best way to reduce dog bite-related incidents in a community?

Dogs cannot be characterized apart from people. At the heart of any public safety issue involving dogs is the need for responsible pet ownership. Effective laws hold dog owners responsible for the humane care, custody, and control of all dogs regardless of breed or type. Humane communities are safer communities.

Updated 23 October 2013



Click on the thumbnail to print this page.

[1] Centers for Disease Control (2008). *Dog Bite: Fact Sheet*. Retrieved from: <http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Dog-Bites/dogbite-factsheet.html>

[2] Oit, S.A., Schalke, E., von Gaertner, A.M., & Hackbarth, H. (2008). Is There a Difference? Comparison of Golden Retrievers and Dogs Affected by Breed-Specific Legislation Regarding Aggressive Behavior *Journal of Veterinary Behavior*, (3)3: 134-140

- [3] American Veterinary Medical Association: Animal Welfare Division. (2012) *Dog Bite Risk and Prevention: The Role of Breed*. Retrieved from: <https://www.avma.org/KB/Resources/Backgrounders/Pages/The-Role-of-Breed-in-Dog-Bite-Risk-and-Prevention.aspx>
- [4] Patronok, G.J., Slater, M., & Marder, A. (2010). Use of a number-needed-to-ban calculation to illustrate limitations of breed-specific legislation in decreasing the risk of dog bite-related injury. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 237(7): 788-792.
- [5] National Canine Research Council (2013) *Denver's Breed-Specific Legislation: Brutal, Costly, and Ineffective*. Retrieved from: http://nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com/uploaded_files/tinymce/Denver%20BSL%20Brutal,%20Costly,%20and%20Ineffective%20-%20Aug%202013.pdf
- [6] Rosado, B., García-Belenguer, S., León, M., & Palacio, J. (2007) Spanish dangerous animals act: Effect on the epidemiology of dog bites. *Journal of Veterinary Behavior*, 2(5): 166-174.
- [7] Cornelissen, J., M., & Hopster, H. (2010) Dog bites in the Netherlands: a study of victims, injuries, circumstances and aggressors to support evaluation of breed specific legislation. *Veterinary Journal*, 186(3): 292-298
- [8] Peat, D. (2010, April 28) Pit bull ban fails to reduce dog bites. *The Toronto Sun*. Retrieved from: <http://www.torontosun.com/news/torontoandata/2010/04/28/13753106.html>
- [9] National Canine Research Council (2012). *Winnipeg, Manitoba Far Behind Calgary in Community Safety*. Retrieved from: http://nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com/uploaded_files/tinymce/Winnipeg%20Manitoba%20far%20behind%20Calgary%20in%20community%20safety_July%20-%202012.pdf
- [10] The White House. (2013). *Breed-Specific Legislation Is a Bad Idea*. Retrieved from: <https://petitions.whitehouse.gov/petition/ban-and-outlaw-breed-specific-legislation-bsl-united-states-america-federal-level/d1WR0gcj>

A comprehensive look at why discriminatory dog laws are not the answer

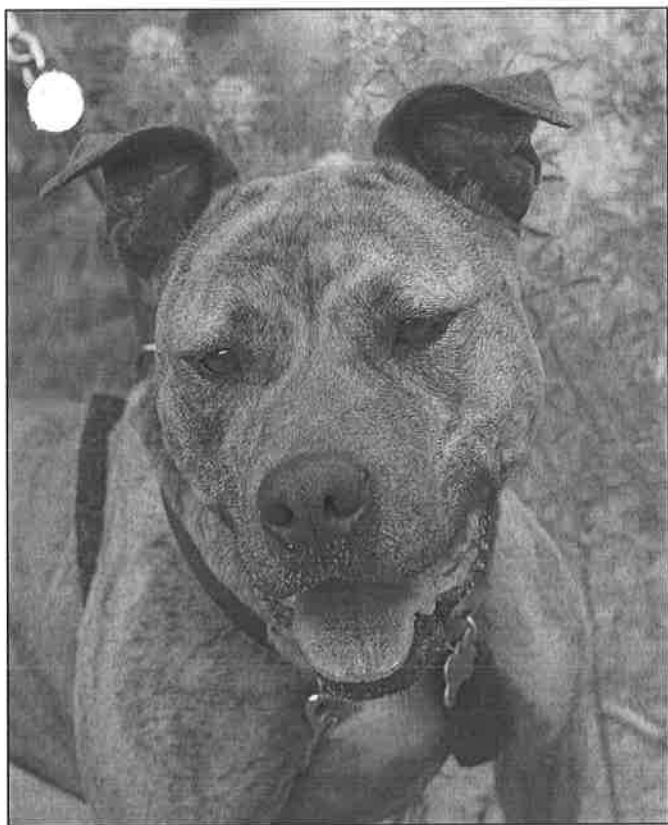
By Micaela Myers, originally posted on July 5, 2011



(Photos by Melissa Lipani)

Breed-discriminatory legislation (BDL) refers to laws that target dogs based on how they look rather than their actions. Hundreds of U.S. cities have already enacted BDL, and more cities adopt it every year. Many cities and counties—plus Marine Corps and Army bases—have banned select breeds altogether. Other cities enact BDL that automatically labels dogs of certain breeds as “vicious” or “dangerous” regardless of their behavior. These laws may require owners of the targeted breeds to follow strict guidelines, such as sterilization, proof of liability insurance, housing of the dog in a cage with a roof and floor, and muzzling the dog when on a leash. Currently, BDL most often focuses on pit bull types (dogs that have “pit bull characteristics”), but some cities also target Rottweilers, German Shepherds, Doberman Pinchers, American Bull Dogs, Bull Terriers, Mastiffs, Dalmatians, Chow Chows, other large breeds and mixes of the targeted breeds. Here, we outline the inherent flaws of BDL, why it doesn’t work and why it concerns every dog lover.

1. Doesn't Make Communities Safer



Lawmakers in favor of BDL claim it will improve public safety, but there are no studies showing this is the case. In fact, the Netherlands banned pit bulls in 1993 but lifted the ban in 2008 because it had not led to a reduction in dog bites. Since enacting the Dangerous Dog Act of 1991 that targeted pit bulls and several other breeds, England has actually experienced a dramatic rise in serious attacks. The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals notes several other examples in their [Position Statement on Breed-Specific Legislation](#), including a spike in dog bites after the 2005 Council Bluffs, Iowa, pit bull ban; and a study based on Prince George's County, Md., pit bull ban showing public safety has not improved as a result of the ban.

2. Fails to Address the Real Issues

BDL fails to address the real issues behind dog bites. Dogs involved in severe attacks tend to have factors in common regardless of breed, such as being unrestrained and unaltered. In addition, these dogs are usually not indoor members of the family (and may be kept or trained as guard dogs). Chaining, lack of proper training or socialization, abuse and neglect can also lead to aggression. Children are often the victims of dog bites, and experts advise always supervising children with pets. All of the above are issues of owner responsibility.

3. Based on Flawed Data

Lawmakers in favor of BDL usually cite the Center for Disease Control (CDC) report on dog bite fatalities. However, they fail to take into account the CDC's own warnings about the data or the CDC's conclusion that BDL is not the answer. The CDC acknowledges that many factors contribute to a dog's tendency to bite, that dog breeds responsible for fatalities vary over time, that visual identification of a dog's breed is problematic, that there are no statistics on how many dogs of each breed are currently living in the United States, that any breed can be trained to be aggressive, and that irresponsible owners can simply move on to another breed if one is banned.

4. Impossible to Accurately Enforce

Approximately half the dogs in the United States are mixed breeds, and recent studies have shown that visual identification of a dog's breed is highly inaccurate. In addition, the term "pit bull" applies to a type of dog rather than a

breed. American Pit Bull Terriers, American Staffordshire Terriers and Staffordshire Bull Terriers, mixes of these breeds, or dogs with physical characteristics resembling one of these breeds are lumped into the “pit bull” category. Because of the costs associated with DNA testing, it is not standard practice. This means that untold numbers of misidentified dogs are seized and euthanized under BDL. Faulty visual identification by bystanders, owners, the media or animal control personnel is also a major reason why current dog bite statistics, which categorize dogs by breed, are inaccurate.



5. Taxes Limited Resources

BDL takes limited resources away from enforcing important leash and license laws, educating the public, promoting spay/neuter and cracking down on dog fighting and abuse. Instead, limited personnel must track down dogs resembling pit bulls (or other targeted breeds) and house them during what can be lengthy legal proceedings, which can lead to adoptable dogs of all breeds being euthanized due to overcrowding.

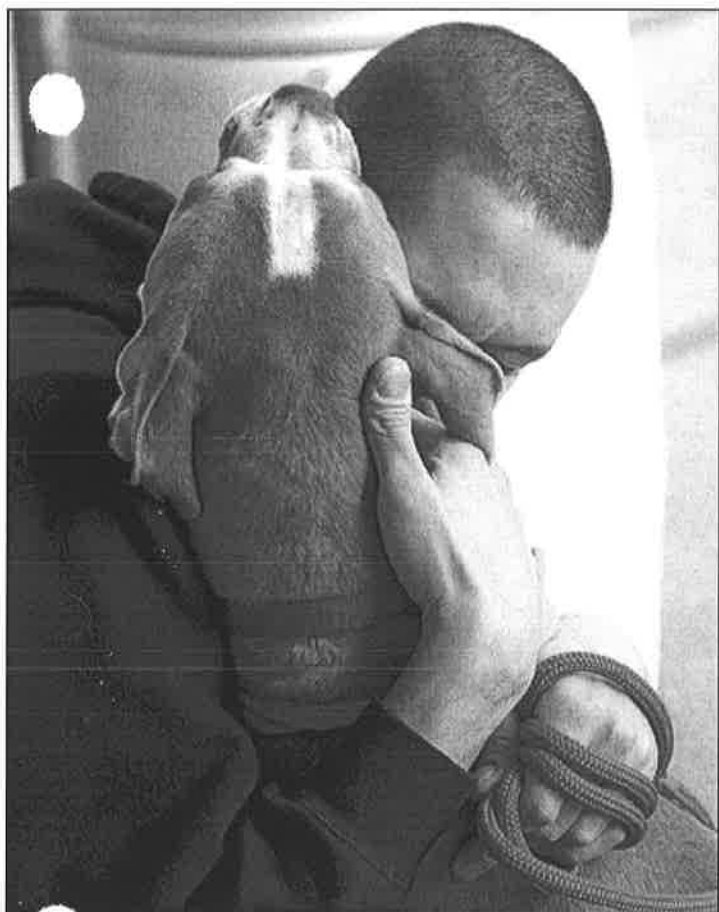
6. Creates Financial Burden

BDL places an incredible financial burden on cities and counties. Best Friends has created a fiscal calculator to show the costs of breed-discriminatory legislation. In addition to costs related to enforcement, housing and euthanasia, BDL opens cities up to lawsuits from owners who claim it violates their constitutional rights, who claim their dogs were misidentified, or who have service animals that fall under the breed restrictions (although the ADA allows all breeds, Denver has been sued for not allowing pit bull service dogs).

7. Negatively Impacts Law-Abiding Families

In cities with BDL, law-abiding owners of targeted breeds must either move or comply. Those without the financial means to move often have to surrender their beloved family pets to be euthanized. An untold number of pit bulls and other dogs have been euthanized as the result of BDL (thousands under Denver’s ban alone), based not on their behavior but simply how they look. In addition to tearing families apart, BDL forces some underground, hiding targeted dogs and not giving them proper veterinary care or exercise in an attempt to avoid detection by authorities (read one such story [here](#)). This is especially true in the case of dog fighters, who are already breaking the law; rather than solving the problem, BDL most likely only pushes them further underground.

8. Engenders Further Prejudice



Regulation and labeling of certain breeds as “vicious” or “dangerous” makes it all the more difficult for responsible guardians of these breeds to find landlords who will rent to them and homeowners or rental insurance companies who will insure them, regardless of how well trained or even tempered their pet is. Even those not living in cities with BDL are impacted by this widespread prejudice. The fact that more than 500 cities and counties already have enacted BDL also makes it difficult for families with these breeds to travel with their pets or consider moving for work or family obligations.

9. Short Sighted

Breeds popular as guard dogs and for image enhancement change over time, creating rises in popularity of certain breeds and often corresponding rises in bites from those breeds. As an example, Great Danes caused the most reported human deaths from dog attacks in 1979/80. With more than 200 breeds to choose from, many experts agree that when one breed is banned, irresponsible owners will simply move on to another large breed. Those who think their breed of choice won't be impacted by BDL should think again: Dozens of breeds and mixes of those breeds have already been restricted by various laws across our country. The list of breeds singled out by homeowners' insurance policies, homeowners' associations and apartment complexes is far lengthier.

10. Based on Myths

Rather than based on any proof that it's effective, BDL is often enacted as an emotional reaction to one or two incidences within a community. Inaccurate data and breed myths are often brought up as “facts” to support breed bans. This misinformation includes statements about the percentage of pit bull type dogs in the U.S. (which is unknown) and the numbers of attacks caused by pit bull types (which is also unknown given breed misidentification and lack of accurate data). Other misinformation includes the myth that pit bulls have locking jaws, bite differently than other dogs or suddenly “snap.” There is no credible evidence to support any of these erroneous theories. Pit bulls' jaw mechanism/anatomy is no different than any other dog of equal size, and locking the jaw is physically impossible for any breed of dog. Experts examining the body of a bite victim may be able to tell if it was a large or small dog, but

cannot identify the specific breed that caused the wounds. And regarding the “suddenly snapping” theory: Pit bull’s brains are no different than any other dog.

11. Illegal

The American Veterinary Medical Association’s community dog bite prevention report states: “Breed-specific ordinances, however, raise constitutional questions concerning dog owners’ fourteenth amendment rights of due process and equal protection.” In addition to lawsuits over constitutional rights, multiple lawsuits have been filed by owners in various cities who claim their dogs were wrongly labeled as one of the targeted breeds.



12. Unsupported

For these reasons and more, the Centers for Disease Control, the American Kennel Club, National Animal Control Association, American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Humane Society of the United States, and American Veterinary Medical Association all oppose BDL and suggest more effective breed-neutral solutions to reducing dog bites and making communities safer, such as the AVMA’s community approach to dog bite prevention. Calgary’s Responsible Pet Ownership law is also frequently cited as an example of a successful breed-neutral law.

For More Information:

American Bar Association

All Bark and Fiscal Bite—Are Breed-Discriminatory Laws Effective?

Pit Bull Bans: The State of Breed-Specific Legislation

Animal Farm Foundation

Breed Specific Legislation

AKC
Canine Legislation Position Statement

ASPCA
Position Statement on Breed-Specific Legislation
Breed Specific Legislation

AVMA
Responsible Ownership
A community approach to dog bite prevention
Dog Bite Prevention Message Points

Best Friends Animal Society
Pit Bulls: Saving America's Dog
Best Friends BDL Fiscal Impact

CDC
Dog Bite Prevention
Special Report

HSUS
Dangerous Dogs and Breed-Specific Legislation

Mid Atlantic Animal Law
Fiscal Bite & Breed Discrimination

National Canine Research Council
The Pit Bull Placebo: The Media, Myths and Politics of Canine Aggression
Breed Identification

Download the PDF

« « [The Fabulous Gracie](#) | [Juno](#) » »

About

StubbyDog is a non-profit, 501(c)(3), focused on changing public perceptions of pit bulls.

Sign up for our newsletter!

Email*

First Name

Last Name

* = required field

AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION

ADOPTED BY THE HOUSE OF DELEGATES

AUGUST 6-7, 2012

RESOLUTION

RESOLVED, That the American Bar Association urges all state, territorial, and local legislative bodies and governmental agencies to adopt comprehensive breed-neutral dangerous dog/reckless owner laws that ensure due process protections for owners, encourage responsible pet ownership and focus on the behavior of both dog owners and dogs, and to repeal any breed discriminatory or breed specific provisions.

REPORT

Introduction and Current Legal Landscape

Breed-discriminatory measures, sometimes referred to as breed-specific measures, distinguish dogs of one or more specific breeds, along with dogs presumed to mixes of those breeds, as inherently dangerous because of the dog's physical appearance. Often these provisions will describe the most common physical characteristics of the breed, or they will refer to the American Kennel Club or United Kennel Club's description. Dogs within the community are judged by these physical characteristics. If a certain number of features are present in a particular dog, the dog is presumed to be a member of the breed or, in the case of mixed-breed dogs, of that breed's heritage and is classified as dangerous per se. The consequences of this classification vary greatly. Some laws ban the ownership, keeping or harboring of dogs of certain breeds or appearance, other laws place onerous restrictions on the dogs and their owners. These restrictions can include requiring sterilization, micro-chipping, prescribed enclosures, muzzling, special leashes, specific collars, detailed signage, training and a minimum age of the person who can walk the dog. The dogs affected by these laws have not actually shown dangerous behaviors; the dogs just appear to be of a certain breed or heritage.

Breed-discriminatory laws occasionally are proposed and sometimes passed by local governments. These proposals usually come after a well-publicized and emotional dog bite incident within or near the local community and are best described as "panic policymaking."¹ Because these laws are enacted out of emotion, lawmakers often fail to consider the effects of provisions that impact the property rights of responsible dog owners and can involve the seizing and destroying of property (family pets) simply because their dog is of the targeted breed, heritage, or appearance.

Currently twelve states avoid panic policymaking by prohibiting breed discriminatory measures.² Only one state, Ohio, previously defined one or more breeds of dogs as "vicious."³ In February 2012, the State of Ohio enacted legislation that repealed that designation and establishing a generic dangerous dog law based on behavior. In addition, many national public health and animal welfare organizations publicly oppose breed-discriminatory legislation, including the American Humane Association,⁴ American Kennel Club,⁵ American Society for the Prevention

¹ Susan Hunter and Richard A. Brisbin, Jr., *Panic Policy Making: Canine Breed Bans in Canada and the United States*, 1, Prepared for delivery at the 2007 Annual Meeting of the Western Political Science Association (2007).

²CAL. AGRIC. CODE §31683 (West 2009) (provided, however, that California law does allow local authorities to enact breed specific ordinances pertaining only to mandatory spay or neuter programs under certain circumstances – CAL. HEALTH & SAFETY CODE §§ 122330 and 122331); COLO.REV. STAT. ANN. §18-9-204.5(5)(b) (West 2009); FLA.STAT. ANN. §767.14 (West 2009); 510 ILL. COMP. STAT. 5/24 (2009); MINN. STAT. ANN. §347.51 (West 2009); N.J. STAT. ANN. § 4:19-36 (West 2009); N.Y. AGRIC. & MKTS.LAW §107(5) (McKinney 2009); OKLA.STAT. ANN. tit.4, §46(B) (West 2009); PA. CONS. STAT. ANN. § 459-507-A(c) (West 2009); TEX.HEALTH & SAFETY CODE ANN. § 822.047 (Vernon 2009); VA.CODE ANN. §3.2-6540(C) (West 2009).

³OHIO REV. CODE ANN. § 955.11 (A)(4)(a)(iii) (West 2010) (providing that a dog is vicious if it "[b]elongs to a breed that is commonly known as a pit bull dog").

⁴American Humane Association, Animal Protection Position Statements 9 (2009), <http://www.americanhumane.org/assets/pdfs/animals/au-animal-welfare-position-statements.pdf> (last visited July 26, 2011) ("American Humane opposes legislation that seeks to ban a particular breed of dog. Such laws provide a false sense of security as all dogs, when improperly treated or trained, can present a risk to public health.")

of Cruelty to Animals,⁶ American Veterinary Medical Association,⁷ Association of Pet Dog Trainers,⁸ Best Friends Animal Society,⁹ the Humane Society of the United States¹⁰ and the National Animal Control Association,¹¹ or promote breed-neutral approaches to reducing dog bites like the Centers for Disease Control.¹²

Public safety and property rights are safeguarded when governmental entities target a specific dog or dog owner's behavior, not appearance.

Due Process

A primary reason this recommendation calls for the repeal of breed-discriminatory laws is that such laws are inconsistent with traditional notions of due process. Fundamental principles of due process require that laws provide adequate notice to the public and to the officers charged with their enforcement in order to prevent arbitrary and discriminatory application of the law. Breed discriminatory legislation often vaguely define the targeted breed. For example, the recently revised Ohio statute previously defined a vicious dog as a dog that “belongs to a breed that is commonly known as a pit bull dog.”¹³ This type of definition raises serious problems for owners

⁵American Kennel Club, Canine Legislation Position Statements 7 (2008), http://www.akc.org/pdfs/canine_legislation/PBLEG2.pdf (last visited July 26, 2011) (“The American Kennel Club strongly opposes any legislation that determines a dog to be ‘dangerous’ based on specific breeds or phenotypic classes of dogs.”)

⁶American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals – Position Statement on Breed-Specific Legislation, <http://www.asPCA.org/about-us/policy-positions/breed-specific-legislation-1.aspx> (last visited July 26, 2011).

⁷American Veterinary Medical Association, Dangerous Animal Legislation http://www.avma.org/issues/policy/dangerous_animal_legislation.asp (last visited July 26, 2011) (“The AVMA supports dangerous animal legislation by state, county, or municipal governments provided that legislation does not refer to specific breeds or classes of animals.”)

⁸Association of Pet Dog Trainers, Breed Specific Legislation, Association of Pet Dog Trainers Position Statement, 2001, http://www.apdt.com/about/ps/breed_specific_legis.aspx (last visited July 26, 2011) (“The APDT opposes any law that deems a dog as dangerous or vicious based on appearance, breed or phenotype. Canine temperaments are widely varied, and behavior cannot be predicted by physical features such as head shape, coat length, muscle to bone ratio, etc. The only predictor of behavior is behavior.”)

⁹Best Friends Animal Society, Pit Bull Terrier Initiatives, <http://network.bestfriends.org/initiatives/pitbulls/default.aspx> (last visited July 26, 2011) (“Best Friends Animal Society is working throughout the country to help pit bulls, who are battling everything from a media-driven bad reputation to legislation designed to bring about their extinction. Best Friends hopes to end discrimination against all dogs. Dogs are individuals and should be treated as individuals.”)

¹⁰Humane Society of the United States, Dangerous Dogs and Breed Specific Legislation (2010), http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/dogs/facts/statement_dangerous_dogs_breed_specific_legislation.html (last visited July 26, 2011) (“The HSUS opposes legislation aimed at eradicating or strictly regulating dogs based solely on their breed for a number of reasons.”)

¹¹National Animal Control Association, Extended Animal Control Concerns – Dangerous/Vicious Animals (2002), http://www.nacanet.org/guidelines/Guidelines%20Dangerous_Vicious%20Animals.pdf (last visited July 26, 2011) (“Dangerous and/or vicious animals should be labeled as such as a result of their actions or behavior and not because of their breed.”)

¹²The Centers for Disease Control, Injury Prevention and Control: Home & Recreational Safety, Dog Bite Fact Sheet (2008) <http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Dog-Bites/dogbite-factsheet.html> (last visited July 26, 2011) (“Many practical alternatives to breed-specific policies exist and hold promise for preventing dog bites.”)

¹³OHIO REV. CODE ANN. § 955.11 (A)(4)(a)(iii) (West 2010). Legislation was enacted in February 2012 that deleted the reference to pit bull dogs in the definition of “vicious” in Ohio law. Ohio state law is now breed neutral and

and enforcement authorities because there is no clear guidance as to which dogs fall into such category. The identifier "pit bull" does not refer to a single or recognized breed of dog. It covers a genetically diverse group of dogs, including, at minimum, American Pit Bull Terriers, American Staffordshire Terriers, and Staffordshire Bull Terriers, and dogs presumed to be mixes of one or more of those breeds. It is a slang term used to describe an ever increasing group of dogs that fit an ever evolving set of physical characteristics. "Pit bull," as now employed by shelters, rescues, animal control agencies, politicians and municipalities, most often describes dogs of unknown origin.

Moreover, even if the breed is more specifically defined in the legislation, it is very difficult to determine the breed of a dog based on its appearance. As described in more detail below, even trained individuals often misidentify the breed of a dog. Since a pit bull type dog is not an official breed of dog but rather refers to a dog from a variety of official breeds and/or a dog that merely has certain physical characteristics of those breeds, the chance for error is greatly increased. The result is a vague standard that fails to provide adequate notice to owners that they may own such a dog. Moreover, the definition allows for far too much discretion by officials in identifying a dog as falling within the definition and results in the subjective and hence arbitrary enforcement of the law.¹⁴The definition's vagueness offends due process because a "vague law impermissibly delegates basic policy matters to policemen, judges, and juries for resolution on an *ad hoc* and subjective basis, with attendant dangers of arbitrary and discriminatory application." *Grayned v. City of Rockford*, 408 U.S. 104, 108-09 (1972) (footnote omitted).

Economics

A second reason this recommendation calls for the repeal of breed-discriminatory laws and the implementation of strong, breed-neutral laws is because dangerous dog laws with breed discriminatory provisions are very expensive to enforce. In 1997, Prince George's County in Maryland enacted CB-104-1996, which banned pit bull terrier type dogs. In 2002, CR-68-2002 created the Vicious Animal Legislation Task Force to evaluate the effectiveness of existing legislation and administrative regulations concerning vicious animals and to advise the county on improvements and amendments to current policies or laws.¹⁵ The task force found that the cost to the Animal Management Division for maintenance of pit bull terrier type dogs over a two-year period was approximately \$560,000. The task force concluded that the breed-discriminatory policy was inefficient, costly, difficult to enforce, subjective and questionable in results. It recommended repealing the breed-specific ban.¹⁶

considers the behavior of the dog in determining whether a dog should be deemed dangerous or vicious. H.B. 14, 129th Gen. Assemb. (Ohio 2012).

¹⁴*See e.g.* American Dog Owners Assoc. v. City of Lynn, 533 N.E.2d 632 (Mass. 1989) (finding the law unconstitutional and stating that it "depends for enforcement on the subjective understanding of dog officers of the appearance of an ill-defined "breed," [and] leaves dog owners to guess at what conduct or dog "look" is prohibited . . . Such a law gives unleashed discretion to the dog officers charged with its enforcement, and clearly relies on their subjective speculation whether a dog's physical characteristics make it what is "commonly understood" to be a "Pit Bull.").

¹⁵ Vicious Animal Legislation Task Force, REPORT OF THE VICIOUS ANIMAL LEGISLATION TASK FORCE 2 (2003) (Presented to Prince George's County Council, July 2003).

¹⁶*Id.* at 5.

Despite these findings, Prince George's County has yet to repeal its breed ban. The county seizes and impounds more than 900 pet "pit bulls" per year. On average, more than 80 percent of the dogs impounded are maintained by the Animal Management Division throughout a lengthy hearing process and eventually euthanized, not because of any dangerous propensities, but solely because of their appearance.¹⁷

In 2009, Best Friends Animal Society commissioned a study entitled "The Fiscal Impact of Breed Discriminatory Legislation in the United States."¹⁸ The study estimates the number of canines in every community in the country based on federal government data. The model correlates a wide range of demographic and geographic variables, all of which are available at the community level, with known canine populations in thirteen jurisdictions utilizing non-linear programming techniques. In other words, the model minimizes the differences between actual and predicted canine populations in the control cities by estimating coefficients across a wide range of available data.

Using this model, the analysis determined that the number of dogs in a specific town is a function of the total number of households, total population, physical land area, the structural type of housing, the gender and ethnic mix of the community, the poverty rate, and the marriage rate.¹⁹

Once the total number of dogs is estimated, the number of pit bull terrier type dogs is calculated using national estimates of the number of dogs affected by the breed-discrimination legislation.²⁰ When the model was developed, it was estimated that there are 72,114,000 dogs in the United States, with an estimated 5,010,934 pit bull terrier type dogs.²¹ Note that these are not genetic American Pit Bull Terriers, American Staffordshire Terriers or Staffordshire Bull Terriers, the breeds of dogs typically defined as "pit bulls," but rather dogs that may be identified as pit bull terrier type dogs simply due to their size and shape, which are the dogs typically netted by breed-discriminatory laws.

According to the study, if the United States were to enact a breed-discriminatory law, it would cost \$459,138,163 to enforce annually.²² The fiscal cost of a breed-discriminatory law in the District of Columbia alone would be \$965,990 annually.²³ The costs include those related to animal control and enforcement, kenneling and veterinary care, euthanasia and carcass disposal, litigation from residents appealing or contesting the law, and DNA testing. Other costs not included in this estimate may vary depending on current resources available to a specific community's animal control program. They may include additional shelter veterinarians,

¹⁷ *Id.* at 6.

¹⁸ John Dunham & Assoc., Inc., *The Fiscal Impact of Breed Discriminatory Laws in the United States*, May 13, 2009, <http://www.guerrillaeconomics.biz/bestfriends/best%20friends%20methodology%20and%20write%20up.pdf> (last visited Aug. 1, 2011).

¹⁹ *Id.* at 4.

²⁰ *Id.* at 2. (This was an average of 6.9 percent, and was calculated from local and national statistics found on media reports, animal activist reports, federal government reports, and from dog-bite victims groups.)

²¹ *Id.*

²² *Id.*

²³ <http://www.guerrillaeconomics.biz/bestfriends/>(Select state; then "calculate." The cost to other individual cities and counties can be determined online by using the study's fiscal impact calculator).

increased enforcement staffing, and capital improvements associated with increased shelter space needed.

Efficacy

This recommendation calls for the implementation of strong, breed-neutral laws because dangerous dog laws with breed-discriminatory provisions are ineffective at improving public safety. Several studies have been conducted on the topic of the impact and effectiveness of laws that regulate dogs based on breed or appearance instead of behavior. .

The United Kingdom banned “pit bulls” in 1991. One study examined the U.K.’s Dangerous Dog Act and concluded that the ban had no effect on stopping dog attacks.²⁴

A more recent study compared dog bites reported to the public-health department of Aragon, Spain, for the five-year period before the 1999 implementation of the city’s Dangerous Dog Act and the five-year period after.²⁵ The Act targeted a variety of breeds. The allegedly dangerous breeds accounted for 2.4 percent of the dog bites before the breed-discriminatory law was introduced and 3.5 percent of the dog bites after the law was implemented. The authors state that the “results suggest that BSL was fundamentally flawed ... [and] not effective in protecting people from dog bites in a significant manner.”²⁶

In 2007, the Netherlands repealed a “pit bull” ban that had been in place for 15 years because it had failed to reduce the incidence of dog bites.²⁷ As part of the evaluation that led to repeal, the government had commissioned a study of dog bites in the country. The authors had reported to the government a “mismatch between risk indices and the then-current legislation.” As opposed to regulating dogs on the basis of breed or appearance, the authors recommended “a better understanding of how to handle dogs.”²⁸

A recent study published in the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, employing the “number needed to treat” methodology relied upon in evidence-based medicine, proposes one possible explanation of the lack of public safety results. Based upon the authors’ analysis of dog-bite-injury data obtained from multiple jurisdictions across the US and estimates of the “breed” populations of the nation’s canines, the authors calculated that serious injury from

²⁴ B. Klaassen, J.R. Buckley & A. Esmail, *Does the Dangerous Dog Act Protect Against Animal Attacks: A Prospective Study of Mammalian Bites in the Accident and Emergency Department*, 27(2) *INJURY* 89-91 (1996) (examining incidents seen at one urban accident and emergency department before the implementation of the act and again two years later).

²⁵ B. Rosado et al., *Spanish: Dangerous Animals Act: Effect of the Epidemiology of Dog Bites*, 2(5) *JOURNAL OF VETERINARY BEHAVIOR* 166-74 (2007).

²⁶ *Id.* at 172.

²⁷ *Expatica.com*, Dutch Agriculture Minister Scraps Pit Bull Ban (June 11, 2008)

http://www.expatica.com/nl/news/local_news/Dutch-Agriculture-Minister-scraps-pit-bull-ban.html (last visited July 24, 2011.)

²⁸ Cornelissen, J.M.R., Hopster, H., *Dog bites in The Netherlands: A Study Of Victims, Injuries, Circumstances And Aggressors to Support Evaluation of Breed Specific Legislation*, 186(3) *THE VETERINARY JOURNAL* 292-8 (2009).

dogs is so infrequent that authorities would have to remove approximately 100,000 dogs of a targeted group from a community in order to prevent one serious bite.²⁹

These published studies are consistent with a 2009 article discussing the effect of the Denver, Colorado breed discriminatory law.³⁰ Twenty years after the ban was enacted, the director of Denver Animal Control admitted that he is unable to say with any certainty whether it has made Denver any safer. Labrador Retrievers – the most popular dog breed – are the most likely dog to bite in the Denver metropolitan area.³¹

As stated above, several agencies and organizations have published policies that disagree with the implementation of breed discriminatory provisions. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reached this conclusion after conducting a study of human fatalities resulting from dog bites. The CDC noted many other factors beyond a dog's breed may affect a dog's tendency toward aggression – such as reproductive status, heredity, sex, early experience, and socialization and training. Author Karen Delise, a leading authority on dog bite-related fatalities in the United States, distinguishes between what she describes as resident dogs--dogs whose owners maintain them exclusively on chains, in kennels, or in yards; and/or obtain them for negative functions (such as guarding, fighting, protection, and irresponsible breeding) and family dogs--dogs whose owners afford them opportunities to learn appropriate behavior and to interact with humans on a regular basis in positive and humane ways,³² rather than on breed

A result analogous to Delise's was reported by a team of university ethologists in 1997. Their study demonstrated that family dogs who were bonded closely with human beings stay closer to their guardians and are likelier to look to them for clues to dealing with unfamiliar and problem-solving situations and dealing with unfamiliar situations than are dogs not comparably bonded with people.³³

The National Animal Control Association (NACA) has also issued guidelines that disapprove of ordinances that classify dogs as dangerous solely because of their breed and appearance.³⁴ Instead, NACA advocates for stringent enforcement of dangerous dog laws that classify dogs as dangerous based on a dog's individual behavior.³⁵ One of the reasons they established this policy

²⁹Patronek, G., Slater, M., Marder, A., *Use of a Number-Need-To-Ban Calculation to Illustrate Limitations of Breed-Specific Legislation in Decreasing the Risk Of Dog Bite-Related Injury*, 237(7) JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION 788 (October 1, 2010).

³⁰Peter Marcus, *Do Dog Breed Bans Work?* DENVER DAILY NEWS, March 3, 2009 (on file with authors).

³¹Corona Research, *Dog Bites in Colorado: Report of Dog Bite Incidents Reported to Animal Control July 2007 - June 2008*, (2009), <http://www.livingsafelywithdogs.org/>; follow "Data on dog bites in Colorado: key findings and recommended action steps; full report," (last visited July 27, 2011).

³²Karen Delise, *THE PIT BULL PLACEBO: THE MEDIA, MYTHS AND POLITICS OF CANINE AGGRESSION* 151, 168 (Anubis Publishing 2007).

³³Topál, J., Miklósi, A., Csányi, V., *Dog-Human Relationship Affects Problem Solving Behavior in the Dog*, 10(4) ANTHROZOOS 214-224 (1997).

³⁴National Animal Control Association, *Extended Animal Control Concerns – Dangerous/Vicious Animals* (2002), http://www.nacanet.org/guidelines/Guidelines%20Dangerous_Vicious%20Animals.pdf (last visited July 26, 2011) (stating "[d]angerous and/or vicious animals should be labeled as such as a result of their actions or behavior and not because of their breed").

³⁵*Id.*

was because dogs of all breeds are capable of being aggressive and dangerous.³⁶ Thus, focusing on just a single or a few breeds does not adequately protect the public and thus is not good legal policy.

Enforcement: Identifying dogs of unknown origin

A significant percentage of the US dog population is of mixed breed and undocumented origin.³⁷ Attempts to name the breed or breeds in undocumented mixed-breed dogs has been shown to correlate extremely poorly with DNA breed analysis of the same dogs. In a recent study, adoption agency personnel were asked to identify the breed or breeds comprising mixed breed dogs whose origins they did not know. Their identifications were then compared with DNA breed analysis of the same dogs. In only 25% of the dogs was at least one of the breeds proposed by the adoption agency personnel detected as a predominant breed by DNA analysis. In 87.5% of the dogs, breeds were detected by DNA analysis that none of the adoption agency personnel named in their responses.³⁸

The controlled-study result mirrors real-world outcomes. For example, in January of 2010, authorities in Brampton, Ontario seized two dogs, about whom there had been no complaint for running at large, aggression or biting, claiming that they satisfied the definition of “pit bull” as used in the Ontario breed-ban statute. The dogs were evaluated by an independent veterinarian who advised the city that the dogs did not satisfy the definition. After the dogs had been in the animal shelter for 97 days, they were released to their owners. According to the Brampton Guardian, the city expended approximately \$43,000 in the matter of these two dogs.³⁹

Impact on Individuals

This recommendation calls for the implementation of strong, breed neutral laws because breed-discriminatory laws not only infringe on property rights without demonstrated increase in public safety, but they also cause unintended hardship to responsible owners of dogs that happen to fall within the regulated breed. In a survey conducted by the American Pet Product Association, 70% of people considered their dog like a child or family member.⁴⁰ When a breed is banned, families are forced to choose between moving to another city or county, surrendering their

³⁶*Id.*

³⁷ Janis Bradley, THE RELEVANCE OF BREED IN SELECTING A COMPANION DOG 11 (National Canine Research Council 2011) (reporting a majority of dogs in the United States are likely of mixed breed); Sandy Robins, *First Mutt Census Reveals Strong Dog DNA Trends*, TODAY, April 4, 2011, available at http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/42380422/ns/today-today_pets_and_animals/t/first-mutt-census-reveals-strong-dog-dna-trends/# (last accessed Aug. 2, 2011) (reporting that more than half the dogs in the U.S. are mixed breed dogs).

³⁸ Victoria L. Voith, et al., *Comparison of Adoption Agency Breed Identification and DNA Breed Identification of Dogs*, 12 JOURNAL OF APPLIED ANIMAL WELFARE SCIENCE 253, 260 (2009) (suggesting with the discrepancy of opinion by shelters and identification by DNA, that it would be worthwhile to reevaluate the reliability of breed identification as well as the justification of current public and private policies pertaining to specific dog breeds).

³⁹ Pam Douglas, *Doggiegate Costs Thousands*, THE BRAMPTON GUARDIAN, July 24, 2010 available at <http://www.bramptonguardian.com/news/cityhall/article/852169--doggiegate-cost-thousands> (last accessed Aug. 2, 2011).

⁴⁰ AM. PET PRODS. ASS'N, 2009-2010 APPA NATIONAL PET OWNERS SURVEY 42 (2010).

family pet in order to comply with the law, or living in violation of the law. Dogs that are given up or seized under these laws are killed.

Some localities respond to this concern by enacting restrictions on the ownership of the breed rather than an all-out ban. However, complying with many of the restrictions typically included in these laws can be quite expensive, and thus the restrictions discriminate against economically disadvantaged dog owners. Veterinary services, including spaying, neutering, and micro-chipping can be costly. Building new fences to meet an enclosure requirement may also be beyond the financial capabilities of some responsible pet owners. These restrictions unfairly punish owners who are economically disadvantaged for whom the restrictions serve as a de-facto ban. Laws should not function to prevent economically disadvantaged individuals from owning pets.

Additionally, as society has become more mobile, these laws not only impact residents of the city with the breed-discriminatory law, but also residents of neighboring communities who pass through the city or travel to that city for their veterinarian, grooming establishment or boarding kennel. A very small minority of jurisdictions have included exceptions for individuals simply passing through the city, but this does not help consumers of businesses within that city. Most laws either are silent on the issue, which implies that those travelling through the jurisdiction would have to meet all requirements, and a few others require that owners obtain permits for any trip into or through the city with their dog. The burden on dog owners and commercial establishments within the city and surrounding areas can be immense.

The impact that these laws can have on individuals with disabilities, however, is particularly harsh. Many individuals with disabilities use service dogs to help them. Many breeds of dogs, as well as mixed breeds, work as service dogs. Training dogs to be service animals is very time consuming and expensive; thus, simply replacing a dog is not an option. Recent cases have highlighted the conflict between breed-discriminatory laws and protections for persons with disabilities. For example, a recent class action suit was brought in the United States District Court of Colorado against the cities of Denver and Aurora who both have breed bans against pit bull type dogs and made no exceptions for service dogs.⁴¹ In its recently enacted guidelines interpreting the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)⁴² the Department of Justice (“DOJ”) stated that it does not believe that it is either appropriate or consistent with the ADA to defer to local laws that prohibit certain breeds of dogs.⁴³ Such deference would have the effect of limiting the rights of persons with disabilities under the ADA who use certain service animals based on where they live rather than on whether the use of a particular animal poses a direct threat to the health and safety of others. According to the comments accompanying the new regulations,

⁴¹Carlos Illescas, *Bans on Pit Bull Prompts Lawsuit*, THE DENVER POST, May 14, 2010, available at http://www.denverpost.com/recommended/cj_15082662 (last accessed Aug. 2, 2011). See *Grider v. City and County of Denver*, 2011 WL 721279 (D. Colo. 2011) (discussing a case where individuals with disabilities using trained service animals subject to breed bans alleged violations of Title II of the ADA). The court in this case specifically did not rule on the validity of the jurisdictions’ ordinances but only considered whether the Plaintiffs in the case alleged facts sufficient to support the elements of the ADA claim. *Id.* at *2.

⁴²Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disability in State and Local Government Services, 75 Fed. Reg. 56164, 56177 (Sept. 15, 2010) (codified at 28 C.F.R. Pts 35 and 36).

⁴³*Id.* at 56194.

governmental entities have the ability to determine, on a case-by-case basis, whether a particular service animal can be excluded based on that particular animal's actual behavior or history--not based on fears or generalizations about an entire breed or breeds of dogs.⁴⁴

Alternative, More Effective Provisions

Measures that protect the public from dogs that are actually dangerous have proven to increase public safety. Instead of discriminating against breeds of dogs, Calgary protects the public from all aggressive dogs, regardless of breed, through its Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw. Pursuant to the city's bylaw, enforcement officers focus on public education and dole out stiff fines for irresponsible dog owners.⁴⁵ According to the Calgary Herald, aggressive dog attacks are at the lowest level they have been in 25 years, despite a steady population growth.⁴⁶

Illinois is one of twelve states that prohibit breed discrimination. Following a series of dog-related incidents, including two that received prominent media attention, the state's General Assembly debated a flurry of breed-discriminatory bills.⁴⁷ Because of these highly publicized dog bite-related incidents, legislators introduced bills that would have restricted a variety of dog breeds. Rather than passing breed-discriminatory laws, the Illinois General Assembly eventually passed comprehensive generic public-safety measures that targeted reckless owners and aggressive dog behavior.

The first was the Ryan Armstrong Act,⁴⁸ which mandates the sterilization of any dog found to be dangerous or vicious by temperament and increases penalties for people who own dogs that are declared dangerous or vicious and later injure someone. Significantly, the Ryan Armstrong Act prohibits municipalities or political subdivisions from passing any ordinance or regulation that is specific to breed.

Another type of effective animal control law targets negligent or reckless owners. In 2007, St. Paul, Minnesota, passed an ordinance that addressed such reckless dog owners.⁴⁹ St. Paul pet owners cited more than once for abusing or neglecting an animal cannot legally own another pet

⁴⁴ *Id.*

⁴⁵ Calgary, Alta., Can., Bylaws 23M2006, amended by 48M2008, 49M2008 (2008).

⁴⁶ Sean Myers, *Calgary Dog Attacks Fall to Lowest Level in 25 Years: City a Leader in Reducing Canine Problems, Says Top Bylaw Officer*, Calgary Herald, Feb. 21, 2009, at B2. (2009 Animal Statistics for Calgary, Alberta can be found here:

<http://content.calgary.ca/CCA/City+Hall/Business+Units/Animal+and+Bylaw+Services/Animal+Services/Statistics/Animal+Statistics.htm> (last visited Aug. 1, 2011)).

⁴⁷ Matt Wagner, *Mauled Kids Bright Outcry for Dog Laws with Teeth*, SPRINGFIELD NEWS-LEADER (Springfield, MO), Oct. 5, 2003 at 1B. In 2001, 7-year-old Ryan Armstrong was mauled by a stray dog in Chicago. Armstrong had gotten off his bike to pet some puppies and was confronted by a fully grown unsterilized male Rottweiler. When Armstrong attempted to pet the Rottweiler, the dog bit him, nearly severing his thumb from his hand. Ryan also was bit on his chest and arm before friends were able to chase the dog away. *Id.* See also Richard Roeper, *For Woman Who Loved Dogs, a Fitting Memorial*, CHICAGO SUN-TIMES, Jan. 21, 2003, at 11 (Anna Cieslewicz, a 48-year-old pediatric nurse, was attacked and killed by two unsterilized male dogs in the Dan Ryan Woods in Chicago.)

⁴⁸ Illinois Public Act 93-0548, Ch. 8 (Il. 2003).

⁴⁹ St. Paul, Minn., CODE OF ORDINANCES §200.02 (2009).

100

under the ordinance. Dog bites are down in St. Paul.⁵⁰ Similarly, Tacoma, Washington, enacted an ordinance regulating “problem pet owners.”⁵¹ A person who commits three or more animal-control violations in a 24-month period can be declared a problem pet owner and forced to surrender all of his or her animals.

Conclusion

The Tort Trial and Insurance Practice Section urges all state, territorial, and local legislative bodies and governmental agencies to enact comprehensive breed-neutral dangerous dog/reckless owner laws that ensure due process protections for owners, encourage responsible pet ownership and focus on the behavior of both individual dog owner and dogs, and to repeal any breed-discriminatory/specific provisions.

Respectfully submitted,

Randy J. Aliment
Chair, Tort Trial & Insurance Practice Section
August 2012

⁵⁰ Steve Brandt, *Dog Bites Are Down in Minneapolis and St. Paul*, STAR TRIBUNE (Minneapolis), June 1, 2009, available at <http://www.startribune.com/local/stpaul/46585887.html?page=1&c=7> (last accessed Aug. 2, 2011).

⁵¹ Press Release, City of Tacoma, A Look at City of Tacoma News for the Week of Dec. 9, 2007, (Dec. 7, 2007) (on file with author) (discussing that members of the City Council to hear final reading of the ordinance that would set penalties and define owners who repeatedly violate animal control laws as “problem pet owners”).

GENERAL INFORMATION FORM

Submitting Entity: Tort Trial and Insurance Practice Section

Submitted By: Randy J. Aliment, Chair

1. Summary of Resolution(s).

This Resolution is intended to address issues arising from canine profiling.

2. Approval by Submitting Entity.

This Measure Was Approved by the Council of the Tort Trial and Insurance Practice Section on February 3, 2012.

3. Has this or a similar resolution been submitted to the House or Board previously?

No.

4. What existing Association policies are relevant to this Resolution and how would they be affected by its adoption?

Not applicable.

5. What urgency exists which requires action at this meeting of the House?

Many cities and counties consider enacting or repealing breed discriminatory laws throughout the year. Ohio, the only state that had codified canine profiling, repealed that provision effective May 22, 2012.

6. Status of Legislation. (If applicable)

Not applicable.

7. Brief explanation regarding plans for implementation of the policy, if adopted by the House of Delegates.

If adopted, the Section plans to inform and educate judges and local jurisdictions about the Resolution and Report.

100

8. Cost to the Association. (Both direct and indirect costs)

None.

9. Disclosure of Interest. (If applicable)

Not applicable.

10. Referrals.

This Resolution with Report is referred to the Chairs and Staff Directors of all ABA Sections and Divisions.

11. Contact Name and Address Information. (Prior to the meeting. Please include name, address, telephone number and e-mail address)

Elise A. "Ledy" VanKavage
Chair, Animal Law Committee
Senior Legislative Attorney
Best Friends Animal Society
PO Box 313
Maryville, IL 62062
Phone: 618-550-9469
E-Mail: ledyv@bestfriends.org

Kara Gilmore
General Counsel
National Canine Research Council
433 Pugsley Hill road.
Amenia, NY 12501
Phone: 845-705-7880
E-Mail: kgilmore@ncrccouncil.com

Rebecca Huss,
Co-Chair, Subcommittee on Companion Animals for Animal Law Committee
Professor of Law
Valparaiso University School of Law
656 S. Greenwich
Valparaiso, IN 46383
Phone: 219-465-7856
E-Mail: rebecca.huss@valpo.edu

Katie Bray Barnett
Co-Chair, Subcommittee on Companion Animals for Animal Law Committee
Program Analyst/Legislative Attorney
2408 McKinley Court
Lawrence, KS 66047
785-840-4488
E-Mail: katieb@bestfriends.org

12. Contact Name and Address Information. (Who will present the report to the House? Please include name, address, telephone number, cell phone number and e-mail address.)

Timothy Bouch
Leth Bouch & Seekings LLP
92 Broad Street
Charleston, SC 29401
843-937-8811
E-Mail: tbouch@leathbouchlaw.com
Cell: 843-834-5571

Robert S Peck
Center for Constitutional Litigation
777 6th St. NW Ste. 520
Washington, DC 20001
202-644-2874
E-Mail: Robert.peck@cclfirm.com
Cell: 202-277-6006

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Summary of the Resolution

This Recommendation calls for state, territorial, and local legislative bodies and governmental agencies to enact comprehensive breed neutral dangerous dog laws based on behavior and to repeal any breed discriminatory provisions.

2. Summary of the Issue that the Resolution Addresses

The Resolution is intended to address problems that arise when dangerous dog laws do not meet due process requirements.

3. Please Explain How the Proposed Policy Position Will Address the Issue

This resolution sets forth actions that legislative bodies and governmental agencies can take to pass effective dangerous dog laws.

4. Summary of Minority Views or Opposition Which Have been Identified

Some political subdivisions have enacted breed discriminatory ordinances because they believe they can identify the heritage of a dog by physical characteristics and that the heritage of a dog controls the dog's behavior.

Help ma
Share yo
platform

[Share Y](#)

OFFICIAL THE WHITE HOUSE RESPONSE TO

Ban and outlaw Breed Specific Legislation (BSL) in the United States of America on a Federal level!

Breed-Specific Legislation Is a Bad Idea

Thanks for your petition.

We don't support breed-specific legislation -- research shows that bans on certain types of dogs are largely ineffective and often a waste of public resources.

In 2000, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention looked at twenty years of data about dog bites and human fatalities in the United States. They found that fatal attacks represent a very small proportion of dog bite injuries to people and that it's virtually impossible to calculate bite rates for specific breeds.

The CDC also noted that the types of people who look to exploit dogs aren't deterred by breed regulations -- when their communities establish a ban, these people just seek out new, unregulated breeds. And the simple fact is that dogs of any breed can become dangerous when they're intentionally or unintentionally raised to be aggressive.

For all those reasons, the CDC officially recommends against breed-specific legislation -- which they call inappropriate. [You can read more from them here.](#)

As an alternative to breed-specific policies, the CDC recommends a community-based approach to prevent dog bites. And ultimately, we think that's a much more promising way to build stronger communities of pets and pet owners.

[Tell us what you think about this response and We the People.](#)

Share this Response



Creating a dupli
make it harder f
response. Inste:
one that has alr

[Recent Pet](#)

[Recent Res](#)

COMMENTARY

ARE "PIT BULLS" DIFFERENT? AN ANALYSIS OF THE PIT BULL TERRIER CONTROVERSY

Randall Lockwood and Kate Rindy

One of the most controversial aspects of animal control legislation is characterizing a dog as vicious, or in some way restricting ownership of a breed, on the basis of breed description alone. Thus far, breed-specific regulations have affected only "pit bulls," but breed clubs and other organizations of dog owners fear that such restrictions might extend to other breeds in the future (Lockwood 1986). This article reviews some of the historical, ethological, and epidemiological evidence relevant to the question of whether pit bull terriers present special animal control problems justifying unusual legislative action.

From an epidemiological perspective, it is difficult to draw scientifically sound conclusions about the dangers posed by a specific breed. Many lists of the breeds most likely to bite have appeared in the popular press, but accurate breed-specific bite rates are very difficult to compute. Such statistics require good data for both the numerator (number of bites attributed to a particular breed) and the denominator (number of animals in that breed). To get good data, one must have detailed and accurate reports of all bites, including reliable information about the breed(s) and registration of all animals in question, and detailed demographics of the whole dog population of the community.

Several studies suggest that the bite rate for pit

bulls is significantly higher than for other breeds (Pickney and Kennedy 1982; Multani and Clifford 1985; Wright 1985). However, many factors, including the following, can bias breed-specific bite rates:

1. Overreporting of bites attributed to a particular breed
2. Difficulty in identifying a particular breed
3. Underreporting of the population of a particular breed, including aberrant registration or licensing rates
4. A tendency to find specific breeds within populations of dog owners more likely to maintain their animals irresponsibly

All of these factors may apply to analyses of pit bull bite rates.

First, dog fighting and bites attributed to fighting breeds attract considerable attention in the print and electronic media. If a community is having a problem with dangerous dogs, any bite or attempted bite involving pit bulls is likely to find its way into newspapers and local records.

Second, people commonly use the term *pit bull* to describe a variety of registered and unregistered dogs, including the American pit bull terrier (registered by United Kennel Club and American Dog Breeders Association), the American Staffordshire terrier, the Staffordshire bull terrier, the bull terrier, and the bulldog (all registered by the American Kennel Club), and many mixtures of these breeds with one another and with other breeds.

There is considerable controversy over the ability of animal control officers, law enforcement officials, and veterinarians to positively identify individual dogs as pit bulls. One survey of over 2,000 bite reports (Beck, Loring, and Lockwood 1975) found that any medium-sized black and tan animal was likely to be recorded as a German shepherd. Similarly, any stocky short-haired animal involved in an attack is likely to be recorded as a pit bull. It is not unusual to find newspaper accounts of "pit bull attacks" accompanied by a picture of a boxer, pug, or some

Randall Lockwood, Ph.D., and Kate Rindy work in the Higher Education Programs of the Humane Society of the United States, 2100 L St. NW, Washington, DC 20037.

This article is reprinted from *The Pit Bull Terrier Controversy* (1987) by permission of the Tufts Center for Animals, Boston, Mass.

other breed.

Third, low estimates of the total population of specific breeds will inflate bite rates. Several of the preceding studies used AKC registrations to estimate the frequency of bites for various breeds in the *total* population of dogs. This approach is likely to produce erroneous results for pit bulls, since many pit bull owners register their dogs with organizations other than the AKC (including UKC and ADBA), and very few dogs have dual registration. Also, pit bull owners are probably less likely to register or license their animals than owners of other breeds, given past attempts to impose restrictions on the breed.

Finally, although there are many well-bred pit bull terriers with responsible owners, the traditional association of pit bulls with illegal dog fighting means that a disproportionate number of these dogs belong to that class of dog owners likely to exercise less responsibility for the care and supervision of any type of dog. Bite rates, therefore, may say more about the irresponsibility of owners who tend to prefer pit bulls than about the viciousness of pit bulls themselves.

The few communities that claim to have documented higher bite rates for pit bulls have not taken into consideration the confounding factors just mentioned. Unfortunately, there are no statewide or nationwide reporting systems that would support epidemiological generalizations. When addressing problems in the real world, however, it is important to separate issues of epidemiology and ethology from issues of public safety and legislation. The public may demand protective legislation if it perceives any increased bite risk, no matter how small, to be associated with a breed. Recent court actions suggest that law enforcement and animal control agencies have a broad mandate to give the protection of the public priority over the right to own property that may cause harm. In the absence of conclusive data, legislators tend to err in the direction of safety.

With these problems in mind, we can address several questions. First, are there biological or ethological reasons why pit bull terriers might present special dangers? Second, do *all* pit bulls present these dangers? If not, are there other predictable factors associated with dogs or owners that are likely to cause harm?

A review of the origins of pit bulls provides some insight. We do not intend to provide a detailed history of the various pit-bull-type breeds in this paper. For in-depth information see *Pit Bull Report* (Lockwood and Miller 1986) or other standard references (for example, Matz 1984; Semenic 1984). We can, however, briefly point to some illuminating facts. All dogs of the pit bull type trace their ancestry to the bulldogs of the nineteenth century. These animals were originally used for bullbaiting in England. When England passed laws against bullbaiting in 1835, organized dog fighting became popular, resulting in a proliferation of smaller dogs bred for combat. These smaller dogs became popular in America at about the time of the Civil War.

The United Kennel Club was founded in 1898 to register pit bull terriers and to standardize the rules of dog fighting. In 1935 the American Kennel Club, which had registered pit bull terriers since its founding, began registering them as Staffordshire terriers; it renamed them American Staffordshire terriers in 1972. Today, even though both AKC and UKC have taken a stand against dog fighting, owners of registered dogs still pride themselves on their animals' "gameness."

A long history of breeding for bullbaiting and fighting has had a profound effect on the genetic predisposition of many of the fighting breeds. In many cases, a shorter history of selection for qualities that might make these animals suitable as household companions has counteracted this effect. The extent to which breeding has altered the original temperaments of fighting breeds is often difficult to predict in a given animal. The following characteristics of fighting dogs contribute to the problems these animals may present:

1. *Aggression against dogs and other animals.* The primary quality for which pit bulls have been selected is "gameness." A game animal is ready and willing for combat and unyielding in battle with another creature. Certain genetically based characteristics reflect gameness. One important characteristic is a low level of fighting inhibition.

Most wild and domestic dogs fight one another only to drive a rival away from some disputed object—food, mate, or territory. The attack ends when the rival withdraws or displays signals

of surrender. Bluff, such as growling or staring, is usually the preferred tactic. Actual attacks are usually last-resort confrontations. In fighting breeds this inhibition against attacking has been selected against. These animals will fight with no provocation, and a game animal will fight until complete exhaustion or death. In this sense, these animals are not "doing what comes naturally." Their behavior is totally abnormal in an evolutionary or ecological sense and is strictly the result of human intervention. This lowered inhibition against aggression may also apply to other species, particularly smaller animals such as cats.

The flight of a potential prey animal usually triggers predatory attacks in wild and domestic dogs. This is why many breeds may pursue or attack moving people or objects like joggers, bicyclists, and cars. But animals selected for bullbaiting and fighting had to show gameness against animals that were either restrained or confined, so these animals and their descendants are more likely to attack targets that do not flee or show other "provocative" behaviors.

Gameness also seems to include a genetically based lowering of sensitivity to pain. Many fighting breeds show no outward sign of disturbance by severe injuries.

2. *Decreased communication.* Dogs, like wolves, are highly social and possess a rich repertoire of signals to communicate their moods and intentions to others. Animals selected for fighting do not reveal their intentions or weaknesses and are not inhibited by opponents' displays of submission or surrender. Fighting dogs offer little or no indication that they are about to charge or attack. They often fail to give warning with a growl, an aggressive facial expression, or other sign. They are often insensitive to behaviors that usually stop aggression. For example, dogs not bred for fighting usually display defeat in combat by rolling over and exposing a light underside. On several occasions, pit bulls have been reported to disembowel other dogs offering this signal of submission.

3. *Attack behaviors.* Dogs use many different styles of attack against members of their own and other species. Many breeds have styles of biting that reflect the purposes for which they were bred. Guard dogs such as German shepherds, for example, tend to restrain their enemies by grab-

bing and holding. The fighting breeds, on the other hand, have been selected to inflict maximum damage on their opponents by sustained grabbing, holding, shaking, and tearing. To our knowledge, there is no direct evidence of unusually great biting force in fighting dogs. These animals do not possess any unusual adaptations for "locking" their jaws. The increased destructiveness of pit bull bites is attributable to the behavioral factors of persistence and stamina rather than to any biomechanical factors.

4. *Aggression toward people.* The fighting dogs of the nineteenth century generally posed little or no threat to people. These animals were disqualified in the pit if they exhibited aggression to their handlers or other people. Early in this century several former fighting breeds such as the bull terrier and the English bulldog were specifically selected for their good dispositions around people.

As mentioned earlier, AKC, UKC, and ADBA animals are all descended from fighting stocks. Breed standards for the American Staffordshire terrier and the American pit bull terrier make little or no reference to temperament, although an animal that attacks a person or a dog in the show ring may be disqualified. Many individual breeders have attempted to produce animals with stable dispositions toward people. There are many examples of well-behaved dogs of these breeds, but there have been no uniform standards in this direction. Nonregistered and pit-bull-mix dogs, which are becoming increasingly popular, have been subjected to even less selection for stable temperament than their registered counterparts.

The widespread practice of hybridizing American Staffordshire terriers and American pit bull terriers with other breeds can produce particularly dangerous animals. American Staffordshire and pit bull terriers were bred to show little aggression to people. Other breeds with which they are commonly hybridized, such as the German shepherd, Bullmastiff, Rottweiler, and Rhodesian ridgeback, have been selected for use as guard dogs against human intruders. The result can easily be an animal with the fighting potential of the classic pit dogs and the potential aggressiveness to people of guard dogs.

Table 1. Fatal Dog Attacks (1986)

Date	Place	Victim's age/sex	Dog(s) involved
12/29	Apison, Tenn.	F, 3 yrs	1 malamute
11/21	Decatur, Ga.	M, 4 yrs	3 pit bulls
10/26	Denver, Colo.	M, 3 yrs	1 pit bull
9/-	Elizabethtown, Pa.	M, 7 yrs	1 coonhound
9/18	Forest City, N.C.	M, 4 yrs	1 wolf-shepherd
9/2	Dallas, Tex.	F, 14 mos	1 pit-bull-mix 1 mixed-breed
7/1	Kobuk, Alaska	F, 2 yrs	1 "husky-type"
6/10	Ramsey, Mich.	M, 20 mos	1 pit bull
5/5	Anchorage, Alaska	F, 2 yrs	1 wolf-husky
4/24	Osteen, Fla.	M, 79 yrs	1 pit-bull-boxer 1 mixed-breed
4/10	Gresham, Ore.	M, 5 yrs	1 pit bull
1/26	Longview, Tex.	M, 6 yrs	At least 4 pit bulls

The lack of uniform standards of temperament, the lack of inhibition of aggression, the strength and tenacity of attacks, and the failure to show appropriate warning signs of aggression all represent potential risks associated with fighting breeds and their hybrids. As previously mentioned, there is little reliable evidence about breed-specific bite rates. We have conducted research to gain some additional insight from two other sources—reports of fatal attacks and a survey of press reports of dog bites.

Although many dog bites go unreported to either the press or to a board of health, we are certain that virtually all dog-related fatalities are reported. When we learn of a dog-related fatality through local humane groups, veterinarians, health departments, or the press, we contact the appropriate authorities to get a complete record of the incident and subsequent investigations. In several cases, we have been able to conduct on-site investigations.

In 1986 we received reports of 12 fatalities from dog attack (see Table 1). Seven of these attacks involved at least one pit bull. Eleven of the 12 fatalities involved children aged 7 or under. A less comprehensive survey of fatal attacks between October 1983 and December 1984 yielded reports of 9 additional fatalities, 7 of

which involved at least one pit bull. Thus, two thirds of the fatalities we have learned of during the last three years have involved pit bulls. Past and current AKC and UKC registrations and AKC estimates of the ratio of unregistered to registered dogs show that there are roughly 500,000 to 1 million pit-bull-type dogs in the United States, or an estimated 1–2% of the entire dog population. It seems clear, then, that pit bulls are over-represented in the small population of dogs involved in human fatalities.

The injuries inflicted by pit bulls in the cases we have studied are noticeably different from the injuries inflicted in fatal attacks by other breeds. Pit bull victims typically had large portions of tissue torn away, whereas victims of other breeds typically died from a smaller number of exsanguinating injuries or from a single crushing injury to the brain or spinal cord. We are preparing a more detailed review of these incidents.

In order to gain insight into serious but nonfatal dog attack injuries, we reviewed press clippings of 278 dog attacks compiled by two clipping services from approximately 1,100 newspapers for the period from January 1, 1986, to October 1, 1986. We abstracted as much information as possible from each report, following the format used by Beck, Loring, and Lockwood

Table 2. Age of Victim in Nonfatal Dog Attacks

Age of victim	No. of victims (dog=pit bull)	No. of victims (dog=other breed)
<5 yrs	22 (18.0%)	25 (21.2%)
5-9 yrs	24 (19.7%)	31 (26.3%)
10-14 yrs	10 (8.2%)	17 (14.4%)
15-19 yrs	5 (4.1%)	3 (2.5%)
20-29 yrs	8 (6.6%)	3 (2.5%)
30-39 yrs	7 (5.7%)	5 (4.2%)
40-49 yrs	4 (3.3%)	4 (3.4%)
Adult, age unspec.	42 (34.4%)	30 (25.4%)
Total	122 (100%)	118 (100%)

(1975) in their survey of police reports.

We realize that we cannot use this analysis to draw breed-specific conclusions about bite rates, since there may be a tendency to report pit bull attacks more often than others. In fact, 143 of the reports, or 51.4%, dealt with pit bull incidents. Of the remainder, 11.5% dealt with German shepherds or German shepherd mixed breeds, 7.2% with Dobermans, 4.7% with Labradors, 2.9% with Chows, and 22.3% with other unidentified breeds. Thus, we are *not* asking the question "Are pit bulls different?" but instead are asking "Are pit bull attacks different?" Our analysis of press clippings indicates several relevant differences.

Beck, Loring, and Lockwood (1975) reported that most serious dog bite cases involve children, and our analysis agrees (see Table 2). There is, however, a higher proportion of adolescents and adults among pit bull victims (54.1%) than among victims of other breeds (38.1%). This suggests that greater size and maturity are less of a defense against pit bulls than they are against other attacking breeds. Familiarity with the animal also appears to provide less protection in the case of pit bulls. Out of 143 pit bull attacks, 19 (13.3%) involved attacks on the owner; out of 135 attacks by other breeds, only 3 (2.2%) involved the owner.

We characterized an injury as serious if the report indicated a need for suturing, hospitalization, or other medical intervention. Of the 143 reports of pit bull attacks, 55 (38.5%) were serious. Of the 135 reports of attacks by other

breeds, only 36 (26.7%) were serious. These figures suggest that the press is *not* more likely to report nonserious pit bull bites just because they involve pit bulls; if they did, we would expect a higher proportion of reports of nonserious pit bull bites. Out of the 91 serious bites reported, however, over half (60.4%) involved pit bulls. Thus, these reports indicate that pit bulls are more likely to be involved in serious bites, and serious bites tend to involve pit bulls more often than other breeds.

Two other measures of the severity of bites are the incidence of bites to the face and the number of bites involving multiple injuries to several body areas. Victims under 9 years of age tended to receive a high proportion (around 60%) of facial bites from *all* breeds. Pit bulls do not inflict more facial injuries than other breeds to any group. However, pit bulls are more likely to inflict multiple injuries on older victims: 35% of older pit bull victims received multiple injuries, compared with 18.5% of older victims of other breeds.

Previous studies of dog bite epidemiology (for example, Beck, Loring, and Lockwood 1975) suggest that the majority of incidents involve free-roaming, owned animals. Virtually all the dogs in the cases we studied were owned. A surprising number, however, were restrained at the time of the attack. In the case of pit bull bites, 61 of 143 (42.7%) involved animals that were fenced, chained, or inside prior to the incident. Twenty cases (14%) involved pit bulls that escaped by jumping fences or breaking chains immediately before the attack. Of the 135 cases involving other breeds, 36 (26.7%) involved restrained animals, but only 1 (0.7%) broke restraint to initiate the attack.

The press accounts support the fact that most dog bites are unprovoked. Table 3 describes the victims' interactions with dogs in the 163 reports in which details were provided. The most noteworthy distinction between pit bull attacks and attacks involving other breeds is that 24.8% of the former involved the victim coming to the aid of an animal or person *already injured* by the attacking animal. This occurred in only 11.3% of the attacks by other breeds.

Our overview suggests that some pit bulls present special problems. They account for a dis-

Table 3. Victim Interaction with Dog (Where Known)

interaction	No. of cases (dog=pit bull)	No. of cases (dog=other breed)
No direct interaction	59/101 (58.4%)	30/62 (48.4%)
Inactive,		
walking	38 (37.6%)	15 (24.2%)
Run, bike, play	9 (8.9%)	7 (11.3%)
Other	12 (11.9%)	8 (12.9%)
Interacting with dog	42/101 (41.6%)	32/62 (51.6%)
Feed, pet, play, misc. friendly	8 (7.9%)	17 (27.4%)
Helping injured animal	5 (5.0%)	3 (4.8%)
Helping injured person	20 (19.8%)	4 (6.5%)
Deliberate provocation	5 (5.0%)	1 (1.6%)
Other	4 (4.0%)	7 (11.3%)

proportionate number of fatal attacks, although these are few; and they are more likely than other breeds to inflict serious injuries, to attack while restrained or after breaking out of restraint, and to attack adults, including their owners.

These generalizations seem to be supportable, but we feel that we cannot use them to make predictions about the behavior of an individual animal. A dog's tendency to bite is a product of at least five factors:

- The dog's genetic predisposition to be aggressive
- The early socialization of the animal to people
- Its training for obedience or mistraining for fighting
- The quality of care and supervision provided by the owner
- The behavior of the victim

All of these factors interact. Genetic predisposition is the only factor directly relevant to the issue of breed-specific restrictions. Are pit bulls as a group genetically uniform and predictably aggressive enough to warrant special restrictions? Responsible breeders argue that they are not. None of the 1986 fatalities involved AKC- or

UKC-registered animals, nor did press accounts of nonfatal bites ever mention registration. Although the nature and severity of pit bull attacks reflect the effects of the dogs' selection for fighting, we must recognize the variability in the animals that we call pit bulls and in their owners.

The genetics of canine aggression are still poorly understood, although the existence of many breeds intentionally selected for aggression under different circumstances clearly demonstrates a strong genetic component to some aspects of aggressive behavior. It is quite possible that the term *pit bull* encompasses a variety of genetically diverse animals. The long history of selection for gameness has produced a characteristic fighting dog. The shorter history of breeding for pet qualities has clearly overcome many negative characteristics in responsibly bred animals.

The remaining factors affecting dog attack are all *human* variables related to the level of owner responsibility and supervision. Many owners are responsible people, well aware of the history of pit bulls, and they attempt to correct problems of aggression inherited from the past. Other owners are ignorant of the breed. Most troublesome are owners specifically seeking a "mean" dog. In their hands, any dog is likely to become a menace, a pit bull particularly so. The interest among less responsible owners and breeders in overall "meanness" has affected at least the last 10 to 20 generations of dogs; this fact may partly account for the recent increase in the number of problem animals. Finally, there continues to be an interest in dog fighting. The dogs that prove to be too aggressive to people to be acceptable for dog fighting often wind up in the hands of owners seeking a "mean" dog.

The common theme in virtually all of the fatal and nonfatal attacks we reviewed was that the owner had not taken appropriate steps to prevent his or her animal from becoming a problem. Simply placing an animal behind a fence or on a chain is not sufficiently responsible behavior, particularly in the case of a breed or individual animal inclined to attack others.

Problems of irresponsible ownership are not unique to pit bulls, nor will they be in the future. For this reason, we feel that effective animal control legislation must emphasize responsible and

humane ownership of sound animals as well as responsible supervision of children and animals when they interact. We believe that this can be accomplished in a number of ways:

- Strengthen and enforce laws against dog fighting to eliminate the "macho" image of this activity.
- Introduce and enforce strong animal control laws to identify problem animals and owners before tragedy strikes. (Guidelines for such ordinances are available from the Humane Society of the United States, 2100 L St. NW, Washington, DC 20037.)
- Introduce programs to educate the public about responsible ownership and the problems of dog bite.

We feel that it is possible to protect the health and safety of the public and at the same time preserve the rights of pet owners. By placing greater emphasis on responsible and humane animal care, communities can go a long way toward solving their current animal problems and preventing new ones.

REFERENCES

- Beck, A. M., H. Loring, and R. Lockwood. 1975. The Ecology of Dog Bite Injury in St. Louis, Missouri. *Public Health Reports* 90(3):262-267.
- Lockwood, R. 1986. Vicious Dogs. *Humane Society News* (Winter).
- Lockwood, R., and P. Miller. 1986. *Pit Bull Report*. Humane Society of the United States, 2100 L St. NW, Washington, DC 20037.
- Matz, K. S. 1984. *The Pit Bull: Fact and Fable*. Sacramento: De Mortmain Books.
- Multani, P., and D. H. Clifford. 1985. Are Pit Bulls Giving Good Dogs a Bad Name? *Community Animal Control* 4(3):16-17.
- Pickney, L. E., and L. A. Kennedy. 1982. Traumatic Deaths from Dog Attacks in the United States. *Pediatrics* 39:193-196.
- Semenic, C. 1984. *The World of Fighting Dogs*. Neptune City, N.J.: T.F.H. Publications.
- Wright, J. C. 1985. Severe Attacks by Dogs: Characteristics of the Dogs, the Victims, and the Attack Settings. *Public Health Reports* 100(1):55-61.

Dog Bite—Related Fatalities From 1979 Through 1988

Jeffrey J. Sacks, MD, MPH; Richard W. Sattin, MD; Sandra E. Bonzo

By combining data from the National Center for Health Statistics and computerized searching of news stories, we identified 157 dog bite—related fatalities that occurred in the United States from 1979 through 1988. Of the 157 deaths, 70% occurred among children who were less than 10 years of age. The death rate for neonates was almost 370 times that of adults who were 30 to 49 years of age. Pit bull breeds were involved in 42 (41.6%) of 101 deaths where dog breed was reported, almost three times more than German shepherds, the next most commonly reported breed. The proportion of deaths attributable to pit bulls increased from 20% in 1979 and 1980 to 62% in 1987 and 1988. Pit bull attacks were almost twice as likely to be caused by strays as attacks by other breeds. Extrapolated estimates suggest 183 to 204 dog bite—related fatalities from 1979 through 1988. To prevent such deaths, we recommend stronger animal control laws, public education regarding dog bites, and more responsible dog ownership. Parents and physicians should be aware that infants left alone with a dog may be at risk of death.

(*JAMA*. 1989;262:1489-1492)

RECENT publicity regarding attacks on humans by pit bulls and what should be done about them has been considerable (*Time*. July 27, 1987:60).¹ In the scientific literature, Winkler² reported 11 dog bite—related fatalities (DBRFs) in the United States between 1974 and 1975, none of which involved pit bulls, while Pinckney and Kennedy³ noted that 6 of 74 DBRFs that occurred in the United States from March 1966 through June 1980 were caused by pit bulls. Both studies used a primarily anecdotal rather than systematic approach toward identifying the deaths and breeds involved.

For the past few years, the usually cited source of information regarding DBRFs and the breeds responsible has been the Humane Society (HS) of the United States. Although the HS considers their own information before 1986 incomplete, HS data for 1987 through 1988 suggest that pit bulls were involved in 58% of human fatalities from dog bites (A. Joly, written com-

munication, January 13, 1989).

Our study had two goals—to estimate mortality from dog bites for the 10-year period from 1979 through 1988 and to identify the breeds of dogs responsible. To accomplish this, we reviewed four separate sources of information regarding DBRFs in the United States.

METHODS

The two sources of data used to identify DBRFs were the NEXIS search service of Mead Data Central and the single-cause mortality tapes (SCMTs) from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). Two additional sources of data (HS records and multiple-cause mortality tapes from the NCHS) were used for supplementary information, but not for case ascertainment.

We searched for news stories regarding DBRFs from 1979 through 1988 using the NEXIS search service. The NEXIS service is a full-text, on-line service that contains more than 160 files of information from newspapers, magazines, wire services, and broadcast transcripts. The NEXIS files can be searched for specific words or word combinations to retrieve stories regarding a requested topic. Because the NEXIS service has not been designed to perform the comprehensive search required in this study, we conducted four searches with different key words and combinations to ensure that we had

identified as many deaths as possible. Other limitations of NEXIS in doing such a search are inconsistent indexing of stories, inadequate and vague documentation, and failure to inform the user when files are inaccessible during a search. Details of our search strategies are available on request.

Our second source of cases was NCHS mortality data. The SCMTs from 1979 through 1986 were used to identify deaths from dog bites among US residents in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. *Dog bite—related fatalities* were defined as those fatalities with the underlying cause of death coded as dog bite (*International Classification of Diseases, Ninth Revision* [E906.0]). Information extracted for each case included decedent's age, sex, residence, and date and location of death. Mortality data through 1986 were used since they were the most recent data available at the time of analysis.

The HS supplied their listing of DBRFs from 1983 through 1988. The listing contained the victim's name and date of death, the city and state of the attack, the dog owner's name, the number and breeds of dogs involved, and information regarding circumstances. These data were used only to identify dog breeds if stories from NEXIS did not note the breed(s) or if the case was identified from the SCMTs only.

Information from the three sources of death data were merged, and duplicate entries were noted. For those deaths reported in NEXIS or the HS data and not found in the SCMTs, we searched both the NCHS single- and multiple-cause mortality tapes for a person of similar age, sex, state of residence, and date of death.

The NCHS multiple-cause mortality tapes for 1979 through 1986 were searched for entries of E906.0 in fields other than underlying cause of death for all cases that appeared in NEXIS, but not in the SCMTs. Deaths found in the SCMTs but not found in NEXIS were again sought in NEXIS by searching for all stories that contained the word *dog* in a 1-week window around the time of death in the states of residence and occurrence. Deaths reported only by the

From the Unintentional Injury Section, Epidemiology Branch, Division of Injury Epidemiology and Control (Drs Sacks and Sattin), Center for Environmental Health and Injury Control (Drs Sacks and Sattin and Ms Bonzo), Centers for Disease Control, Atlanta, Ga.

The use of the trade name NEXIS is for identification only and does not constitute endorsement by the US Public Health Service, the Centers for Disease Control, or the authors.

Reprint requests to the Division of Injury Epidemiology and Control (F-36), Centers for Disease Control, 1600 Clifton Rd NE, Atlanta, GA 30333 (Dr Sacks).

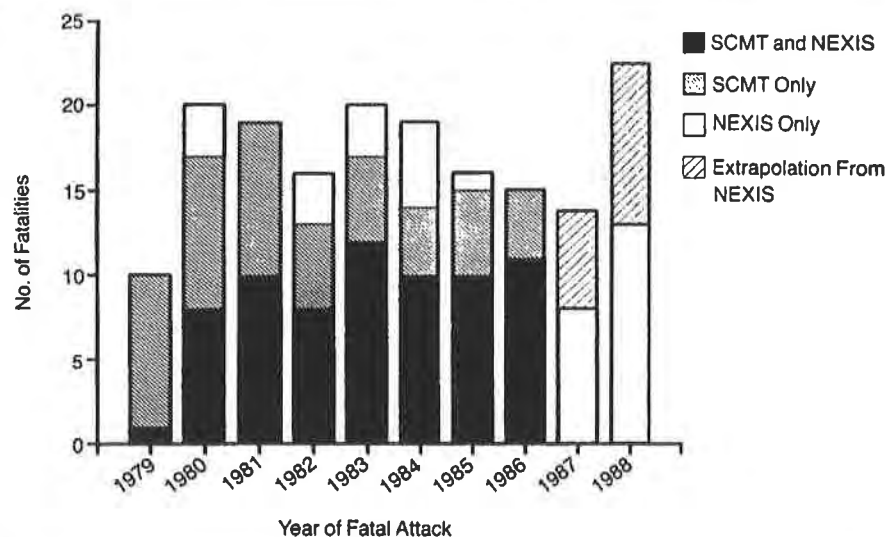


Fig 1.—Number of dog bite-related fatalities, by source of information, in the United States from 1979 through 1988. SCMT indicates single-cause mortality tape; and NEXIS, NEXIS search service of Mead Data Central.

HS were sought in NEXIS by searching for both the deceased person's name and breed of dog in the state of occurrence in the month of the death.

When multiple dogs of the same breed were involved in a fatality, we counted that breed only once. When crossbred animals were involved in a fatality, each breed in the dog's parentage was counted once. Thus, if three pit bulls killed a man, pit bull was counted once. If three pit bull-Labrador crossbreeds killed a man, the pit bull crossbreed was counted only once, as was the Labrador crossbreed.

Dogs were classified as pets, strays, or police or guard dogs. A *pet* was defined as a dog that at the time of the attack was in the owner's house, was confined to the owner's property by a fence, leash, or chain, or was on a restraint off of the owner's property. Free-roaming animals were defined as *strays*.

We excluded the following NEXIS-reported causes of death in this analysis: dying of rabies following a dog bite ($n=1$), being struck by a motor vehicle while being chased by a dog ($n=2$), strangling on a leash or scarf pulled by a dog ($n=2$), dying of a heart attack while a dog prevented resuscitation efforts ($n=1$), dying of a head injury after falling off of a bicycle while being chased by a dog ($n=1$), dying of anaphylaxis after being pushed into a fire ant mound by a dog ($n=1$), and dying of a heart attack while being chased by a dog ($n=1$).

The dog bite-related death rates per 100 million population were calculated for 1979 through 1988 using population

estimates from the Bureau of the Census.⁴⁷ Because 1988 figures were not yet available, we projected these figures. Newborns less than 1 month of age were assumed to represent one twelfth of the population less than 1 year of age.

We assumed that the probability of a fatal dog bite appearing in the SCMTs was independent of its probability of appearing in NEXIS. Accordingly, the "capture-recapture" statistical methods of Sekar and Deming³ were used to estimate the true number of DBRFs that occurred from 1979 through 1986.

Since NCHS data from 1987 and 1988 were unavailable, we projected fatality figures for 1987 and 1988 based on the cases reported in NEXIS those 2 years and the estimated sensitivity of the NEXIS system, ie, the number of cases found in NEXIS from 1979 through 1986 divided by the estimated number of deaths from 1979 through 1986.

RESULTS

Epidemiologic Characteristics of DBRFs

By combining the NEXIS data from 1979 through 1988 and the SCMTs from 1979 through 1986, we identified 157 deaths that occurred from 1979 through 1988 (Fig 1), a rate of 6.7 deaths per 100 million population per year. Of 106 deaths that could be classified, 3 (2.8%) involved a police or guard dog, 29 (27.3%) involved a stray dog, and 74 (69.8%) involved a pet. Of 108 deaths where the number of dogs involved was known, 76 deaths (70.4%) involved 1 dog, 20 deaths involved 2 dogs, and 12 deaths involved 3 to 22 dogs.

We found no obvious trend in number of fatalities over the years and little variation in the season of the attack (winter, 43; spring, 40; summer, 36; and fall, 38). Deaths that involved stray dogs, however, were most common in fall and least common in summer; deaths that involved pets were most common during the winter. The three states with the largest number of fatal attacks were Texas, California, and Ohio. Only 13 states had no fatal attacks during the 10 years (Fig 2). By NCHS region, the South had the most fatalities, but the West had the highest death rate.

Of those killed by dog bites, 70% were children less than 10 years of age (Table 1). The death rate was particularly high for neonates less than 1 month of age. For infants less than 1 year of age, the rate was 68.3 deaths per 100 million population per year. Males accounted for 95 (60.5%) of the 157 deaths, and their death rate (8.3 deaths per 100 million population per year) was 1.6 times that of females (5.1 deaths per 100 million population per year). Between the ages of 1 and 29 years, there were more male than female victims; after age 29 years, there were roughly equal numbers of male and female victims.

Circumstances of the attack were reported for 19 of the 25 deaths among infants less than 1 year of age. All involved pet dogs, and all but one attack occurred in the home and involved a single animal. Ten attacks occurred while the infant was sleeping or in a crib. By breed, pit bull and pit bull crossbreeds, German shepherds and shepherd crossbreeds, and husky and husky crossbreeds were each involved in four attacks.

For pet-related deaths among victims 1 year of age and older, 50 of 53 cases had a description of the circumstances. Thirty-six percent involved a child who gained unauthorized access to a fenced yard where a dog was kept, and 28.0% resulted from a child who wandered too close to a chained dog. Only 9 (17.0%) of these 53 deaths involved more than one dog.

The following circumstances of the attack were described for 28 of the 29 deaths that involved stray dogs: 42.9% occurred on the victim's property; 35.7% involved a dog that had escaped a fence, pen, or restraint; and 10.7% involved children who were riding bicycles and were attacked by a pack of 4 to 14 stray dogs. Overall, 65.5% of the 29 deaths from strays involved 2 or more dogs.

Pit bulls and pit bull crossbreeds were involved in 42 (41.6%) of 101 deaths where the breed of dog was reported (Table 2). Although the yearly number

of DBRFs changed little from 1979 through 1988, the proportion of fatal attacks with reported pit bull involvement increased from 20% in 1979 and 1980 to 62% in 1987 and 1988. Pit bull attacks involved older victims—31% of pit bull-related deaths were among persons older than 9 years compared with 19% for other breeds. Of 41 classifiable attacks that involved pit bulls, 15 (36.6%) involved a stray, compared with 11 (18.6%) of 59 for other breeds.

NEXIS and NCHS Case Ascertainment and Overlap

From 1979 through 1986, the years for which both NEXIS and the SCMT data were available, we identified 136 DBRFs in the United States (Fig 1). Seventy deaths appeared in both systems, 51 deaths in the SCMTs alone, and 15 deaths in NEXIS alone. Overall, the SCMTs identified 121 (89.0%) of the 136 deaths and NEXIS detected 85 deaths (62.5%).

Of the 15 deaths found in NEXIS and not in the SCMTs, 2 deaths (both in women who were older than 90 years) were coded as caused by heart or vascular disease, 4 (all males, 3 less than 1 year of age) were coded as E906.8 (other specified injury caused by an animal), 7 (all less than 15 years of age, 5 were boys) were coded as E906.9 (unspecified injury caused by animal), and 2 could not be located in the death tapes at all. From 1979 through 1986, there were 537 deaths ascribed to E906.8 and 64 deaths ascribed to E906.9.

Reviewing multiple-cause mortality tapes identified an additional 17 persons not found in the SCMTs or in the NEXIS search who had E906.0 noted somewhere on the death certificate, although not as the underlying cause of death. The underlying cause of death listed in 11 cases was some form of cardiovascular disease. Of the remaining 6 deaths, one was listed as assault from a person's bite (E968.8), 1 from bicycling (E826.1), 3 from medical conditions (N310.9, N571.5, and N583.2), and 1 from leptospirosis (N100.9).

Extrapolations Based on the Data

Since neither the NEXIS nor the SCMT surveillance system was complete, we attempted to estimate the true occurrence of DBRFs. According to the SCMTs and NEXIS, the total number of dog bite-related deaths that occurred from 1979 through 1986 was 136. Based on the overlap of cases found in the systems,⁸ we estimate that there were 146.9 DBRFs during this period. For the years when only NEXIS data are available, 21 fatalities were identi-

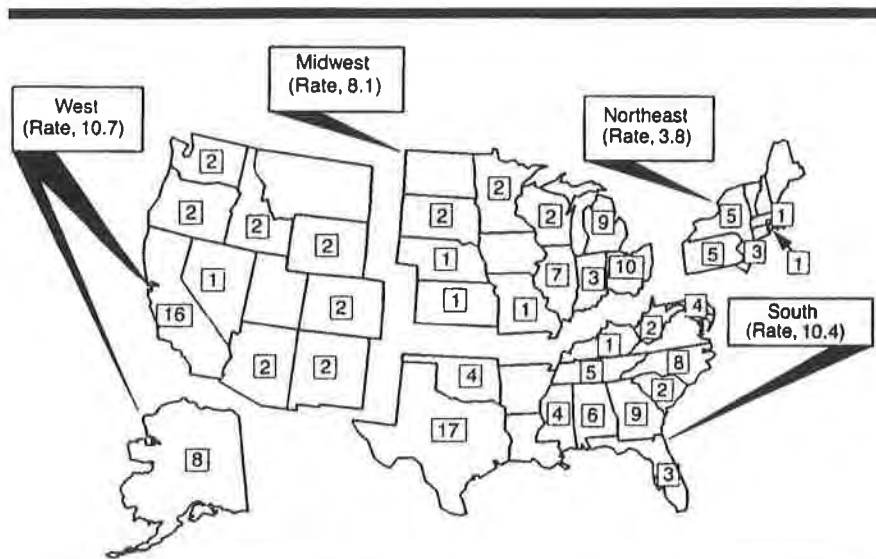


Fig 2.—Number of dog bite-related fatalities and death rate per 100 million population, by state and region of occurrence, in the United States from 1979 through 1988.

Table 1.—Dog Bite-Related Fatalities and Death Rates, by Age and Sex in the United States, 1979 Through 1988

Age Group	No. of Dog Bite-Related Fatalities			Cumulative %	Death Rate*
	Males	Females	Total		
<1 mo	4	5	9	5.7	294.9
1-11 mo†	6	10	16	15.9	47.7
1-4 y	36	20	56	51.6	40.5
5-9 y	23	6	29	70.1	17.3
10-29 y	8	1	9	75.8	1.1
30-49 y	3	2	5	79.0	0.8
50-69 y	9	8	17	89.8	4.0
>69 y	6	10	16	100.0	8.7
All Age Groups	95	62	157		8.7

*Per 100 million population per year.

†There were five deaths in 1-month-old infants, five deaths in 2-month-old infants, two deaths in 7-month-old infants, and one death each in 4-, 5-, 6-, and 11-month-old infants.

Table 2.—Breeds of Dogs Involved in Dog Bite-Related Fatalities by 2-Year Period in the United States, 1979 Through 1988

Breed of Dog*	No. of Deaths Where Breed Was Known					Total (N = 101)
	1979-1980 (n = 10)	1981-1982 (n = 20)	1983-1984 (n = 27)	1985-1986 (n = 23)	1987-1988 (n = 21)	
Purebred						
Pit bull	2	5	10	8	12	37
German shepherd	2	1	5	1	0	9
Husky	2	1	2	2	0	7
Malamute	2	0	3	1	0	6
Doberman pinscher	0	1	0	2	2	5
Rottweiler	0	0	1	1	3	5
Great Dane	3	1	0	0	0	4
Saint Bernard	1	2	1	0	0	4
Crossbred dogs by bloodline†						
Pit bull	0	1	0	3	2‡	6‡
German shepherd	0	2	0	2	2	6
Husky	0	1	1	2	1	5
Wolf-hybrid	0	1	1	2	1	5

*Data shown only for the breed or crossbreeds involved in 4 or more fatalities; 11 additional purebreds accounted for 13 additional deaths (boxer, 1; chow chow, 1; cocker spaniel, 1; dingo, 1; English sheepdog, 1; Japanese hunting dog, 1; Labrador retriever, 1; unspecified retriever, 1; Rhodesian Ridgeback, 1; English bulldog, 2; and hound, 2).

†Each breed that contributed to the crossbreed is counted once.

‡One of these fatalities also involved a purebred pit bull, so the total number of incidents with a pit bull involved is 42.

fied from 1987 through 1988. Assuming a 57.9% sensitivity of NEXIS, ie, 85 of 146.9 deaths that occurred from 1979 through 1986 were detected, the estimated number of fatalities that would have been found from 1987 through 1988 using NCHS (if it were available) and NEXIS was 36.3. The 10-year total would be 183.2.

Humane Society Case Finding

From 1979 through 1986, the HS listed 21 (15.4%) of the 136 deaths found by NEXIS and NCHS. The HS data showed a marked improvement in detection of deaths over time (1979 through 1982, 0.0%; 1983, 10.0%; 1984, 21.1%; 1985, 25.0%; and 1986, 76.5%). Two additional deaths were listed by the HS that were not found in NEXIS or the SCMTs. The first was a 4-year-old boy who died in Kansas in January 1986 after being bitten by two or three Australian shepherd crossbreeds—no NCHS record of death from any cause could be found for such an individual. The second case involved a 79-year-old man in Florida who died in April 1986 from bites by three dogs: a pit bull, a boxer, and a mixed-breed dog—the multiple-cause mortality tapes listed his underlying cause of death as arteriosclerotic heart disease, with dog bite as contributory.

The HS listed 24 deaths during 1987 and 1988 (10 in 1987 and 14 in 1988). Two of the deaths (1 in 1987 and 1 in 1988) could not be located in NEXIS, even after searching for the victims' names. One of these deaths was a 9-year-old Maryland boy who was killed by a stray Newfoundland; the other was a 3-year-old Arkansas boy who was killed by a pet German shepherd. Two HS-reported deaths did not meet our definition of a dog bite-related death—one 1987 case was reported in NEXIS as a 63-year-old Massachusetts man who had a heart attack while being chased by a pit bull and a mixed-breed dog and one 1988 case was reported as a 41-year-old Texas man who suffered a head injury after falling off a bicycle while being chased by a Doberman pinscher and a chow chow crossbreed.

For the 20 DBRFs that appeared in both NEXIS and the HS during 1987 and 1988, the breed(s) of dog listed was identical in 19 cases (95%). In the 20th case, the HS listed one dog from a multiple dog attack as a collie-German shepherd crossbreed and NEXIS listed the dog as a "collie-type."

COMMENT

The occurrence of DBRFs has been underestimated. The HS, the usually cited source of such statistics, identified

45 fatalities from 1979 through 1988. Our results suggest there were approximately 183 DBRFs from 1979 through 1988. If we include the 4 deaths uniquely found by the HS and the 17 deaths in the NCHS multiple-cause mortality tapes where dog bite was listed as a contributory but not underlying cause of death, the total is 204 dog bite-related deaths.

Each surveillance system has limitations. The NEXIS search service proved difficult and expensive to use and results were inconsistent. NEXIS was not intended for scientific purposes; given the problems in using it, its use for routine surveillance is questionable. The SCMTs from the NCHS also had disadvantages. There is a 1- to 2-year lag in their availability. Also, of the 601 deaths ascribed to E906.8 or E906.9, at least 11 persons should have been coded as E906.0 (dog bite-related death). How many more of these deaths are actually dog bite-related is unknown. The HS data included cases that did not meet our definition, and before 1986 the system missed many deaths.

The main victims of fatal dog bites were the very young and very old, those least able to protect themselves. Indeed, the death rate for neonates was almost 370 times that of adults 30 to 49 years of age; the death rate for infants was 85 times that of adults 30 to 49 years of age. In 10 cases, an infant was killed while it was asleep or in a crib—in 4 cases by a pit bull or related breed.

Forty-two percent of dog bite-related deaths in the past 10 years were attributable to pit bulls, and 37% of pit bull-related deaths involved strays. Furthermore, the reported proportion of fatal attacks by pit bulls increased from 20% in 1979 through 1980 to 62% in 1987 and 1988. Because breeds may be misclassified by news stories, our numbers may not be exact. For example, the term *pit bull* has been used to describe a variety of pit bull terrier and bull terrier breeds.¹ It has also been suggested that any short-haired, stocky dog is likely to be called a pit bull.¹ Moreover, the recent attention directed toward these dogs may lead to media overreporting of pit bull-related incidents relative to other species. However, even before 1985, when news coverage seemed to increase, pit bulls still accounted for 31% of deaths.

We would have preferred to calculate dog breed-specific fatality rates. The numerator requires accurate definition of breed as well as a full ascertainment of fatalities. The denominator requires reliable breed-specific population figures, which are not currently available. Using registration or licensing figures for a denominator is problematic be-

cause pit bull owners may be much less likely than other breed owners to register or license their animals.¹ Better dog population data and improved surveillance for fatal and nonfatal dog bites are needed.

Despite the potential biases and lack of dog population figures, pit bulls seemed to be involved in 42% of the fatalities. We do not believe that pit bulls represent anywhere near 42% of dogs in the United States. Therefore, we believe that the pit bull excess in deaths is real and increasing.

Whether they are caused by pit bulls or not, dog bites are a tremendous injury problem. More than 2 million persons are bitten yearly—half are left scarred, one tenth require sutures, and one third suffer lost school or work time.³ Many of these bites and deaths are potentially preventable. For example, 27% of DBRFs were from stray dogs; more stringent animal control laws and enforcement might prevent some of these deaths. Dog owners could prevent some deaths by realizing that a chain may not be a sufficient restraint to ensure that a dog cannot escape and that a securely enclosed and locked pen or structure able to prevent the entry of young children may also be necessary. In particular, parents should be aware that very small infants left alone with a dog may be at risk of death. We support the recommendations offered by the HS as a first step toward the prevention of DBRFs.^{4,5} These measures call for strong animal control laws, public education regarding dog bites, and more responsible dog ownership.

We thank Ann Joly for information; and Philip Rhodes, MS, and Sue Binder, MD, for editorial advice.

References

1. Lockwood R, Rindy K. Are 'pit bulls' different? an analysis of the pit bull terrier controversy. *Anthrozoös*. 1987;1:2-8.
2. Winkler WG. Human deaths induced by dog bites. United States, 1974-75. *Public Health Rep*. 1977;92:425-429.
3. Pinckney LE, Kennedy LA. Traumatic deaths from dog attacks in the United States. *Pediatrics*. 1982;69:193-196.
4. *Current Population Report, Series P-25*. Washington, DC: US Bureau of the Census; 1980. Publication 376.
5. *Current Population Report, Series P-25*. Washington, DC: US Bureau of the Census; 1982. Publication 917.
6. *Current Population Report, Series P-25*. Washington, DC: US Bureau of the Census; 1988. Publication 1022.
7. *Current Population Report, Series P-25*. Washington, DC: US Bureau of the Census; 1988. Publication 1024.
8. Sekar CC, Deming WE. On a method of estimating birth and death rates and the extent of registration. *Am Stat Assoc J*. 1949;44:101-115.
9. Companion Animals Section and Division of Higher Education Programs. *Guidelines for Regulating Dangerous or Vicious Dogs*. Washington, DC: Humane Society of the United States; 1987.

Fatal Dog Attacks, 1989–1994

Jeffrey J. Sacks, MD, MPH*; Randall Lockwood, PhD†; Janet Hornreich‡; and Richard W. Sattin, MD*

ABSTRACT. *Objectives.* To update data on fatal dog bites and see if past trends have continued.

Design. To merge data from vital records, the Humane Society of the United States, and searches of electronic news files.

Setting. United States.

Subjects. U.S. residents dying in the U.S. from 1989 through 1994 from dog bites.

Results. We identified 109 dog bite-related fatalities, of which 57% were less than 10 years of age. The death rate for neonates was two orders of magnitude higher than for adults and the rate for children one order of magnitude higher. Of classifiable deaths, 22% involved an unrestrained dog off the owner's property, 18% involved a restrained dog on the owner's property, and 59% involved an unrestrained dog on the owner's property. Eleven attacks involved a sleeping infant; 19 dogs involved in fatal attacks had a prior history of aggression; and 19 of 20 classifiable deaths involved an unneutered dog. Pit bulls, the most commonly reported breed, were involved in 24 deaths; the next most commonly reported breeds were rottweilers (16) and German shepherds (10).

Conclusions. The dog bite problem should be reconceptualized as a largely preventable epidemic. Breed-specific approaches to the control of dog bites do not address the issue that many breeds are involved in the problem and that most of the factors contributing to dog bites are related to the level of responsibility exercised by dog owners. To prevent dog bite-related deaths and injuries, we recommend public education about responsible dog ownership and dog bite prevention, stronger animal control laws, better resources for enforcement of these laws, and better reporting of bites. Anticipatory guidance by pediatric health care providers should address dog bite prevention. *Pediatrics* 1996;97:891–895; *dog bites, children, injury.*

ABBREVIATIONS. DBRFs, dog bite-related fatalities; MCMTs, multiple-cause mortality tapes; NCHS, National Center for Health Statistics; HSUS, Humane Society of the United States.

From 1979 through 1988, dog attacks claimed at least 15 lives annually in the United States.¹ During this same period, pit bull breeds were involved in 41.6% of the deaths, almost three times more than German shepherds, the next most commonly re-

ported breed.¹ Alarming, the proportion of deaths attributable to pit bulls had increased from 20% during 1979–1980 to 67% by 1987–1988. Publicity about such attacks led to many jurisdictions adopting pit bull-specific bans to prevent such episodes. However, the wisdom of such a breed-specific approach has been called into question.² To monitor the problem and see if past breed involvement trends still held, we studied fatal dog attacks from 1989 through 1994.

METHODS

We used three sources of data to identify dog bite-related fatalities (DBRFs): the NEXIS search service of Reed Elsevier Inc,³ the multiple-cause mortality tapes (MCMTs) from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), and reports compiled by the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) sources, ie, press clipping services, local humane society and animal care and control agency reports, law-enforcement contacts, and legal consultations. We searched for accounts of DBRFs from 1989 to 1994 in the NEXIS database using the search strategy previously reported.¹ Briefly, this consisted of scanning for words or word combinations suggestive of DBRF in electronic files of newspapers, magazines, wire services, and broadcast transcripts. MCMTs from 1989 through 1992 were used to identify DBRFs in U.S. residents occurring within the U.S. DBRFs were defined as those with the underlying cause of death coded as dog bite (*International Classification of Diseases, Ninth Revision* [E906.0]). We also reviewed records where E906.0 or E906.9 (unspecified injury caused by an animal) was mentioned anywhere in the chain of events leading to death.

We also reviewed death tapes from 1987 and 1988, which were unavailable at the time of our previous report.¹ Information extracted for each case included decedent's age, sex, state of occurrence, and date of death. Mortality data through 1992 were used because they were the most recent data available at the time of analysis. The HSUS listing of DBRFs contained date of death, city and state of attack, number and breeds of dogs involved, and information on circumstances.

Information from the three sources were merged. Because breed characterizations of dogs involved in fatal attacks are a continuing source of controversy³ and because press accounts of dog attacks may be erroneous with respect to breeds of dogs involved, we primarily used breed data from the HSUS. These data generally involved a significant effort to obtain accurate breed designations through review of police or animal control reports, statements by owner or victim, or photographic evidence reviewed by knowledgeable animal control professionals. When multiple dogs of the same breed were involved in a fatality, we counted that breed only once. When crossbred animals were involved in a fatality, each breed in the dog's parentage was counted once. Thus, if three German shepherds killed a man, the German shepherd breed was counted once. If three German shepherd-labrador crossbreeds killed a man, the German shepherd crossbreed was counted only once, as was the labrador crossbreed. Dogs were also classified as on or off the owner's property and unrestrained or restrained (eg, chained, leashed) at the time of the

From the *Division of Unintentional Injury Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Public Health Service, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta; and the †Humane Society of the United States, Washington, DC.

Received for publication Mar 20, 1996; accepted April 18, 1996.

Reprint requests to (J.J.S.) National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 4770 Buford Highway, NE (K63), Atlanta, GA 30341.

PEDIATRICS (ISSN 0031 4005). Copyright © 1996 by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

* Use of a trade name is for identification only and does not constitute endorsement by the United States Public Health Service, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, or the authors.

attack. We also noted if the dog had any prior reported history of aggression and the dog's gender and neuter status.

Dog bite-related death rates per 100 million population were calculated for 1989 to 1994 using population estimates from the U.S. Bureau of the Census.⁴ Children less than 1 month of age were assumed to represent one twelfth of the population less than 1 year of age.

RESULTS

We identified 109 deaths from 1989 to 1994, a rate of 7.1 deaths per 100 million population per year. For the period 1989 through 1992 when all three data sources were available, 84 deaths were identified. The NEXIS/HSUS data identified 62 total deaths; death certificates identified 41 of these 62 deaths as dog bites and detected an additional 22 deaths from dog bites. Of the 21 deaths found by NEXIS/HSUS but not recorded as a DBRF on the death certificate, 11 were coded as E906.9; the other 10 deaths did not have E906.0 or E906.9 anywhere on the certificate. Given that NEXIS/HSUS data found 73.8% of total dog bite deaths during this 4-year period, we estimate that for the period from 1993 to 1994 an additional 9 deaths occurred for a total of 118 deaths during the 6-year study period.

Of 82 deaths that could be classified, 1 (1.2%) involved a police or guard dog at work, 18 (22.0%) involved an unrestrained dog off the owner's property, 15 (18.3%) involved a restrained dog on the owner's property, and 48 (58.5%) involved an unrestrained dog on the owner's property. Of 85 deaths where the number of dogs involved was known, 62 (72.9%) deaths involved one dog, 18 (21.1%) involved two dogs, and 5 (5.9%) involved three to seven dogs. For the 18 deaths involving unrestrained animals off the owner's property, 10

(55.6%) resulted from a dog that had escaped a fence, pen, or restraint and 7 (38.9%) involved two or more dogs.

We found no obvious trend in the number of fatalities over the years (1989 = 16, 1990 = 32, 1991 = 19, 1992 = 17, 1993 = 14, 1994 = 11). There was some variation by season (winter = 27, spring = 25, summer = 22, and fall = 35). The fall increase was noted primarily for attacks by unrestrained dogs off the owner's property. The three states with the largest number of fatal attacks were California, Texas, and Illinois (Figure). Only 16 states had no fatal attacks during the 6 years and only six states had no attacks from 1979 through 1994 (Figure). By NCHS region, the South had the most fatalities (49). The South also had the highest death rate per 100 000 000 (9.3) followed by the West (7.6), Midwest (6.4), and Northeast (3.9).

Of those killed by dog attacks, 56.9% were less than 10 years of age (Table 1). The death rate was particularly high for those less than 1 month of age and then fell continuously until age 29 when it began to climb. Males, whose death rate was 8.8% higher than that of females, accounted for 55 (50.5%) of the deaths. Between the ages of 1 and 29 years, there were more male than female victims; after age 49 years, the reverse was true.

Of the 18 deaths in infants less than 1 year of age, all but one occurred on the dog owner's property and involved an unrestrained dog (the exception involved a penned wolf hybrid). Three attacks involved two dogs. In 11 attacks, the infant was sleeping in a crib or bed. Malamutes and pit bulls were involved in four attacks each, huskies and German

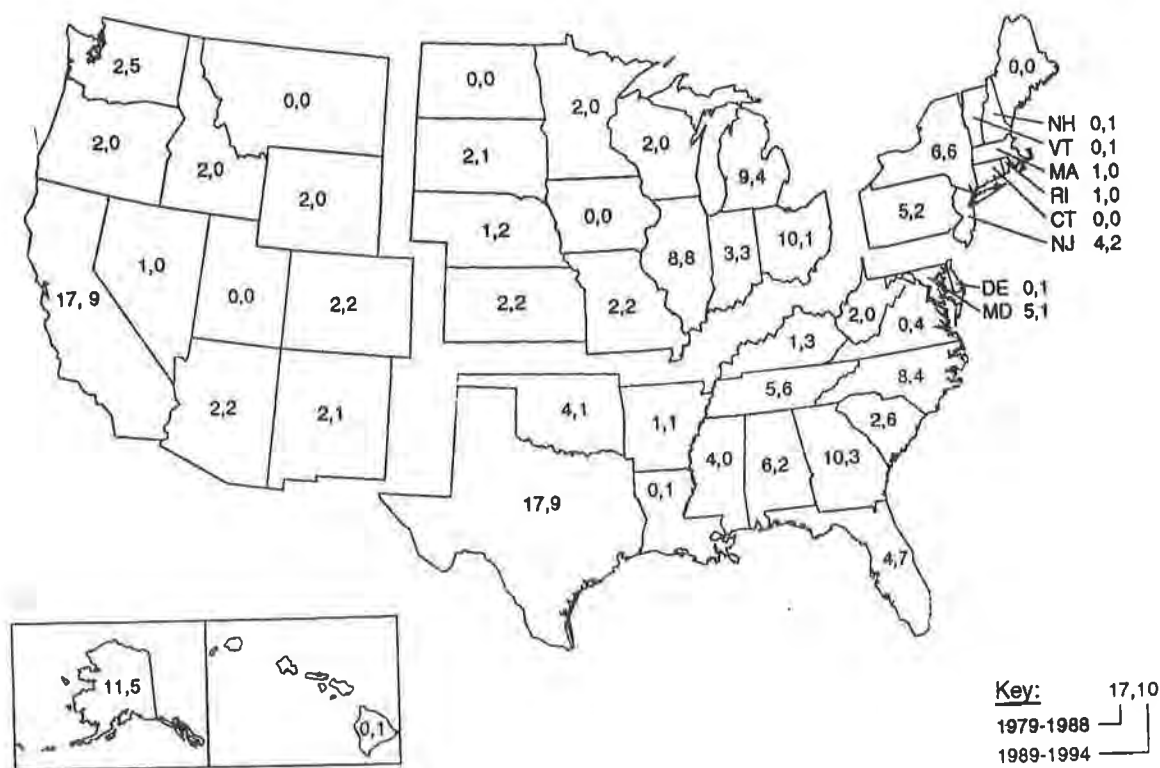


Figure. Number of dog bite-related fatalities, by state and region of occurrence, United States, 1979-1994.

TABLE 1. Dog Bite-Related Fatalities and Death Rates, by Age and Sex, United States, 1989-1994

Age group	Number of Deaths (Death Rate*)		
	Males	Females	Total
<1 month	3 (298.5)	2 (208.5)	6† (305.4)
1-11 months§	4 (36.2)	8 (75.8)	12 (55.5)
1-4 years	18 (38.3)	9 (20.1)	27 (29.4)
5-9 years	11 (19.5)	6 (11.2)	17 (15.5)
10-29 years	4 (1.8)	1 (0.5)	5 (1.1)
30-49 years	5 (2.2)	5 (2.2)	10 (2.2)
50-69 years	3 (2.5)	8 (5.8)	11 (4.3)
≥70 years	6 (11.5)	14 (16.9)	20 (14.9)
Total	55¶ (7.4)	53 (6.8)	109 (7.1)

* Per 100 million population per year.

† Includes one neonate of unknown sex.

§ There were three deaths in 1-month-olds, four deaths in 2-month-olds, two deaths in 6-month-olds, and one death each in 5-, 7-, and 9-month-olds.

¶ Includes one male of unknown age.

|| Includes one male of unknown age and one neonate of unknown sex.

shepherds in three each, wolf hybrids and rottweilers in two each, and a chow in one.

Full circumstances were known for 38 of the 44 deaths among children aged 1 through 9 years old. Seventeen (44.7%) of the attacks involved an unrestrained dog on the owner's property; 11 (28.9%) involved a child wandering too close to a chained dog, and 10 (26.3%) involved an unrestrained dog off the owner's property. Only 7 (17.9%) of the 39 deaths involved more than one dog.

From 1989 through 1994, pit bulls and pit bull mixed breeds were still the most commonly reported breed, involved in 24 (28.6%) of 84 deaths where breed of dog was reported (Table 2). Although the proportion of fatal attacks with reported pit bull involvement had increased from 20% in 1979 through 1980 to 67% by 1987 through 1988,¹ the

proportion fell steadily thereafter. The next most commonly reported breeds during the study period were rottweilers (16) and German shepherds (10). For 78 attacks with data on breed and circumstances, 6 of 24 (25.0%) pit bull-associated attacks involved an unrestrained dog off the owner's property, compared with 10 of 54 (18.5%) for all other breeds. In 7 deaths (29.2%), the pit bull was chained compared with 7 of 58 attacks (12.1%) for other breeds. For 82 attacks with data on breed and number of dogs involved, 8 of 24 pit bull attacks (33.3%) involved more than one dog, compared with 20.7% for 58 attacks involving other breeds. Of 11 pit bull attacks for which data were available, 7 (63.6%) had a prior history of aggression compared with 12 of 31 (38.7%) for other breeds.

For 41 fatal attacks, we had information on the gender of the dog involved. Twenty-five had a male dog involved (20 of the 24 single dog attacks). For 20 of these 41 fatal attacks, we also had information on the neuter status of the animal. In only one attack had the dog (a male chow) been previously neutered; 15 attacks involved an unneutered male dog.

Review of death tapes for 1987 and 1988 identified 9 additional deaths (5 in 1987 and 4 in 1988) not included in the prior report,¹ and additional news accounts that became available identified 4 more deaths (2 in 1986, 1 in 1987, and 1 in 1988) for a total of 170 deaths from 1979 through 1988 and a revised death rate of 7.2 per 100 million population.

DISCUSSION

The death rate from dog bite-related fatalities in the 6-year study period has remained relatively constant compared with the prior 10 years. Dog bites continue to produce about 18 deaths per year in the United States. The main victims of fatal dog bites are children; the death rate for neonates was two orders

TABLE 2. Breeds and Crossbreeds* Involved in Dog Bite-Related Fatalities, by Two-Year Periods, United States, 1979-1994

	Prior Study [†]					Current Study			Total
	1979-1980	1981-1982	1983-1984	1985-1986	1987-1988	1989-1990	1991-1992	1993-1994	
No. known	10	20	27	24	22	35	24	25	177
Purebreed									
Pit bull	2	5	10	9	12	8	6	5	57
Rottweiler	0	0	1	1	3	1	3	10	19
Shepherd	2	1	5	1	1	5	2	0	17
Husky	2	1	2	2	0	2	2	1	12
Malamute	2	0	3	1	0	2	3	1	12
Doberman	0	1	0	2	2	2	1	0	8
Chow	0	1	0	0	0	2	3	0	6
Great Dane	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	5
St Bernard	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	4
Akita	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	4
Crossbreed									
Wolf	0	1	1	2	1	4§	1	2	12
Pit bull	0	1	0	3	2†	3	1	1	10†
Shepherd	0	2	0	2	2	2	0	1	9
Husky	0	1	1	2	1	1	0	0	6
Malamute	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	3
Rottweiler	0	0	0	0	1†	1	0	1	2†
Chow	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2

* Data shown only for breed and crossbreeds involved in ≥4 fatalities; data from prior study¹ is updated. Each breed contributing to the crossbreed is counted only once.

† One fatality also involved a pure breed, so pit bull total involved = 67 and rottweiler total involved = 21.

§ One fatality from a pet wolf occurred in 1989 in Minnesota and was not included.

of magnitude higher than that for adults and the rate for children one order of magnitude higher.

Fatal dog bites represent the most extreme manifestation of a much more common problem. In 1986, dog bites caused an estimated 585 000 injuries resulting in medical attention or restricted activity, an estimate that placed dog bites among the top 12 causes of nonfatal injury.⁵ In 1994, an estimated 1.8% of the U.S. population was bitten by a dog and 0.3% of the U.S. population sought medical care for a bite, ie, 4.7 million bites, of which 800 000 bites resulted in medical attention (1.4 attended bites per minute).⁶

Injuries from playground equipment cause about 17 deaths each year and 170 000 injuries seen in emergency departments,⁷ a similar level of mortality but lesser amount of morbidity than dog bites. Nevertheless, the playground injury problem has resulted in the development of standards for equipment and playgrounds, training and inspection programs, dedication of staff to maintenance, and, most recently, the creation of a federally-funded national center for playground safety to educate the public.⁸ The dog bite problem has not enjoyed a similar prevention effort, despite the fact that 35% of American households owned a dog in 1994 representing a dog population exceeding 52 million.⁹ To counteract this lack of attention we need to reconceptualize the dog bite problem as a largely preventable epidemic, rather than as an endemic problem about which little can be done.

The current incidence of fatal and nonfatal bites and the large dog population underscores the need for a more aggressive approach to the prevention of dog bites. Physicians, health care providers, and those concerned with containment of health care costs can contribute to ameliorating the dog bite problem in several ways:

Patient Education

Victim behavior is only one of several factors contributing to a bite. Reviews^{3,10} have noted that the majority of victims are engaging in normal, nonprovocative activities before the bite incident. For example, in this study, 11 fatal attacks were to sleeping infants. Adults need to be informed that dog owners, through their selection and treatment of a pet, may be able to reduce the likelihood of owning a dog that will eventually bite.¹¹ For example, male dogs appear more likely to bite than female dogs, and unneutered dogs appear more likely to bite than neutered ones.¹¹ Educational efforts directed at high-risk groups, particularly children, could have a significant effect on the incidence of dog bites. Pediatric anticipatory guidance should address strategies for bite prevention, including the need for appropriate supervision of children (Table 3). Health care professionals should take an active role in helping to disseminate existing bite-prevention materials¹² and in helping develop new resources for patient education.

Community Advocacy

At the community level, health care providers should actively support school-based educational programs on bite prevention, canine behavior, and educa-

TABLE 3. Possible Messages for Anticipatory Pediatric Guidance on Preventing Dog Bites

Parents

- Consider the selection of any dog carefully*
- Dogs should be sterilized to reduce aggressive tendencies
- Never leave infants or young children alone with any dog
- Make certain that any dog entering the household receives proper training and socialization. Try to teach submissive behaviors such as rolling over to show stomach, taking food away without growling, etc
- Dogs with prior histories of aggression should not be considered appropriate for families with children
- Teach children basic safety around dogs and review these ideas regularly
- If your dog develops aggressive or undesirable behaviors, seek professional help immediately
- Don't play aggressive games with your dog (eg, wrestling, "sicking")

Children

- Never approach an unfamiliar dog
- Never play with a dog unless supervised by an adult
- Immediately report stray dogs or dogs displaying unusual behavior to an adult
- Never run from a dog and scream
- Avoid direct eye contact with a dog
- Don't disturb a dog that is sleeping, eating, or caring for puppies
- Don't pet a dog without letting it see and sniff you first
- Remain motionless when approached by an unfamiliar dog
- If knocked over by a dog, lie still and remain in a ball
- If bitten, report the bite to an adult immediately

* Realistically evaluate your environment and lifestyle to help decide the type of dog. Speak with a professional to make an informed decision. Ask questions about the dog's background. Although genetics play a contributing factor in aggression, each dog should be judged on an individual basis. Involve the family in the selection; be sensitive to cues that a child is fearful or apprehensive about a dog (if so, delay getting the dog). Spend time with a dog before bringing it into your home. Use caution about bringing a dog or puppy into the home of an infant or toddler.

tional programs regarding responsible dog ownership and training. There should be strong advocacy for supporting animal control programs and laws for regulating dangerous or vicious dogs.¹³ For example, in at least 19 deaths in this study, the dog had a reported prior history of aggression; moreover, 21% of DBRFs were from free roaming dogs off the owner's property. More stringent animal control laws and enforcement might prevent some of these deaths. Although several breeds appear overrepresented in the population of animals involved in fatal attacks, this representation fluctuates over time. Thus, it may be unproductive to view this as a problem that is unique to any one breed. Community responses that address the problem of chronically irresponsible dog owners may be an effective approach.¹⁴

Bite Reporting

Because improved surveillance data for fatal and nonfatal dog bites are needed if we are to better understand how to evaluate prevention efforts, providers should report dog bites as required by local or state ordinances. Reports of bite incidents should, whenever possible, include detailed information about the circumstances of the bite including ownership, breed, sex, spay/neuter status of the animal, history of prior aggression, and the nature of restraint before the bite incident.

Finally, it is important to recognize that most of the

52 million dogs in this country never bite or kill anyone. However, the problems caused by the highly visible minority of animals and their owners have far-reaching consequences.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank Sandy Bonzo of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Ann Joly of the Humane Society in Baltimore, Maryland for assistance in information collection.

REFERENCES

1. Sacks JJ, Sattin RW, Bonzo SE. Dog bite-related fatalities in the United States, 1979-1988. *JAMA*. 1989;262:1489-1492
2. Lockwood R. Humane concerns about dangerous dog laws. *Univ Dayton Law Rev*. 1988;13:267-277
3. Lockwood R, Rindy K. Are "pit bulls" different? An analysis of the pit bull terrier controversy. *Anthrozoos*. 1987;1:2-8
4. U.S. Bureau of the Census. State Population Estimates via Internet @ www.census.gov/ftp/pub/population/www/statepop.html. October 1995
5. Sosin DM, Sacks JJ, Sattin RW. Causes of nonfatal injuries in the United States, 1986. *Accid Anal Prev*. 1992;24:685-687
6. Sacks JJ, Kresnow M, Houston B. Dog bites: how big a problem? *Injury Prev*. 1996;2:52-54
7. Tinsworth DK, Kramer JT. *Playground Equipment-related Injuries and Deaths*. Washington DC: U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission; 1990
8. Announcement 549. Program for Playground Safety. *Fed Register*. 1995; 60:25725-25727
9. Wise JK, Yang J-J. Dog and cat ownership, 1991-1998. *J Am Vet Med Assoc*. 1994;204:1166-1167
10. Beck AM, Loring H, Lockwood R. The ecology of dog bite. *Public Health Rep*. 1975;90:262-267
11. Gershman KA, Sacks JJ, Wright JC. Which dogs bite? A case-control study of risk factors. *Pediatrics*. 1994;93:913-917
12. Lockwood R. *Resources for Dog Bite Prevention*. 1995. Washington, DC: Humane Society of the United States; 1995
13. Companion Animals Section and Division of Higher Education Programs. *Guidelines for Regulating Dangerous or Vicious Dogs*. Washington, DC: Humane Society of the United States; 1987
14. Lockwood R. Dangerous dogs revisited. *The Humane Society News*. 1992; 37:20-22

HARSH WORDS ABOUT OUR HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

... the U.S. health care system is flawed principally because we have never asked what its goals are. So long as that fundamental moral question remains unanswered, no amount of political or economic tinkering will fix the system's problems. If we carefully examine the present workings of our system, we would have to conclude that its goals are two: maintain the prerogatives of physicians and the well-being of the private insurance industry. Such goals hardly represent an exercise of moral choice, and ... are morally indefensible.

Churchill LR. *Self-Interest and Universal Health Care*. Boston: Harvard University Press; 1994. Reviewed by Brody H. *Ethics-in-Formation*. October 1995.

Submitted by Student



Dog-Bite-Related Fatalities -- United States, 1995-1996

From 1979 through 1994, attacks by dogs resulted in 279 deaths of humans in the United States (1,2). Such attacks have prompted widespread review of existing local and state dangerous-dog laws, including proposals for adoption of breed-specific restrictions to prevent such episodes (3). To further characterize this problem and the involvement of specific breeds, CDC analyzed data from the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and media accounts in the NEXIS database *. This report presents three recent cases of dog-bite-related fatalities (DBRFs), summarizes characteristics of such deaths during 1995-1996, and provides breed-specific data for DBRFs during 1979-1996. The findings in this report indicate that most DBRFs occurred among children and suggest approaches for prevention.

In January 1995, a 2-year-old boy in South Dakota wandered into a neighbor's yard, where he was attacked and killed by two chained wolf-German shepherd hybrids. In September 1995, a 3-week-old girl in Pennsylvania was killed in her crib by the family Chow Chow while her parents slept in the next room. In March 1996, an 86-year-old woman in Tennessee went outside of her home to check the weather and was fatally mauled by two rottweilers owned by a neighbor; the dogs had attacked and injured the woman 1 month before the fatal attack.

The HSUS attempts to identify all DBRFs (1,2) and maintains a registry of these incidents. A DBRF was defined as a death caused by acute trauma from a dog attack. Case reports in the registry include details such as date of death, age and sex of decedent, city and state of attack, number and breeds of dogs involved, and circumstances. To supplement HSUS reports, CDC included data from the NEXIS database and death certificates. However, death-certificate data were not available for 1995-1996. Deaths associated with infection secondary to dog bites were excluded.

Data from HSUS and NEXIS were merged to maximize detection of cases and avoid duplicate reports. Because news media accounts can inaccurately report breeds of dogs involved in DBRFs, only breed data from the HSUS were used (4). When multiple dogs of the same breed were involved in a fatality, that breed was counted only once. When crossbred animals were involved in a fatality, each breed in the dog's parentage was counted once. Dogs were also classified as on or off the owner's property and whether they were restrained (e.g., chained or leashed) at the time of the attack.

During 1995-1996, at least 25 persons died as the result of dog attacks (11 in 1995 and 14 in 1996). Of the 25 DBRFs, 20 (80%) occurred among children (three were aged less than or equal to 30 days {neonates}, one was aged 5 months, 10 were aged 1-4 years, and six were aged 5-11 years), and five occurred among adults (ages 39, 60, 75, 81, and 86 years). Most (18 {72%}) DBRFs occurred among males.

Of 23 deaths with sufficient information for classification, seven (30%) involved an unrestrained dog off the owner's property, five (22%) involved a restrained dog on the owner's property, and 11 (48%) involved an unrestrained dog on the owner's property. Of the 25 deaths, nine (36%) involved one dog, nine (36%) involved two dogs, two (8%) involved three dogs, and five (20%) involved six to 11 dogs. All the attacks by unrestrained dogs off the owner's property involved more than one dog. Of the three deaths among neonates, all occurred on the dog owner's property and involved one dog and a sleeping child.

During 1995-1996, rottweilers were the most commonly reported breed involved in fatal attacks (Table_1). Fatal attacks were reported from 14 states (California {four deaths}; Florida and Pennsylvania {three each}; Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, and South Dakota {two each}; and Connecticut, Massachusetts, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, Tennessee, and Washington {one each}).

Reported by: R Lockwood, PhD, Humane Society of the United States, Washington, DC. Div of Unintentional Injuries Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, CDC.

Editorial Note

Editorial Note: During 1979-1996, fatal dog attacks occurred in 45 states (Figure_1). In 1986, nonfatal dog bites resulted in an estimated 585,000 injuries that required medical attention or restricted activity; in that year, dog bites ranked 12th among the leading causes of nonfatal injury in the United States (5). In 1994, an estimated 4.7 million persons (1.8% of the U.S. population) sustained a dog bite; of these, approximately 800,000 (0.3%) sought medical care for the bite (6).

The findings in this report are subject to at least two limitations. First, because death-certificate data were not available, the two sources used for case finding in 1995-1996 probably underestimated the number of DBRFs and may represent only 74% of actual cases (1,2). Second, to definitively determine whether certain breeds are disproportionately represented, breed-specific fatality rates should be calculated. The numerator for such rates requires complete ascertainment of deaths and an accurate determination of the breed involved, and the denominator requires reliable breed-specific population data (i.e., number of deaths involving a given breed divided by number of dogs of that breed). However, such denominator data are not available, and official registration or licensing data cannot be used because owners of certain breeds may be less likely than those owning other breeds to register or license their animals (3).

Three categories of strategies can be considered for preventing dog bites:

1. Owner and public education. Dog owners, through proper selection, socialization, training, care, and treatment of a dog, can reduce the likelihood of owning a dog that will eventually bite (7). Male and unspayed/unneutered dogs are more likely to bite than are female and spayed/neutered dogs (7). Educational and prevention efforts should be directed at parents and children. Veterinarians and pediatricians should address strategies for bite prevention, including the need for appropriate supervision of children. Other strategies include dissemination of information on preventing bites (see box (Table_B1)), school-based educational programs on bite prevention and canine behavior, and educational programs regarding responsible dog selection, ownership, and training.
2. Animal control at the community level. Animal-control programs should be supported, and laws for regulating dangerous or vicious dogs should be promulgated and enforced vigorously (8). For example, in this report, 30% of DBRFs resulted from groups of owned dogs that were free roaming off the owner's property. Some of these deaths might have been prevented through more stringent animal-control laws and enforcement. Although some breeds were disproportionately represented in the fatal attacks described in this report, the representation of breeds changes over time (Table_1). As a result,

targeting a specific breed may be unproductive; a more effective approach may be to target chronically irresponsible dog owners (9).

3. Bite reporting. Evaluation of prevention efforts requires improved surveillance for dog bites. Dog bites should be reported as required by local or state ordinances, and reports of such incidents should include information about the circumstances of the bite; ownership, breed, sex, age, spay/neuter status, and history of prior aggression of the animal; and the nature of restraint before the bite incident.

Dogs provide many health and social benefits (10). Most of the approximately 55 million dogs in the United States never bite or kill humans. However, the findings in this report indicate that DBRFs continue to occur and that most are preventable. HSUS and the U.S. Postal Service have designated June 9-13, 1997, as National Dog Bite Prevention Week. Additional information about preventing dog bites is available from HSUS, 100 L Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037; telephone (202) 452-1100; or on the World-Wide Web at <http://www.hsus.org>.

References

1. Sacks JJ, Sattin RW, Bonzo SE. Dog bite-related fatalities from 1979 through 1988. JAMA 1989;262:1489-92.
2. Sacks JJ, Lockwood R, Hornreich J, Sattin RW. Fatal dog attacks, 1989-1994. Pediatrics 1996;97:891-5.
3. Lockwood R. Humane concerns about dangerous dog laws. University of Dayton Law Review 1988;13:267-77.
4. Lockwood R, Rindy K. Are "pit bulls" different? An analysis of the pit bull terrier controversy. Anthrozoos 1987;1:2-8.
5. Sosin DM, Sacks JJ, Sattin RW. Causes of nonfatal injuries in the United States, 1986. Accid Anal Prev 1992;24:685-7.
6. Sacks JJ, Kresnow M, Houston B. Dog bites: how big a problem? Injury Prev 1996;2:52-4.
7. Gershman KA, Sacks JJ, Wright JC. Which dogs bite? A case-control study of risk factors. Pediatrics 1994;93:913-7.
8. Companion Animals Section and Division of Higher Education Programs. Guidelines for regulating dangerous or vicious dogs. Washington, DC: Humane Society of the United States, August 1987.
9. Lockwood R. Dangerous dogs revisited. The Humane Society News 1992;37:20-2.
10. American Veterinary Medical Association. AVMA Welfare Forum: human-canine interactions. J Am Vet Med Assoc 1997;210:1121-54.

* An on-line service containing information from newspapers, magazines, wire services, and broadcast transcripts.

Table 1

Note: To print large tables and graphs users may have to change their printer settings to landscape and use a small font size.

TABLE 1. Dog breeds and crossbreeds* involved in dog-bite-related fatalities, by 2-year period -- United States, 1979-1996 +

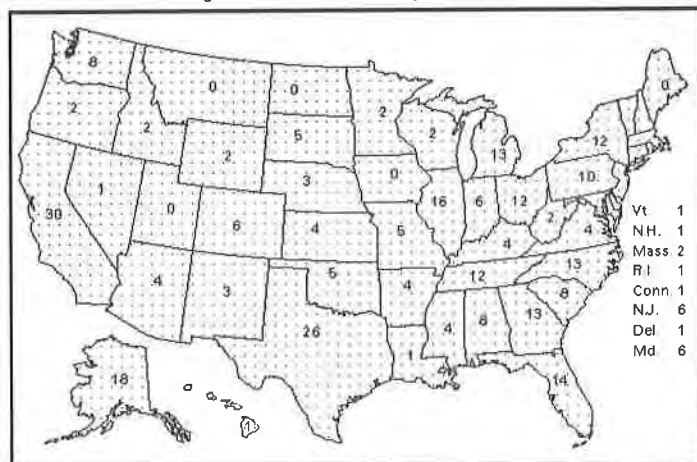
Category	1979-1980	1981-1982	1983-1984	1985-1986	1987-1988	1989-1990	1991-1992	1993-1994	1995-1996	Total
Breed										
"Pit bull"	2	5	10	9	12	8	6	5	3	60
Rottweiler	0	0	1	1	3	1	3	10	10	29
German shepherd	2	1	5	1	1	5	2	0	2	19
"Husky"	2	1	2	2	0	2	2	1	2	14
Alaskan malamute	2	0	3	1	0	2	3	1	0	12
Doberman Pinscher	0	1	0	2	2	2	1	0	0	8
Chow Chow	0	1	0	0	0	2	3	0	2	8
Great Dane	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	6
St. Bernard	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Akita	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	4
Crossbreed										
Wolf hybrid	0	1	1	2	1	4	1	2	2	14
German shepherd	0	2	0	2	2	2	0	1	2	11
"Pit bull"	0	1	0	3	2	3	1	1	0	10
"Husky"	0	1	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	6
Alaskan malamute	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	3
Rottweiler	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	3
Chow Chow	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	3
No. incidents for which breed known	10	20	27	24	22	35	24	25	22	199

* Data shown only for breeds and crossbreeds involved in four or more fatalities. Each breed contributing to the crossbreed is counted only once.
 + For 1979-1994, data obtained from the Humane Society of the United States registry, NEXIS database accounts, and death certificates.
 † One fatality also involved a single breed.

[Return to top.](#)

Figure 1

FIGURE 1. Number of dog-bite-related fatalities, by state—United States, 1979–1996*



*For 1979–1994, data obtained from the Humane Society of the United States registry, NEXIS database accounts, and death certificates. For 1995–1996, data from death certificates were not available.

[Return to top.](#)

Table B1

Note: To print large tables and graphs users may have to change their printer settings to landscape and use a small font size

Measures for Preventing Dog Bites

- Realistically evaluate environment and lifestyle and consult with a professional (e.g., veterinarian, animal behaviorist, or responsible breeder) to determine suitable breeds of dogs for consideration.
- Dogs with histories of aggression are inappropriate in households with children.
- Be sensitive to cues that a child is fearful or apprehensive about a dog and, if so, delay acquiring a dog.
- Spend time with a dog before buying or adopting it. Use caution when bringing a dog or puppy into the home of an infant or toddler.
- Spay/neuter virtually all dogs (this frequently reduces aggressive tendencies).
- Never leave infants or young children alone with any dog.
- Properly socialize and train any dog entering the household. Teach the dog submissive behaviors (e.g., rolling over to expose abdomen and relinquishing food without growling).
- Immediately seek professional advice (e.g., from veterinarians, animal behaviorists, or responsible breeders) if the dog develops aggressive or undesirable behaviors.
- Do not play aggressive games with your dog (e.g., wrestling).
- Teach children basic safety around dogs and review regularly:
 - Never approach an unfamiliar dog.
 - Never run from a dog and scream.
 - Remain motionless when approached by an unfamiliar dog (e.g., "be still like a tree").
 - If knocked over by a dog, roll into a ball and lie still (e.g., "be still like a log").
 - Never play with a dog unless supervised by an adult.
- Immediately report stray dogs or dogs displaying unusual behavior to an adult.
- Avoid direct eye contact with a dog.
- Do not disturb a dog who is sleeping, eating, or caring for puppies.
- Do not pet a dog without allowing it to see and sniff you first.
- If bitten, immediately report the bite to an adult.

[Return to top.](#)

Disclaimer All MMWR HTML versions of articles are electronic conversions from ASCII text into HTML. This conversion may have resulted in character translation or format errors in the HTML version. Users should not rely on this HTML document, but are referred to the electronic PDF version and/or the original MMWR paper copy for the official text, figures, and tables. An original paper copy of this issue can be obtained from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO), Washington, DC 20402-9371; telephone: (202) 512-1800. Contact GPO for current prices.

**Questions or messages regarding errors in formatting should be addressed to mmwrq@cdc.gov.

Page converted: 09/19/98

[HOME](#) | [ABOUT MMWR](#) | [MMWR SEARCH](#) | [DOWNLOADS](#) | [RSS](#) | [CONTACT](#)
[POLICY](#) | [DISCLAIMER](#) | [ACCESSIBILITY](#)

SAFER • HEALTHIER • PEOPLE™
 Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report

Department of Health

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Rd, MailStop E-80, Atlanta, GA 30333, U.S.A



and Human Services

This page last reviewed 5/2/01

Special Report

Breeds of dogs involved in fatal human attacks in the United States between 1979 and 1998

Jeffrey J. Sacks, MD, MPH; Leslie Sinclair, DVM; Julie Gilchrist, MD;
Gail C. Golab, PhD, DVM; Randall Lockwood, PhD

Objective—To summarize breeds of dogs involved in fatal human attacks during a 20-year period and to assess policy implications.

Animals—Dogs for which breed was reported involved in attacks on humans between 1979 and 1998 that resulted in human dog bite-related fatalities (DBRF).

Procedure—Data for human DBRF identified previously for the period of 1979 through 1996 were combined with human DBRF newly identified for 1997 and 1998. Human DBRF were identified by searching news accounts and by use of The Humane Society of the United States' registry databank.

Results—During 1997 and 1998, at least 27 people died of dog bite attacks (18 in 1997 and 9 in 1998). At least 25 breeds of dogs have been involved in 238 human DBRF during the past 20 years. Pit bull-type dogs and Rottweilers were involved in more than half of these deaths. Of 227 reports with relevant data, 55 (24%) human deaths involved unrestrained dogs off their owners' property, 133 (58%) involved unrestrained dogs on their owners' property, 38 (17%) involved restrained dogs on their owners' property, and 1 (< 1%) involved a restrained dog off its owner's property.

Conclusions—Although fatal attacks on humans appear to be a breed-specific problem (pit bull-type dogs and Rottweilers), other breeds may bite and cause fatalities at higher rates. Because of difficulties inherent in determining a dog's breed with certainty, enforcement of breed-specific ordinances raises constitutional and practical issues. Fatal attacks represent a small proportion of dog bite injuries to humans and, therefore, should not be the primary factor driving public policy concerning dangerous dogs. Many practical alternatives to breed-specific ordinances exist and hold promise for prevention of dog bites. (*J Am Vet Med Assoc* 2000;217:836-840)

(DBRF) in the United States.^{1,3} Most victims were children. Studies indicate that pit bull-type dogs were involved in approximately a third of human DBRF reported during the 12-year period from 1981 through 1992, and Rottweilers were responsible for about half of human DBRF reported during the 4 years from 1993 through 1996. These data have caused some individuals to infer that certain breeds of dogs are more likely to bite than others and should, therefore, be banned or regulated more stringently.^{4,5} The purposes of the study reported here were to summarize breeds associated with reported human DBRF during a 20-year period and assess policy implications.

Procedure

We collected data from The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and media accounts related to dog bite attacks and fatalities, using methods from previous studies.^{1,3} The HSUS maintains a registry of human DBRF, including date of death, age and sex of decedent, city and state of attack, number and breeds of dogs involved, and circumstances relating to the attack. To supplement HSUS reports, as in the past, a database⁶ was searched for accounts of human DBRF that occurred in 1997 and 1998. Our search strategy involved scanning the text of newspapers and periodicals for certain words and word combinations likely to represent human DBRF followed by a review of articles containing those terms. Data obtained from HSUS and news accounts were merged to maximize detection of human DBRF and avoid duplicate reports. One new human DBRF from 1996 was identified in the 1997 and 1998 reports and was added to the existing data for 1996.

A human DBRF was defined as a human death caused by trauma from a dog bite. In addition to excluding 9 human deaths, as described in previous reports (eg, dying of rabies from a dog bite, strangling on a leash or scarf pulled by a dog, dying from fire ant

From 1979 through 1996, dog attacks resulted in more than 300 human dog bite-related fatalities

From the Division of Unintentional Injury Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, US Department of Health and Human Services, US Public Health Service, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 4770 Buford Hwy NE (MS K-63), Atlanta, GA 30341 (Sacks, Gilchrist); The Humane Society of the United States, 2100 L Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037 (Sinclair, Lockwood); and the Division of Education and Research, American Veterinary Medical Association, 1931 N Meacham Rd, Ste 100, Schaumburg, IL 60173 (Golab). Dr. Sacks' present address is the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 4770 Buford Hwy NE (MS K-45), Atlanta, GA 30341. Dr. Sinclair's present address is Shelter Veterinary Services, 9320 Jarrett Ct, Montgomery Village, MD 20886.

Use of trade names and commercial sources is for identification purposes only and does not imply endorsement by the authors or their affiliated agencies.

The authors thank Dr. Suzanne Binder for technical assistance.

bites after being pushed on a mound by a dog, or dying from a motor vehicle or bicycle crash while being chased by a dog), for 1997 and 1998, we excluded 3 additional deaths: death resulting from infection secondary to a dog bite, death attributable to trauma from being knocked over but not bitten, and death resulting from myocardial infarction, which was caused by an individual being chased but not bitten. For the 20-year study, we excluded 4 human deaths from attacks by guard or police dogs "at work" and approximately 90 deaths when breed information for the attacking dog was unavailable; thus, this study included approximately 72% of cases of human DBRF and is not exhaustive.

We tallied data in 2 ways to provide alternatives for breed data interpretation. First, we used a human death-based approach in which we counted whether a particular breed was involved in a death. When multiple dogs of the same breed were involved in the same fatal episode, that breed was counted only once (eg, if 10 Akitas attacked and killed a person, that breed was counted once rather than 10 times). When crossbred dogs were involved in a fatality, each suspected breed in the dog's lineage was counted once for that episode. Second, we tallied data by dog. When multiple dogs of the same breed were involved in a single incident, each dog was counted individually. We allocated crossbred dogs into separate breeds and counted them similarly (eg, if 3 Great Dane-Rottweiler crossbreeds attacked a person, Great Dane was counted 3 times under crossbred, and Rottweiler was counted 3 times under crossbred). Data are presented separately for dogs identified as pure- and crossbred. Lastly, dogs were classified as to whether they were on or off the owners' property and restrained (eg, chained or leashed) or unrestrained at the time of the attack.

Results

Fatalities during 1997 and 1998—During 1997 and 1998, at least 27 people died as the result of dog bite attacks (18 people in 1997 and 9 in 1998). Of 27 human DBRF, 19 (70%) were children (1 was ≤ 30 days old, 3 were between 7 and 11 months old, 9 were between 1 and 4 years old, and 6 were between 5 and 11 years old), and 8 were adults (ages 17, 44, 64, 70, 73, 75, 75, and 87). Approximately half (n = 15 [56%]) of the human DBRF were male.

Five (19%) deaths involved unrestrained dogs off the owners' property, 18 (67%) involved unrestrained dogs on the owners' property, 3 (11%) involved restrained dogs on the owners' property, and 1 (4%) involved a restrained dog off the owner's property. Eighteen (67%) deaths involved 1 dog, 5 (19%) involved 2 dogs, and 4 (15%) involved 3 dogs. Sixty percent of attacks by unrestrained dogs off the owners' property involved more than 1 dog.

Fatal attacks were reported from 17 states (California [4 deaths]; Georgia and North Carolina [3 each]; Kansas, Texas, and Wisconsin [2 each]; and Alaska, Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New York, South Dakota, and Tennessee [1 each]).

Some breed information was reported for all 27 attacks. As in recent years, Rottweilers were the most commonly reported breed involved in fatal attacks, followed by pit bull-type dogs (Table 1). Together, these 2 breeds were involved in approximately 60% of human deaths.

Twenty-year data—Some breed information was available for 238 human DBRF. More than 25 breeds of dogs were involved in DBRF during the past 20 years (Table 2). Of 227 human DBRF for which data were

Table 1—Breeds of dogs involved in human dog bite-related fatalities (DBRF) in the United States, by 2-year period, between 1979 and 1998. Death-based approach of counting most frequent purebreds and crossbreds involved in 7 or more human DBRF

Breed	1979-1980	1981-1982	1983-1984	1985-1986	1987-1988	1989-1990	1991-1992	1993-1994	1995-1996	1997-1998	Total
Purebred											
Pit bull-type	2	5	10	9	11*	8	6	5	4*	6	66
Rottweiler	0	0	1	1	3	1	3	10	10	10	39
German Shepherd Dog	2	1	4*	1	1	4*	2	0	2	0	17
Husky-type	2	1	2	2	0	2	2	1	2	1	15
Malamute	2	0	3	1	0	2	3	1	0	0	12
Doberman Pinscher	0	1	0	2	2	2	1	0	0	1	9
Chow Chow	0	1	0	0	0	2	3	0	2	0	8
Great Dane	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	7
Saint Bernard	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	7
Crossbred											
Wolf-dog hybrid	0	1	1	2	1	4	1	2	2	0	14
Mixed-breed	0	3	1	2	1	2	0	1	1	1	12
German Shepherd Dog	0	2	0	2	2	2†	0	1	2	0	10†
Pit bull-type	0	1	0	3	2†	3	1	1	0	0	10†
Husky-type	0	1	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	6
Rottweiler	0	0	0	0	1†	1	0	1	1	2	5†
Alaskan Malamute	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	3
Chow Chow	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	3
Doberman Pinscher	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
Saint Bernard	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Great Dane	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1†	0†
No. deaths for which breed was known	10	20	26*	24	22	34*	24	25	26*	27	238

*Numbers differ from previous reports because police/guard dogs "at work" were excluded, and 1 new DBRF was identified as occurring in 1996. †A purebred dog and a crossbred dog of this breed were involved in a single fatality; therefore, that breed is counted only once in the total column.

Table 2—Breeds of dogs involved in human dog bite-related fatalities between 1979 and 1998, using death-based and dog-based approaches

Breed	Death-based approach			Dog-based approach		
	Purebred	Crossbred	Total	Purebred	Crossbred	Total
Pit bull-type	66	11*	76*	98	20	118
Rotweiler	39	6*	44*	60	7	67
German Shepherd Dog	17	11*	27*	24	17	41
Husky-type (includes at least 2 Siberian)	15	6	21	15	6	21
Malamute	12	3	15	13	3	16
Wolf-dog hybrid	0	14	14	0	15	15
Mixed-breed (NOS)	0	12	12	0	47	47
Chow Chow	8	3	11	8	13	21
Doberman	9	1	10	12	1	13
Saint Bernard	7	1	8	7	1	8
Great Dane	7	1*	7*	11	2	13
Labrador Retriever	1	4	5	1	7	8
Akita	4	0	4	4	0	4
Sled-type (NOS)	3	0	3	12	0	12
Bulldog	2	1	3	2	1	3
Mastiff	2	1	3	4	1	5
Boxer	2	1	3	4	1	5
Collie	0	3	3	0	6	6
Bullmastiff	1	1	2	1	1	2
Hound-type (NOS)	1	1	2	1	1	2
Retriever-type (NOS)	1	0	1	1	0	1
Chesapeake Bay Retriever	1	0	1	1	0	1
West Highland Terrier (NOS)	1	0	1	1	0	1
Terrier-type (NOS)	1	0	1	1	0	1
Japanese Hunting Dog (NOS)	1	0	1	1	0	1
Newfoundland	1	0	1	1	0	1
Coonhound	1	0	1	1	0	1
Sheepdog (NOS)	1	0	1	1	0	1
Australian Shepherd	0	1	1	0	3	3
Rhodesian Ridgeback	1	0	1	1	0	1
Cocker Spaniel	1	0	1	1	0	1

* A purebred dog and a crossbred dog of this breed were involved in a single fatality; therefore, that breed is counted only once in the total column.
NOS = Not otherwise specified.

available, 55 (24%) deaths involved unrestrained dogs off the owners' property, 133 (58%) involved unrestrained dogs on the owners' property, 38 (17%) involved restrained dogs on the owners' property, and 1 (< 1%) involved a restrained dog off the owner's property.

Four hundred three dogs were responsible for these attacks. There were almost twice as many dogs involved in off-owner-property attacks, compared with attacks occurring on the owners' properties. In 160 human deaths, only 1 dog was involved; in 49 deaths, 2 dogs were involved; and in 15 deaths, 3 dogs were involved. Four and 7 dogs were involved in 3 deaths each; 5, 6, and 10 dogs were involved in 2 deaths each; and 11 and 14 dogs were responsible for 1 death each.

Discussion

Ideally, breed-specific bite rates would be calculated to compare breeds and quantify the relative dangerousness of each breed. For example, 10 fatal attacks by Breed X relative to a population of 10,000 X's (1/1,000) implies a greater risk than 100 attacks by Breed Y relative to a population of 1,000,000 Y's (0.1/1,000). Without consideration of the population sizes, Breed Y would be perceived to be the more dangerous breed on the basis of the number of fatalities.

Considering only bites that resulted in fatalities, because they are more easily ascertained than nonfatal bites, the numerator of a dog breed-specific human DBRF rate requires a complete accounting of human

DBRF as well as an accurate determination of the breeds involved. Numerator data may be biased for 4 reasons. First, the human DBRF reported here are likely underestimated; prior work suggests the approach we used identifies only 74% of actual cases.^{1,2} Second, to the extent that attacks by 1 breed are more newsworthy than those by other breeds, our methods may have resulted in differential ascertainment of fatalities by breed. Third, because identification of a dog's breed may be subjective (even experts may disagree on the breed of a particular dog), DBRF may be differentially ascribed to breeds with a reputation for aggression. Fourth, it is not clear how to count attacks by crossbred dogs. Ignoring these data underestimates breed involvement (29% of attacking dogs were crossbred dogs), whereas including them permits a single dog to be counted more than once. Therefore, we have elected to present data separately for purebred and crossbred dogs to demonstrate at least 2 alternative counting methods. Relative rankings do not differ greatly whether one focuses only on purebred dogs or includes crossbred dogs. The crossbreed issue is also problematic when estimating denominators (ie, breed-specific population sizes).

The denominator of a dog breed-specific human DBRF rate requires reliable breed-specific population data. Unfortunately, such data are not currently available. Considering American Kennel Club registration data⁷ for Rottweilers in parallel with fatality data for that breed indicates that as the breed has soared in pop-

ularity, so have Rottweiler-related deaths (24,195 registrations from 1979 through 1982 and 0 deaths; 272,273 registrations from 1983 through 1990 and 6 deaths; and 692,799 registrations from 1991 through 1998 and 33 deaths). However, official registration or licensing data are likely to be biased, as owners of certain dog breeds may be less likely than those owning other breeds to register or license their dogs⁴ and, thus, should not be used to calculate these rates. Finally, it is imperative to keep in mind that even if breed-specific bite rates could be accurately calculated, they do not factor in owner-related issues. For example, less responsible owners or owners who want to foster aggression in their dogs may be drawn differentially to certain breeds.

Despite these limitations and concerns, the data indicate that Rottweilers and pit bull-type dogs accounted for 67% of human DBRF in the United States between 1997 and 1998. It is extremely unlikely that they accounted for anywhere near 60% of dogs in the United States during that same period and, thus, there appears to be a breed-specific problem with fatalities.

Although the fatality data are concerning, one must broaden the context to consider both fatal and nonfatal bites when deciding on a course of action. Nonfatal dog bites continue to be a public health problem in the United States. Although this and prior reports³ document more than 330 DBRF during a 20-year period, these tragedies represent only the most severe manifestation of the problem. In 1986, nonfatal dog bites resulted in an estimated 585,000 injuries that required medical attention or restricted activity.⁸ By 1994, an estimated 4.7 million people (1.8% of the US population) sustained a dog bite; of these, approximately 800,000 (0.3% of the US population) sought medical care for the bite (332,000 in emergency departments), and 6,000 were hospitalized.⁹⁻¹¹ This 36% increase in medically attended bites from 1986 to 1994 draws attention to the need for an effective response, including dog bite prevention programs. Because (1) fatal bites constitute less than 0.00001% of all dog bites annually, (2) fatal bites have remained relatively constant over time, whereas nonfatal bites have been increasing, and (3) fatal bites are rare at the usual political level where bite regulations are promulgated and enforced, we believe that fatal bites should not be the primary factor driving public policy regarding dog bite prevention.

Several interacting factors affect a dog's propensity to bite, including heredity, sex, early experience, socialization and training, health (medical and behavioral), reproductive status, quality of ownership and supervision, and victim behavior. For example, a study in Denver of medically-attended dog bites in 1991 suggested that male dogs are 6.2 times more likely to bite than female dogs, sexually intact dogs are 2.6 times more likely to bite than neutered dogs, and chained dogs are 2.8 times more likely to bite than unchained dogs.¹² Communities have tried to address the dog bite problem by focusing on different factors related to biting behavior.

To decrease the risk of dog bites, several communities have enacted breed-specific restrictions or bans. In general, these have focused on pit bull-type dogs and Rottweilers. However, breeds responsible for human

DBRF have varied over time. Pinckney and Kennedy¹³ studied human DBRF from May 1975 through April 1980 and listed the following breeds as responsible for the indicated number of deaths: German Shepherd Dog (n = 16); Husky-type dog (9); Saint Bernard (8); Bull Terrier (6); Great Dane (6); Malamute (5); Golden Retriever (3); Boxer (2); Dachshund (2); Doberman Pinscher (2); Collie (2); Rottweiler (1); Basenji (1); Chow Chow (1); Labrador Retriever (1); Yorkshire Terrier (1); and mixed and unknown breed (15). As ascertained from our data, between 1979 and 1980, Great Danes caused the most reported human DBRF; between 1997 and 1998, Rottweilers and pit bull-type dogs were responsible for about 60% of human DBRF. Indeed, since 1975, dogs belonging to more than 30 breeds have been responsible for fatal attacks on people, including Dachshunds, a Yorkshire Terrier, and a Labrador Retriever.

In addition to issues surrounding which breeds to regulate, breed-specific ordinances raise several practical issues. For optimal enforcement, there would need to be an objective method of determining the breed of a particular dog. Pedigree analysis (a potentially time-consuming and complicated effort) combined with DNA testing (also time-consuming and expensive) is the closest to an objective standard for conclusively identifying a dog's breed. Owners of mixed-breed or unregistered (ie, by a kennel club) dogs have no way of knowing whether their dog is one of the types identified and whether they are required to comply with breed-specific ordinances. Thus, law enforcement personnel have few means for positively determining a dog's breed and deciding whether owners are in compliance or violation of laws.

Some municipalities have attempted to address this classification issue of unregistered and mixed-breed dogs by including within their ordinances a description of the breed at which the ordinance is directed. Unfortunately, such descriptions are usually vague, rely on subjective visual observation, and result in many more dogs than those of the specified breed being subject to the restrictions of the ordinance.

When a specific breed of dog has been selected for stringent control, 2 constitutional questions concerning dog owners' fourteenth amendment rights have been raised: first, because all types of dogs may inflict injury to people and property, ordinances addressing only 1 breed of dog are argued to be underinclusive and, therefore, violate owners' equal protection rights; and second, because identification of a dog's breed with the certainty necessary to impose sanctions on the dog's owner is prohibitively difficult, such ordinances have been argued as unconstitutionally vague, and, therefore, violate due process. Despite such concerns, a number of breed-specific ordinances have been upheld by the courts.¹⁴⁻¹⁶

Another concern is that a ban on a specific breed might cause people who want a dangerous dog to simply turn to another breed for the same qualities they sought in the original dog (eg, large size, aggression easily fostered). Breed-specific legislation does not address the fact that a dog of any breed can become dangerous when bred or trained to be aggressive. From a scientific point of view, we are unaware of any formal

evaluation of the effectiveness of breed-specific legislation in preventing fatal or nonfatal dog bites.

An alternative to breed-specific legislation is to regulate individual dogs and owners on the basis of their behavior. Although, it is not systematically reported, our reading of the fatal bite reports indicates that problem behaviors (of dogs and owners) have preceded attacks in a great many cases and should be sufficient evidence for preemptive action. Approaches to decreasing dangerous dog and owner behaviors are numerous. The potential importance of strong animal control programs is illustrated by our data; from 1979 through 1998, 24% of human DBRF were caused by owned dogs (typically more than 1) that were roaming off the owners' property. Some deaths might have been averted through more stringent animal control laws and enforcement (eg, leash laws, fencing requirements). Although the bite prevention effectiveness of such animal control ordinances and programs has not been systematically evaluated, free-roaming dogs and dogs with menacing behavior are problems that need to be addressed even if they do not bite (eg, causing bicycle or car crashes).

Generic non-breed-specific, dangerous dog laws can be enacted that place primary responsibility for a dog's behavior on the owner, regardless of the dog's breed.¹⁷ In particular, targeting chronically irresponsible dog owners may be effective.¹⁸ If dog owners are required to assume legal liability for the behavior and actions of their pets, they may be encouraged to seek professional help in training and socializing their pets. Other options include enforcing leash laws and laws against dog fighting. We noticed in the fatal cases, that less than one half of 1% of DBRF were caused by leashed animals off the owners' property. Subdivisions and municipalities that outlaw fences or limit fences to heights insufficient for controlling large dogs may be increasing the probability of children interacting with unsupervised dogs. Scientific evaluations of the effects of such regulations are important.

Education of dog owners can address several issues: (1) understanding breed profiles^{19,20} may assist owners in selecting the appropriate dog for their lifestyle and training abilities, (2) convincing owners to seriously consider the sex and reproductive status of their dogs is important because male and sexually intact dogs are more likely to bite than are female and neutered dogs,¹² and (3) teaching owners about the importance of socialization and training may decrease their likelihood of owning a dog that will eventually bite.

Veterinarians play a key role in educating pet owners, but because many dogs that bite may not be seen by a veterinarian prior to the bite incident, programs that encourage responsible ownership must also be presented through other venues. Public education strategies should include school-based and adult educational programs addressing bite prevention and basic canine behavior, care, and management. Programs should strive to ensure that dogs receive proper socialization, exercise, and attention; that they are given adequate food, water, shelter, and veterinary care; that they are neutered if they are not maintained for legitimate and responsible breeding purposes; and that they are trained humanely and confined safely. However,

like breed-specific legislation, all these approaches appear formally unevaluated for effectiveness.

Targeting and evaluation of prevention efforts requires improved surveillance for fatal and nonfatal dog bites. Dog bites should be reported as required by local or state ordinances, and reports of such incidents should include information about the circumstances of the bite, ownership, breed, sex, reproductive status of the dog, history of prior aggression, and the nature of restraint prior to the bite incident. Collection of data on the entire dog population (eg, breed, age, sex) would help resolve comparative risk issues and may be accomplished by combining paperwork on mandatory rabies immunizations with registration of breed and sex. Only with numerator and denominator data and with formal evaluations of the impacts of strategies tried by various communities will we be able to make science-based recommendations for decreasing the number of dog bites. In the interim, adequate funding for animal control agencies, enforcement of existing animal control laws, and educational and policy strategies to reduce inappropriate dog and owner behaviors will likely result in benefits to communities and may well decrease the number of dog bites that occur.

References

1. Sacks JJ, Sattin RW, Bonzo SE. Dog bite-related fatalities in the United States, 1979-1988. *JAMA* 1989;262:1489-1492.
2. Sacks JJ, Lockwood R, Hornreich J, et al. Fatal dog attacks, 1989-1994. *Pediatrics* 1996;97:891-895.
3. Centers for Disease Control. Dog bite related fatalities—United States, 1995-1996. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 1997;46:463-467.
4. Lockwood R. Humane concerns about dangerous dog laws. *University of Dayton Law Rev* 1988;13:267-277.
5. Lockwood R, Rindy K. Are "pit bulls" different? An analysis of the pit bull terrier controversy. *Anthrozoos* 1987;1:2-8.
6. NEXIS-LEXIS [online database available at <http://www.lexis-nexis.com/lnc>]. Dayton, Ohio: Lexis-Nexis Group; 1999.
7. American Kennel Club. *Dog registration statistics, Jan 1, 1990-Dec 31, 1998*. New York: American Kennel Club.
8. Sosin DM, Sacks JJ, Sattin RW. Causes of nonfatal injuries in the United States, 1986. *Accid Anal Prev* 1992;24:685-687.
9. Sacks JJ, Kresnow M, Houston B. Dog bites: how big a problem? *Injury Prev* 1996;2:52-54.
10. Weiss HB, Friedman D, Coben JH. Incidence of dog bite injuries treated in emergency departments. *JAMA* 1998;279:51-53.
11. Quinlan KP, Sacks JJ. Hospitalizations for dog bite injuries. *JAMA* 1999;281:232-233.
12. Gershman KA, Sacks JJ, Wright JC. Which dogs bite? A case-control study of risk factors. *Pediatrics* 1994;93:913-917.
13. Pinckney LE, Kennedy LA. Traumatic deaths from dog attacks in the United States. *Pediatrics* 1982;69:193-196.
14. Pollock S. Banning pit bulls in the District of Columbia. Memorandum to the Washington Humane Society from the Arnold and Porter Law Firm. Washington, DC, 1999.
15. Burt MR. Canine legislation: can dogs get a fair shake in court? *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 1997;210:1139-1142.
16. Wapner M, Wilson JE. Are laws prohibiting ownership of pit bull-type dogs legally enforceable? *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 2000;216:1552-1554.
17. Companion animals section and division of higher education programs. Guidelines for regulating dangerous or vicious dogs. Washington, DC: Humane Society of the United States, 1987.
18. Lockwood R. Dangerous dogs revisited. *The Humane Society News* 1992;37:20-22.
19. Hart BL, Miller MF. Behavioral profiles of dog breeds. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 1985;186:1175-1180.
20. Hart BL, Hart LA. Selecting pet dogs on the basis of cluster analysis of breed behavior profiles and gender. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 1985;186:1181-1185.

Dog Attack Deaths and Maimings, U.S. & Canada September 1982 to January 1, 2008

By Merritt Clifton
Editor, ANIMAL PEOPLE

Reports are logged as received, and the current log is printed out as requested.

Compiled by the editor of ANIMAL PEOPLE from press accounts since 1982, this table covers only attacks by dogs of clearly identified breed type or ancestry, as designated by animal control officers or others with evident expertise, who have been kept as pets.

Due to the exclusion of dogs whose breed type may be uncertain, this is by no means a complete list of fatal and otherwise serious dog attacks.

Attacks by police dogs, guard dogs, and dogs trained specifically to fight are also excluded. "Attacks doing bodily harm" includes all fatalities, maimings, and other injuries requiring extensive hospital treatment.

"Maimings" includes permanent disfigurement or loss of a limb. Where there is an asterisk (*), please see footnotes. If there are more "attacks" than "victims," it means that there were multiple dogs involved in some attacks. If the numbers of "victims" does not equal the numbers of "deaths" and "maimings," it means that some of the victims -- in attacks in which some people were killed or maimed -- were not killed or maimed.

Over the duration of the data collection, the severity of the logged attacks appears to be at approximately the 1-bite-in-10,000 level.

There is a persistent allegation by pit bull terrier advocates that pit bulls are over-represented because of misidentifications or because "pit bull" is, according to them, a generic term covering several similar types of dog. However, the frequency of pit bull attacks among these worst-in-10,000 cases is so disproportionate that even if half of the attacks in the pit bull category were misattributed, or even if the pit bull category was split three ways, attacks by pit bulls and their closest relatives would still outnumber attacks by any other breed.

Breed	Attacks doing					Notes
	bodily harm	Child	Adult	Deaths	Maimings	
	[dogs X victims]	[-----Individuals-----]				
Akita	48	32	14	1	39	
Akita mix (inspecific)	2	2	0	0	2	
Akita/Chow mix	3	3	0	0	3	
Akita/Lab mix	1	1	0	0	1	
Akita/terrier mix	2	1	0	0	1	
Airedale/boxer	1	1	0	1	0	#
Airedale	1	1	0	1	0	
American bulldog (not pit)	7	1	2	2	1	#
Australian blue heeler	8	2	1	0	3	
Australian cattle dog	1	1	0	0	1	
Australian shepherd	7	5	0	0	2	
Australian shepherd mix	1	0	1	1	0	#
Basset/GSD mix	1	1	0	1	0	
Basset/beagle mix	1	1	0	0	1	
Beagle	2	2	0	1	1	#
Belgian shepherd	5	2	3	0	2	
Blue heeler	3	0	2	0	1	
Border collie	1	0	1	1	1	#
Boxer	35	9	13	2	16	#
Boxer mix	2	2	0	1	1	
Briard	2	0	1	1	0	
Brittany spaniel	4	1	0	0	1	
Bulldog (American)	4	0	3	2	2	
Bulldog (English)	18	10	3	1	11	

Bull mastiff (Presa Canario)	39	11	18	7	20	
Bull mastiff/German shepherd	2	1	0	1	0	
Buff mastiff/Rottweiler	1	1	0	0	1	
Bull mastiff/Boxer	1	1	0	1	0	
Bull terrier (not pit)	2	1	1	0	1	
Cane Corso	5	1	3	1	4	
Catahoula	3	0	1	0	1	
Catahoula/pit bull mix	1	0	1	1	0	
Chihuahua	1	1	0	1	1	#
Chow	51	34	14	6	34	
Chow/German shepherd	1	0	1	0	1	
Chow/husky mix	2	2	0	1	1	
Chow/Labrador mix	4	4	0	0	3	
Chox mix (other)	3	3	0	0	3	
Cocker spaniel	1	1	0	0	1	
Collie	3	3	0	0	3	
Collie/retriever mix	1	1	0	0	1	
Coonhound	1	1	0	0	0	
Dalmatian	3	3	0	0	3	
Dalmatian/Akita mix	1	1	0	0	1	
Dauschund	5	3	2	1	5	#
Doberman	12	8	4	4	7	#
Dogo Argentino	1	1	0	0	1	
Doge de Bordeaux	2	1	0	0	1	
East Highland terrier	1	0	1	1	0	#
Fila Brasileiro	1	1	0	0	1	
German shepherd	71	45	20	9	43	
German shepherd mix	34	23	8	7	21	#
German shepherd/husky mix	4	3	1	1	2	
German shepherd/Lab mix	3	1	1	0	2	
Golden retriever	9	7	2	2	6	#
Golden retriever mix	1	0	1	1	0	#
Great Dane	25	5	5	2	10	
Great Pyranees	1	0	1	1	0	
Greyhound	1	1	0	0	1	
Husky	45	28	4	17	9	
Husky/Malamute mix	2	2	0	0	2	
Husky/Labrador mix	1	0	1	0	1	
Jack Russell terrier	3	2	1	2	0	#
Labrador	31	21	11	3	24	#
Labrador mix	11	9	2	0	10	#
Labrador/boxer mix	1	0	1	0	0	
Lab-Doberman	1	1	0	0	1	
Lab-St. Bernard	1	1	0	0	1	
Malamute	8	7	1	3	3	
Maremma	1	0	1	0	1	
Mastiff	18	12	4	4	11	
Norwegian elkhound	1	0	1	0	1	#
Old English sheep dog	2	1	1	2	0	#
Pit bull terrier	1312	564	456	131	699	#
Pit bull boxer mix	9	3	4	0	6	
Pit bull/chow mix	5	2	3	1	3	
Pit bull/Doberman/GSD/Lab	2	2	0	0	2	
Pit bull/GSD mix	4	2	1	0	3	
Pit bull/Lab mix	15	10	4	3	8	#
Pit bull/Rott. mix	39	7	3	2	8	
Pit bull/Sheltie mix	1	1	0	0	1	

Pit bull/Weimaraner mix	1	0	1	0	1	
Pit mix unknown	4	2	1	0	3	
Pointer mix	1	0	1	0	0	#
Pomeranian	1	1	0	1	0	
Poodle	2	1	1	0	2	#
Poodle/terrier	1	1	0	0	1	
Pug	1	1	0	0	1	
Pug/Rottweiler mix	2	1	0	1	0	
Queensland heeler	3	0	1	0	1	
Rottweiler	429	245	113	63	234	#
Rottweiler/chow mix	1	1	0	0	1	
Rottweiler/GSD mix	14	8	5	3	10	
Rottweiler/Labrador	7	6	1	0	7	
Russian terrier	1	0	1	0	1	
Saint Bernard	6	3	0	1	1	
Sharpei	5	5	0	0	5	
Sharpei/Rottweiler	2	1	0	0	1	
Sharpei/unknown mix	1	1	0	0	1	
Sharpei/Labrador	1	1	0	0	1	
Springer spaniel	3	4	0	0	4	
Terrier mix (not pit bull)	1	0	1	0	1	
Tosa	1	1	0	0	1	
Weimaeaner	1	1	0	0	1	
Wheaten terrier	2	1	0	0	1	
Wolf hybrid	80	66	4	19	44	#
<hr/>						
Total:	2524	1262	752	314	1369	

Pit bulls, Rottweilers, Presa Canarios, and their mixes:

1894	865	613	210	1012
75%	69%	81%	67%	74%

Pit, Rott, Wolf hybrid:

1816	874	577	215	980
77%	73%	83%	70%	77%

Notes:

Airedale/boxer: The only listed attack was by 10 dogs at once.

American bulldog: Described as resembling an "English bulldog on stilts" by Livingston County (Michigan) animal control director Anne Burns, the five dogs involved in two fatal attacks on September 13, 2007 did not appear to match either the usual description of a pit bull terrier or the AKC-defined "American bull dog."

Australian shepherd mix: Involved with golden retriever mix in July 26, 2008 fatal attack on Lorraine May, 74, of Titusville, Florida.

Beagle: The fatality was a strangulation caused by tugging on a leash which was around a child's neck.

Border collie: Involved in 4-dog attack. The other dogs were two American bull dogs and a mastiff.

Boxer: Fatal attack on 3-week-old infant also involved a Rottweiler.

Dauschund: Julia Beck, 87, of Fort Wayne, died 5/15/05, two weeks after attack by dauschund & Lab at home she shared with Michael T. Kitchen, 48, and Linda A. Kitchen, 57. Linda Floyd, 56, a diabetic, lost toe to dauschund who gnawed it off in her sleep 6/30/08.

Chihuahua: Dog on retractable leash leaped up and bit the lip of a six-year-old who was riding past on a bicycle. The bicycle's momentum and restraint on the dog apparently increased the severity of the injury (8-12-08, Springfield Township, Indiana.)

Doberman: One miniature pinscher apparently joined two pit bull terriers in attacking a child.

East Highland terrier: Victim, age 75, died of heart attack.

German shepherd mix: One fatality victim, age 83, was apparently killed by an overly rowdy greeting. The victim was knocked down and suffered multiple broken bones, but was not bitten. The dog had bitten a person

on a previous occasion. In that case, the skin was not broken. Another 83-year-old victim was killed by either a German shepherd/Labrador mix or a pit bull terrier, but it was not clear whether both dogs attacked her, or just one of them. An 18-day-old child was killed in an attack also involving a pit bull terrier/golden Lab mix.

Golden retriever: One dog responsible for an attack was rabid. Another accidentally strangled Kaitlyn Hassard, 6, of Manorville, Long Island, on 1/24/06, by tugging at her scarf.

Golden retriever mix: Involved with Australian shepherd mix in July 26, 2008 fatal attack on Lorraine May, 74, of Titusville, Florida.

Jack Russell terrier: Patricia Schneider, 50, of Discovery Bay, Calif., whose spleen had been removed, died in 2/98 of infection, 3 days after receiving infected bite on lip at home of Diane Gardner and Elaine Goodney.

Labrador: Adult victim was attacked in her home by as many as 23 dogs owned by daughter. The Lab who severely mauled Jasmine Charboneau, 2, on 7/29/04 in Devils Lake, ND, proved to be rabid.

Labrador mix: Reports varied as to whether one case was severe enough to include.

Mastiff: One mastiff attack also involved an attacking pit bull terrier.

Old English sheep dog: Gertrude Monroe, 87, mother of Kathryn Schwarb of Birmingham, Michigan, on December 19, 1984 tripped over King Boots, 8, an award-winning show dog belonging to Schwarb, and was severely bitten. Whether Monroe died of the bites, the fall, or a heart attack or stroke preceding the fall was not clearly established. King Boots was defanged and castrated, by judicial order, as this was the second biting incident involving him.

Pit bull terrier: One case involved a dog who assisted in a killing carried out by a human. Another case was a 6-year-old girl who was caught and strangled by a pit bull's chain. An 83-year-old victim was killed by either a German shepherd/Labrador mix or a pit bull terrier, but it was not clear whether both dogs attacked her, or just one of them. One case involved a woman who was apparently killed by two pit bulls and one Rottweiler. Rashawn Thompson, 18, was mauled on 4/25/07 by 13 dogs, including one pit bull and 12 of unidentifiable mix. As many as 27 pit bull puppies in August 2008 used terminal cancer patient Michael Warner, 55, "as a food source," according to Pierce County sheriff's spokesman Ed Troyer. Warner was hospitalized in critical condition.

Pit bull/golden Lab mix: One child was killed in an attack also involving a German shepherd mix.

Pointer mix: Was involved in attack on Iran Menses, 66, of Los Angeles, on 5/28/00, along with two pit bull terriers, but apparently did not inflict any of Menses' injuries.

Poodle: Very strange case involved prescription drug use possibly affecting dog as well as victim.

Rottweiler: Jonathon Chandler, 6 months, of Lancaster, Ohio, was reportedly crushed in bed by the family Rottweiler. Four other children, ages 2-11, were removed from home of Shelly Fisher; case was investigated as possible negligent homicide. Another case involved a woman who was apparently killed by two pit bulls and one Rottweiler. Joe Mortensen, 22, of Dix Hills, N.Y., was mauled by two Rottweilers belonging to James Mazzone, 44, in June 2007, when the Rottweilers allegedly attacked his pit bull mix.

Wolf hybrid: One adult victim was a small woman who was defending two children. The other was a small woman, 61, who was apparently defending her dog. In that instance, the wolf hybrid was identified as being a wolf hybrid/German shepherd cross, with the German shepherd configuration dominant. Some experts are skeptical that the animal had any wolf ancestry at all.

Contact Info:

Merritt Clifton
Editor, ANIMAL PEOPLE
P.O. Box 960
Clinton, WA 98236

Telephone: 360-579-2505
Fax: 360-579-2575
E-mail: anmlpepl@whidbey.com
Web: www.animalpeoplenews.org

[ANIMAL PEOPLE is the leading independent newspaper providing original investigative coverage of animal protection worldwide, founded in 1992. Our readership of 30,000-plus includes the decision-makers at more than 10,000 animal protection organizations. We have no alignment or affiliation with any other entity. \$24/year; for free sample, send address.]

1

2

3

Dog Bites

Nearly 4.5 million Americans are bitten by dogs each year, half of these are children.¹ One in five dog bites results in injuries serious enough to require medical attention.¹

Why be concerned about dog bites?

- About 4.5 million people are bitten by dogs each year.¹
- Almost one in five of those who are bitten, about 885,000, require medical attention for dog bite-related injuries; half of these are children.¹
- In 2012, more than 27,000 people underwent reconstructive surgery as a result of being bitten by dogs.²

Who is at risk?

- **Children:** Among children, the rate of dog bite-related injuries is highest for those ages 5 to 9 years, and children are more likely than adults to receive medical attention for dog bites.³
- **Adult Males:** Male adults are more likely than female adults to be bitten.¹
- **People with dogs in their homes:** Among children and adults, having a dog in the household is associated with a higher incidence of dog bites. As the number of dogs in the home increases, so does the incidence of dog bites. Adults with two or more dogs in the household are five times more likely to be bitten than those living without dogs at home.¹

How can dog bites be prevented?



Any dog of any breed has the potential to bite. Dog bites are a largely preventable public health problem, see the below suggestions for preventing dog bites.

Before you bring a dog into your household:

- Work with a local animal shelter, rescue organization or reputable breeder. They can often help you find breeds and dogs within those breeds that will be a good fit for your household.
- Choose a veterinarian who can help you identify a reputable trainer for your new family member.
- Be sensitive to cues that a child is fearful or apprehensive about a dog. If a child seems frightened by dogs, wait before bringing a dog into your household. Dogs with histories of aggression are not suitable for households with children.
- Spend time with a dog before buying or adopting it. Use caution when bringing a dog into a household with an infant or toddler.

Once you decide to bring a dog into your home:

- Spay/neuter your dog (this often reduces aggressive tendencies).
- Never leave infants or young children alone with a dog.
- Don't play aggressive games with your dog (e.g., wrestling).
- Properly socialize and train any dog entering your household. Teach the dog submissive behaviors (e.g., rolling over to expose the abdomen and giving up food without growling).
- Immediately seek professional advice (e.g., from veterinarians, animal behaviorists, or responsible trainers) if the dog develops aggressive or undesirable behaviors.

Learn about Rabies

[What it is and what you can do about it](http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/index.html)
<http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/index.html>

- [Rabies and kids](http://www.cdc.gov/rabiesandkids/derick.html)
<http://www.cdc.gov/rabiesandkids/derick.html>

Teach children to review them regularly:



- Do not approach a dog.
- Do not run from a dog.
- Remain motionless if "knocked over" by an unfamiliar dog. Do not play with a dog by an adult.
- Immediately report any unusual behavior to an adult.
- Avoid direct eye contact with a dog.
- Do not disturb a dog that is sleeping, eating, or caring for puppies.
- Do not pet a dog without allowing it to see and sniff you first.
- If bitten, immediately report the bite to an adult.

In addition, the [American Veterinary Medical Association task force](https://www.avma.org/public/Health/Documents/dogbite.pdf) (<https://www.avma.org/public/Health/Documents/dogbite.pdf>) (<http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html>) has outlined recommended strategies that communities can undertake for the prevention of dog bites.

Resources for More Information

[CDC MMWR: Nonfatal Dog Bite-Related Injuries Treated in Hospital Emergency Departments --- United States, 2001](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5226a1.htm) (<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5226a1.htm>)

[So Your Child Wants a Dog? Podcast](http://www2c.cdc.gov/podcasts/player.asp?f=11206) (<http://www2c.cdc.gov/podcasts/player.asp?f=11206>) You've heard so much in the news about dog bites. Is having a dog safe? Learn steps you can take to prevent dog bites in this *Ask CDC* podcast. (4:05)

[WISQARS](http://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/index.html) (<http://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/index.html>) – WISQARS (Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System) is an interactive system that provides customized reports of injury-related data and can be used to find data on dog bites treated in an Emergency Department.

[American Veterinary Medical Association \(AVMA\)](https://www.avma.org/public/Health/Documents/dogbite.pdf) (<https://www.avma.org/public/Health/Documents/dogbite.pdf>) (<http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html>) includes recommendations for choosing the right dog, addressing behavioral concerns, as well as recommendations for a community dog bite prevention program.

References

1. Gilchrist J, Sacks JJ, White D, Kresnow MJ. Dog bites: still a problem *Injury Prevention* 2008.
2. [Society of Plastic Surgeons. 2012 Plastic Surgery Statistics Report \[online\]. 2012. \[cited 2013 Oct 24\]. Available from URL: <http://www.plasticsurgery.org/Documents/news-resources/statistics/2012-Plastic-Surgery-Statistics/full-plastic-surgery-statistics-report.pdf>](http://www.plasticsurgery.org/Documents/news-resources/statistics/2012-Plastic-Surgery-Statistics/full-plastic-surgery-statistics-report.pdf) (<http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html>)
3. CDC. Nonfatal Dog Bite--Related Injuries Treated in Hospital Emergency Departments--United States, 2001. *MMWR* 2003; 52(26): 605-610.

Page last reviewed: October 25, 2013
 Page last updated: October 25, 2013
 Content source: [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control](#), Division of Unintentional Injury Prevention

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 1600 Clifton Rd. Atlanta, GA 30333, USA
 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636) TTY: (888) 232-6348 - [Contact CDC-INFO](#)

A community approach to dog bite prevention

American Veterinary Medical Association
Task Force on Canine Aggression and Human-Canine Interactions

MEMBERS OF THE TASK FORCE

Bonnie V. Beaver, DVM, MS, DACVB (Chair), Department of Small Animal Medicine and Surgery, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-4474, representing the AVMA Executive Board.

M. Douglas Baker, MD, FAAP, Pediatric Emergency Department, Room WP143, Yale-New Haven Children's Hospital, 20 York St, New Haven, CT 06504, representing the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Robert C. Gloster, MD, FACEP, Swedish Hospital Medical Center, PO Box 14999, Seattle, WA 98114, representing the American College of Emergency Physicians.

William A. Grant, DVM, Community Veterinary Hospital, 13200 Euclid St, Garden Grove, CA 92843, representing the Professional Liability Insurance Trust.

James M. Harris, DVM, Montclair Veterinary Clinic and Hospital, 1961 Mountain Blvd, Oakland, CA 94611, representing the AVMA Committee on the Human-Animal Bond.

Benjamin L. Hart, DVM, PhD, DACVB, Department of Anatomy, Physiology, and Cell Biology, School of Veterinary Medicine, University of California, Davis, CA 95616, representing the American College of Veterinary Behaviorists.

Danny H. Hattaway, BS, Underwriting Consultant, State Farm Insurance, 1 State Farm Plaza, D-1, Bloomington, IL 61701, representing the insurance industry.

Thomas Houston, MD, Director, Science and Public Health Advocacy Programs, American Medical Association, 515 N State St, Chicago, IL 60610, representing the American Medical Association.

James R. Koschmann, DVM, MS, Crossroads Animal Hospital, 4910 Crossroads Dr, El Paso, TX 79922, representing the AVMA Animal Welfare Committee.

Randall Lockwood, PhD, Vice President/Research and Educational Outreach, Humane Society of the United States, 2100 L St NW, Washington, DC 20037, representing humane organizations.

Don Rieck, BS, Chief Animal Control Officer, Health Department, City of Sioux Falls, 132 North Dakota Ave, Sioux Falls, SD 57104, representing the National Animal Control Association.

Jeffrey J. Sacks, MD, MPH, Medical Epidemiologist, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 4770 Buford Hwy, NE (Mailstop K-45), Atlanta, GA 30341, representing the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

William S. Strauss, JD, 235A Windsor Pl, Brooklyn, NY 11215, representing the legal profession.

Jan Strother, DVM, 809 Hwy 36 E, Hartselle, AL 35640, representing the AVMA Council on Public Relations.

STAFF SUPPORT

Gail C. Golab, PhD, DVM, Division of Education and Research, American Veterinary Medical Association, 1931 N Meacham Rd, Ste 100, Schaumburg, IL 60173, staff consultant.

Julie Horvath, BS, Division of Education and Research, American Veterinary Medical Association, 1931 N Meacham Rd, Ste 100, Schaumburg, IL 60173, staff assistant.

Table of Contents

Introduction and problem statement	1733
Scope of the problem	
Which dogs bite?	
Dog bite costs to a community	
This program	
Multidisciplinary and multiprofessional groups	1734
Identify dog bite issues in the community	
Identify potential partners, allies, support, and funding sources	
Develop an advisory council	
Infrastructure	1735
Program coordinator	
Animal control agencies	
Preventive measures	
After a bite occurs	
Bite data reporting	1738
What should be reported?	
Who should report?	
Who should receive reports?	
Data management, analysis, interpretation, and dissemination	
Education	1739
Public officials and community leaders	
Professionals	
Public	
Media	1743
Know the media	
A spokesperson	
Have information readily available	
Ways to effectively convey information	
References	1745
Appendices	1746
1. Groups potentially involved in dog bite prevention	
2. Model dog and cat control ordinance	
3. Recommended data elements for reports of dog bites	
4. Model legislation for the identification and regulation of "dangerous" dogs	
5. Suggested reading for professionals	

Introduction and Problem Statement

Dog bites are a serious public health problem that inflicts considerable physical and emotional damage on victims and incurs immeasurable hidden costs to communities. Bites have been tolerated as a job-related hazard for utility and postal workers, but for many communities the problem may be more encompassing. Following a severe attack, there is usually an outcry to do something, and the something that is done often reflects a knee-jerk response. Only later do officials realize that the response was not effective and, in fact, may have been divisive for the community. To assist communities in avoiding such ineffective responses, the AVMA convened a Task Force on Canine Aggression and Human-Canine Interactions. Although the number of injuries will never be reduced to zero, Task Force members believe a well-planned proactive community approach can make a substantial impact. The information contained in this report is intended to help leaders find effective ways to address their community's dog bite concerns.^a

Scope of the problem

Dogs have shared their lives with humans for more than 12,000 years,¹ and that coexistence has contributed substantially to humans' quality of life. In the United States, there are slightly more than 53 million dogs sharing the human-canine bond,^{2,3} more dogs per capita than in any other country in the world.¹ Unfortunately, a few dogs do not live up to their image as mankind's best friend, and an estimated 4.5 million people are bitten each year,^{4,5} although the actual number injured is unknown.⁶ Approximately 334,000 people are admitted to US emergency departments annually with dog bite-associated injuries, and another 466,000 are seen in other medical settings.⁶ An unknown number of other people who have been bitten do not sustain injuries deemed serious enough to require medical attention. Still another group of individuals is not represented by these data, those that incur injuries secondary to a bite or attempted bite. For example, a jogger may trip and break an arm while fleeing from a threatening dog.

Of concern too are the demographics of typical dog bite victims. Almost half are children younger than 12 years old.^{6,8} People more than 70 years old comprise 10% of those bitten and 20% of those killed.^{9,10}

Direct costs of dog bite injuries are high. The insurance industry estimates it pays more than \$1 billion/y in homeowners' liability claims resulting from dog bites.¹¹ Hospital expenses for dog bite-related emergency visits are estimated at \$102.4 million.⁶ There are also medical insurance claims, workmen's compensation claims, lost wages, and sick leave-associated business costs that have not been calculated.

Which dogs bite?

An often-asked question is what breed or breeds of dogs are most "dangerous"? This inquiry can be prompted by a serious attack by a specific dog, or it may be the result of media-driven portrayals of a specific breed as "dangerous."^{12,13} Although this is a common concern, singling out 1 or 2 breeds for control can

result in a false sense of accomplishment.¹⁴ Doing so ignores the true scope of the problem and will not result in a responsible approach to protecting a community's citizens.

Dog bite statistics are not really statistics, and they do not give an accurate picture of dogs that bite.⁷ Invariably the numbers will show that dogs from popular large breeds are a problem. This should be expected, because big dogs can physically do more damage if they do bite, and any popular breed has more individuals that could bite. Dogs from small breeds also bite and are capable of causing severe injury. There are several reasons why it is not possible to calculate a bite rate for a breed or to compare rates between breeds. First, the breed of the biting dog may not be accurately recorded, and mixed-breed dogs are commonly described as if they were purebreds. Second, the actual number of bites that occur in a community is not known, especially if they did not result in serious injury. Third, the number of dogs of a particular breed or combination of breeds in a community is not known, because it is rare for all dogs in a community to be licensed, and existing licensing data is then incomplete.⁷ Breed data likely vary between communities, states, or regions, and can even vary between neighborhoods within a community.

Wolf hybrids are just that: hybrids between wild and domestic canids. Their behavior is unpredictable because of this hybridization, and they are usually treated as wild animals by local or state statutes. Wolf hybrids are not addressed by this program.

Sex differences do emerge from data on various types of aggression. Intact (unneutered) male dogs represented 80% of dogs presented to veterinary behaviorists for dominance aggression, the most commonly diagnosed type of aggression.¹ Intact males are also involved in 70 to 76% of reported dog bite incidents.^{7,15} The sex distribution of dogs inflicting unreported bites is not known. Unspayed females that are not part of a carefully planned breeding program may attract free-roaming males, which increases bite risk to people through increased exposure to unfamiliar dogs. Dams are protective of their puppies and may bite those who try to handle the young. Unspayed females may also contribute to the population of unwanted dogs that are often acquired by people who do not understand the long-term commitment they have undertaken, that are surrendered to animal shelters where many are destroyed, or that are turned loose under the misconception that they can successfully fend for themselves.¹⁶

Dog bite costs to a community

Costs associated with dog bite injuries cannot be readily measured, because so many intangible quality of life issues are involved. This makes it more difficult for community councils to justify the time, effort, and expense necessary to institute a bite reduction program when compared to a new fire truck, street paving, or city park. Intangible costs include time spent by volunteer and paid community officials on animal-related issues, deterioration of relationships between neighbors, building appropriate medical support, citizens' concerns about neighborhood safety for children,

homeowners' insurance costs within the community, and animal shelter support for unwanted pets. These are quality of life issues that ultimately determine the desirability of a community to its citizens and that can motivate proactive community officials to institute a prevention program.

This program

Reducing the incidence of dog bites requires active community involvement; passive attention or a token commitment is not sufficient. By actively focusing on dog bite prevention, the State of Nevada was able to reduce the incidence of bites by approximately 15%.^b Members of the Task Force represented a broad range of disciplines and designed the program presented here. It was recognized that the community approach must be multidisciplinary and that different communities will have different needs based on their level of commitment, preexisting programs, and available resources. Although the best results will be obtained by adopting the entire prevention program, the program is designed so that it may be adopted as a whole or in part. Either way, the goal remains to reduce the incidence of dog bites within communities and improve quality of life for their citizens.

Multidisciplinary and Multiprofessional Groups

It is unlikely that a dog bite prevention program will begin in a complete vacuum. Typically, some formal program is already in place under the auspices of animal control, the health department, or local law enforcement. Efforts may also be under way by other groups such as educators or dog breeders. It makes sense to identify related activities to determine what needs are not being met, find likely sources of support or resistance, and avoid duplication of effort and potential turf battles (**Appendix I**).^c

Identify dog bite issues in the community

Each community has a unique set of dog bite-related problems and its own approaches to confronting them. A central task is to identify these particular issues. The project begins by assessing the political landscape regarding dog bites and dog bite prevention. Before launching a program, it is useful to pinpoint the degree of current and potential support among corporate and community leaders as well as legislators and senior staff in the dog bite prevention program's sponsoring agency.

Recognize hot buttons—Crafting a program is easier if the objectives mesh with a highly visible community issue. For example, there may be public outcry about dog waste or a publicized dog attack. Such a situation may provide impetus for a campaign to support licensing and leash laws or ordinances pertaining to reporting dog bites. When community groups and the media have already invested in finding a solution to the dog bite problem, program organizers can dovetail their efforts and work collaboratively with these groups.

Community interest—Knowing the degree of support that exists for a prevention program is important.

The prior existence of a program suggests support, but this may not always be the case. The active support of a commissioner or health department head (local or state) is critical, because without his/her backing, a fledgling dog bite prevention program is vulnerable to shifting funding initiatives and political pressure. Public officials are influenced by vocal well-organized constituencies, so it is important to know what dog bite-related agendas are getting politicians' attention. It also helps to know whether any legislators have a strong interest in the dog bite issue.

Dogs in the news—News accounts can provide clues as to how dog-related issues have played out over time. Compare these accounts with available statistical data and scientific assessments for reliability.

Identify potential partners, allies, support, and funding sources

Determine which organizations in the community are likely to support program efforts or resist them. Some individuals and organizations will emerge as natural allies; some old hands will be glad to work with a new partner in the dog bite prevention field, and some will actively welcome a new focal point for dog bite prevention activity. Learning about various entities and their interest and involvement in dog bite control can help answer questions in the following areas.

Community resources—Organizations, agencies, businesses, and individuals offering training, assistance, consulting, library or computer search capabilities, in-kind contributions, volunteer help, or supplemental funding must be identified.

Currently available data—Before launching a major effort to collect dog bite data, it is wise to determine whether an assessment has already been done. Ask about reports related to injuries and costs from dog bites, surveys that include dog bite or dog ownership information, opinion surveys or other studies describing community perceptions about the need for dog bite prevention, and similar information. If possible, find out what happened to existing assessments and related recommendations. Knowing the history of previous evaluation and prevention efforts will help in development of a new program. If an assessment has been done, determine whether methods and conclusions are sound.

Legislation—It is important to know what interventions (eg, leash laws, "dangerous" dog ordinances) have been previously introduced and their history of success. Individuals involved in these efforts may be valuable allies in new programs. In addition, current ordinances should be evaluated to determine whether enforcement or revision could increase their effectiveness.

Barriers—Ownership of particular dog bite issues and potential turf battles should be confronted realistically. In addition, it must be acknowledged that a dog bite prevention program may attract opposition from groups on philosophical grounds (eg, groups that strongly support personal freedom argue that the gov-

ernment should not mandate licensing of dogs). Clubs for specific breeds may not be supportive if they fear their breed will be singled out in a negative way. Barriers can be overcome by a fresh approach to old problems or by agreeing to carve out areas of responsibility among interested groups. Typically, there are many more problems than there are organizations to tackle them, so it makes sense to avoid attacking similar issues.

Develop an advisory council

Obtaining community input can be as sophisticated as conducting public opinion surveys or holding focus groups to learn about what the community sees as pressing dog bite issues. More likely, there will be limited funds at the outset of the program, so more informal but also potentially valuable approaches may be required. These include meetings with potential partners and interested groups to learn about their constituencies' concerns. This type of informal interview can be a great help in uncovering key dog-related issues as perceived by the community. Talking with people in neighborhoods most affected by dog bite problems is important. For example, if there is a problem with dog bites in low-income neighborhoods, obtaining the views of people living there can help identify the nature of the problem and potential solutions.

An advisory council or task force that represents a wide spectrum of community concerns and perspectives creates a source of support for program initiatives. Advisory groups provide guidance for a dog bite prevention program and may focus on specific high-priority dog bite issues. Although organizing and maintaining an advisory council is labor-intensive, it can substantially benefit the program. Members may be able to provide access to useful information that is not otherwise easy for the coordinator to obtain. Members can also identify ways in which the program can work with appropriate voluntary organizations and associations. People with experience in dog bite control can offer perspective about the program and help identify potential pitfalls as well as successful strategies. Participation by members representing community organizations builds a sense of ownership in the dog bite prevention program.

Logistics in starting an advisory council include identifying organizations and individuals that should participate (Appendix 1), determining the size of the council, establishing a structure and operating procedures for the council and its regular meetings, assigning staff support, determining the relationship between the staff and the council, and reaching an agreement about key tasks. When community members and government officials work together to support the creation and development of a local task force, it enhances the group's visibility and impact.

To foster an involved and active advisory council, professionals agree that several criteria must be met. The number of participants should be kept manageable; 10 to 12 is a size that works well. If it is necessary to have more members for political reasons, breaking the group into smaller committees or working groups

will improve the dynamics. For example, groups could coalesce around data issues, legislation and policy, and so on. Involving participants from the start in meaningful tasks will underscore that this is a productive group. In addition, people are more likely to support a program they participated in creating, because they have a sense of ownership.

Because each community's needs and priorities differ, the advisory council's major tasks will vary. The advisory council or one of its working groups may consider the following activities:

- coordinating efforts among participating organizations
- developing an action plan
- establishing dog bite prevention priorities
- generating public and legislative support for dog bite control
- identifying dog bite reporting sources
- interpreting data
- identifying and obtaining resources for program activities (educational, financial, staffing)
- providing technical expertise for the program
- recommending goals and objectives for prevention

It is recommended that the program be overseen by a paid coordinator. The program coordinator and other staff involved can contribute to the advisory council's success by good meeting planning and preparation, regular communication with members, working with the advisory council chairperson to set the agenda, and helping to solve problems that threaten to derail the process. As with any volunteer effort, a dog bite prevention advisory council is likely to thrive if the coordinator nurtures its members with regular expressions of appreciation.

Infrastructure

A coordinated effort is essential for success in any venture, and each individual or organization involved must have a clear sense of their/its responsibilities. Reducing the incidence of dog bites requires the cooperation of many groups, including animal control agencies, the human and veterinary medical communities, educators, departments of health, and the local licensing authority. Open and consistent communication is an integral part of an effective program, and one entity should be designated as the coordinating agency. A logical coordinating agency would be the health department or animal control. In addition, it is imperative that an appropriate agency be granted authority to conduct investigations and make recommendations.

Program coordinator

As previously mentioned, dog bite prevention efforts should be assisted by a paid staff person. Because the diversity of input is so great, it is recommended that the office of the advisory council's program coordinator be located within the municipality's coordinating agency. Individuals, agencies, or organizations that come into contact with or are aware of a "dangerous" dog or risky situation should provide this information to the coordinator. The coordinator should then relay all information to the proper recipients.

Animal control agencies

Animal control officers are the frontline in controlling animal bites. A well-resourced animal control agency is vital for public health and safety within any community. In some communities, animal control is a stand-alone agency. In others it is administered through the local city or county health director or is a subsidiary of the local police department or sheriff's office. Wherever located, the functions of animal control within communities are multiple, including:

- training of animal control officers and ancillary personnel
- licensing of dogs and cats
- enforcement of leash laws, ordinances, regulations, and statutes
- control of unrestrained and free-roaming animal populations
- investigation of animal bite-related incidents
- administration of rabies quarantine programs after an animal bites
- bite data management, analysis, and dissemination
- regulation of "dangerous" animals
- educational outreach within the community regarding responsible ownership, spay/neuter programs, control of "dangerous" animals, rabies vaccinations
- coordination of efforts

Larger communities often possess more resources to properly fund animal control agencies and provide adequate staff¹⁷ and training; however, smaller animal control programs can also be effective, even when they operate on a limited budget. Dedicated personnel can accomplish much if they have community support, including support from law enforcement and the judiciary.

Preventive measures

Preventive measures are designed to minimize risk and should be addressed by all communities.

Control of unrestrained and free-roaming animals—Reasonable and enforceable laws or ordinances are required for good control of unrestrained or free-roaming animals (**Appendix 2**).¹⁸ Laws written to ensure that owned animals are confined to their property or kept on a leash make freeing a community of unrestrained and free-roaming animals easier. Although most dog bites occur on the property where the dog lives, unrestrained or free-roaming dogs do pose a substantial threat to the public. Enforcement of restraint laws is, therefore, essential if the incidence of dog bites is to be reduced. It is important to protect animal owners by providing an adequate amount of time for them to claim animals that have been impounded. Because of economic constraints, the current standard in the industry is 3 working days; however, 5 days may be more reasonable to ensure successful owner-animal reunions. Control of unrestrained and free-roaming animal populations requires an adequately staffed, trained, and funded animal control agency.

Licensing of dogs—The primary benefit of licensing animals is identification, should that animal

become lost. Licensing also ensures rabies vaccinations are current, allows quick identification in case of a bite incident, and provides revenue to help offset the costs of administering the animal control program. An effective program can be a source of reliable demographic data as well.

Vaccinations—Rabies vaccinations are normally a prerequisite for licensing dogs and cats, because they are an important control measure for a major public health concern. In addition to protecting pets, rabies vaccinations provide a barrier between infected wild animals and humans. Vaccination has reduced confirmed cases of rabies in dogs from 6,949 in 1947 to 126 in 1997.¹⁹

Breed or type bans—Concerns about "dangerous" dogs have caused many local governments to consider supplementing existing animal control laws with ordinances directed toward control of specific breeds or types of dogs. Members of the Task Force believe such ordinances are inappropriate and ineffective.

Statistics on fatalities and injuries caused by dogs cannot be responsibly used to document the "dangerousness" of a particular breed, relative to other breeds, for several reasons. First, a dog's tendency to bite depends on at least 5 interacting factors: heredity, early experience, later socialization and training, health (medical and behavioral), and victim behavior.⁷ Second, there is no reliable way to identify the number of dogs of a particular breed in the canine population at any given time (eg, 10 attacks by Doberman Pinschers relative to a total population of 10 dogs implies a different risk than 10 attacks by Labrador Retrievers relative to a population of 1,000 dogs). Third, statistics may be skewed, because often they do not consider multiple incidents caused by a single animal. Fourth, breed is often identified by individuals who are not familiar with breed characteristics and who commonly identify dogs of mixed ancestry as if they were purebreds. Fifth, the popularity of breeds changes over time, making comparison of breed-specific bite rates unreliable.

Breed-specific ordinances imply that there is an objective method of determining the breed of a particular dog, when in fact, there is not at this time. Owners of mixed-breed dogs or dogs that have not been registered with a national kennel club have no way of knowing whether their dog is one of the types identified and whether they are required to comply with a breed-specific ordinance. In addition, law enforcement personnel typically have no scientific means for determining a dog's breed that can withstand the rigors of legal challenge, nor do they have a foolproof method for deciding whether owners are in compliance or in violation of laws. Such laws assume that all dogs of a certain breed are likely to bite, instead of acknowledging that most dogs are not a problem. These laws often fail to take normal dog behavior into account and may not assign appropriate responsibilities to owners.

Some municipalities have attempted to address notice and enforcement problems created by unregistered and mixed-breed dogs by including in the ordinance a description of the breed at which the ordi-

nance is directed. Unfortunately, such descriptions are usually vague, rely on subjective visual observation, and result in many more dogs than those of the intended breed being subject to the restrictions of the ordinance.

Animal control legislation has traditionally been considered a constitutionally legitimate exercise of local government power to protect public safety and welfare. Breed-specific ordinances, however, raise constitutional questions concerning dog owners' fourteenth amendment rights of due process and equal protection.²⁰ When a specific breed of dog is selected for control, 2 constitutional questions are raised: first, because all types of dogs may inflict injury to people and property, ordinances addressing only 1 breed of dog appear to be underinclusive and, therefore, violate owners' equal protection rights; and second, because identification of a dog's breed with the certainty necessary to impose sanctions on the dog's owner is impossible, such ordinances have been considered unconstitutionally vague and, therefore, to violate due process.

After a bite occurs

It is important to have a well-defined postbite program in place to minimize physical and emotional pain for dog bite victims. This allows animal control personnel to work efficiently, protects animals that are victims of false allegations, and provides the judiciary with reasonable alternatives that address a variety of situations. State laws may dictate parts of this process.

Investigation of animal bite-related incidents—

Any animal bite or incident must be thoroughly investigated and substantiated by an agent of the empowered investigating authority such as an animal control officer, police officer, or peace officer. Ideally, the investigating authority should be the same authority that enforces related ordinances or laws to give continuity and credibility to all investigations. Investigating officers must be given authority to perform their duties by statute or ordinance. Clear, concise, standardized information concerning the incident must be obtained to ensure its successful resolution and facilitate long-term data collection (**Appendix 3**).

Postbite rabies quarantine programs—A healthy dog that is currently vaccinated against rabies and that bites a human should be examined by a licensed veterinarian to determine its health status. If no signs of illness compatible with rabies are detected, the dog should be quarantined. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has set the quarantine period for dogs, cats, and ferrets at 10 days, including the day of the bite. Vaccinated dogs can be allocated to 2 categories: those that have bitten a member of the immediate family and those that have bitten an individual outside the immediate family. Home quarantine can be considered for vaccinated dogs that have bitten a member of the immediate family, assuming the owner can confine the dog in a manner that prevents further exposure. Vaccinated dogs that have bitten a human outside of the immediate family generally should be quarantined at the local shelter or veterinarian's office. At the end of the quarantine period, the dog should

undergo a physical examination. In addition, interim evaluations are highly recommended.

A dog that is not currently vaccinated against rabies and that bites a human should be considered a rabies suspect and be appropriately quarantined. Contact with the dog during the quarantine period should be strictly limited to individuals who have completed rabies prophylaxis and are up-to-date on serologic testing and booster vaccinations. Physical examinations should be conducted at the beginning and end of the quarantine period to determine the dog's health status. Quarantined dogs may be treated by a veterinarian, but rabies vaccines should not be administered to the dog until the quarantine period is complete. If at any time during the quarantine period the dog has signs of illness compatible with rabies, it should be humanely euthanized and samples submitted for rabies testing.

Records of all bites must be kept, including information specifically identifying the dog and owner. These should be crosschecked with each incident for evidence of a chronic problem.

Identification and regulation of "dangerous" dogs—

Certain dogs may be identified within a community as being "dangerous," usually as the result of a serious injury or threat. That classification, because it carries with it serious implications, should be well defined by law (**Appendix 4**). Any such definition should include an exclusion for justifiable actions of dogs. Procedures should be outlined that take into account the potential public health threat, are reasonable to enforce, and convey the seriousness of the situation to the owner. Although animal control officers or their statutory counterparts are responsible for collecting information, a judge or justice will hear evidence from animal control officers and the dog's owner to determine whether that dog fits established criteria for "dangerousness." In some municipalities, a hearing panel comprising a cross section of private citizens hears alleged "dangerous" dog evidence and has been given the authority to declare a dog "dangerous" if deemed appropriate. Any declaration by a hearing panel, judge, or justice is subject to judicial review.

A judge, justice, or hearing panel may promulgate orders directing an animal control officer to seize and hold an alleged "dangerous" dog pending judicial review. If a dog is determined to be "dangerous" by a judge, justice, or hearing panel, the owner of that dog is usually required to register the dog with the appropriate health department or animal control facility. The judicial process may also require the owner to follow other rigid requirements, including but not limited to permanent identification of offending dogs, training and assessment of dogs and owners, and having offending dogs spayed or neutered.

Because the judicial branch is such an integral part of any enforcement action, the judiciary must assist during formulation of "dangerous" dog laws. If the judiciary is involved, its members will be aware of the process that must be followed to declare a dog "dangerous." In addition, they will be aware of steps that have already been completed and the options available when a particular case reaches the courts.

Bite Data Reporting

Accurate and complete reporting of dog bites is an essential element of a bite prevention program. These reports are vital not only for case management and judicial review but for planning, implementing, and evaluating the status of the problem. Major goals of comprehensive dog bite data reporting include:

- accurately defining victim demographics to identify populations at greatest risk for bites and allow targeting of educational efforts
- defining dog and owner characteristics associated with higher risk so that an actuarial approach to the dog bite problem is possible (this facilitates effective program planning and proper targeting of control measures)
- defining high risk geographic areas at city, county, or neighborhood levels so that limited resources for animal control and public education can be appropriately deployed
- establishing baseline data so that the impact of specific elements of the bite prevention program can be assessed
- providing an accurate, detailed, unbiased, objective source of information for decision makers, media, and the public interested in the dog bite problem and its prevention
- providing critical information for proper management of dog bite cases

What should be reported?

At a minimum, a dog bite case should be defined as any medically-attended dog bite or any dog bite resulting in a report to an animal control or law enforcement agency. This would presumably cover those instances consuming public resources and would also include cases that may result in litigation.

A number of data elements should be captured on a report form such that it is comprehensive in scope without placing unnecessary burdens on reporting agencies (Appendix 3). Fatal and severe dog attacks on humans have been associated with prior or concurrent attacks on pets or livestock, so it is important that communities also track those incidents. Maintaining records of incidents of menacing behaviors of owned dogs running at large in the community may be found useful in later legal actions.

Who should report?

The goal is to report any medically treated dog bite or any bite resulting in a report to, or response from, an animal control agency, humane society with animal control responsibilities, or law enforcement agency. Therefore, the primary sources of data should be:

- animal control or law enforcement agencies responding to a dog bite complaint
- health professionals attending to a bite injury (hospital emergency staff, urgent care facility staff, private physicians, school or camp medical staff, medical staff of other entities such as military bases or reservations, and veterinarians)

Recognizing that many dog bites go unreported, a comprehensive program to assess dog bite incidence

should consider possible secondary sources of data. These may include:

- anonymous surveys of high-risk populations (eg, school-age children) that may clarify the true extent of risk in a community
- anonymous surveys of the public (eg, phone surveys) that can help document the extent of bite injuries and provide a basis for estimating the ratio of unreported to reported bites
- reports from professionals including veterinarians, animal behaviorists, dog trainers, groomers, and kennel operators who are informed of a bite incident (mandating that any or all of these professions report bites may be unrealistic given the potential legal consequences of identifying an animal as a biter)

Reporting mandates are often inconsistent between jurisdictions or are poorly enforced. Current local and state reporting regulations should be reviewed, as should directives from health or veterinary officials. If current provisions are adequate, it may be necessary to implement procedures to reeducate professionals concerning their reporting obligations and periodically remind them of these obligations. When a failure to report is uncovered, it may be an opportunity to gain the attention of the professional, because sanctions may be imposed.

Who should receive reports?

Reporting should be coordinated by one agency. Logical agencies to coordinate reports include animal control or the public health department. The coordinating agency, perhaps through the dog bite prevention program coordinator, must assume responsibility for maintaining all information and disseminating that information to other appropriate individuals or agencies (eg, veterinarians, physicians, the dog owner, and those involved in follow-up educational efforts).

To insure consistency and compliance, regulations or procedures should unambiguously state to whom reports should be submitted and within what time frame the reports should be submitted.

Data management, analysis, interpretation, and dissemination

Because multiple sources may report the same case, procedures should be in place to permit combination of data from multiple sources into a single report. Avenues should be developed for electronic submission of reports to assist in rapid response, to streamline reporting to higher levels of government, and to facilitate data analysis. Whereas disposition of individual incidents is the first goal for reporting, there is much to be learned from looking at the overall picture. Keeping information in an electronic database simplifies the latter.

Data should be reviewed at regular intervals (no less than yearly) to determine whether the incidence and severity of dog bites is getting better, worse, or staying the same. Basic analysis consists of studying the characteristics of incidents, including:

- time—yearly trends, peak months, day of week, time of day. This can help with scheduling animal

control services as well as dispatch and response planning.

- place—locating every incident on a map with a pin. Are there hot spots? This can help target high risk areas for future control.
- person—victims and animal owners: age, sex, race, size. Can they be targeted for education?
- dog—proportion of offenders by sex and breed, proportion running at large, proportion neutered, proportion with prior reported problems, history of rabies vaccinations, licensing history. Have these proportions changed over time?

Successful evaluation and resolution of a community problem and accurate assimilation, evaluation, and use of quality data requires interactive assessment, feedback, and information exchange. City, county, and state public health practitioners, epidemiologists, and representatives of public health organizations (eg, the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians, the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists, the Association of State and Territorial Health Officers, and the National Association of County and City Health Officials) can provide communities with considerable expertise in the acquisition and interpretation of dog bite data. Their participation should be encouraged.

Education

Education is key to reducing dog bites within a community. The list of those to be educated and those who may educate includes everyone who regularly comes into contact with dog owners and potential victims (eg, veterinarians, veterinary technicians and assistants, animal control officers, animal behaviorists, dog trainers, humane society personnel, physicians, school nurses, public health officials, teachers, and parents).

The purposes of this section are to educate city officials and community leaders about the role of various professionals in an educational program to reduce dog bites, provide starting references to ensure a core of knowledge for those professionals (**Appendix 5**), and assist in identification of the educational needs of various constituencies within a community.

Public officials and community leaders

Public officials and community leaders are the people to whom residents look for assistance with social problems. Their influence is important and well recognized. If a community dog bite prevention program is to gain public acceptance and be effective, community leaders must be well-informed about dog-related issues within their community and in general.

Professionals

Professionals from many backgrounds need to be involved in bite prevention programs. Their expertise is essential to making realistic decisions about what should and can be done to prevent or follow up on dog bite incidents and in recognizing what is normal or abnormal behavior for a dog. Several of these professionals will likely be members of the advisory commit-

tee, but all should be encouraged to be a part of a community's efforts to decrease the impact of a dog bite problem.

Many professions mentioned in this document are science-based. This means their members are used to making decisions on the basis of peer-reviewed data-supported information rather than gut feelings. This approach to decision making results in improved outcomes. Because the dog bite problem impacts so many different groups, networking between community leaders and professionals is important. The following sections describe ways that various professionals and community leaders can work together toward a common goal.

Veterinarians—Veterinarians are scientists trained for a minimum of 7 to 8 years and then licensed to diagnose and treat animal problems both medical and behavioral. Although most people think of veterinarians as performing animal vaccinations and surgical neutering, the practice of veterinary medicine includes all subdisciplines typically associated with human medicine. The study of animal behavior both normal and abnormal has become more important within the profession as animals have become more important to their owners. Dogs are now four-legged members of the family, rather than farm animals that help bring cows into the barn at milking time. With this change in the dog's role have come unrealistic owner expectations about what constitutes normal behavior for a dog. Veterinarians can educate dog owners as to what behavior is normal, can help dog owners teach their dogs to respond appropriately in various environments and provide referrals to reputable dog trainers, and can assist owners with behavioral problems, including those that have a medical basis or are responsive to medication.

Until recently, animal behavior was not often taught in veterinary curricula. Many veterinarians have had to acquire their knowledge of normal and abnormal canine behavior from continuing education programs and professional textbooks. For this reason, different veterinarians have different degrees of knowledge about behavior. All veterinarians, however, have access to board-certified veterinary behaviorists for help with behavioral problems beyond their expertise.

Although the time, physical, and emotional demands of veterinary practice can be overwhelming and leave limited time to devote to a formal community prevention program, veterinarians can substantially impact prevention efforts through their professional contact with prospective and current dog owners. This contact should begin before the pet is acquired. Providing unbiased information on pet selection can help prevent inappropriate owner-dog pairings. Prospective dog owners often make spur-of-the-moment selections that are based on warm-and-fuzzy feelings and unrealistic expectations. Encouraging prospective dog owners to seek information from their veterinarian about the characteristics and needs of various types of pets and encouraging future dog owners to ask for guarantees from puppy providers can minimize future problems. When owners take their newly

acquired dogs to their veterinarian for an initial examination and immunizations, the veterinarian has a second opportunity to provide these owners with good medical, nutritional, and behavioral advice.²¹ Finally, veterinarians can educate owners during their dogs' routine examinations (asking appropriate questions can reveal problems an owner may not have recognized) or when their dogs are evaluated for specific problems.

Board-certified veterinary behaviorists—The American College of Veterinary Behaviorists (ACVB), an American Veterinary Medical Association-recognized veterinary specialty organization, certifies graduate veterinarians in the specialty of veterinary behavior. To become certified, a veterinarian must have extensive postgraduate training, sufficient experience, and pass a credential review and examination set by the ACVB. Diplomates of this organization work with problem animals by referral from the animal's regular veterinarian, consult with practitioners on cases, and give continuing education seminars on animal behavior. Although many communities may not have the benefit of a resident board-certified veterinary behaviorist, veterinarians have access to and may consult with their specialist colleagues when necessary.

Veterinary technicians—Veterinary technicians are integral members of the veterinary health care team who have been educated in the care and handling of animals, basic principles of normal and abnormal life processes, and routine laboratory and clinical procedures. They perform many of the same tasks for veterinarians that nurses and others perform for physicians. Veterinary technicians are often frontline people when it comes to educating pet owners, particularly in general veterinary practices; they greet clients and answer initial inquiries, clarify instructions, provide clients with appropriate print, audio, and video educational material, and answer questions. Certainly, they are an important part of the educational team when it comes to dog bite prevention.

Like veterinarians, veterinary technicians have several opportunities to educate clients. Veterinarians may be consulted prior to owners acquiring a new pet, and veterinary technicians can help provide information on appropriate pet selection. Veterinary technicians regularly counsel owners during new puppy appointments, and this is a particularly good opportunity to provide owners with information on bite prevention, including the importance of socialization and training. Routine physical examinations are times when veterinary technicians can reinforce the importance of these early lessons and training, and they can help veterinarians identify potential aggression problems through observation and dialog with owners. Veterinary technicians can also be tapped to educate nonpet-owning children and adults through school or other programs.

Veterinary technology programs do not always offer curricula in animal behavior and, consequently, many technicians do not have formal training in this area when they enter practice. Continuing education that includes basic principles of animal behavior is

essential for veterinary technicians, just as it is for their employers. Maintaining a clinic reference library of appropriate print, audio, and video material for reinforcement and enrichment and for client education is useful.

Behavioral education for veterinary technicians relative to dog bite prevention should include recognition of classic canine behavioral displays and an understanding of the basic types of canine aggression and their prevention. The aim is to assist technicians in conveying dog bite prevention information to owners. Veterinary technicians must not be placed in the role of diagnosing or treating canine aggression.

Animal behaviorists—There are a number of scientists with PhD degrees in academic fields related to animal behavior who can serve as valuable resources for communities attempting to reduce dog bite injuries. Because of their science-based backgrounds, they can be particularly helpful in setting up protocols to determine the extent of the problem within a community and whether ongoing programs are having a substantial impact.

As a note of caution, the terms animal behaviorist or animal psychologist are often used by individuals who do not have strong scientific backgrounds but who want to work with problem dogs. There is no method to evaluate the competence of these individuals, and they may be more harmful than helpful to a community's efforts.

Dog trainers—This is a diverse group of individuals with no uniformly recognized credentialing body or measures of competence. Although there are many good dog trainers, there are also trainers that use inappropriate methods of behavioral modification that can negatively affect a dog's behavior, making the dog more dangerous to the owner and the community. It is important that communities make a concerted effort to work with responsible trainers who interact closely with veterinarians and PhD-degreed animal behaviorists. A qualified responsible dog trainer can be a valuable asset to a community advisory group.

Obedience training by itself does not prevent the development of behavior problems,²² and animals that are sent to a training facility may not learn how to obey their owners, because the owners do not learn how to give commands. For problem animals, training is only part of the solution.

Physicians and nurses—With a dog residing in 1 of every 3 US homes and approximately 53 million dogs in the United States,^{23,6} exposure of the physician or nurse, their family members, or their patients to dogs during the course of daily life is inevitable. Dogs have become important members of many families, and the presence of a pet in the home can affect an individual's own decisions about care. Most physicians are familiar with at least 1 example of a person refusing hospitalization, because there was no one else in the home to care for their pet.

Because 334,000 Americans are seen in emergency departments for dog bite injuries each year, 466,000 are seen in other medical practice settings, and 6,000

are hospitalized,⁶ it behooves human healthcare providers to acquaint themselves with community and personal strategies to prevent dog bites. Furthermore, just as occurrences of infectious diseases such as measles are reported to enable investigation of outbreaks and development of control measures to protect the public, dog bites must be reported so that cause and prevention can be addressed. Communities differ in their requirements for reporting, and practitioners must understand what is required in their area.

Traditionally, when confronted with patients seeking care for dog bites, physicians and nurses have confined their roles to providing medical treatment. With the expanding roles of physicians and nurses, however, disease prevention has become an important issue. In addition to competently treating dog bites and their complications, healthcare providers need to be aware of critical roles they can play in reducing dog bite injuries.

Advising patients about safe behaviors appears effective in preventing injury.²³⁻²⁶ Teaching children, parents, and patients who own dogs about proper behavior around dogs and responsible dog ownership is advisable given the frequency of human-canine contact in our society. Physicians can recommend contacting a veterinarian for pet selection information and advice if an individual or family is considering dog ownership, and for information about canine behavior and obedience training if a dog is already part of the family. Pediatricians provide age-appropriate injury prevention counseling during wellness visits.²⁶ Dog bite prevention should be a part of this counseling. Dog safety tips can also be included in packets of materials routinely sent home with new mothers.

When a patient is being treated for a bite, an opportunity exists to prevent future injury by teaching bite-avoidance strategies. Probing into the circumstances of the current bite may reveal which strategies should be emphasized. Taking advantage of teachable moments should be considered part of curative care. Consulting with a veterinarian may help human health care providers identify subjects they can address during postbite sessions.

As witnesses to the health-related outcomes of dog bites, physicians and nurses are particularly credible sources of information and can be effective spokespersons. Pediatricians and nurses should be full partners in community efforts to reduce dog bite injuries.

Animal control personnel—The staff of a well-resourced animal control program often includes an education coordinator who can train teachers, school nurses, and volunteers to become dog bite prevention educators within the community's school system (similar to volunteers in the McGruff crime prevention program presented to primary-school children). For animal control personnel, job-related continuing education is important. Programs are available through the National Animal Control Association.

Humane society/animal shelter/rescue group personnel—Dog bite injuries have negative repercussions for dogs as well as people, and humane society/animal shelter/rescue group personnel must deal with these

issues. Dogs causing severe injuries may be brought to humane facilities for rabies quarantine or euthanasia. Dogs that have threatened to bite or that have nipped may be surrendered to shelters or rescue groups, sometimes without full acknowledgment by their owners.¹⁰ Shelter personnel are forced to decide which dogs can be placed in new homes and which are not suitable for adoption. Progressive organizations work with veterinarians and animal control officers to educate their staff about safe dog handling and objective evaluation techniques. Record keeping and follow-up studies expand their knowledge base about what works in their community and what does not. Well-trained and dedicated humane society/animal shelter/rescue group personnel can be valuable community resources for public education as well.

Public

Public education is critical to the success of any dog bite prevention program, because half of all bites are inflicted by the family dog.²⁷ Only about 10% of bites are inflicted by dogs unknown to the victim.^{7,15} A public education effort must target a variety of individuals and age groups, and one individual should be assigned to integrate its components. If a special advisory council or task force is convened, its paid coordinator would be a logical choice to coordinate the public education effort. Alternatively, the public education coordinator could be a member of a municipal group such as the local health department, animal control agency, or board of education, or a member of a stakeholder group such as a humane society or veterinary association. Many educational programs targeted at various audiences exist and are included in the dog bite prevention resource list found on the American Veterinary Medical Association Web site (www.avma.org). As new materials become available, they will be added to this resource list.

Children—Children are the most common victims of serious dog bites. Seventy percent of fatal dog attacks and more than half of bite wounds requiring medical attention involve children.^{7,9,15} In addition, almost half of all children are bitten before 18 years of age.^{27,28} The most vulnerable youngsters are 5- to 9-year-old boys,^{6,7,8} but smaller children can also be seriously injured.²⁹ Dog bite injuries rank third only to bicycle and baseball/softball injuries as a leading cause of emergency admission of children to hospitals.⁶ Children's natural behaviors, including running, yelling, grabbing, hitting, quick and darting movements, and maintaining eye contact, put them at risk for dog bite injuries. Proximity of a child's face to the dog also increases the likelihood that facial injuries will occur.^{6,7,29-31}

Target group—The first step in a child education effort is determining what population of children to target and when. The logical primary audience is those at greatest risk: children in grades kindergarten through 4. Late winter or early spring appears to be the best time to institute a campaign, because the school year is concluding and, as children spend more time outside, exposure risk increases.³² It is critical

that school administrators buy into the concept of a dog bite prevention program; therefore, requests to the school district must be made by committed convincing well-organized individuals. Because school curricula are crowded, time blocks for dog bite prevention education should be requested early within the school system's calendar year. If such a block of time is not available, an alternative is to have a veterinarian or physician present a 1-hour lecture or assembly program to the entire student body. Once dog bite prevention education has been included within the curriculum (or has been scheduled to be provided through a special lecture or assembly program), teachers, nurses, and volunteers should consider addressing the school's parent-teacher organization to inform parents of upcoming dog bite prevention training for their children.

Secondary efforts—Secondary targets include children in other settings, such as early education programs (eg, Head Start, day care centers, recreational centers, and camps).

Identifying instructors—Who teaches the material will depend on expertise within the community. For classroom instruction, teachers who have had in-service training, school nursing staff, health educators, or trained volunteers are logical choices. Stakeholder groups (eg, veterinarians, veterinary technicians, animal control officers, physicians, nurses, humane society staff) may provide a ready source of volunteers for classroom instruction and special programs.

Adults—Adult citizens must understand the need for and support a strong dog bite prevention program not only for their own safety but for the safety of others in their community. It is this understanding that gives a prevention program long-term stability. All adults should learn appropriate behaviors around dogs so that they can protect themselves, teach their own children, serve as an example for others, and reinforce appropriate behaviors in other children at every opportunity. Adults also serve as local eyes for animal control so that roaming dogs are controlled.

Educational materials sent home with school children, distributed by pediatricians during well-child visits, inserted in public utility bills, and produced by an enlightened local media are all reasonable approaches. Involving representatives of service organizations and community groups during a prevention program's planning and active stages will strengthen commitment.

Active adults (eg, joggers, bicyclists, golfers) whose outdoor activities provide greater exposure to dogs are most at risk for injury. To reach these individuals, bite prevention information should be provided to local interest groups, recreational facilities, and health clubs.

Target group—Primary adult targets within the community are those who have children and who are active in outdoor activities.

Secondary efforts—Secondary targets include individuals between the ages of 21 and 65 years.

Identifying instructors—Materials can be developed or selected by animal control personnel, veterinarians, veterinary technicians, or other people knowledgeable about dog behavior. Information can be distributed through a number of channels such as those identified above.

The elderly—As people age, they become more susceptible to injury and disease. Thinning skin increases risk of bruising, and a bite producing a simple puncture wound in a younger individual can cause a severe laceration in a senior citizen. Sensory perception decreases so that an elderly person may not see a threatening dog or may not be able to read its behavioral signals accurately. In addition, diminished motor skills mean that the elderly are less able to physically protect themselves or escape.

Another concern for the elderly is that their beloved pet may not be trustworthy around their grandchildren. Dogs not raised around small children or not frequently exposed to them may not be socialized toward them.¹ This increases the likelihood of aggressive behavior being directed toward these children.

An educational program for senior citizens can be implemented in various settings. Materials may be provided through community services for the elderly such as church groups, visiting nurse programs, meals-on-wheels, recreational centers, or travel groups. Secondary targets are shopping malls and the media. Trained volunteers, especially from dog-associated professions, are logical sources of information. Human healthcare professionals can be an important source of information for the elderly because of the frequency of their interactions.

Target group—Primary targets are grandparents and people aged 60 years or older who have dogs in their homes.

Secondary efforts—Secondary targets include other individuals who are at least 60 years old.

Identifying instructors—Physicians can interact with these people during clinic visits. Animal control personnel, veterinarians, veterinary technicians, and people knowledgeable about dog behavior can select or produce resource information.

Animal owners—People who own dogs have a wide variety of views about their responsibilities. For some, dog care means providing food and water when the thought occurs to them. At the other end of this spectrum is the person who actively makes sure the pet is appropriately fed, well-trained, licensed, and healthy. Some individuals view dogs as disposable items that can be abandoned at any sign of trouble or expense. Once a community establishes acceptable standards for responsible ownership, dog owners must be informed of these expectations and related ordinances, and rules must be enforced. Owners and future owners must be educated about their unique set of responsibilities, which include appropriate pet selection, providing quality nutrition, housing, and medical care, compliance with confinement and licensing requirements,

appropriate behavioral training, and supervision of interactions between dogs and children. Citizens must understand that pet ownership is an ongoing responsibility, not a passive activity.

Dog owners can be provided with information through various avenues. Veterinarians and their staff are logical educators and distributors. Local dog clubs and trainers provide services to more conscientious owners. Businesses that sell pet foods and supplies should also be encouraged to provide bite prevention materials to their customers. Information can be distributed with utility bills, and animal shelters can provide classes for people who are considering acquiring a pet. Incentives for attendance at bite prevention classes could include reduced fees for licenses and coupons for vaccinations, food, and obedience classes. The most difficult group of dog owners to reach is those with minimal attachment to their pets. Although strong enforcement of local regulations will change some owners into former owners, most will continue to own dogs. Therefore, education should be an integral part of any enforcement program. A good working relationship with the judiciary is critical so that offenders of animal-related ordinances are required to take courses that emphasize responsible ownership.

Target group—Primary targets are adults who already own dogs.

Secondary efforts—Secondary targets are adults who are considering getting a new dog.

Identifying instructors—Information for this target audience can come from various sources, and its distribution should be approached in a number of ways. Animal control officers and members of the legal profession can describe what is expected regarding local regulations and the serious consequences if these regulations are violated. Veterinarians and their staff can educate owners about vaccinations, neutering, restraint, and other health care issues. Dog club members and trainers can assist by providing socialization and training instruction and can help educate owners about being good dog-owning neighbors.

Victims—When someone becomes a dog bite victim, a teachable moment is created. How useful that moment becomes in preventing future incidents depends tremendously on the seriousness of the bite and the fear response of the victim. Scare-producing or threatening events are good times for dog bite prevention information to be conveyed. However, the time surrounding a serious injury is generally too emotionally charged to be of value for dog bite prevention education.

Who provides information to victims depends, in part, on who is contacted about the incident. In addition to medical personnel, animal control's investigative efforts usually require a home visit. Routine visits to a physician should include gathering historical information about the patient's interactions with dogs to identify patients who would benefit from additional education. Media stories that reinforce correct approaches to prevention can also touch many when they are most receptive.

Target group—Individuals who have recently been bitten by a dog seriously enough to require medical attention but not so seriously as to have sustained severe injuries are the primary target.

Secondary efforts—Secondary targets are individuals who have been bitten by a dog in the past.

Identifying instructors—Medical professionals and animal control personnel are the individuals who encounter this group.

Businesses—Community businesses need to address dog bite prevention as well. Certain businesses (eg, veterinary clinics, grooming and boarding facilities, animal control, pet sitting agencies) revolve around direct contact with dogs, and employee education is critical from a safety and liability standpoint. Employees of other businesses will occasionally encounter dogs in the course of their daily job activities (eg, utility workers, police officers, parcel carriers, and emergency medical technicians). Training conducted by an animal control officer or other knowledgeable professional may provide employees with the tools they need to safely handle contacts with at-large animals, attack/guard dogs, or dogs who simply reside on the premises of those facilities where they do business.

Target group—Primary targets are employees and business owners who will be working with dogs on a daily basis.

Secondary efforts—Employees of companies who are likely to encounter dogs in their daily business activities can be considered secondary targets.

Identifying instructors—Animal control personnel, veterinarians, veterinary technicians, and dog trainers who are experienced at dealing with dogs in a variety of environments. These individuals will need to customize presentations to the type of situations most likely encountered by the target audiences.

Media

The local media play an important role in a community's efforts at bite prevention. For this reason, it is suggested that 1 member of the advisory council or task force be a media representative. In addition, the advisory council can be proactive in helping the media convey important and appropriate messages. Sensational events provide an opportunity to convey important messages. Regular features can reinforce principles and keep educational efforts flowing.

Know the media

Your key to the public eye and ear is a selective up-to-date list of local media contacts who have an interest in animal issues. Such a list can be developed by undertaking a comprehensive media survey. Check the local library for publications that list names, telephone numbers, and short descriptions of your community's media outlets. Call each office or studio to discover which desks or departments should receive your inquiries and press releases. Read local newspapers and listen to local radio and television news and feature

programs to identify reporters and hosts who address animal issues. Finding out whether these individuals gather their own news or use wire services will allow you to target press releases and materials to those who are most likely to use them. Contact local freelance writers to see whether they would be willing to feature a bite prevention message in an upcoming piece. Be aware that your media list will be dynamic, and take time to update the names of specific contacts. Once a helpful story is published, or a reporter conveys your message during a broadcast, be sure to acknowledge that effort by sending a thank-you note or making an appreciative telephone call.

A spokesperson

The community should identify a spokesperson who has the expertise to address complicated dog bite-related issues, and this individual should be provided with media training so that he/she becomes an effective communicator with the print and broadcast media. It is the spokesperson's responsibility to convey information clearly, accurately, and promptly. In various situations, this individual can identify when there are not enough animal control officers to prevent dog packs from forming or when a dog has been "sicked" on a person as a weapon. A knowledgeable and effective communicator can turn a publicized bite into a learning opportunity by providing suggestions on how that bite could have been prevented (eg, the dog was not appropriately controlled or confined, or a child was left unsupervised).

Have information readily available

The advisory council or task force should create a 1-page fact sheet for use by the media and the spokesperson. This fact sheet should include the number of dog bite incidents occurring in the community during the past year, the number of dogs in the community, the number of licensed dogs in the community, what local laws govern dog ownership and control, and to whom problems should be reported. A list of community resources should also be available.

Ways to effectively convey information

Because animal stories are popular with the media, there are numerous opportunities to convey bite prevention information. Local broadcast programs and newspapers find regular segments about animals popular with viewers/listeners/readers, and most of those spots have enough time for short lessons. Another approach is to proactively bring animal stories to the media. Examples include a story about a shelter dog that visits nursing homes after being rescued and appropriately trained, a description of a guide or "hero" dog's training, or warm-weather tips for pets. Effective mechanisms for providing information vary with the medium but include:

News releases—Releases may be provided to print, radio, or television outlets. Releases should be double-space typed on stationery that provides the source of the announcement (ie, the advisory council or task force). Include the subject of the news release and contact information in the upper left corner. The

mailing date of the release should be indicated along the right margin. The release should be written in inverted pyramid style, placing the most important information at the beginning. Releases should be limited to 1 page if possible.

Interviews—Interviews may be conducted by print, radio, or television reporters or hosts and, in the case of television and radio, may be live or taped. The individual being interviewed must be an excellent communicator and intimately familiar with dog bite issues and prevention. The interviewee may request a preinterview to get a grasp of the direction of the interview. It is advisable to tell the interviewer which issues you would definitely like to see addressed. Answers should be structured according to the program's time limits.

Talk shows—Most of the principles that apply to interviews also apply to talk shows, but in this situation there usually will be interaction with guests (who often hold opposing views), potentially with an audience, and with the host. Running through mock discussions prior to participation is helpful. Responses to questions or comments from those with opposing views should always be factual, sincere, and polite.

Public affairs programs—Many stations air 2 or 3 programs a week in which the station's news staff or station management interview a newsmaker, a spokesperson from an activist group, or a public relations representative from an industry. Issues in the news are often addressed by such programming. These provide a good opportunity to make your community aware of bite prevention efforts and to elicit support. Access to these programs may be requested by sending a letter to the station manager.

Bulletin board and community announcements—Many local television stations donate air time to announcements of community events. These are often broadcast in calendar format. This is an easy way to publicize educational events and responsible pet ownership classes.

Editorials—Editorials are used by print, radio, and television reporters to present their views on issues of public interest. Prepared statements describing the advisory council's approach to dog bite prevention can be provided to reporters for use in preparing an editorial or may be provided if a reporter presents an opposing viewpoint.

Public service announcements—Many radio and television stations donate time for **public service announcements (PSA)**; however, public service groups cannot specify when your PSA is to be aired. It is acceptable to suggest when you believe airing your PSA will be most effective. Most PSAs run for 30 to 60 seconds, although 10- and 20-second spots are also used. To mitigate the costs associated with production, you may want to contact local stations to see whether they offer sponsored placements, in which local advertisers donate time for specific public service messages. Public service announcements may consist of script only, sight and sound (simple or complex), or 16-mm film or videotape.

*See www.avma.org for additional and updated information.

^bAnderson RD, Nevada Department of Public Health, Reno, Nev: Personal communication, 1999.

^cNational Center for Injury Prevention and Control. *Resource guideline for state and local injury control programs*; in preparation.

References

1. Beaver BV. *Canine behavior: a guide for veterinarians*. Philadelphia: WB Saunders Co, 1999.
2. Wise JK, Yang JJ. Dog and cat ownership, 1991-1998. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 1994;204:1166-1167.
3. Center for Information Management. *US pet ownership and demographics sourcebook*. Schaumburg, Ill: American Veterinary Medical Association, 1997.
4. Sacks JJ, Kresnow M, Houston B. Dog bites: how big a problem? *Inj Prev* 1996;2:52-54.
5. Quinlan KP, Sacks JJ. Hospitalizations for dog bite injuries. *JAMA* 1999;281:232-233.
6. Weiss HB, Friedman DI, Coben JH. Incidence of dog bite injuries treated in emergency departments. *JAMA* 1998;271:51-53.
7. Wright JC. Canine aggression toward people: bite scenarios and prevention. *Vet Clin North Am Small Anim Pract* 1991;21:299-314.
8. Parrish HM, Clack FB, Brobst D, et al. Epidemiology of dog bites. *Public Health Rep* 1959;74:891-903.
9. Sacks JJ, Sattin RW, Bonzo SE. Dog bite-related fatalities from 1979 through 1988. *JAMA* 1989;262:1489-1492.
10. Sacks JJ, Lockwood R, Hornreich J, et al. Fatal dog attacks, 1989-1994. *Pediatrics* 1996;97:891-895.
11. Beaver BV. Human-canine interactions: a summary of perspectives. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 1997;210:1148-1150.
12. Lockwood R. Vicious dogs: communities, humane societies, and owners struggle with a growing problem. *Comm Anim Control* 1996;Mar/Apr:12-14.
13. Podberscek AL. Dog on a tightrope: the position of the dog in British society as influenced by press reports on dog attacks (1988 to 1992). *Anthrozoös* 1994;7:232-241.
14. Sacks JJ, Sinclair L, Gilchrist J, et al. Breeds of dogs involved in fatal attacks in the United States between 1979 and 1998. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 2000;217:836-840.
15. Gershman KA, Sacks JJ, Wright JC. Which dogs bite? A case-control study of risk factors. *Pediatrics* 1994;93:913-917.
16. Line SW. Factors associated with surrender of animals to an urban humane society, in *Proceedings*. 135th AVMA Annu Conv, 1998:345-348.
17. Mays J. How many ACOs should you have? *NACA News* 1998;Jan/Feb:27.
18. American Humane Association, American Veterinary Medical Association, The Humane Society of the United States, Pet Food Institute. *Model dog and cat control ordinance*. Schaumburg, Ill: American Veterinary Medical Association, 1976.
19. National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians. *Compendium of animal rabies control*. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 1999;214:198-202.
20. Marmer L. The new breed of municipal dog control laws: are they constitutional? *University of Cincinnati Law Review* 1984;53:1067-1081.
21. Hart BL. Selecting, raising, and caring for dogs to avoid problem aggression. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 1997;210:1129-1134.
22. Voith VL, Wright JC, Danneman PJ. Is there a relationship between canine behavior problems and spoiling activities, anthropomorphism, and obedience training? *Appl Anim Behav Sci* 1992;34:263-272.
23. Quinlan KP, Sacks JJ, Kresnow M. Exposure to and compliance with pediatric injury prevention counseling—United States, 1994. *Pediatrics* 1998;102:E55.
24. Miller TR, Galbraith M. Injury prevention counseling by pediatricians: a benefit-cost comparison. *Pediatrics* 1995;96:1-4.
25. Bass JL, Christoffel KK, Widome M, et al. Childhood injury prevention counseling in primary care settings: a critical review of the literature. *Pediatrics* 1993;92:544-550.
26. Committee on Injury and Poison Prevention, American Academy of Pediatrics. Office-based counseling for injury prevention. *Pediatrics* 1994;94:566-567.
27. Jones BA, Beck AM. Unreported dog bites and attitudes towards dogs. In: Anderson RK, Hart BL, Hart LA, eds. *The pet connection: its influence on our health and quality of life*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1984:355-363.
28. Beck AM, Jones BA. Unreported dog bites in children. *Public Health Rep* 1985;100:315-321.
29. Thompson, PG. The public health impact of dog attacks in a major Australian city. *Med J Aust* [serial online] 1997;167:129-132. Available at: <http://www.mja.com.au>. Accessed April 24, 2000.
30. Wright JC. Severe attacks by dogs: characteristics of the dogs, the victims, and the attack settings. *Public Health Rep* 1985;100:55-61.
31. Karlson TA. The incidence of facial injuries from dog bites. *JAMA* 1984;251:3265-3267.
32. Harris D, Imperato PJ, Oken B. Dog bites—an unrecognized epidemic. *N Y Acad Med Bull* 1974;50:981-1000.
33. American Animal Hospital Association. Owner education is key to preventing pet behavior problems. *Paw Prints* 1995;Spring.
34. Arkow P. Animal control laws and enforcement. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 1991;198:1164-1172.
35. Borchelt PL, Lockwood R, Beck AM, et al. Attacks by packs of dogs involving predation on human beings. *Public Health Rep* 1983;98:57-66.
36. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Dog-bite related fatalities United States, 1995-1996. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 1997;46:463-467.
37. Hannah HW. Municipal animal control ordinances—some legal issues. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 1998;213:38-39.
38. Hannah HW. Legal issues involved in the control of dangerous dogs. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 1994;204:735-736.
39. Hannah HW. Dog-bite statutes. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 1989;195:908-909.
40. Hannah HW. Veterinarians, dog bite statutes, and liability. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 1981;179:662-663.
41. Lauer EA, White WC, Lauer BA. Dog bites: a neglected problem in accident prevention. *Am J Dis Child* 1982;136:202-204.
42. Lockwood R, Rindy K. Are "pit bulls" different? An analysis of the pit bull terrier controversy. *Anthrozoös* 1987;1:2-8.
43. Moss SP, Wright JC. The effects of dog ownership on judgments of dog bite likelihood. *Anthrozoös* 1987;1(2):95-99.
44. Podberscek AL, Blackshaw JK. Dog bites: why, when and where? *Aust Vet Pract* 1990;20:182-186.
45. AVMA animal welfare forum: human-canine interactions. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 1997;210:1121-1154.
46. Segan DJ. When the dog bites: strategies for emergency management. *The Physician and Sportsmedicine* 1994;22:67-69.
47. Sosin DM, Sacks JJ, Sattin RW. Causes of nonfatal injuries in the United States, 1986. *Accid Anal Prev* 1992;24:685-687.
48. American Veterinary Medical Association. *Zoonosis updates from the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*. Schaumburg, Ill: American Veterinary Medical Association, 1995.
49. AVMA Committee on the Human-Animal Bond. *The veterinarian's way of selecting a proper pet*. Schaumburg, Ill: American Veterinary Medical Association, 1986.
50. American Veterinary Medical Association. Dangerous animal legislation (position statement). *2001 AVMA membership directory and resource manual*, 2000:86.
51. Beaver BV. Profiles of dogs presented for aggression. *J Am Anim Hosp Assoc* 1993;29:564-569.
52. Borchelt PL. Aggressive behavior of dogs kept as companion animals: classification and influence of sex, reproductive status and breed. *Appl Anim Ethol* 1983;10:45-61.
53. Hart BL, Hart LA. Selecting pet dogs on the basis of cluster analysis of breed behavior profiles and gender. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 1985;186:1181-1185.
54. Hart BL, Miller MF. Behavioral profiles of dog breeds. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 1985;186:1175-1180.
55. Hopkins SC, Schubert TA, Hart BL. Castration of adult male dogs: effects on roaming, aggression, urine marking, and mounting. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 1976;168:1108-1110.
56. Horwitz D. Pet misbehavior: the human-animal bond at risk. *Adv Small Anim Med Surg* 1998;11:1-3.
57. Landsberg GM. The distribution of canine behavior cases at three behavior referral practices. *Vet Med* 1991;Oct:1011-1018.
58. Landsberg B, Hunthausen W, Ackerman L. *Handbook of*

behaviour problems of the dog and cat. Boston: Butterworth-Heinemann, 1997;129-150.

59. Lund JD, Vestergaard KS. Development of social behaviour in four litters of dogs (*Canis familiaris*). *Acta Vet Scand* 1998;39:183-193.

60. Mathews JR, Lattal KA. A behavioral analysis of dog bites to children. *Dev Behav Ped* 1994;15:44-52.

61. Neilson JC, Eckstein RA, Hart BL. Effects of castration on problem behaviors in male dogs with reference to age and duration of behavior. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 1997;211:180-182.

62. Netto WJ, Planta DJU. Behavioural testing for aggression in the domestic dog. *Appl Anim Behav Sci* 1997;52:243-263.

63. O'Farrell V, Peachey E. Behavioural effects of ovariohysterectomy on bitches. *J Small Anim Pract* 1990;31:595-598.

64. Overall K. When dogs bite: what you don't know can kill dogs. *DVM Newsmagazine* 1998;Apr:13S-20S.

65. Overall K. *Clinical behavioral medicine for small animals*. St Louis: Mosby, 1997;88-137.

66. Overall KA. Sex and aggression. *Canine Pract* 1996;20:16-18.

67. Overall K. Fearful aggression, anxiety case leads to intensive behavior modification protocol. *DVM Newsmagazine* 1995;May:6S-10S.

68. Overall KL. Early intervention by owner can help prevent inappropriate play aggression. *DVM Newsmagazine* 1993;26(9):43.

69. Reisner IR, Erb HN, Houpt KA. Risk factors for behavior-related euthanasia among dominant-aggressive dogs: 110 cases (1989-1992) *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 1994;205:855-863.

70. Tan JS. Human zoonotic infections transmitted by dogs and cats. *Arch Intern Med* 1997;157:1933-1943.

71. Underman AE. Bite wounds inflicted by dogs and cats. *Vet Clin North Am Small Anim Pract* 1987;17:195-207.

72. Wright JC. Canine aggression: dog bites to people. In: Voith VL, Borchelt PL, eds. *Readings in companion animal behavior*. Trenton, NJ: Veterinary Learning Systems, 1996:240-246.

73. Zoonotic diseases in the immunocompromised: roles of physicians and veterinarians. *Am Assoc Food Hyg Veterinarians News-O-Gram* 1998;Nov/Dec:14-15.

74. American Veterinary Medical Association. *People and animals sharing the world*. Schaumburg, Ill: American Veterinary Medical Association, 1993.

75. Fleisher GR. The management of bite wounds. *N Engl J Med* 1999;340:138-140.

76. Talan DA, Citron DM, Abrahamian FM, et al. Bacteriologic analysis of infected dog and cat bites. *N Engl J Med* 1999;340:85-92.

Appendix 1

Groups potentially involved in dog bite prevention

A model program for preventing dog bites begins with assembling a local coalition. Wide representation of community views on the coalition helps ensure sufficient input and community acceptance of the program. Key players include:

- animal control officials
- attorneys, judges
- business sector (eg, local business leaders, insurance companies, pet stores)
- dog breeders and trainers
- educational system (eg, schools, parent-teacher organizations)
- health departments and public health associations
- humane societies
- human healthcare providers and associations (eg, nurses, pediatricians, community health centers, emergency medical service and ambulance companies, health maintenance organizations, hospitals, managed care organizations, medical associations, medical examiners' and coroners' offices, schools of medicine and public health, trauma centers)
- kennel clubs, dog clubs, assistance dog organizations
- law enforcement agencies
- local government officials
- media
- occupational safety organizations, agencies, and groups (eg, firefighters, meter readers)
- veterinary care providers and associations, allied staff, clinics, schools of veterinary medicine and veterinary technology
- volunteer nonprofit organizations (eg, boy/girl scouts; various "Y"s; 4-H clubs; chapters of the American Red Cross, Safe Kids, National Safety Council, and National Fire Protection Association; foundations; United Way; and civic groups [Kiwans, Rotary])
- other groups (eg, sports recreation clubs [joggers, bicyclists], automobile clubs, extension offices)

Continued on next page.

Appendix 2

Model dog and cat control ordinance

Originally produced and published jointly by the American Veterinary Medical Association, the American Humane Association, the Humane Society of the United States, and the Pet Food Institute in 1976. Modifications have been made from the original version to reflect updated US Public Laws, current titles of other referenced documents, and present favored terminology and definitions concerning "dangerous" animals.

Section 1. Definitions

As used in this ordinance the following terms mean:

Animal—For the purpose of this ordinance, animal shall mean dog or cat.

Animal control authority—The person or persons designated to enforce this ordinance.

Animal establishment—Any pet shop, grooming shop, animal auction, performing animal exhibition, kennel or animal shelter, except this term shall not include veterinary medical facilities, licensed research facilities, facilities operated by government agencies, or licensed animal dealers regulated by the USDA under the provisions of US Public Laws 89-544, 91-579, 94-279, 99-198, and 101-624.

Animal shelter—Facility designated or recognized by the [jurisdiction]* for the purpose of impounding and caring for animals.

At large—A dog or cat shall be deemed to be at large when off the property of the owner and not under restraint.

Humane manner—Care of an animal to include, but not be limited to, adequate heat, ventilation and sanitary shelter, wholesome food and water, consistent with the normal requirements and feeding habits of the animal's size, species, and breed.

Kennel—An establishment kept for the purpose of breeding, selling, or boarding dogs or cats or engaged in training dogs or cats.

Licensing authority—The agency or department of [jurisdiction] or any designated representative thereof charged with administering the issuance and/or revocation of permits and licenses under the provisions of this ordinance.

Livestock guarding dogs—Dogs kept for the primary purpose of protecting livestock from predatory attacks.

Neutered—Rendered permanently incapable of reproduction.

Nuisance—A dog or cat shall be considered a nuisance if it: damages, soils, defiles, or defecates on private property other than the owner's or on public walks and recreation areas unless such waste is immediately removed and properly disposed of by the owner; causes unsanitary, "dangerous," or offensive conditions; causes a disturbance by excessive barking or other noise making; or chases vehicles, or molests, attacks, or interferes with persons or other domestic animals on public property.

Owner—A person having the right of property or custody of a dog or cat or who keeps or harbors a dog or cat or knowingly permits a dog or cat to remain on or about any premises occupied by that person.

Person—Any individual, corporation, partnership, organization, or institution commonly recognized by law as a unit.

Pet shop—An establishment engaged in the business of buying or selling, at retail, dogs or cats or other animals for profit-making purposes.

Restraint—A dog or cat shall be considered under restraint if it is within the real property limits of its owner or secured by a leash or lead or under the control of a responsible person.

"Dangerous" dog or cat—A dog or cat that without justification attacks a person or domestic animal causing physical injury or death, or behaves in a manner that a reasonable person would believe poses an unjustified imminent threat or serious injury or death to one (1) or more persons or domestic animals.

Section 2. Licensing and rabies vaccination

a. Except as provided in Section 3, no person shall own, keep, or harbor any dog or cat over four (4) months of age within [jurisdiction] unless such dog or cat is vaccinated and licensed. The provisions of this section do not apply to animals owned by a licensed research facility or held in a veterinary medical facility or government operated or licensed animal shelter.

b. All dogs and cats shall be vaccinated against rabies by a licensed veterinarian, in accordance with the latest "Compendium of Animal Rabies Prevention and Control" authored by the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians and published annually in the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*.

c. A certificate of vaccination shall be issued to the owner of each animal vaccinated on a form recommended by the Compendium. Each owner shall also receive a durable vaccination tag indicating the year in which it was issued.

d. Application for a license must be made within thirty (30) days after obtaining a dog or cat over 4 months of age, except that this requirement will not apply to a nonresident keeping a dog or cat with the [jurisdiction] for no longer than sixty (60) days.

Written application for a dog or cat license shall be made to the [licensing authority] and shall include the name and address of the owner and the name, breed, color, age, and sex of the dog or cat. Applicants also shall pay the prescribed licensing fee and provide proof of current rabies vaccination.

e. The licensing period shall be for 1 year(s). License renewal may be applied for within sixty (60) days prior to the expiration date. New residents must apply for a license within thirty (30) days of establishing residence.

f. A license shall be issued after payment of a fee of \$_____ for each unneutered dog or cat and \$_____ for each neutered dog or cat. Persons who fail to obtain a license as required within the time period specified in this section will be subjected to a delinquent fee of \$_____.

g. License fees shall be waived for dogs serving the blind or deaf or government-owned dogs used for law enforcement. All other licensing provisions shall apply.

h. Upon acceptance of the license application and fee, the [licensing authority] shall issue a durable license tag including an identifying number, year of issuance, city, county, and state. Both rabies and license tags must be attached to the collar of the dog or cat. Tags must be worn at all times and are not transferable. [Licensing authority] shall maintain a record of all licenses issued, and such records shall be available to the [animal control authority].

Section 3. Permits

a. No person shall operate an animal establishment without first obtaining a permit in compliance with this section.

b. The permit period shall begin with the first day of the fiscal year and shall run for one (1) year. Renewal applications for permits may be made within sixty (60) days prior to the expiration date. Application for a permit to establish a new breeding animal establishment under the provisions of this ordinance may be made at any time.

c. Annual permits shall be issued upon payment of the applicable fee:

i. For each kennel authorized to house less than six (6) dogs or cats \$_____

ii. For each kennel authorized to house six (6) but not more than

forty-nine (49) dogs or cats \$_____

iii. For each kennel authorized to house fifty (50) or more dogs and cats \$_____

iv. For each pet shop \$_____

v. For other animal establishments \$_____

d. A person who maintains a kennel of six (6) or more dogs or cats for breeding purposes may pay an annual permit fee or may elect to license individual dogs or cats as provided under

Section 2. Every facility regulated by this ordinance shall be considered a separate enterprise, requiring an individual permit.

e. Under the provisions of this ordinance, no permit fee shall be required of any animal shelter. All other provisions shall apply. Any change in the category under which a permit is issued shall be reported to the [licensing authority] within sixty (60) days, whereupon reclassification and appropriate adjustment of the permit fee shall be made.

f. Failure to comply with the provisions of this section is subject to a fine of \$_____.

Section 4. Issuance and revocation of permits and licenses

a. The [appropriate authority] may revoke any permit or license if the person holding the permit or license refuses or fails to comply with this ordinance, the regulations promulgated by the [appropriate authority] or any other law governing the protection and keeping of animals.

b. If an applicant is shown to have withheld or falsified any material information on the application, the [licensing authority] may refuse to issue or may revoke a permit or license.

c. It shall be a condition of issuance of any permit for an animal establishment that the [appropriate authority] shall be permitted to inspect any and all animals and the premises where such animals are kept at any reasonable time during normal business hours. Where a permit is revoked for any cause, or pending appeal of any such action, the [appropriate authority] shall have power of entry on the premises, and into all areas where animals are being kept. A person denied a permit may not reapply for a period of at least thirty (30) days. Each reapplication shall disclose any previous denial or revocation and shall be accompanied by a \$_____ fee.

Section 5. Owner responsibility

a. All dogs and cats shall be kept under restraint.

b. Every "dangerous" dog or cat, as determined by the [appropriate authority], shall be confined by its owner within a building or secure enclosure and shall be securely muzzled or caged whenever off the premises of its owner.

c. No dog or cat shall be allowed to cause a nuisance. The owner of every dog or cat shall be held responsible for every behavior of such dog or cat under the provisions of this ordinance.

d. Failure to comply with the provisions of this section shall be subject to a fine of \$_____.

e. Dog and cat owners shall ensure that their dog or cat carries identification at all times in the form of microchip, tag, or other means to allow easy determination of the owners.

f. Livestock guarding dogs shall be exempt from nuisance regulations when performing duties protecting livestock on premises owned or controlled by the owner.

Section 6. Impoundment

a. Any dog or cat found running at large shall be impounded by the [animal control authority] in an animal shelter and confined in a humane manner. Immediately upon impounding a dog or cat, the [animal control authority] shall make every reasonable effort to notify the owner and inform such owner of the conditions whereby custody of the animal may be regained. Dogs and cats not claimed by their owners within a period of [five (5) full days] in which the shelter is open to the public shall become the property of the [jurisdiction].

b. When a dog or cat is found running at large and its ownership is verified by the [animal control authority], the authority may exercise the option of serving the owner with a notice of violation in lieu of impounding the animal.

c. In the event that the [appropriate authority] finds dogs or cats to be suffering, it shall have the right forthwith to remove or cause to have removed any such animals to a safe place for care at the owner's expense or to euthanize them when necessary to prevent further suffering. Return to the owner may be withheld until the owner shall have made full payment for all expenses so incurred.

d. Disposal of an animal by any method specified here in does not relieve the owner of liability for violations and any accrued charges.

Section 7. Redemption

a. Any animal impounded may be redeemed by the owner thereof within five (5) days upon payment of an impoundment fee of \$_____, provided that if any such animal has been previously impounded, the impoundment fee shall be \$_____. Payment of impoundment fees is not considered to be in lieu of any fine, penalty, or license fees.

b. Any animal confined for rabies quarantine, evidence, or other purpose may be redeemed by the owner thereof upon payment of a fee of \$_____.

c. No animal required to be licensed or vaccinated under this ordinance may be redeemed until provisions for such licensing have been fulfilled.

Section 8. Adoption

An adoption fee of \$_____ shall be assessed at the time of adoption. No dog or cat shall be released for adoption as a pet without being neutered or without a written agreement from the adopter guaranteeing that the animal will be neutered. Vaccination fees, licensing fees, and veterinary costs may be assessed above and beyond the adoption fee.

Section 9. Interference

No person shall interfere with, hinder, or molest any agent of the [animal control authority] in the performance of any duty as herein provided.

Any person violating this section shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be subject to a fine of not less than \$_____ or more than \$_____.

Section 10. Repeals (conflicting ordinances)

All other ordinances of the [jurisdiction] that are in conflict with this ordinance are hereby repealed to the extent of such conflict.

Section 11. Severability

If any part of this ordinance shall be held invalid, such part shall be deemed severable and the invalidity thereof shall not affect the remaining parts of this ordinance.

Section 12. Applicability

This ordinance shall be in full force and effect upon the expiration of days after its passage and publication.

Section 13. Safety clause

The [jurisdiction] hereby finds, determines, and declares that this ordinance is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public health, safety, and welfare of the [jurisdiction] and the inhabitants thereof.

*For all occurrences of [], communities should insert their applicable agency. [The organizations developing this model ordinance recommended that licensing tags show, in addition to the license number, the city or county and state in which the animal is registered. This helps to alleviate the problem of an animal being left unidentified or unclaimed because it has been transported from one state to another and has no reference to the issuing city or county on the license tag. Where blanks are found without insertions, communities should insert applicable fees or conditions. Different license fees for neutered animals serve as an incentive for responsible pet ownership. Breakaway collars are recommended when tags are affixed to collars worn by cats. It is recognized that holding periods will be determined to some degree by availability of facilities; however, it is important to ensure a reasonable opportunity for owners to reclaim their dog or cat.]

Appendix 3

Recommended data elements for reports of dog bites

Data element	Comment	Data element	Comment
Notifications of dog attacks on humans . . .	A card or telephone report to be submitted by those providing care to the human victim	Dog information	
Name of victim		Name	
Address of victim		Breed	Indicate by whose designation (eg, owner report, animal control officer, law enforcement officer). This is important if breed data are to be interpreted.
Telephone (home and work)		Sex	
Parent contact information (if a minor)		Age	
Incident date and time		Weight	
Reported to whom		Reproductive status	
Date and time of report		Name of veterinarian	
Notifications of dog attacks on animals . . .	A card or telephone report to be submitted by those providing care to the animal victim	Rabies vaccination date	
Owner of victim		Rabies tag number	
Type of victim		License number	
Address of owner		Microchip number	
Telephone (home and work)		Degree of confinement	Identifying different forms of confinement (eg, chaining, tethering, electronic fence) is important if risk associated with these practices is to be assessed.
Incident date and time		at time of bite	
Name and address of owner or custodian of attacking dog		Prior incidents	
Reported to whom		Obedience training	
Date and time of report		Circumstances of the bite	
For animal control investigations		Victim account	
Agency information		Owner's account	
Case number		Witness account (contact information)	
Report date and time		Number of dogs involved	Attacks by multiple dogs may account for 20 to 30% of incidents. Forms for these animals could be given case numbers with a special designation (eg, 123A, 123B).
Incident date and time		Injury information	
Who reported the case		Location of injury	
Report received by		Nature of injury	
Location of incident		Severity of injury	
Victim information		Animal disposition	
Name		Quarantine location	
Breed (if animal)		Date of quarantine	
Age and date of birth		Date to be released	
Sex		Quarantined by	
Address		Euthanatized	
Telephone (home and work)			

Continued on next page.

Appendix 4

Model legislation for the identification and regulation of "dangerous" dogs

- A. Actions allowed by authorized persons prior to hearing**
1. If any dog shall attack a person or domestic animal who was peaceably conducting himself in any place where he may lawfully be, any person, for the purpose preventing imminent injury or further injury, may use such force as is required to stop the attack.
 2. A police officer or peace officer acting pursuant to his statutory duties may, where the threat of serious injury to a person or domestic animal is imminent and unjustified, use such force as is required to prevent such injury.
- B. Definitions**
1.
 - a. "Dangerous dog" means any dog which without justification attacks a person or domestic animal causing physical injury or death, or behaves in a manner that a reasonable person would believe poses an unjustified imminent threat of serious injury or death to one or more persons or domestic animals. A dog's breed shall not be considered in determining whether or not it is "dangerous." Further,
 - b. No dog may be declared "dangerous"
 - i. If the dog was protecting or defending a person within the immediate vicinity of the dog from an attack or assault;
 - ii. If at the time the person was committing a crime or offense upon the property of the owner, or custodian, of the dog;
 - iii. If the person was teasing, tormenting, abusing or assaulting the dog, or in the past had teased, tormented, abused or assaulted the dog;
 - iv. If the dog was attacked or menaced by the domestic animal, or the domestic animal was on the property of the owner, or custodian, of the dog;
 - v. If the dog was responding to pain or injury, or protecting itself, its kennels or its offspring;
 - vi. If the person or domestic animal was disturbing the dog's natural functions such as sleeping or eating.
 - vii. Neither growling nor barking, nor both, shall alone constitute grounds upon which to find a dog to be "dangerous."
 2. "Attack" means aggressive physical contact initiated by the dog.
 3. "Serious injury" means any physical injury consisting of broken bones or a permanently disfiguring laceration requiring either multiple stitches or cosmetic surgery.
 4. "Domestic animal" means any animal commonly kept as a pet in family households in the United States, including, but not limited to dogs, cats, guinea pigs, rabbits and hamsters; and any animals commonly kept for companion or commercial purposes.
- C. Hearing procedure**
1. Any person may make a complaint of an alleged "dangerous" dog as that term is defined herein to a police officer or peace officer of the appropriate municipality. Such officers shall immediately inform the complainant of his right to commence a proceeding provided for in Paragraph 2, immediately below, and, if there is reason to believe the dog is a "dangerous" dog, the officer shall forthwith commence such proceeding himself.
 2. Any person may, and any police officer, or peace officer acting within the scope of his statutory duties, shall make a complaint under oath or affirmation of an alleged "dangerous" dog as that term is defined herein to any municipal judge or justice. Thereupon, the judge or justice, or hearing panel subject to judicial review, shall immediately determine if there is probable cause to believe the dog is a "dangerous" dog and, if so, shall issue an order to any police officer or peace officer pursuant to his statutory duties or animal control officer directing such officer to immediately seize such dog and hold same pending judicial determination as herein provided. Whether or not the judge or justice, or hearing panel subject to judicial review, finds there is probable cause for such seizure, he shall, within five (5) days and upon written notice of not less than three (3) days to the owner of the dog, hold a hearing on the complaint.
- D. Where a dog is determined pursuant to clear and convincing evidence at a duly constituted hearing to be "dangerous," the judge or justice, or hearing panel subject to judicial review, shall require the owner of said animal to register such animal (with the appropriate Health Department or animal control facility), and to provide prompt notification to (the appropriate Health Department or animal control facility) of any changes in the ownership of the animal; names, addresses and telephone numbers of new owners; any change in the health status of the animal; any further instances of attack; any claims made or lawsuits brought as a result of further instances of attack; the death of the animal. In addition, the judge or justice, or hearing panel subject to judicial review, may require any or all of the following, but items 5, 6 and 11, or any one of them, may only be imposed where there has been serious injury to a person.**
1. Indoors, when not alone, the dog be under the control of a person eighteen (18) years or older. (Provisions for the dog to be outdoors must also be made.)
 2. Outdoors and unattended, the dog be kept within a locked fenced area from which it cannot escape.
 3. When outdoors the dog must be attended and kept within a fenced area from which it cannot escape.
 4. When outdoors the dog must be attended and kept on a leash no longer than six (6) feet and under the control of a person eighteen (18) years of age or older.
 5. When outdoors the dog must be attended and muzzled. Such muzzle shall not cause injury to the dog or interfere with its vision or respiration but shall prevent it from biting any person or animal.
 6. Outdoors and unattended, the dog must be confined to an escape-proof kennel of the following description:
 - a. Such kennel shall allow the dog to stand normally and without restriction, and shall be at least two and one half (2.5) times the length of the dog, and shall protect the dog from the elements.
 - b. Fencing materials shall not have openings with a diameter of more than two (2) inches, and in the case of wooden fences, the gaps shall not be more than two (2) inches.
 - c. Any gates within such kennel or structure shall be lockable and of such design as to prevent the entry of children or the escape of the animal, and when the dog is confined to such kennel and unattended such locks shall be kept locked.
 - d. The kennel may be required to have double exterior walls to prevent the insertion of fingers, hands or other objects.
 7. Placement of a sign or signs of a description and in places directed by the judge or justice, advising the public of the presence and tendencies of said animal.
 8. Attendance by the dog and its owner/custodian at training sessions conducted by a certified applied animal behaviorist, board certified veterinary behaviorist or other recognized expert in the field and completion of training or any other treatment as deemed appropriate by such expert. The owners of the dog shall be responsible for all costs associated with the evaluation and training ordered under this section.
 9. Neutering or spaying of the dog at the owner's expense, unless medically contraindicated.
 10. That the dog be permanently identified by tattooing or by injecting an identification microchip, using standard veterinary procedures and practices, identification number and the identification of the person performing the procedure to be registered with the (appropriate health department or animal control facility) as indicated above.
 11. The procurement of liability insurance in an amount to be determined by the judge or justice, but in no case in an amount of less than fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000), covering the medical and or veterinary costs resulting from future actions of the dog (a determination of liability shall be made in accordance with the laws of the jurisdiction). This condition may not be imposed if it is shown that no such insurance is available for a reasonable premium.
 12. If any of the above conditions ordered by a judge or justice, or hearing panel subject to judicial review, are not complied with, the owner shall be subject to a fine of not more than ten thousand dollars (\$10,000).
 13. If a further incident of attack occurs under such circumstances that the dog, after a hearing as described above, is determined to be a "dangerous" dog, the judge or justice, or hearing panel subject to judicial review, may impose or reimpose any applicable directives listed above; additionally, humane destruction of the dog may be ordered, but only where the further incident involves serious injury to a person.

Appendix 5

Suggested reading for professionals (numbers correspond to cited references)

Group	Reference numbers
Public officials and community leaders	4, 6, 8-9, 10, 12, 14-16, 18, 20, 27-28, 30, 32-47
Veterinarians	1, 4-10, 12, 14-16, 27-28, 30, 32, 35-36, 39, 41-73
Veterinary technicians	7, 12, 16, 28, 43-45, 47, 50-57, 59, 61, 63-64, 66-69, 74
Physicians and nurses	4-6, 8-10, 12, 14-15, 27-28, 30, 32, 35-36, 41, 43, 45-48, 60, 70-71, 73, 75-76
Humane society/animal shelter/ rescue personnel	4-6, 10, 12, 14-15, 27-28, 30, 35-36, 41-43, 51-55, 61, 66, 69, 71



RESEARCH

Is there a difference? Comparison of golden retrievers and dogs affected by breed-specific legislation regarding aggressive behavior

Stefanie A. Ott, DVM, Esther Schalke, DVM, Amelie M. von Gaertner, DVM,
Hansjoachim Hackbarth, DVM, PhD

From the Institute for Animal Welfare and Behaviour, University of Veterinary Medicine Hanover, Hanover, Germany.

KEYWORDS:

Golden Retrievers;
temperament test;
aggressive behavior;
breed specific legislation

Abstract Between 2000 and 2002, legislation in Lower Saxony insinuated a special dangerousness of certain dog breeds, and controls were imposed on them. Exemption was only possible if the dogs passed a standardized temperament test. In a previous study, test results of 415 dogs belonging to breeds affected by the legislation were analyzed. Ninety-five percent of the dogs showed no indication of disturbed aggressive communication or aggressive behavior in inappropriate situations. Because a control group was not available at that time, these results referred to a comparison between the affected breeds. In this study, golden retrievers were tested and used as control group. Seventy golden retrievers were tested in the temperament test. The order of testing was: veterinary examination, learning test, situations of dog-human-, dog-environment-, and dog-dog-contact, and obedience. Levels of escalation in aggressive behavior were scored using a scale of 1-7. A total of 58.57% of the dogs did not show aggressive behavior (Scale 1). Forty percent displayed aggressive behavior referring to Scale 2, and 1.43% showed aggressive behavior referring to Scale 5. A total of 98.57% of the dogs reacted appropriately, and 1.43% displayed aggressive behavior in inappropriate situations. In the previous study, 95% of the animals reacted appropriately, whereas 5% displayed excessive aggressive communication or aggressive behavior in inappropriate situations. Comparing the results of golden retrievers and breeds affected by the legislation, no significant difference was found. A scientific basis for breed specific lists does not exist. Therefore, legislation in Lower Saxony was changed, and breed lists were withdrawn.
© 2008 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Introduction

Between July 2000 and July 2002, the Niedersaechsische Gefahrtierverordnung (GefTVO) was in force in Lower Saxony, Germany. At that time the authorities assumed that

certain breeds of dogs were especially dangerous without just cause. Therefore, controls regarding keeping and breeding were imposed on these breeds. An exemption from these restrictions was only possible if the dogs passed a standardized temperament test. This test had been developed to detect individuals displaying an indication of disturbed aggressive communication or aggressive behavior in inappropriate situations. It was based on a temperament test by Netto and Planta (1997).

In a previous study (Mittmann, 2002), the results of the temperament tests of 415 dogs belonging to six breeds

Funded by the Gesellschaft der Freunde der Tieraerztlichen Hochschule Hannover (GdF) and the Gesellschaft fuer Tierverhaltenstherapie (GTVT).

Address reprint requests and correspondence: S. Ott, Institute for Animal Welfare and Behaviour, University of Veterinary Medicine Hanover, Buenteweg 2, 30559 Hannover, Germany.

E-mail: ta.ott@web.de

affected by the legislation were analyzed for: (1) breed predisposition for disturbed aggressive communication or aggressive behavior in inappropriate situations, and (2) differences in behavior between the breeds. In 395 dogs (95.18%) no indication of disturbed aggressive communication or aggressive behavior in inappropriate situations could be found. Nineteen dogs showed aggressive behavior in inappropriate situations, and 1 dog reacted with disturbed aggressive communication (4.82%).

Because a control group was not available at that time, those results referred to a comparison between the six breeds affected by the legislation (American Staffordshire terrier, bullterrier, Doberman, rottweiler, Staffordshire Bullterrier, and dogs of the pit bull-type). However, whether the assumption of a special dangerousness of certain dog breeds is correct or not can only be proven with the use of a control group of dogs that do not belong to the breeds affected by the legislation.

For this reason, in a consecutive study 70 golden retrievers were tested and used as a control group. The results of this study were evaluated for:

- Breed disposition for disturbed aggressive communication or aggressive behavior in inappropriate situations in golden retrievers.
- Significant differences in the occurrence of aggressive behavior between the dogs affected by the legislation and golden retrievers.
- Clues for preferred strategies to solve conflict situations.

Materials and methods

Animals

For statistical reasons, all dogs of the control group had to belong to only 1 breed. The golden retriever was not affected by legislation in any German county. It is often regarded as a friendly and peaceable dog and widely represented in the German society. For these reasons, the golden retriever was chosen as breed to make up the control group. The owners attended the temperament test voluntarily.

According to the guidelines of the temperament test, the animals had to be at least 15 months old. A limiting age did not exist. All dogs were kept in private ownership and did not know the examiner conducting the temperament test, the test assistants or the location of the test.

Test area

The temperament tests were conducted at a special test area located on the premises of the University of Veterinary Medicine Hanover. The test site was approximately 1,300 square meters (38 m × 36 m). It was enclosed by metal fencing, which was 2 m high and on one side had a door that could be closed securely. The ground of the test site was made up of sand and gravel. Along one side was a 4 m wide asphalted

path. The whole area could be easily overlooked from every position within the test site. The general medical examination as well as learning and frustration test were carried out before the temperament test in a separate room of the university.

Test assistants

Besides the examiner at least another 3 test assistants were needed to conduct a temperament test. All test assistants were students at the University of Veterinary Medicine Hanover. They were of varying age, sex, and body height. One of the test assistants had to operate the video camera. Before the temperament test, all test assistants were informed about safety regulations and professional discretion. The assessment of the golden retrievers was always carried out by the same observer. The dogs tested were not known to the examiner or test assistants.

Test devices

Depending on the test situation different items were needed. All items were property of the University of Veterinary Medicine Hanover. They had already been used by Mittmann (2002) for conducting the temperament test. The test devices are mentioned in the descriptions of the test situations (Table 1).

For safety reasons all dogs had to be lead on a 2 m long double-ended leash. With two golden retrievers a size 8 plastic muzzle (top length 8 cm, bottom length 13 cm, circumference 31 cm) was used.

The temperament tests, except for general medical examination and learning and frustration test, of all 70 golden retrievers were videotaped with the use of a Sony CCD-TR 950E video camera. The videotaping covered the whole situation, i.e., test assistant, owner of the dog, and display of the dog.

Test procedure

Per day, a maximum of 5 dog-owner-teams were tested. The order of dog-owner-teams was determined by chance. Before commencing with the tests, the owners were introduced to the test procedure, and questions were settled. After this, every dog had to undergo a general medical examination to detect or rule out any diseases that might influence the dog's behavior in the temperament test. After the general clinical examination, a learning and frustration test was carried out to be sure that the participants had not been given sedatives. The temperament test consisted of the following parts: 21 situations involving dog-human contact, 14 situations involving dog-environment contact, dog-dog contact, and obedience. For a single dog the test lasted about 60 minutes. The dog-dog-contact was tested after every dog had completed all other parts of the test. Following Mittmann (2002), the situations of the dog-dog-contact and the obedience part were not analyzed in this

Table 1 Dog behavioral test according to the law for keeping dogs in Niedersachsen (NMELF, 2000)

Situation	Grading (A)	Comments (description of communicative behavior)
1.		The owner tries to play with the dog by giving appropriate visual signals
2.		A person approaches the dog from the front and stares at it
3.		The dog is tied to a post (e.g., as in front of a shop) and a person runs past him (distance, approx 50 cm)
4.		A person wearing a long black coat and a hat walks past the dog; the coat touches the dog
5.		A limping person (with a walking stick or walking aid) walks past the dog and his owner
6.		A person kneels in front of the dog, stretches the hand toward the dog and talks to him (distance, 0.5 m + lead*)
7.		A person is lying on the ground (or is crouching) and gets up abruptly as dog and owner are passing by (distance, 2 m*)
8.		A person stumbles, passing the dog at a 1 m distance
9.		A jogger passes the dog from both directions and suddenly runs away from the dog
10.		A person with a blind man's cane is slowly finding his way past the dog (distance, 2 m*)
11.		A 'drunk person' staggers past the dog (2 m distance*)
12.		A person talks to the dog
13.		A person shouts angrily at the dog
14.		A person cries (like a child)
15.		The dog owner talks in a friendly way to the dog and strokes him, while another person walks past, shouting at the dog and clapping his hands.
16.		The dog owner puts his hand on the neck/back of the dog and puts his hand around the dogs muzzle (while talking to the dog in a friendly way)
17.		A person contacts the dog's body while passing by
18.		A person displays play behavior in front of the dog
19.		Several (4) people approach the dog (not directly, in a casual manner) and stop close by him, coming into body contact with the dog (simulating a situation such as in a lift)
20.		A strange person tries to stroke the dog over the back (while talking to him)
21.		A group of people come up to the dog, stand near him talking to each other and (if possible) coming occasionally in slight body contact with the dog
22.		A barking dog is standing in front of the dog and his owner (distance approx 2 m)
23.		Two strange dogs of different gender and with a different appearance (e.g., size, coat), pass the dog (distance approx. 2 m)
24.		Immediately afterwards: the owner stumbles and touches the dog**
25.		Confrontation with a dog of the same gender behind a fence
26.		The dog gets isolated from his owner and is tied up at approx. 2 m distance from a fence with a dog of the same gender behind it
27.		Several people stop close to the dog while a noisy machine gets pushed by
28.		Dog and dog owner pass some colored balloons in a close space
29.		An umbrella gets opened in close proximity to the dog (in a casual way as if happening on a street, not in a threatening way directed toward the dog)
30.		A ball is rolled up to the dog
31.		A pram stroller with baby noise coming from it (tape recorder with crying baby, and a doll) gets pushed past the dog.
32.		A bicycle drives past, ringing the bell (2 m distance)
33.		A test person approaches the dog, threatening him, shouting at him (with no other aids)
34.		A person threatens the dog with a stick (while standing up, <u>not</u> crouching down)
35.		A person with a burning lighter approaches the dog
36.		A broom makes noises on the floor
OBEDIENCE		
It must be obvious, that the owner is in control. The dog has to come back when recalled and stop any behavior when given a 'leave' command.		

Table 2 Assessment of dogs: grading system for reactions (NMELF, 2000)

1	No aggressive signals detected (e.g., dog shows avoidance behavior or fear)
2a	Acoustic signals (growling or barking, hissing, crying)
2b	Visual signals (showing teeth, lifting lip, staring/direct eye contact with or without growling or barking) while doing this, the dog is stationary or backs up
3	Snapping (bite movements at some distance) with/without growling or barking or showing of teeth, direct eye contact/staring; menace signals/aggressive facial expression or body language while being stationary or backing up
4	Like Number 3, but dog comes closer (but stops at some distance). It is important to observe if the dog stops on its own or if it gets stopped by the lead
5	Biting (attempt to bite) or attack (attempt to attack: coming closer at a fast pace and pushing) with growling or barking or showing teeth
6	Like Number 5, but without any acoustic or visual signs
7	Like Number 6 but animal needs over 10 min to calm down after escalation of behavior

study. A description of the situations of the dog behavioral test is given in Table 1.

Assessment of the dogs

The dog's behavior was observed for each situation separately. For every situation, the dog's behavior was assigned to a category of behavior called scale. The total number of scales was seven. Scale 1 summarized all non-aggressive behaviors, e.g., the dog stayed neutral, or showed social approach, avoidance behavior, play behavior, or flight. Scales 2–7 classified aggressive behavior into 6 steps of escalation. The description of the dogs' behavior and the scale it was assigned to is given in Table 2.

According to the GefTVO, the assessment of a dog regarding its dangerousness had to be based on the following observation whether a dog reacted appropriately in the test situations or not. A temperament test result was regarded as failure if the dog showed aggressive communication of Scale 5 in inappropriate situations, i.e., non-threatening situations in which the test assistant clearly communicated in a friendly way, or situations that often occur in everyday life. A dog was also considered to have failed the temperament test if, in any situation, it displayed aggressive behavior assigned to Scale 6 or 7. The assessment of a dog regarding its dangerousness was therefore dependent on its behavior in threatening and in non-threatening situations.

Statistical analysis and preparation of graphics were carried out using GraphPad Prism 4 (GraphPad Software, Inc., La Jolla, CA). Concerning pair-wise comparisons, the significance between groups was tested with the χ^2 value. Values of $P < 0.05$ were considered as significant.

Results

Dogs

Of 70 golden retrievers tested in this research project, 22 were male (3 of them neutered), and 48 female (6 of them

spayed). The dogs were between 15 months and 10 years old with a mean age of 4.1 years.

Thirty-three golden retrievers had previously attended and passed a temperament test of their kennel club, 2 golden retrievers had attended it and failed. Thirty-five golden retrievers had not attended their kennel club's temperament test.

Highest scale reached

Of 70 golden retrievers tested, 41 dogs (58.6%) did not show aggressive behavior at all (scale 1). Mittmann (2002) had detected Scale 1 to be the highest scale reached in 33% of the American Staffordshire terriers, 63% of the bullterriers, 30% of the Dobermans, 36% of the rottweilers, 43% of the Staffordshire bullterriers, and 35% of the dogs of the pit bull-type (Table 3).

Another 28 golden retrievers (40%) displayed visual or acoustic menace signals while being stationary or backing away (Scale 2) at most. Mittmann (2002) had assigned Scale 2 as the highest scale reached to 49% of the American Staffordshire terriers, 32% of the bull terriers, 52% of the Dobermans, 54% of the rottweilers, 50% of the Staffordshire bull terriers, and 44% of the dogs of the pit bull-type (Table 4).

Table 3 Number and percentage of dogs per breed reaching Scale 1 as highest scale

Dog breed	Percentage of dogs
Golden retrievers	58.6
American Staffordshire terriers	33
Bull terriers	63
Dobermans	30
Rottweilers	36
Staffordshire bull terriers	43
Dogs of the pit bull type	35

Table 4 Number and percentage of dogs per breed reaching Scale 2 as highest scale

Dog breed	Percentage of dogs
Golden retrievers	40
American Staffordshire terriers	49
Bull terriers	32
Dobermans	52
Rottweilers	54
Staffordshire bullterriers	50
Dogs of the pit bull type	44

Biting or attacking with complete approach and earlier menace signals (Scale 5) was observed in 1 golden retriever (1.4%). Aggressive behavior of Scale 5 at most was shown by 13% of the American Staffordshire terriers, 3% of the bull terriers, 6% of the Dobermans, 4% of the Rottweilers, 12% of the Staffordshire bull terriers, and by 13% of the dogs of the pit bull-type.

Scale 3 (snapping intention while being stationary or backing up), Scale 4 (snapping intention while moving closer but stopping at some distance), Scale 6 (biting or attacking with complete approach but without earlier menace signals), and Scale 7 (like 6, but dogs needs more than 10 min to calm down) were not observed at all (Table 5).

Behavior of the dogs in individual situations

When examining the results it became apparent that the behavior of the golden retrievers depended on the behavior of the test assistants in the different situations. Aggressive behavior was most often observed in threatening situations: In situation "Person stares at dog" 12 dogs (17.1%) showed acoustic or visual menace signals (Scale 2). In situation "Person threatens dog with no aids" the behavior of 7 dogs (10.0%) was assigned to Scale 2.

In non-threatening situations, acoustic or visual menace signals (Scale 2) were shown in situations "Drunk Person" (7 dogs, 10%), "Clapping hands, screaming" (6 dogs, 8.6%), "Umbrella" (5 dogs, 7.1%), "Stumbling," "Bicycle" (3 dogs,

Table 5 Number and percentage of dogs per breed reaching Scale 5 as highest scale

Dog breed	Percentage of dogs
Golden retrievers	1.4
American Staffordshire terriers	13
Bull terriers	3
Dobermans	6
Rottweilers	4
Staffordshire bull Terriers	12
Dogs of the pit bull type	13

4.2% in each situation), "Long coat, hat," "Crying," "Person threatens dog with stick" (2 dogs, 2.8% in each situation), "Abrupt rise," "Person shouts at dog," and "Broom" (1 dog, 1.4% in each situation). In the situation "Drunk Person" 1 dog (1.4%) reacted with aggressive behavior assigned to Scale 5. This was the only situation in which a golden retriever reached a higher score than Scale 2.

The 5 situations of the test in which aggressive communication was observed most often were "Person stares at dog," "Person threatens dog with no aids," "Clapping hands, screaming," "Umbrella," and "Drunk person."

Comparison of threatening and non-threatening situations

The dog-human- and dog-environment-contact included four threatening situations. In 7.9% of the threatening situations aggressive communication of Scales 2-4 could be observed. In non-threatening situations aggressive behavior of Scales 2-4 was detected in 1.4% of the situations. Aggressive behavior of Scales 2-4 was therefore highly significant more often shown by the dogs in threatening situations than in non-threatening situations ($P < 0.0001$).

Disorders in aggressive behavior and aggressive behavior in inappropriate situations

A dog was categorized as showing aggressive behavior in inappropriate situations if it reacted with biting with complete approach in those situations in which the test assistant communicated clearly in a friendly way or in situations that often occur in everyday life. A dog was considered to show disturbed aggressive behavior if it showed biting without previous threatening behavior (Scale 6) or if it was not able to become calm within 10 min (Scale 7).

According to these criteria 69 golden retrievers (98.6%) reacted appropriately considering the situation. One animal showed biting with complete approach and earlier menace signals (Scale 5) in the situation in which a "Drunk person" staggers past the dog in 2 m distance. This situation is a non-threatening situation. Therefore the dog's reaction was considered as aggressive behavior in an inappropriate situation.

In the previous study by Mittmann (2002) had tested 415 dogs in the temperament test. In that study, 19 dogs had shown aggressive behavior in inappropriate situations. Concerning aggressive behavior in inappropriate situations, the pair-wise comparison between the dogs tested by Mittmann (2002) and the dogs of the control group resulted in a P value of 0.19 (χ^2 test). Therefore no significant difference between both groups of dogs with regard to aggressive behavior in inappropriate situations could be detected. The same results were found when comparing the golden retrievers with each single breed of dog tested by Mittmann (2002). The pair-wise comparison of bullterriers,

rottweilers, Staffordshire bull terriers, and dogs of the pit bull-type resulted in values of $0.26 < P < 1$ (χ^2 test). However, the pair-wise comparison of American Staffordshire terriers and Dobermans resulted in values of $P = 0.047$ and 0.049 respectively (χ^2 test), indicating that these breeds showed aggressive behavior in inappropriate situations slightly significantly more often than the golden retrievers.

For statistical reasons, i.e., too small numbers of dogs showing disturbed aggressive communication, a comparison between the breeds tested by Mittmann (2002) and the golden retrievers concerning disturbed aggressive communication could not be drawn.

Strategies to solve conflict situations

Every golden retriever underwent 34 test situations. As 70 dogs were tested, a total of 2,380 test situations were observed. In between 10 (29.4%) and 31 (91.2%) of the test situations signs of insecurity or stress signs such as panting, frequent urination, displacement behaviors such as shaking or yawning (Eisfeld, 1966; Lindsay, 2000; Rugaas, 2001; Schoening et al., 2004), and calming signals (Rugaas, 2001) could be observed in the display of the dogs. In a mean of 68.9% of the test situations the golden retrievers showed submissive behavior (e.g., averting gaze (Feddersen-Petersen and Ohl, 1995; Lindsay, 2000), squinting (Lindsay, 2000; Rugaas, 2001), submissive grin (Fox, 1971; Feddersen-Petersen and Ohl, 1995; Feddersen-Petersen, 2004), lip licking (Fox, 1971; Zimen, 1971; Feddersen-Petersen and Ohl, 1995; Lindsay, 2000; Feddersen-Petersen, 2004), paw raising (Schenkel, 1967; Fox, 1971; Althaus, 1982; Feddersen-Petersen, 2004), or drawn back ears, lips, and facial muscles (Schalke, 2004) as strategy for solving a conflict.

Discussion

The assessment of the behavior of dogs by observing them is always prone to the subjectivity of the observer. In 1 study, a significant difference between judgments made by experts in more than 50% of observed behaviors was found (Sundgren, 1993). The dogs tested by Mittmann (2002) were all observed by 2 experts. The golden retrievers were assessed by only 1 observer different from the experts in the previous study, and a second expert could always be consulted. However, to minimize the influence of errors caused by the observer's subjectivity, all temperament tests carried out at the Institute of Animal Welfare and Behavior (Pets, Laboratory Animals and Horses) of the University of Veterinary Medicine Hanover were videotaped. This made repeated observations of the dogs' behavior possible. By playing the tapes in slow motion or freezing images even slightest parts as well as fast changes of the dogs' displays could be detected.

By using a standardized testing procedure and scaling system a validated assessment of a dog's behavior was possible.

Results

A significant difference in the occurrence of aggressive behavior in inappropriate situations between the golden retrievers tested in this study and dogs belonging to 6 different breeds affected by the legislation and tested in a previous research project (Mittmann, 2002) could not be detected. For the following reason, this is a striking result. The owners of the golden retrievers participated in this study on a voluntary basis. The results of their dogs' tests did not have to be passed on to the authorities.

The dogs tested by Mittmann (2002) fell into 2 categories according to the legislation. Dogs belonging to Category 1 (American Staffordshire terriers, bullterriers, and dogs of the pit bull type) had to undergo a temperament test to not be euthanized. Dogs assigned to Category 2 (Dobermans, rottweilers, Staffordshire bull terriers, and 9 other dog breeds) had to attend a temperament test in case the owner wanted to get an exemption from having his dog muzzled and on a leash for the rest of its life. Concerning dogs belonging to either Category 1 or 2, the results of the temperament test had an influence on the dog's further life. The owners of these dogs therefore had a much higher psychologic pressure resting on them. The higher the psychologic and physiologic pressure resting on the owner, the more stress will the dog experience in a certain situation, leading to the dog showing aggressive behavior earlier and more intensively (Schoening, 2000). This applies to the dogs tested by Mittmann (2002) and explains the slightly more frequent occurrence of aggressive behavior in dogs tested in the previous study. However, no significant difference between the 415 dogs tested by Mittmann (2002) and the 70 golden retrievers of this study was found. Furthermore, no significant difference in the pair-wise comparison of golden retrievers with rottweilers, bullterriers, Staffordshire bullterriers, and dogs of the pit bull type was detected. The result that American Staffordshire terriers and Dobermans had a tendency to show aggressive behavior in inappropriate situations more often than golden retrievers might be explained by the far bigger psychological pressure put on these dogs' owners—the passing of the test being the single criterion deciding over a dog's euthanasia or its life-long being kept leashed and muzzled.

As the results show, aggressive behavior was most often shown in situations that were threatening for the dog, or in situations that were characterized by fast, abrupt, or strange movements of the test assistants. The reason for showing aggressive behavior was most often found to be anxiety. The same results were found by Mittmann (2002). This concordance shows that dogs, regardless of their breed, display

aggressive behavior toward the same triggers. Regardless of their breed dogs are threatened by similar human attitudes and situations.

Aggressive behavior most often shown in situations that dogs are not familiar with, and in situations that do not often occur in daily life. The human behavior that triggers aggressive behavior in dogs is often different from what dogs know as being "normal." This indicates how important the first weeks in a dog's life, i.e. the socialization period is in which a dog learns what it should regard as "normal" in its later life. To minimize the chance that a dog will show aggressive behavior in its later life due to anxiety or fear, breeders as well as future owners need to present many stimuli connected with positive experiences to a dog regardless of the dog's breed. Still the following has to be considered: however good the experiences with humans and the environment of a dog in its life has been during the socialization period, strange situations can occur in a dog's life. A dog cannot be prepared for every single situation it will encounter in its later life. To prepare a dog for its later life it should be trained an alternative behavior as early in its life as possible, thus teaching the dog a way to solve conflicts by showing this alternative behavior instead of feeling anxious and reacting aggressively.

Conclusion

In this research project, no significant differences in the occurrence of aggressive behavior in inappropriate situations were found when comparing golden retrievers and 6 dog breeds affected by legislation. Therefore, assuming that certain dog breeds are especially dangerous and imposing controls on them cannot be ethologically justified. Consequently, legislation in Lower Saxony was changed, and breed lists were withdrawn.

It is striking that the golden retrievers and the dogs tested previously reacted mainly in situations involving unusual movements. In both groups, fear was found to be the main cause of the behavior. This underlines that the emphasis for preventing biting accidents should be consideration of the emotions in the dog and the effect of eliciting stimuli rather than affiliation with particular breeds. It

furthermore shows that more emphasis has to be put on educating breeders and owner as well as on preventing than on solving behavior problems.

References

- Althaus, T., 1982. Die Welpenentwicklung beim Siberian Husky. Dissertation, Philosophisch-naturwissenschaftliche Fakultät, Universität Bern, Switzerland.
- Eisfeld, D., 1966. Verhaltensbeobachtungen an einigen Wildcaniden. *Z. Wiss. Zool.* 174, 227-289.
- Fedderson-Petersen, D., 2004. Hundepsychologie. Sozialverhalten und Wesen. Emotionen und Individualität. Kosmos Verlag, Stuttgart, Germany.
- Fedderson-Petersen, D., Ohl, F., 1995. Ausdrucksverhalten beim Hund. Gustav Fischer Verlag, Jena, Stuttgart, Germany.
- Fox, M.W., 1971. Socio-infantile and socio-sexual signals in canids: a comparative and ontogenic study. *Z. Tierpsychol.* 28, 185-210.
- Lindsay, S.R., 2000. Handbook of applied dog behavior and training. Iowa State University Press, Iowa, United States of America.
- NMELF-Niedersächsisches Ministerium fuer Ernährung, Landwirtschaft und Forsten, 2000. Wesenstest fuer Hunde. Available at: <http://www.ml.niedersachsen.de>
- Mittmann, A., 2002. Untersuchung des Verhaltens von 5 Hunderassen und einem Hundetypus im Wesenstest nach den Richtlinien der Niedersächsischen Gefährtiervverordnung vom 05.07.2000. Thesis, University of Veterinary Medicine Hannover, Germany. Available at: http://elib.tiho-hannover.de/dissertations/mittmanna_2002.pdf
- Netto, W.J., Planta, D.J.U., 1997. Behavioural testing for aggression in the domestic dog. *Appl. Anim. Behav. Sci.* 52, 243-263.
- Rugaas, T., 2001. Calming Signals. Die Beschwichtigungssignale der Hunde, 4th edition. Animal Learn Verlag, Grassau, Germany.
- Schalke, E., 2004. Persönliche Mitteilung. Tierärztliche Hochschule Hannover, Hannover, Germany.
- Schenkel, R., 1967. Submission: its features and function in the wolf and dog. *Am. Zool.* 7, 319-329.
- Schoening, B., 2000. Warum beißt der Hund? Deutsches Tierärzteblatt. 9, 904-914.
- Schoening, B., Steffn, N., Roehrs, K., 2004. Hundesprache. Kosmos Verlag, Stuttgart, Germany.
- Sundgren, P.E., 1993. Working dogs. Testing and breeding. A preliminary study on testing methods and genetic variability in working traits in dogs. In: The 5th International Symposium on Rescue Dogs, Rose- rsberg, Sweden.
- Zimen, E., 1971. Woelfe und Koenigspudel-vergleichende Verhaltensbeobachtungen. R. Piper & Co Verlag, Muenchen, Germany.

Member Center | News & Publications | Professional Development | Practice & Economics | Advocacy | Meetings & Events
 About AVMA | Knowledge Base

You are here: [Home](#) | [Knowledge Base](#) | [Resources](#) | [Backgrounders](#)

Backgrounders

FAQs

Market Research Statistics

Reference Guides

Reports

Dog Bite Risk and Prevention: The Role of Breed

Backgrounder

April 17, 2012

[PDF version](#)

BREEDS IMPLICATED IN SERIOUS BITE INJURIES

In a range of studies, the breeds found to be highly represented in biting incidents were German Shepherd Dog,^{1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16} pit bull type,^{5,9,13,16,17,18,19,20,21} mixed breed,^{1,4,6,8,10,11,12,22} Rottweiler,^{15,19,21,23} Chow Chow,^{7,20} Jack Russell Terrier,^{18,23} and others (Collie,³ Springer Spaniel¹⁴ Saint Bernard,¹² and Labrador Retriever²). If you consider only the much smaller number of cases that resulted in very severe injuries or fatalities,^{17,18} pit bull-type dogs are more frequently identified. However this may relate to the popularity of the breed in the victim's community, reporting biases and the dog's treatment by its owner (e.g., use as fighting dogs¹²). It is worth noting that fatal dog attacks in some areas of Canada are attributed mainly to sled dogs and Siberian Huskies,¹³ presumably due to the regional prevalence of these breeds. See [Table 1](#) for a summary of breed data related to bite injuries.

CONTROLLED STUDIES

The prevalence of particular dog breeds can also change rapidly over time, often influenced by distinct peaks of popularity for specific breeds. It seems that increased popularity is sometimes followed by increases in bite reports in some large breeds. For example there was a distinct peak in American Kennel Club registration of Rottweilers²⁴ between 1990 and 1995, and they come at the top of the list of 'biting breeds' for the first time in studies of bites causing hospitalization in the late 90s and early 2000s.^{21,23,15,45} While it must be noted that other fad breeds such as Dalmatians and Irish setters do not seem to make similar appearances, any estimate of breed-based risk must take into account the prevalence of the breed in the population at the time and place of serious biting events.²⁵

For example, researchers may compare well-documented bite cases with matched control households. Using this method, one study found that the breeds disproportionately involved in bite injuries requiring medical attention in the Denver area (where pit bull types are not permitted) were the German Shepherd Dog and Chow Chow.⁵¹

Other studies use estimates of breed prevalence that do not relate specifically to the households where the bites occurred, such as general community surveys, breed registries, licensed dogs or animal shelter populations (See [Table 2](#)). These studies implicate the German Shepherd Dog and crosses^{47,48,49,50,51} and various other breeds (mixed breed,^{49,50} Cocker spaniel,^{48,52} Chow Chow,^{51,52} Collie,⁴⁸ Doberman,⁴⁷ Lhasa Apso,^{35,52} Rottweiler,³⁸ Springer Spaniel,³⁴ Shih Tsu,³⁴ and Poodle⁴⁹).

AGGRESSIVE BREEDS

Based on behavioral assessments and owner surveys the breeds that were more aggressive towards people were small to medium-sized dogs such as the collies, toy breeds and spaniels.^{26,27,28,29} For example, a survey of general veterinary clientele in Canada (specifically practices in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island) identified Lhasa Apso, Springer spaniel and Shih Tsu as more likely to bite.³¹



RELATED CONTENT

[February is National Pet Dental Health Month](#)

[Want to save money on your veterinary bills?](#)

[The Conversation](#)

[Taking on cancer](#)

[AVMA CEO Testimony on the Prevent All Spring Tactics Act: 2013](#)

[Animal Welfare Policy Statements](#)

[America's veterinarians congratulate Congress on passage of Fann Bill](#)

MOST VIEWED PAGES

MOST SHARED

[Canine circovirus](#)

[Accredited Veterinary](#)

[Technology Programs](#)

[Cold weather pet safety](#)

[Veterinary Career Center](#)

[Pet Food & Product](#)

[Recalls/Alerts](#)

While small dogs may be more aggressive their size means they are less likely to inflict serious bite injury except on vulnerable individuals or as part of a pack attack.²⁹ Referrals for aggression problem more closely approximate the breeds implicated in serious bite attacks, probably because owners are more likely to seek treatment for aggression in dogs that are large enough to be dangerous. Larger dogs (regardless of breed) are implicated in more attacks on humans³¹ and other dogs.³²

Certain large breeds are notably under-represented in bite statistics such as large hounds and retrievers (e.g., Labrador Retrievers and Golden Retrievers)^{33,34}—although even these breeds may have known aggressive subtypes.³³ Results relating to German Shepherd Dogs are mixed,^{29,34} suggesting there may be particularly high variability in this breed, perhaps depending on regional subtypes or ownership factors.

PIT BULL TYPES

Owners of pit bull-type dogs deal with a strong breed stigma,²⁵ however controlled studies have not identified this breed group as disproportionately dangerous. The pit bull type is particularly ambiguous as a "breed" encompassing a range of pedigree breeds, informal types and appearances that cannot be reliably identified. Visual determination of dog breed is known to not always be reliable.³⁵ And witnesses may be predisposed to assume that a vicious dog is of this type.

It should also be considered that the incidence of pit bull-type dogs' involvement in severe and fatal attacks may represent high prevalence in neighborhoods that present high risk to the young children who are the most common victim of severe or fatal attacks. And as owners of stigmatized breeds are more likely to have involvement in criminal and/or violent acts³⁷—breed correlations may have the owner's behavior as the underlying causal factor.

BREED BANS

While some study authors suggest limiting ownership of specific breeds might reduce injuries (e.g., pit bull type,³⁸ German Shepherd Dog³⁹) it has not been demonstrated that breed-specific bans affect the rate or severity of bite injuries occurring in the community.⁸ Factors that are reliably associated with serious dog bite injury (requiring hospital treatment) in the United States are the victim being a young child and the dog being familiar (belonging to the family, a family friend or neighbor).^{40,41} Strategies known to result in decreased bite incidents include active enforcement of dog control ordinances (licensing)⁴².

CONCLUSION

Maulings by dogs can cause terrible injuries⁴⁰ and death—and it is natural for those dealing with the victims to seek to address the immediate causes. Serious bites occur due to a range of factors in which a dog's size and temperament are known to be the risk factors. Also important are dog management factors such as neutering and leashing, and child care factors such as supervision around animals.

Given that pit bull-type dogs are not implicated in controlled studies, and the potential role of prevalence and management factors, it is difficult to support the targeting of this breed as a basis for dog bite prevention. If breeds are to be targeted a cluster of large breeds would be implicated including the German shepherd and shepherd crosses and other breeds that vary by location.

See Also:

National Animal Control Association Guideline Statement: "*Dangerous and/or vicious animals should be labeled as such as a result of their actions or behavior and not because of their breed.*"

Summary Tables

Table One

Studies of Serious Dog Bite Injury by Breed

Period	Data Source	N	Country	Top Two Breeds Identified	Ref
1971	US Dept. Health	843	United States (VA)	mixed breed German Shepherd Dog	1
1971-1974	Hospital records	50	South Africa	German Shepherd Dog Labrador Retriever	2

1973-1976	US Dept. Health	2618	United States (AL)	German Shepherd Dog Collie	3
1979-1982	Health Dept. Severe attacks	16	United States (SC)	pit bull type Saint Bernard	17
1981-1983	US Reservations	772	United States	mixed breed unspecified pedigree	22
1982-1989	Hospital records	146	United Kingdom	pit bull type Jack Russell Terrier	18
1987-1988	HASS	487	United Kingdom	mixed breed German Shepherd Dog	4
1979-1998	Fatalities	27	United States	pitt bull type Rottweiler	19
1989	Hospital records	168	United States	German Shepherd Dog pit bull type	5
1989	Hospital records	75	United Kingdom	German Shepherd Dog mixed breed	6
1991	Animal control records	357	United States	German Shepherd Dog Chow Chow	7
1991+1994	Hospital records	198	United Kingdom	German Shepherd Dog mixed breed	8
1989-1996	Hospital records	1109	United States (CA)	pit bull type German shepherd	9
1990-2007	Fatalities	28	Canada	mixed breed husky "sled dog"	43
1995	Patients receiving rabies post-exposure prophylaxis	~8000	United States (PA)	German Shepherd Dog mixed breed	10
1991-2000	Hospital records	654	Spain	German Shepherd Dog mixed breed	11
1996	Hospital records	1916	Australia	German Shepherd Dog Bull Terrier	44
1995-1997	Animal control	?	United States	pit bull type Chow Chow	20
1997	Hospital records	385	Canada	German Shepherd Dog Cocker Spaniel	11 ⁴⁵
1998-2002	Hospital records	72	Canada	Rottweiler German Shepherd Dog	46
1991-2004	Hospital records	25	South Africa	pit bull type German Shepherd Dog	47
1994-2005	Hospital records	341	Austria	mixed breed German Shepherd Dog	12
1997-2003	Hospital records	11	United States	Rottweiler German Shepherd Dog	15

[Help](#)

[Privacy](#) | [Terms of Use](#)

Copyright © 2014 American Veterinary Medical Association

2001-2002	ACC claims	3020	New Zealand	German Shepherd Dog pit bull type	13
2000-2004	Hospital records	593	United Kingdom	Rottweiler Jack Russell Terrier	23
2001-2005	Hospital records	551	United States	pit bull type Rottweiler	21
2002-2005	Veterinary referral	111	United States (PA)	Springer Spaniel German Shepherd Dog	14

Table Two

Studies of Serious Dog Bite Injury by Breed taking into Account Breed Prevalence

Period	Data Source	Prevalence estimate	N	Country	Breeds Identified as Higher Risk	Ref
1974-1975	Animal control	Licensed dogs	?	United States (MD)	German Shepherd Dog and shepherd crosses Doberman Pinscher	48
1976-1977	US Bases	Relative risk versus mixed breed	529	United States (IL, MO)	Collie German Shepherd Dog Cocker Spaniel	49
1982	Pediatric practice	Non-biting pets of other patients	194	United States (MO)	German Shepherd Dog and shepherd crosses mixed breed over 30lb Poodle	50
1986-1987	Health Unit	Licensed dogs	318	Canada	German Shepherd Dog mixed breed	51
1991	Plastic surgery cases	Prevalence in community	146	Australia	German Shepherd Dog	39
1991	Animal control	Case controls	178	United States (CO)	German Shepherd Dog Chow Chow	52
1990-1993	Hospital records	Survey	356	Australia	Doberman Pinscher German Shepherd Dog Rottweiler	38
1993	Shelter animals quarantined for biting	General shelter admissions	170	United States (WI)	Chow Chow Cocker Spaniel Lhasa Apso	53
1996	Owner self-report (biters)	Owner self-report (non-biters)	3226	Canada	Lhasa Apso Springer Spaniel Shih Tsu	34

References

- 1 Morton C. Dog bites in Norfolk, VA. *Health Serv Rep*. 1973;86:59-65.
- 2 Chait LA, Spitz L. Dogbite injuries in children. *S Afr Med J* 1975;49:718-720.
- 3 Maetz, M. Animal bites, a public health problem in Jefferson County, Alabama. *Public Health Rep* 1979;94: 528-534.
- 4 Levene S. Dog bites to children. *BMJ* 1991;303:466.
- 5 Avner JR, Baker MD. Dog bites in urban children. *Pediatrics*. 1991;88:55-57.
- 6 Jarrett P. Which dogs bite? *Arch Emerg Med* 1991;8:33-35.
- 7 Patrick GR, O'Rourke KM. Dog and cat bites: epidemiologic analyses suggest different prevention strategies. *Public Health Rep* 1998;113:252-257.
- 8 Klaassen B, Buckley JR, Esmail A. Does the Dangerous Dogs Act protect against animal attacks: a prospective study of mammalian bites in the accident and emergency department. *Injury* 1996; 27: 89-91.
- 9 Meade, P. Police and domestic dog bite injuries: What are the differences? What are the implications about police dog use? *Injury Extra* 2006;37:395-401.
- 10 Moore DA, Sischo WM, Hunter A, et al. Animal bite epidemiology and surveillance for rabies postexposure prophylaxis. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 2000;217:190-194.
- 11 Meidez Gallart R, Gomez Tellado M, Somoza Argibay I, Liras Munoz J, Pais Pineiro E, Vela Nieto D. Dog bite related injuries treated in a pediatric surgery department: analysis of 654 cases in 10 years. *An Esp Pediatr*. 2002;56:425-429.
- 12 Schafalmon J. Analysis of dog bites in children who are younger than 17 years. *Pediatrics* 2006;117:374-379.
- 13 Wake AF. *The Aetiology of Dog Bites in New Zealand*. [MSc thesis], Palmerston North: Massey University. 2005.
- 14 Reisner, IR. Assessment, management, and prognosis of canine dominated-related aggression. *The Veterinary Clinics of North America Small Animal Practice* 1997;27:479-495.
- 15 Benson LS, Edwards SL, Schiff AP, et al. Dog and cat bites to the hand: treatment and cost assessment. *J Hand Surg [Am]* 2006; 31: 468-473.
- 16 Ashby K. Dog bites. Victorian Injury Surveillance System. *Hazard* 1996; 26: 7-13.
- 17 Wright JC. Severe attacks by dogs: characteristics of the dogs, the victims, and the attack settings. *Public Health Rep* 1985;100:55-61.
- 18 Shewell PC, Nancarrow JD. Dogs that bite. *BMJ* 1997;303:1512-13.
- 19 Sacks JJ, Sinclair L, Gilchrist J, Golab GC, Lockwood R. Breeds of dogs involved in fatal human attacks in the United States between 1979 and 1998. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 2000; 217: 836-840.
- 20 Blocker DE. Dog bite rates and biting dog breeds in Texas, 1995-1997. Masters Thesis 2000.
- 21 Kaye AE, Belz JM, Kirschner RE. Pediatric Dog Bite Injuries: A 5 Year Review of the Experience at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. *Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery* 2009;124:551-558.
- 22 Daniels TJ. A study of dog bites on the Navajo reservation. *Public Health Rep* 1986;101:50-59.
- 23 Thompson P. Aggression Effects - From a Human Perspective and Solutions. *Urban Animal Management Conference Proceedings* 2004.
- 24 Herzog H. Forty-two Thousand and One Dalmatians: Fads, Social Contagion, and Dog Breed Popularity. *Society and Animals* 2006;4:383-398.
- 25 Cunningham, L. The Case Against Dog Breed Discrimination By Homeowners' Insurance Companies. *Connecticut Insurance Law Journal* 2004;11:61.
- 26 Fatjó J, Amat M, Mariotti VM, Torre JLR, Manteca X. Analysis of 1040 cases of canine aggression in a referral practice in Spain. *J Vet Behav* 2007; 2:158-65.
- 27 Duffy, DL., Hsu, Y, Serpell, JA. Breed differences in canine aggression. *Appl Anim Behav Sci* 2008;114:441-460.
- 28 Draper, T.W., Canine analogs of human personality factors. *J Gen Psych* 1995;122: 241-252.
- 29 Lund JD, Agger JF, Vestergaard KS. Reported behaviour problems in pet dogs in Denmark: age distribution and influence of breed and gender. *Preventative Vet med* 1996;28:33-48.
- 30 Kneafsey B, Condon KC. Severe dog-bite injuries, introducing the concept of pack attack: A literature review and seven case reports. *Injury*. 1995;26:37-41.
- 31 Harris D, Imperato PJ, Oken B. Dog bites—an unrecognized epidemic. *Bull NY Acad Med* 1974;50:981-1000.
- 32 Roll, A., Unshelm, J. Aggressive conflicts amongst dogs and factors affecting them. *Appl Anim Behav Sci*. 1997;52:229-242.
- 33 van den Berg, L., Schilder, M.B.H., Knol, B.W. Behaviour genetics of canine aggression: behavioural phenotyping of Golden Retrievers by means of an aggression test. *Behav Gen* 2003;33:469-483.
- 34 Guy, N. Canine household aggression in the caseload of general veterinary practitioners in Maritime Canada, Master of Science thesis, Atlantic Veterinary College, University of Prince Edward Island, 1999.
- 35 Twining, H., Arluke, A., Patronek, G. Managing stigma of outlaw breeds: A case study of pit bull owners. *Society and Animals* 2001;8:1-28.
- 36 Voith VL, Ingram E, Mitsouras K. Comparison of adoption agency breed identification and DNA breed identification of dogs. *J Appl Anim Welf Sci*

2009;12:253-262.

37 Ragatz L, Fremouw W, Thomas T, McCoy K. Vicious dogs: the antisocial behaviors and psychological characteristics of owners. *Journal of Forensic Sciences* 2009;54:699-703

38 Thompson PG. The public health impact of dog attacks in a major Australian city. *Med J Aust* 1997;167:129-32.

39 Greenhalgh C, Cockington R, Raftos I. An epidemiological survey of dog bites presenting to the emergency department of a children's hospital. *J Paediatr Child Health* 1991; 27: 171-174.

40 Loewe CL, Francisco JD, Bechinski J. Pitbull mauling deaths in Detroit. *The American Journal of Forensic Medicine and Pathology* 2007;28:356-360.

41 Monroy A, Behar P, Nagy M, Poje C, Pizzuto M, Brodsky L. Head and neck dog bites in children. *Otolaryngol. Head Neck Surg* 2009;140:354-357

42 Clarke NM. A survey of urban Canadian animal control practices: the effect of enforcement and resourcing on the reported dog bite rate. Master of Science – MSc 2009

43 Raghavan M. Fatal dog attacks in Canada, 1990–2007. *Can Vet J.* 2008;49:577–581.

44 Ashby K. Dog bites. Victorian Injury Surveillance System. *Hazard* 1996; 26: 7-13.

45 Flores J, Brown J, Mackenzie SG. Innovative CHIRPP project focuses on dog bites. *CHIRPP News* 1997;11:3-7.

46 Lang ME, Klassen T. Dog bites in Canadian children: a five-year review of severity and emergency department management. *Can J Emerg Med.* 2005;7:309–314.

47 Dwyer JP, Douglas TS, van As AB. Dog bites injuries in children—a review of data from a South Africa paediatric trauma unit. 2007;97:597–600.

48 Berzon DR. The animal bite epidemic in Baltimore, Maryland: review and update. *Am J Public Health.* 1978;68:593-595.

49 Hanna, TL, Selby LA. Characteristics of the human and pet populations in animal bite incidents recorded at two Air Force bases. *Public Health Rep.* 1981;96:580-584.

50 Lauer EA, White WC, Lauer BA. Dog bites: a neglected problem in accident prevention. *AJDC.* 1982;136:202-204.

51 Szpakowski NM, Bonnett BN, Marlin SW. An epidemiological investigation into the reported incidents of dog biting in the City of Guelph. *Can Vet J* 1989;30:937–942.

52 Gershman KA, Sacks JJ, Wright JC. Which dogs bite: a case-control study of risk factors. *Pediatrics* 1994;93:913-917.

53 Castelein C, Klouda J, Hirsch H. The bite case scenario—it is not what you think. In: WFHS newsletter, Madison, Wis: Wisconsin Humane Society, 1996;Sep:12-14.

Cited in: Overall KL, Love M. Dog bites to humans: demography, epidemiology, injury, and risk. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 2001;218:1923-1934.

This information has been prepared as a service by the American Veterinary Medical Association's Animal Welfare Division. Mention of trade names, products, commercial practices or organizations does not imply endorsement by the American Veterinary Medical Association.

The charitable arm of the AVMA



American Veterinary Medical Foundation

OTHER AVMA SITES

[Aardvarks to Zebras](#)

[Externs on the Hill](#)

[MyVeterinarian.com](#)

[WebMD® Pet Health Community](#)

[Keep Our Food Safe](#)

[National Pet Week](#)

[Animal Health SmartBrief](#)

Animals and Society Institute



Dog Bites: Problems and Solutions

POLICY PAPER

Janis Bradley

The Animals and Society Institute is an independent research and educational organization that advances the status of animals in public policy and promotes the study of human-animal relationships. We are a think tank as well as a producer of educational resources, publications and events. Our objectives are to promote new and stricter animal protection laws, stop the cycle of violence between animal cruelty and human abuse, and learn more about our complex relationship with animals.

Janis Bradley is the author of *Dogs Bite: But Balloons and Slippers Are More Dangerous* (Berkeley, CA: James and Kenneth Publishers, 2005). She has spent 20 years designing and teaching college courses in several disciplines and counseling adult students in the process of career change. At the San Francisco SPCA, she was one of the main architects of a uniquely student-centered curriculum for public dog training classes and developed a new model for counseling clients who need help resolving their dogs' behavior issues. She is a clicker trainer and educator.

The Animals and Society Institute Policy Papers provide credible, academic-style information on current topics of specialized interest that are researched and developed by expert authors. The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the Animals and Society Institute.

Copyright © 2006 by Animals and Society Institute
All rights reserved.

Printed in the United States of America

ISBN 0-9788572-1-6
ISBN 978-0-9788572-1-9

Animals and Society Institute
3500 Boston Street
Suite 325
Baltimore, MD 21224
USA

(410) 675-4566

www.animalsandsociety.org

Acknowledgements

The Animals and Society Institute wishes to thank the following for their assistance and expertise in the preparation of this policy paper: the Animal Farm Foundation, Inc., Jane Berkey, Donald Cleary and Jill Howard Church.

We also wish to thank those individuals and like-minded organizations and foundation whose financial support help to make our programs possible.

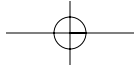
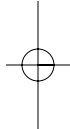
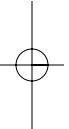
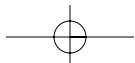
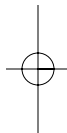
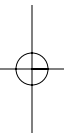


Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary	1-2
2. Scope of the Problem: Incidence of Dog Bite Fatalities and Injuries. Comparison with Other Injury Modalities in Rate and Severity	3-7
2.1 Fatality incidence	3
2.2 Dog-bite injury rates compared with common medically treated injuries	4
2.3 Injury severity	6
3. Existing and Proposed Legal Remedies: Efficacy and Costs	9-14
3.1 Attempts to identify and remove high-risk animals: breed bans	9
3.2 Attempts to identify and remove high risk animals: dangerous dog laws	11
3.3 Resources for enforcement	12
3.4 Other outcomes.....	13
4. Benefits of Dogs vs. Risks	15-16
4.1 Health benefits of dog guardianship	15
4.2 Number of people benefiting versus number harmed.....	16
5. Recommendations	17-19
5.1 Effective legislation	17
5.1.1 Enforcement of existing dog regulations	17
5.1.2 Limit injury prevention proscriptions to dogs who have bitten injuriously	17
5.1.3 Tracking of dogs with one injurious bite	17
5.1.4 Bites in the context of other negligent infractions.....	18
5.2 Focus prevention resources on education	18
5.2.1 Educating children and adults to behave safely around dogs	18
5.2.2 Educating dog guardians in puppy-raising techniques to minimize aggression	18
5.2.3 Incentives for breeders to select for low reactivity	19
6. Works Cited	21-24
7. Overview References	25



1. Dog Bites: Problems and Solutions

Executive Summary

Public concern regarding dog bites has grown in recent years. Alarm often intensifies in response to a fatality or serious injury. Many actions, both legislative and educational, have been proposed and some implemented in attempts to address this concern. However, in considering any public policy change in response to a perceived threat to the general welfare, it is important to consider not only the scope of the problem relative to other risks, but also whether or not an effective remedy is available. If a remedy is known, we must still consider what detrimental side effects it might carry, what resources would be required to effect it, and whether such resources might have greater beneficial impact on public safety if directed toward other hazards. This paper is a brief attempt to address these questions insofar as current research allows.

Dog bite fatalities are extremely rare, accounting for about one in 167,000 deaths per year in the U.S. Dog bites represent 0.2 percent of emergency room visits. They are comparable in incidence to (but less severe than) accidents involving many common household objects, such as chairs. Attempts have been made to reduce this injury rate by banning breeds of dogs considered dangerous. However, follow-up studies show no impact on bite rates following breed-ban legislation. Moreover, no credible evidence has been presented to demonstrate that any particular breeds, including Rottweilers, American Staffordshire Terriers, and American Pit Bull Terriers are overrepresented among biting dogs.

Other attempts to identify and regulate high-risk animals focus on prior aggressive behavior. This has been shown to be effective with regard to previous injurious biting behavior. Threatening behavior, however, is too widespread among dogs to be sufficiently predictive of actual biting. Removing or regulating all threatening dogs would require enormous increases in enforcement personnel, and draw resources from other public safety issues affecting more people. It could also significantly decrease the number of people keeping dogs. Since living with companion dogs has been shown to prevent and ameliorate the effects

2 | Executive Summary

of widespread chronic diseases, any measures that discourage companion animal guardianship should be approached with caution.

Two types of solutions are proposed. First, legal penalties should focus on people who knowingly keep dogs in clear disregard for public safety, either through a lack of appropriate supervision and confinement, mistreatment or neglect likely to foster aggression, or through a lack of precautions taken after an injurious bite has occurred. Second, information should be widely disseminated, especially to children, regarding safe ways to interact with dogs, and education for responsible dog guardians should include instruction on puppy socialization and breeder selection. In addition, broad public information campaign should convince people that it is unrealistic to expect selective aggression from dogs. If society wants “people-safe” dogs, it must reject using them for protection and guarding.

2. Scope of the Problem: Incidence of Dog Bite Fatalities and Injuries. Comparison with Other Injury Modalities in Rate and Severity

2.1 Fatality incidence

Calls for legislation to prevent dog bites often arise in response to a single local fatality. This may not be a realistic response, however, because dog bite fatalities are extremely rare. For each dog bite fatality in the United States, more than 1,000 people die as a result of a fall, and almost 3,000 die in auto accidents.¹

Approximately one person in 18 million dies as a result of a dog bite in this country in an average year.^{2,3,4} One in 167,000 deaths overall is attributable to this cause.⁵ Most mortality modalities this rare are not regularly counted; however, a few other rare fatalities are studied occasionally. Statistics show that dog-bite deaths occur at approximately one-fifth the rate of lightning fatalities, one-third the rate of forklift fatalities, and one-third the rate of cattle-related fatalities. (The cattle figure is probably low, since the only counts available are for work-related injuries).^{6,7,8,9} Children under 10 are twice as likely to drown in a five-gallon bucket and 1.5 times more likely to die on playground equipment than from a dog bite.^{10,11,12} This is not to say that these deaths are unimportant, but in considering allocating public resources to prevent such deaths, one must first establish that the same resources could not be used to save more lives at risk from other causes. For example, an intervention that reduced automobile-accident mortality by 0.009 percent would save twice as many lives as one that eliminated dog-bite fatalities.

Thus, a reasonable decision to allocate resources to prevent a very rare cause of death requires that the risk factors be clearly identifiable and necessitate only modest expenditure to implement. Some rare mortality modalities can meet this standard. Grain-bin fatalities, for example, have been substantially decreased by regulating safety standards for working conditions.^{13,14} This is possible because exposure to the hazard is limited to a relatively small number of sites that can be easily inspected, and because dangerous conditions are readily identified. Such an approach

4 | Scope of the Problem

is clearly impractical when dealing with an estimated U.S. dog population of around 74 million,¹⁵ approximately one in 5 million of whom is involved in a fatal attack each year. This problem of scale is exacerbated by the fact that even if it was possible to inspect them all, there is no reliable way to predict which dogs are dangerous.

2.2 Dog bite injury rates compared with common medically treated injuries

There is considerable confusion about how many injuries result from dog bites every year and whether or not these numbers are increasing. Yearly estimates for 1992 through 1994 (the date of the last major study) range from 334,000 to 800,000.^{1,16,17,18} A number in the lower range is more statistically defensible; this lower estimate comes from an actual count of injuries treated in sampled hospital emergency departments, so the occurrences were documented by medical professionals. The larger number comes from a telephone survey, with all the reporting and sampling biases inherent in such a procedure. Also, the emergency-department study counted more actual bites as the basis of their estimate than did the phone survey. This means that when the counted bites were extrapolated to national bite rates, the statistical margin of error was much narrower.

Claims of increased bite-related injuries are often made by insurance spokespersons, attorneys specializing in dog bite litigation, and even by CDC-affiliated researchers. Two National Center for Injury Prevention and Control surveys done in 1986 and 1994^{17,18} are often used to support these claims. The studies appear to show a 36 percent increase in medically treated dog bites by comparing 1994 study results with those from a 1986 study, although the authors themselves do not draw such a conclusion. However, there are difficulties with both numbers, and enough differences between the methodologies of the two studies to make it inadvisable to compare them.

In 1986, in a study of nonfatal injuries, the National Center for Health Statistics interviewed one person in each of 23,838 households. The survey tallied injuries sustained by everyone in those households, thus gathering information on a total of 62,052 people. The survey counted injuries that had resulted in “restricted activity” or a “doctor visit” in the two weeks prior, and injuries requiring hospitalization or “limitation of regular activities” for the entire year. Only the short-term data were used

in the report, since records for the longer period was considered unreliable. The interviewees reported six injurious dog bites, which were used to calculate a national figure of 585,000 bites for 1986. Extrapolation on this scale inevitably leads to a very wide margin of error (technically called a “confidence interval”); in this case, it ranged from 226,000 to 944,000.

Then in 1994, the CDC conducted a much smaller injury survey, interviewing one adult in each of 5,328 households about injuries sustained by that adult and by any children under 15 in the household, thus gathering information on a total of 8,869 people. This survey recorded injuries that occurred over the previous year and counted only injuries that received medical treatment. The reported total of 38 injurious bites was used to calculate a national figure of 756,701 (rounded up to 800,000 to include the bites the researchers thought they would have found among 15- to 17-year-olds, who were not covered in the survey). The margin of error was even greater than in the earlier study; it ranged from 345,038 to 1,168,363, substantially overlapping the 1984 result. The differences in methodologies and the statistically overlapping results make it impractical to use these two studies to compare dog bite injuries in 1986 with those in 1994.

Given these survey weaknesses, it’s probably better to rely upon the emergency department numbers, which are replicated every year in an ongoing injury data collection effort of the CDC called the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System (NEISS).¹ An annual rate of 334,000 injurious dog bites (the average between 1992 and 1994) was collected by a separate but similar emergency department survey system called the National Center for Health Statistics National Hospital Ambulatory Medical Care Survey, which collects data on all emergency room visits arising from both illnesses and injuries.¹⁶ But the NEISS estimates for 2002–2004, a full decade later, suggest stability, averaging 334,000 bite incidents per year once again, even though the dog and human populations had both increased by 12–15 percent in the interim. It should be noted that these data collection systems do not include injuries treated in physicians’ offices, or ones that are not treated at all, so we must assume that the total bite numbers are somewhat higher. It is likely, however, that most serious injuries go through emergency systems.

6 | Scope of the Problem

It's important to note that this more stable data-collection system shows no increase in dog bite injuries over the last decade. Although this may be due to slightly different methodologies, it remains the case that the increases often described in the press have not been documented.

Nevertheless, it is safe to say that dog bite injuries occur relatively frequently. They currently account for 0.2 percent of all emergency department visits, and 0.8 percent of injury-related visits.¹ Approximately one third of American households includes at least one dog.¹⁵ This means that at least 96 million people are in daily contact with dogs, if we include only the members of the dogs' own households. Almost anything with that kind of massive exposure is going to carry some hazards. In fact, dogs are associated with fewer injuries than other ordinary artifacts of daily life, including tables and chairs, doors, beds, even sneakers and slippers.^{19,20} For another example, roughly 180 million people of all ages in the U.S. participate in some kind of sport or physical activity at least occasionally—about double the number of people who live with dogs. Yet emergency departments treat more than 13 times as many sports-related injuries as dog bites.²¹ When looking specifically at injuries to children under 14, dogs bites account for about two-thirds as many injuries as playground equipment.^{1,21}

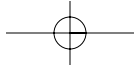
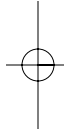
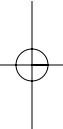
Dog bites are much rarer than the sorts of injuries that are ordinarily described as common. For every dog bite treated in an emergency room, for example, 23 falls and 13 automobile accident injuries are treated.¹ And as mentioned previously, falls and automobile accidents are much more serious, 51 and 200 times more likely to prove fatal, respectively.

2.3 Injury Severity

Dog bites, on average, are less severe than any of the more common injury categories. Ninety-nine percent of emergency room-treated dog bites are rated as minor, scored as 1 on a six-point injury severity scale.²² (A level 1 injury is one from which the person recovers quickly with no lasting impairment; a level 6 is one likely to be fatal.) Treated fall injuries, on the other hand, average around a 4,²³ meaning a moderate injury that either requires weeks to months to fully heal or results in lasting minor impairment.

Falls are four times as likely to result in hospitalization as dog bites and are 51 times more likely to be fatal.¹ Pennsylvania Department of Health studies found that the average treatment for dog bites costs less than the average fall injury, results in hospitalization less frequently, and that hospital stays (when they do occur) are shorter.^{24,25} This discrepancy holds true for other common injuries as well. Injuries from overexertion, for example, are more severe than those from dog bites, according to national data.¹

Similar disparities in magnitude exist between dog bites and other unusual injuries. Almost half (45 percent) of playground injuries are severe, including internal injuries, concussions, and dislocated, fractured, and amputated limbs.¹² Most dog bite injuries are minor punctures and lacerations.²² More than three percent of patients in emergency rooms because of playground accidents are hospitalized.¹² This is three times the rate of hospitalizations for dog bites.¹



3. Existing and Proposed Legal Remedies: Efficacy and Costs

3.1 Attempts to identify and remove high-risk animals: breed bans

The best known study of fatal dog bites has attributed more fatalities to dogs identified as “pit bull type” dogs over the past two decades than to any single breed.²⁶ News reports of dog attacks often identify the dog or dogs involved as pit bulls. This has led to a widely held perception that some breeds of dogs present a greater risk of injuring people than others and therefore should be eliminated from the population as a public safety risk, even though the researchers themselves caution strongly against such an approach. One of the co-authors of the study, veterinarian behaviorist Goleb, has stated, “It is frustrating for me personally because people who want to enact Breed Specific Legislation keep using the report to try and make a case against pit bulls. *The whole point of our summary was to explain you can’t do that.* [emphasis from source]”²⁷ Nevertheless, hundreds of municipalities have instituted statutes that prohibit or limit the ownership of pit bulls and occasionally other breeds, most commonly Rottweilers. Numerous objections have been made to this approach, based on lack of reliable evidence that pit bulls are overrepresented among injurious biters.²⁸

The data presented in support of this practice suffer from a lack of breed-specific population figures from which to determine proportionate representation of a particular breed among biting dogs. There also are difficulties in defining what is meant by a pit bull, difficulties in identifying individual members of the breed or group of breeds once defined, a lack of any scientifically credible evidence for any physiological traits making pit bulls more dangerous than other dogs, and difficulty differentiating between genetic tendencies toward aggression and the kind of aggression elicited by careless and inhumane husbandry practices.

One researcher has found major gaps in the data collection in the two most commonly cited studies on fatal attacks.^{26,28,29} These studies rely on information gathered from newspaper articles, and thus exclude fully 27 percent of the fatalities uncovered by searching death certificates. Research on the missing 27 percent of cases reveals breed

identification on nearly half, showing a much lower percentage attributed to pit bulls (7 percent) than in the overall study.²⁹ The same author also points out the extreme imbalance in press coverage of dog-bite events depending upon the breed. She found four dog bite incidents of roughly equal severity occurring on a single day in 2006, but the one case attributed to pit bulls generated 22 to 90 times the number of news stories as the bites attributed to dogs of other breeds.³⁰ Clearly, this kind of selective press coverage contributes to the public perception of pit bulls as especially dangerous.

For all these reasons, the breed-ban approach has been controversial, both legally and politically, and has led to court challenges of these statutes on constitutional grounds, up to and including state supreme courts. The results have been varied. The objections cited above, however, have been summarized in a 2006 Ohio Appeals Court decision overturning a city breed-ban ordinance as violating the equal protection and substantive due process clause because there was no rational basis to single out the American Pit Bull Terrier as inherently dangerous. The court also found that the breed ban violated the due process clause because there was no rational basis to positively identify a pit bull. In other words, the breed ban failed to meet a minimum standard of rationality.³¹

Even if the drawbacks listed above could be overcome, one insurmountable difficulty with breed bans will remain. This is the fact that they do not decrease the appeal of owning dogs with a popular reputation and persistent media portrayal as aggressive. Some people seek out such dogs for protection, some for dog fighting competition, some for fostering a macho image, and some simply for financial gain by breeding puppies to sell to people with any of these motives. Banning specific breed(s) does nothing to deter people from satisfying these motives, as all people so motivated need do is shift their attention to another breed, and then selectively breed and raise the dogs for elevated levels of aggression and tendency to bite hard enough to injure. This behavior-related breeding can be accomplished with any genetic line within any breed in a few years. In fact, a follow-up to the breed/fatality study revealed an entirely different composition of breeds involved in fatal attacks in the decade immediately preceding the period covered by the study.²⁹ This is unsurprising, as dramatic genetic behavioral modification has even been done with wild animals. Most

famous are the Russian Institute of Cytology and Genetics' rapid transformation of wild, aggressive foxes into cuddly, affiliative pets, and their more recent separation of behaviorally normal lines of rats into either affectionate pets or ferocious attackers.^{32,33}

Moreover, there is no evidence of decreased dog-bite injuries where breed-ban legislation is in force. The only study so far on pre- and post-breed ban dog-bite rates was completed in the U.K. in the mid-1990s.³⁴ The study concluded that the Dangerous Dogs Act, which banned several breeds, had had no effect whatsoever. The Aberdeen Royal Infirmary researchers did find, however, that "human bites were as common as those from the most implicated dog breed." At least there, it seems that people bite and injure other people as often as any single breed of dog does.

3.2 Attempts to identify and remove high-risk animals: "dangerous dog" laws

The second common legislative approach to removing dangerous dogs from the population targets the behavior of the individual dog, designating dogs with labels such as "potentially dangerous," "dangerous," or in some cases "vicious" based on actual incidents, and then either eliminating the dogs or limiting the conditions under which they may be kept (such as requiring sterilization, microchipping, training, behavioral consultation, muzzling, etc.). Such laws increasingly also specify civil and criminal liability incurred by people whose dogs injure someone after receiving such a designation.

There is some evidence that a "prior behavior" approach to the "dangerous dog" designation may decrease injurious bite incidence. This has only been demonstrated, however, where the dangerous dog label is limited to dogs who have already bitten and injured someone. A program in Oregon showed a decrease from 25 percent to 7 percent in repeat injurious bites after the implementation of a program restricting conditions of ownership of dogs who had caused injuries.³⁵

Many dangerous dog laws try not only to control dogs who have already injured people, but to predict which ones will do so in the future and attempt to prevent this. Typical legal descriptions of "dangerous" dog behavior include "approaches in a vicious or terrorizing manner," "in a menacing fashion," having "a known disposition, tendency, or propensity to attack," or "engages in any behavior that requires a

defensive action by any person to prevent bodily injury.”^{36,37} Aside from the subjectivity of these descriptions, the main difficulty with such an approach is that the best research to date indicates the likelihood that a majority of dogs engage in such behavior without necessarily hurting anyone. One groundbreaking study found that 41 percent of the dogs studied had growled, snarled or snapped at a familiar person at some time, but that only 15 percent had actually bitten, and only 10 percent of the 15 percent of the bites had injured.³⁸ This means that a hypothetical net cast to identify the 1.5 percent of dogs who will injure based on whether they had behaved aggressively would actually capture at least 41 percent of the dog population. And since this study only included behavior toward family members and other people well known to the dog, and only included guardians responsible and caring enough to provide veterinary care for their companions, the percentage of potential problems within the entire dog population must certainly be considerably higher. A history of threatening behavior has not been shown to predict that a dog will bite, much less that she will injure if she bites. One could make the argument that it is prudent to spay and neuter even such a large percentage of dogs as ever engage in threatening behavior, thus limiting the population entirely to consistently affiliative individuals, but enforcement of such wide-scale forced sterilization is unlikely.

3.3 Resources for enforcement

There are currently about 15,000 animal control officers in the U.S.³⁹ This is one for every 5,000 dogs. A conservative estimate of the incidence of aggressive behavior among dogs³⁸ indicates that at least 2,000 out of each caseload of 5,000 are likely to meet criteria for “dangerous dog” designation according to statutes that try to eliminate or regulate dogs at high risk for biting (who have not yet bitten or injured someone). No one knows what percentage of dogs bear a physical resemblance to any or all of the commonly prohibited breeds. In some urban areas, this may well be a majority of the dogs. In addition, animal control officers have many other duties beyond policing dangerous dogs. It would be impractical for officers to identify, much less enforce proscriptions on owners for such a large number of dogs. This would require an enormous commitment of additional officers in animal control departments that are already under-funded to meet their mandates. A commitment to enforce dangerous-dog statutes would have to draw

resources from other areas of public services. Community officials might well have to choose between animal control officers and crossing guards, pool lifeguards, emergency services dispatchers, or any of a number of other public employees who safeguard citizens against much more common hazards than dog bites.

Breed bans have proved costly. In 2004, a task force study in Prince George's County, Maryland, recommended repealing the community's breed ban because it was ineffective and had cost the county \$570,000 in kenneling and maintenance costs alone. This figure did not include direct enforcement costs.⁴⁰ In the U.K., the country with the longest history of breed bans, attempts to enforce bans have proved to be expensive, with kenneling costs for confiscated animals totaling over 3 million pounds (nearly \$6 million) in the first four years (1992–95) of implementation.⁴¹ And yet, as mentioned above, follow-up studies indicate no change in dog-bite injury rates.³⁴

3.4 Other outcomes

With regard to dangerous dog laws based on behavior, as discussed above, definitions of dangerous are so varied and subject to interpretation that most dogs' behavior could be interpreted to qualify. A conservative estimate would be about 30 million dogs who would likely meet criteria. (This estimate is based on a study that found 41 percent of dogs growl, snarl, or snap at a familiar person, and thus does not include dogs that only threaten strangers, so the real percentage is almost certainly considerably greater.)³⁸ Some statutes require only that the dog "endangered" a person in some way, leaving the way open for complaints by anyone who simply felt (but was not really) endangered.³⁶ All this creates a serious danger of abuse in any system that attempts to weed out "potentially dangerous" animals who have not bitten anyone. It casts a net far too wide to be enforceable. When laws exist without the practical means to widely enforce them, the result is selective enforcement, enforcement based on grudge complaints, and widespread noncompliance.

With regard to breed-ban legislation, perhaps the most worrisome potential effect is driving the behavior of keeping dogs of certain breeds or physical descriptions underground. Not only can this make criminals of otherwise law-abiding people, it is not farfetched to think that people

14 | Existing and Proposed Legal Remedies

hiding their dogs from the authorities could increase the risk of zoonotic disease. Up until the mid-20th century, about 100 Americans per year died of rabies; today it's one or two, and in some years none.⁴² Not one of these deaths has been documented to have been the result of a native domestic animal bite in decades (although 1–2 per decade have involved the variant of the virus found in indigenous dogs).⁴³ This is entirely attributable to the very high rate of vaccination of domestic dogs against this disease. This is in stark contrast to much of the rest of the world; worldwide annual human rabies deaths are around 55,000, according to the World Health Organization.⁴⁴ Ninety-nine percent of these victims worldwide are estimated to have contracted the disease from domestic dogs.⁴² We would be ill advised to do anything that would discourage anybody from inoculating their dogs against rabies.

The most significant risk of either breed bans or “dangerous dog” laws is that, if successful, they would eliminate large populations of animals, most of whom would never have injured a human. Discouraging dog guardianship on any significant scale risks a detrimental effect on public health, as discussed in the next section.

4. Benefits of Dogs vs. Risks

4.1 Health benefits of dog guardianship

Both of the legal remedies described previously attempt to address the problem of dog bites by eliminating segments of the dog population supposedly at an elevated risk for inflicting bites. Apart from whether this perception is accurate, only a minority of the animals eliminated would have injured anyone, and the net result would be a smaller population of dog guardians. Thus it is important, when evaluating such a strategy, to consider the potential loss of health benefits of dog guardianship.

A growing body of research supports the contention that dog companions enhance human health across the lifespan. For example, a study of children in Sweden has shown a dramatically lower incidence of allergies among children who lived with a dog (even better, with two) as infants.⁴⁵

Several large-scale studies (one including almost 6,000 people in a heart health screening clinic) have documented a correlation between companion animal guardianship and decreased risk of cardiovascular disease, either in terms of lower risk factors for developing disease or of survival rates after a heart attack.^{46,47} One study found dog guardianship to be comparable to heart-healthy dietary changes in its correlation with decreased heart attack risk.⁴⁶

Among the elderly, dog guardians spend an average of 1.4 hours a day outside playing or walking with their dogs and less sedentary time than their peers without companion animals.⁴⁸ This level of activity is known to contribute to extending the time older people can live independently.

A group from a 1991 U.K. study reported that common health complaints, including backaches, headaches, and contracting the flu, decreased a few months after adopting a dog or a cat.⁴⁹ This improvement held true whether or not the new dog guardian increased his or her walking activity.

Talking to or simply being in the presence of their dogs allows people to lower their blood pressure to their resting heart rate level, even in stressful situations. The effect is more significant than that attained through meditation.⁵⁰

Petting one's dog increases calming neurochemicals, including serotonin, prolactin, and oxytocin, and decreases the main neurochemical connected with stress, cortisol.⁵¹ Chronically elevated levels of this stress hormone have been tied to many health risks, from high blood pressure to immunosuppressant ailments.

4.2. Numbers of people benefiting versus numbers harmed

With growling, snarling, and snapping demonstrated to be normal (meaning exhibited by most individuals) and actual biting occurring in about 15 percent of dogs,³⁸ it is likely that if we keep dogs, we will continue to have some dog bites. A very small percentage of those bites will injure. However, any injury-prevention approach that significantly reduces the number of companion dogs would also risk removing the preventive effect these animals have on ailments that cause exponentially more loss of life and health than even the highest estimates of bite cases. This is made clear by considering the two most common ailments that are ameliorated by living with dogs.

Allergy reduction, as documented in the Swedish study mentioned earlier, could cancel out the risk to children from dog bites many times over. Asthma, the most severe common manifestation of allergies, afflicts millions of children, with around 200 dying of it each year in the U.S. About 13 million people of all ages seek medical treatment for this ailment each year.⁵²

Cardiovascular disease kills approximately 910,000 Americans every year.⁵³ Multiple studies have found that dog guardians have fewer risk factors for cardiovascular disease than nonguardians, and are almost five times more likely to survive a heart attack for at least a year if one does occur.^{46,47}

If only a very small percentage of the more than 44 million American households that now include dogs¹⁵ were to stop keeping these companions, the detrimental impact on public health could be considerable. In order to prevent this, any legal proscriptions that attempt to prevent dog bites must be accurately and narrowly targeted only at animals who present a very high risk (dogs who have already bitten and injured someone).

5. Recommendations

5.1 Effective legislation

Effective and equitable dog-bite legislation should target people who willfully disregard public safety in the keeping of their companion animals. This is almost certainly a minority of dog guardians.

5.1.1 Enforcement of existing dog regulations

There is consensus among researchers that the majority of dogs who bite injure people they know well, in the dogs' own homes.^{54,55,56,57} Yet much of the public concern is directed at bites to strangers in public places. This statistically misplaced concern may occur because the victims of such bites often have not consented to the dog having access to them. The most direct approach to this concern is to more stringently enforce leash laws and to increase penalties for violations.

5.1.2 Limit injury prevention proscriptions to dogs who have bitten injuriously

It is possible to have a law that identifies dogs who present a demonstrable threat to humans. These are the dogs with a history of injuring. Incidents of repeat injurious bites should carry heavy penalties. An effective law of this type would include a clear definition of serious injury. Such a law could be equitably enforced if medically treated bites were consistently reported.

5.1.3 Tracking of dogs with one injurious bite

The only program with any evidence of preventing repeat bites placed restrictions on the guardians of dogs who had injured someone, and then monitored the guardians for compliance.³⁵ If we decide to delegate increased law enforcement resources to this issue, this would be a productive place to put them. At the current rate of 334,000 documented injurious bites per year,^{1,16,22} this would make an maximum average load of 22 follow-up cases for each of the 15,000 animal control officers nationwide,³⁹ a more efficient use of resources than any of the proposals that target much larger numbers of dogs.

5.1.4 Bites in the context of other negligent infractions

Guardians should also be subject to serious penalties if their dogs bite and injure (even on a first occurrence) if the bite occurs in the context of another infraction, particularly a violation of leash laws, but also where a lack of supervision of dogs with children can be demonstrated, or where the guardians have a history of animal cruelty violations. Fines assessed for such violations could then be used to fund animal law enforcement.

5.2 Focus prevention resources on education

Most of the exposure to dog-bite injury risk can be mitigated by providing appropriate education to well-intentioned but misinformed and/or uninformed guardians, and to the public at large.

5.2.1 Educating children and adults to behave safely around dogs

Sixty-seven percent of injurious dog bites to children have been shown to be preventable by changing the child's or the caregiver's behavior in interacting with the dog.⁵⁸ Even a single 30-minute lesson incorporated into a regular school day, taught by a dog handler, has been shown to dramatically reduce high-risk behaviors toward unfamiliar dogs in both very young (kindergarten) and middle-school children.^{59,60} This is a strategy worth pursuing if we want to direct resources toward preventing dog-bite injuries. Much of this work could be done by volunteers, minimizing the impact on fiscal resources that are needed to address more widespread public health dangers. Many dog professionals would volunteer their time in such an endeavor, and many humane organizations have education departments staffed with people well qualified to undertake such teaching tasks. National humane organizations could be tapped to develop appropriate curriculum, so a school program could be implemented with very little impact on public resources.

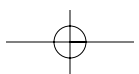
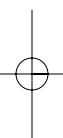
5.2.2 Educating dog guardians in puppy-raising techniques to minimize aggression: Methods and resources

Several major provocations for dog bites (food and object guarding, handling sensitivity, and wariness of strangers) can be

substantially mitigated by proper puppy-raising techniques. Requiring or providing incentives to guardians to attend training classes certified to address these issues would have a far-reaching preventive effect. Many communities now charge variable registration fees depending on the reproductive status of a dog; a similar mechanism could be applied to puppy-class attendance, and the majority of the expense would be borne by the guardian.

5.2.3 Incentives for breeders to select for low reactivity: Methods and resources

Finally, dogs can be bred to be less inclined to guard their food and possessions, respond defensively when touched, and to try to drive strangers away. The public can be educated about the likelihood of behavior problems, especially aggression, among puppy-mill dogs sold in stores and through Internet brokers. Certifying breeders of purebred dogs as producing animals who do not demonstrate problematic behaviors could be undertaken. Qualifying all breeding animals through the AKC Canine Good Citizen test would be a start toward safety ratings for dogs. The public must, of course, be educated to value such safety ratings (as has been done with many consumer products). These measures would almost certainly help minimize injurious dog bites among the purebred dog population.



6. Works Cited

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Web-based injury statistics query and reporting system (WISQARS). National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2006. Accessed at www.cdc.gov/ncipc/wisqars. All data on mortality/morbidity/ED data. All annual figures based on averages from 2001-2003 unless otherwise noted.
2. Sacks, J. J., Sattin, R. W., Bonzo, S. E. "Dog bite-related fatalities from 1979 through 1988." *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 1989; 262, 1489-1492.
3. Sacks, J. J., Lockwood R., Hornreich J., Sattin R. W. "Fatal dog attacks, 1989-1994." *Pediatrics*, 1996; 97, 891-5.
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Dogbite-related fatalities—United States, 1995-1996 (1997)." *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 1997; 46:463-7.
5. Kochanek, K., Murphy, S. L., Anderson, R. N., Scott, C. "Deaths: Final data for 2002 national vital statistics reports." 2004; 53 (5): 1-116.
6. Curran, E. B., Holle, R. L., López, R. E. "Lightning casualties and damages in the United States from 1959 to 1994." *Journal of Climate*, 1999; 13 (9); 3448-3464.
7. "Lightning-Associated Deaths - United States, 1980-1995." *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 1998; 47(19), 391-394.
8. Collins, J. W., Landen, D. D., Kisner, S. M., Johnston, J. J, Chin, S. F., Kennedy, R. D. "Fatal occupational injuries associated with forklifts, United States, 1980-1994." *American Journal of Independent Medicine*, 1999; 36(5), 504-12.
9. Langley, R. L., Hunter, J. L. "Occupational fatalities due to animal-related events." *Wilderness and Environmental Medicine*; 2001; Vol. 12, No. 3, pp. 168-174.
10. Jumbelic, M. I., Chambliss, M. "Accidental toddler drowning in 5-gallon buckets." *Journal of American Medical Association*, 1990; 263 (14), 1952-3.
11. "U.K. Department of Trade and Industry Fatal drowning accidents - 5-gallon buckets." *Department of Trade and Industry Journal*, March 1996.
12. Tinsworth, D., McDonald, J. "Special study. Injuries and deaths associated with children's playground equipment." *U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission 2001*.
13. "Suffocations in Grain Bins-Minnesota, 1992-1995." *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 1996; 45(39), 837-841.
14. Occupational Safety and Health Administration. "Grain handling facilities." *Standard Regulatory Review*, March 13, 2003.
15. American Pet Products Manufacturers Association. "Fact Sheet. 2004/2005." Accessed at www.appma.org/press_industrytrends.asp.
16. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Nonfatal dog bite-related injuries treated in hospital emergency departments-United States, 2001." *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 2003; 52(26): 605-610.

22 | Works Cited

17. Sosin D. N., Sacks, J. J., Sattin, R. W. "Causes of nonfatal injuries in the United States, 1986." *Accident Analysis and Prevention Journal*. 1992; 24, 685-7.
18. Sacks J. J., Kresnow, M., Houston, B. "Dog bites: How big a problem?" *Injury Prevention*, 1996; 2: 52-54.
19. National Electronic Injury Surveillance System On-line U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission. Accessed at www.cpsc.gov.library.neiss.html. Data for calendar year 2003.
20. Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents. "Home and Leisure Accident Surveillance System-Annual Report 2000-2002." Accessed at www.rospa.com/hassandlass/reports/2002data.pdf on June 10, 2004.
21. "Nonfatal sports- and recreation-related injuries treated in emergency departments- United States, July 2000-June 2001." *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 2002; 51(33), 736-40.
22. Weiss, H. B, Friedman, D. I, Coben, J. H. "Incidence of dog bite injuries treated in emergency departments." *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 1998; 279 (1), 51-53.
23. Mathers, L. J., Weiss, H. B. "Incidence and characteristics of fall-related emergency department visits." *Academic Emergency Medicine*, 1998; 5, 1064-1070.
24. Anastasopoulou, A., Weiss, H. B., Forjuoh, S. N. "Fall injuries in Pennsylvania, 1994." Center for Violence and Injury Control, Department of Emergency Medicine, Pittsburgh, PA: Allegheny University of the Health Sciences, 1998.
25. Strotmeyer, S. J., Forjuoh, S. N, Coben, J. H. "Dog bite injuries in Pennsylvania, 1995." Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Center for Violence and Injury Control, Department of Emergency Medicine, Allegheny University of the Health Sciences, 1999.
26. Sacks, J. J., Sinclair, L., Gilchrist, J., Golab, G. C., Lockwood, R. "Breeds of dogs involved in fatal human attacks in the United States between 1979 and 1998." *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 2000; 217, 836-840.
27. Goleb, G. in "Why Debate What the Experts Have Concluded..." Accessed at www.animalfarmfoundation.org/topic.php?id=4&topic=17.
28. Lockwood R., Rindy K. "Are 'pit bulls' different? An analysis of the pit bull terrier controversy." *Anthrozoos*, 1987; 1(1): 2-8.
29. Delise, K., "Fatal Dog Attack Studies: Wrong numbers, not statistics." Accessed at www.animalfarmfoundation.org/item.php?item=344.
30. Delise, K., "Media Reports of Dog Attacks: June 8, 2006." Accessed at www.animalfarmfoundation.org/topic.php?id=4&topic=17.
31. City of Toledo v. Tellings, No. CRB-02-15267, March 3, 2006.
32. Trut L. N. "Early canid domestication: The farm fox experiment." *American Scientist*, 1999; 87: 160-169.
33. Wade N. "Nice rats, nasty rats: Maybe it's all in the genes." *The New York Times*, July 25, 2006.

34. Klaassen B., Buckley J. R., Esmail A. "Does the dangerous dogs act protect against animal attacks: A prospective study of mammalian bites in the accident and emergency department." *Injury*, 1996; 27 (2): 89-91.
35. Oswald M. "Report on the potentially dangerous dog program: Multnomah County, Oregon." *Anthrozoos*, 1991; 5 (4), 247-54.
36. Favre D. S., Borchelt P. L. *Animal Law and Dog Behavior*. (Tucson: Lawyers & Judges Pub. Co.; 1999). This work and the one following contain full discussions of the various legal principles underlying the basic types of dangerous dog statutes.
37. Randolph M. *Dog Law* (Berkeley, CA: Nolo, 2001; 4th Ed.).
38. Guy N. C., Luescher U. A., Dohoo S. E., Spangler E., Miller J. B., Dohoo I. R., Bate L. A. "Demographic and aggressive characteristics of dogs in a general veterinary caseload." *Applied Animal Behaviour Science*, 2001; 74(1), 15-28.
39. U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics "Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2004." Accessed at www.bls.gov/oco/oco20055.htm.
40. Vicious Animal Legislation Task Force, Prince George's County, Maryland. "Report of the Vicious Animal Legislation Task Force. 2003."
41. The United Kingdom Parliament House of Commons Dangerous Dogs Hansard Written Answers, June 5, 1996. Accessed at www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm199596/cmhansrd/vo960605/text/60605w08.htm.
42. "Rabies: Epidemiology." Accessed at www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/rabies/Epidemiology/Epidemiology.htm.
43. Noah D. L., Drenzek C. L. et al. "Epidemiology of human rabies in the United States, 1980 to 1996." *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 1998; 128 (11) 922-30.
44. "Rabies." National Center for Infectious Diseases. Accessed at www.who.int/zoonoses/diseases/rabies/en/index.html.
45. Hesselmar B., Aberg N., Aberg B., Eriksson B., Borksten B. "Does early exposure to cat or dog protect against later allergy development?" Department of Pediatrics, University of Goteborg, Goteborg, Sweden. *Clinical and Experimental Allergy*, 1999; 29 (5), 611-7.
46. Anderson, W. P., Reid, C. M., Jennings, G. L. "Pet ownership and risk factors for cardiovascular disease." *Medical Journal of Australia*, 1992; 157, 298-301.
47. Friedmann E., Thomas S. A. "Pet ownership, social support, and one-year survival after acute myocardial infarction in the cardiac arrhythmia suppression trial (CAST)." *American Journal of Cardiology*. 1995; 76: 1213-1217.
48. Siegel, J. M. "Stressful life events and use of physician services among the elderly: The moderating role of pet ownership." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1990; 58: 1081-1086.
49. Serpell J. A. "Beneficial aspects of pet ownership on some aspects of human health and behaviour." *Journal of Research in Social Medicine*, 1991; 84: 717-720.
50. Allen, K. M. "Dog ownership and control of borderline hypertension: A controlled

24 | Works Cited

- randomized trial." Presented at the 22nd Annual Scientific Sessions of the Society of Behavioral Medicine in Seattle, WA. March 24, 2001.
51. Odendaal J. S., Meintjes R. A. "Neurophysiological correlates of affiliative behavior between humans and dogs." *Veterinary Journal*, 2003; 165, 296-301.
 52. Mannino D. M., Homa D. M., Akinbami L. J., Moorman J. E., Gwynn C., Redd S. C. "Surveillance for asthma-United States, 1980-1999." *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report: Surveillance Summaries*, 2002; 51, 1-13.
 53. CDC Coordinating Center for Health Promotion: Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention. "Heart Disease and Stroke: The nation's leading killers. 2006." Accessed at www.cdc.gov/nccddphp/publications/aag/pdf/aag_cvh2006.pdf.
 54. Greenhalgh C., Cockington R. A., Raftos J. "An epidemiological survey of dog bites presenting to the emergency department of a children's hospital." *Journal of Pediatrics and Child Health*, 1991; 27: 171-4.
 55. Avner J. R., Baker M. D. "Dog bites in urban children." *Pediatrics*, 1991; 88: 55-7.
 56. Beck A. M., Jones B. A. "Unreported dog bites in children." *Public Health Report*, 1985; 100: 315-21.
 57. Shewell P. C., Nancarrow J. D. "Dogs that bite." *British Medical Journal*, 1991; 14; 1512-1513.
 58. Kahn A., Bauche P., Lamoureux J. "Child victims of dog bites treated in emergency departments: A prospective survey." *European Journal of Pediatrics*, 2003; 162(4), 254-8.
 59. Chapman, S., Cornwall, J., Righetti, J., Lynne, S., Grossman, D. "Preventing dog bites in children: Randomized controlled trial of an educational intervention." *The Western Journal of Medicine*, 2000; 173 (4) 233.
 60. Wilson, F., Dwyer, F., Bennett, P. C. "Prevention of dog bites: Evaluation of a brief educational intervention program for preschool children." *Journal of Community Psychology*, 2002; 31 (1) 75-86.

7. Overview References

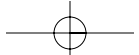
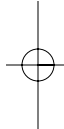
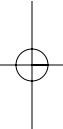
AVMA Task Force on Canine Aggression and Human-Canine Interactions. "A community approach to dog bite prevention." *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 2001; 218: 1732-1749.

Beck, A. M., Meyers, N. M. "Health enhancement and companion animal ownership." *Annual Review of Public Health*, 1996; 17: 247-257.

Delise, K. *Fatal dog attacks: the stories behind the statistics*. (Manorville, NY: Anubis Press, 2002).

Ozanne-Smith, J., Ashby, K., Stathakis V. 1998. "Dog bites and injury prevention - a critical review and research agenda." *Proceedings of Animals, Community Health and Public Policy Symposium*. Sydney: AU.

Serpell, J. A. "Evidence for long-term effects of pet-ownership on human health." In L.H. Burger (Ed.), *Pets, Benefits and Practice* (pp.1-7). London: BVA Publications, 1990.



- [About Us](#) • [Responsible Pet Ownership](#) • [Breed ID](#) • [Dog Legislation](#) • [Search](#)
- [Injurious Dog Bites](#) • [Publications](#) • [Press Center](#) • [Contact Us](#) • [Submit](#)
- [Blog](#)

...erving the Human-Canine Bond

- [Home](#) • [Injurious Dog Bites](#) • [Dog Bite-Related Fatalities](#)

Dog Bite-Related Fatalities

Multiple, co-occurring factors identified in DBRF's

The co-occurring factors are potentially preventable

Family dogs were rarely involved

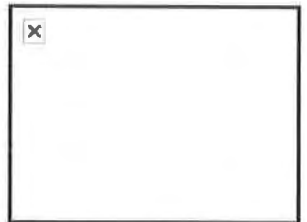
Breed was not one of the factors identified

Dog bite-related fatalities are extremely rare

NCRC Annual DBRF reports 2009-2011

DBRF incidents reported in 2013—pending analysis

Featured Video



NCRC Video Interview with Janis Bradley

[READ MORE](#)

Send to Friends

Publications

- [Visual Breed ID Poster: German Shepherd Mixes](#)
- [Visual Breed ID Poster: Labrador retriever Mixes](#)
- [Visual Breed ID Poster: "Pit Bull" Mixes](#)
- [Dog Bites: Problems & Solutions](#)
- [The Problem of Dog-Related Incidents and Encounters](#)
- [The Pit Bull Placebo](#)

[READ ALL PUBLICATIONS »](#)

View Points

Humane Communities are Safe. Safe Communities are Humane.
by Cynthia Bathurst

Click [here](#) to read entire Viewpoint.

Multiple, co-occurring factors identified

In December, 2013, *The Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association (JAVMA)* published the most comprehensive multifactorial study of dog bite-related fatalities^[1](DBRFs) to be completed since the subject was first studied in the 1970's. It is based on investigative techniques not previously employed in dog bite or DBRF studies and identified a significant co-occurrence of multiple potentially preventable factors.

The results reported confirm the multifaceted approach to dog bite prevention recommended by virtually all previous studies, as well as by organizations such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Veterinary Medical Association.

The co-occurring factors are potentially preventable

Based on an analysis of all DBRFs known to have occurred over a ten-year period, the researchers identified a striking co-occurrence of multiple, controllable factors:

- no able-bodied person being present to intervene (87.1%);
- the victim having no familiar relationship with the dog(s) (85.2%);
- the dog(s) owner failing to neuter/spay the dog(s)(84.4%);
- a victim's compromised ability, whether based on age or physical condition, to manage their interactions with the dog(s) (77.4%);
- the owner keeping dog(s) as resident dog(s), rather than as family pet(s) (76.2%);
- the owner's prior mismanagement of the dog(s) (37.5%);
- the owner's abuse or neglect of dog(s) (21.1%).

Four or more of these factors were present in 80.5% of the cases.

Family dogs were rarely involved

76.2% of the DBRFs in this study involved dogs that were not kept as family pets; rather they were only resident on the property. The distinction between a resident dog and a family dog[2] was first proposed years ago by NCRC Founder Karen Delise. Dogs are predisposed to form attachments with people, to become dependent on people, and to rely upon their guidance in unfamiliar situations. While it is extremely rare that dogs living as either resident dogs or as family pets ever inflict serious injuries on humans, dogs not afforded the opportunity for regular, positive interaction with people may be more likely, in situations they perceive as stressful or threatening, to behave in ways primarily to protect themselves.

Breed was not one of the factors identified

The authors report that the breed of the dog or dogs could not be reliably identified in more than 80% of cases. News accounts disagreed with each other and/or with animal control reports in a significant number of incidents, casting doubt on the reliability of breed attributions and more generally for using media reports as a primary source of data for scientific studies. In only 45 (18%) of the cases in this study could these researchers make a valid determination that the animal was a member of a distinct, recognized breed. Twenty different breeds, along with two known mixes, were identified in connection with those 45 incidents.

The methods used in this study can lead to better prevention

The trend in prevention of dog bites continues to shift in favor improved ownership and husbandry practices, better understanding of dog behavior, education of parents and children regarding safety around dogs, and consistent enforcement of dangerous dog/reckless owner ordinances in communities. Having reliably identified the potentially preventable factors that co-occurred in their case file, the authors recommend their coding method as a way of enhancing the quantity and quality of information compiled in investigation of any serious dog bite-related injuries.

This new study and its comprehensive methodology offer an excellent opportunity for policy makers, physicians, journalists, indeed, anyone concerned with the prevention of dog bite-related injuries, to develop an understanding of the multifactorial nature of serious and fatal incidents.



[Click here to read "Potentially preventable husbandry factors co-occur in most dog bite-related fatalities"](#)

Dog bite-related fatalities are extremely rare

Dog bite-related human fatalities have always been exceedingly rare, though they can attract the kind of publicity that creates an impression that they are more prevalent than they actually are. The annual total of such fatalities has risen and fallen with no discernable trend, while the canine population in the U.S. has continued its steady increase. The chart below shows the number for some common and uncommon injury related fatalities for 2010 (2010 is the most recent year which CDC fatalities are available).

About

Reading Suggestions



The Relevance of Breed in Selecting a Companion Dog

Janis Bradley is author of *Dogs Bite, but Balloons and Slippers are More Dangerous* and *Dog Bites: Problems and Solutions*. She explores the relevance of breed in selecting a companion dog in this publication.

[READ NOW »](#)

[Us Legislation](#) [Responsible Pet Ownership](#) [Breed ID](#) [Dog Publications](#) [Contact Us](#) [Sitemap](#)

© 2013 National Canine Research Council, LLC. Trade/service marks are the property of National Canine Research Council. All rights reserved.

Website Design by Blue Fountain Media

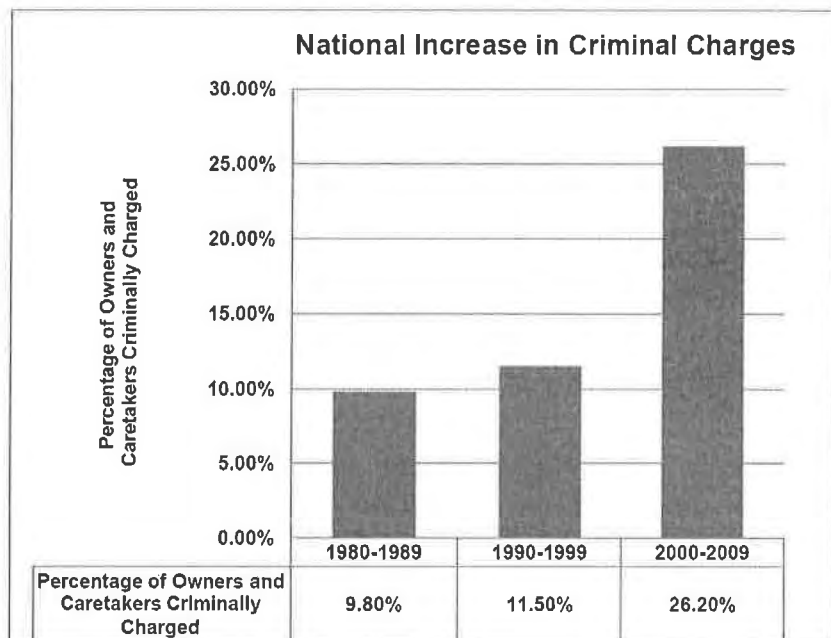
Comparison of Injury Fatalities in the United States - 2010	
Unintentional Poisoning Fatalities	33,041
Unintentional Motor Vehicle Fatalities	35,332
Unintentional Fatalities from Falls	26,009
Homicide	16,259
Unintentional Pedestrian Fatalities (Motor Vehicle Traffic)	4,383
Unintentional Fatalities from Drowning	3,782
Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities	1,537
Dog Bite-Related Fatalities	33

(Sources for this graph)[3]

Responsible pet ownership is key to prevention

All dog owners have an unequivocal responsibility for the humane care, including providing a license and permanent id, spaying or neutering their dogs, providing training, socialization, proper diet, and medical care, and not allowing a pet to become a threat or a nuisance.

An increased awareness of these responsibilities may be reflected in the increasing percentage of the investigations that arise from all DBRF's that result in criminal prosecutions of the owners and caretakers (compiled as part of NCRC's exhaustive investigation of each reported case ')).



(Sources for this graph)[5]

NCRC annual DBRF reports

We strive to understand the circumstances surrounding each case carefully and correctly, in an attempt to increase understanding that can lead to effective prevention.

This careful investigative process takes time, so each report is available approximately twelve months after the end of the year.

2013



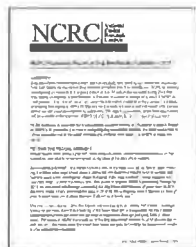
2013 Preliminary Report

2012



2012 Preliminary Report

2011



2011 Final Investigative Report

2011 Preliminary Report

2010



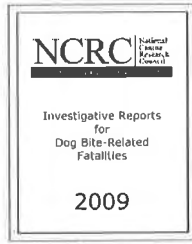
2010 Final Investigative Report

2010 Preliminary Report



Special Investigative Reports on 2010 Cases Originally Reported

to be Dog Bite-Related Fatalities

2009**2009 Final Investigative Report****Research Must Improve Understanding**
by Karen Delise**DBRF's reported in 2013—pending analysis**

- Jan. 8: Betty Chapman Todd, 65 yrs., Greenwood, SC
- Jan. 19: Christian Gormanous, 4 yrs., Montgomery, TX
- Feb. 8: Elsie Grace, 91 yrs., Riverside, CA
- Feb. 16: Isaiah Aguilar, 2 yrs., Uvalde, TX
- Mar. 2: Ryan Maxwell, 7 yrs., Knox, IL
- Mar. 6: Daxton Borchardt, 14 mo., Walworth, WI
- Mar. 17: Monica Laminack, 21 mo., Bryan, GA, criminal charges
- Apr. 2: Tyler Jett, 7 yrs., Bay, FL, criminal charges
- Apr. 11: Claudia Gallardo, 38 yrs., San Joaquin, CA, criminal charges
- Apr. 22: Jordyn Arndt, 4 yrs., Jasper, IA, criminal charges
- Apr. 24: Beau Rutledge, 2 yrs., Fulton, GA
- Apr. 30: Rachael Honabarger, 35 yrs., Coshocton, OH
- May 8: Carlton Freeman, 80 yrs., Dorchester, SC
- May 9: Pamela Marie Devitt, 63 yrs., Los Angeles, CA, criminal charges
- Jun. 9: Ayden Evans, 5 yrs., Garland, AR
- Jun. 17: Nephi Selu, 6 yrs., Alameda, CA
- Jun. 25: Arianna Merrbach, 5 yrs., Florence, SC
- Jul. 1: Linda Oliver, 63 yrs., Liberty, TX
- Sept. 13: Jordan Lee Reed, 5 yrs., Kotzebue, AK
- Sept. 22: Daniel "Doe," 2 yrs., Maricopa, AZ
- Sept. 23: Samuel Zamudio, 2 yrs., San Bernardino, CA, criminal charges
- Sept. 27: Jordan Ryan, 5 yrs., Baker, OR
- Oct. 30: Nga Woodhead, 65 yrs., Pierce, WA *
- Nov. 1: Terry Douglass, 56 yrs., Baltimore, MD
- Nov 5: Katherine Atkins, 25 yrs., Forsyth, NC
- Nov. 8: Levi Watson, 4 yrs., White, AR
- Nov. 21: Joan Kappen, 75 yrs., Hot Springs, AR
- Dec. 7: Jah'niyah White, 2 yrs., Chicago, IL, ruled a homicide
- Dec. 10: Mia Gibson, 2 mos., Franklin, OH
- Dec. 13: Michal Nelson, 41 yrs., Valencia County, NM
- Dec. 28: Thomas Vick, 64 yrs., Bullhead City, AZ

*Awaiting final autopsy results

Note: Aug. 30: Juan Campos, 96 yrs., Harris, TX - Media reports alleged that Mr. Campos had been killed by dogs. NCRC contacted the Harris County Medical Examiner on Nov. 4, 2013. The Coroner has ruled both the cause and manner of death as "undetermined." Since dog bites were not determined as the cause or manner of death, this incident is excluded from the listing of dog bite-related fatalities for 2013.

Updated 2013 December

SOURCES and NOTES:

[1] Patronek, G.J., Sacks, J.J., Delise, K.M., Cleary, D.V., & Marder, A.R. (2013). Co-occurrence of potentially preventable factors in 256 dog bite-related fatalities in the United States (2000-2009). *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 243(12), 1726-1736. Retrieved from: <http://avmajournals.avma.org/doi/abs/10.2460/javma.243.12.1726>

See also: National Canine Research Council (2013). Potentially preventable husbandry factors co-occur in most dog bite-related fatalities. Retrieved from: http://nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com/uploaded_files/tnymce/Co-occurrence%20Whitepaper%20-%202013.pdf

[2] National Canine Research Council. (2013). *Resident Dog vs. Family dog. What is the Difference?* Retrieved from: http://nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com/uploaded_files/tnymce/NEW%20Resident%20v%20Family_revised%20Jan%202013.pdf

[3] Unintentional Poisoning Fatalities

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Compressed Mortality File 1999-2009. CDC Wonder Online Database. Retrieved from: <http://wonder.cdc.gov/cmfi-icd10.html>
Query: Injury Intent: Unintentional; Injury Mechanism: Poisoning; Year: 2010.

Unintentional Motor Vehicle Fatalities: Overall

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Compressed Mortality File 1999-2009. CDC Wonder Online Database. Retrieved from: <http://wonder.cdc.gov/cmfi-icd10.html>
Query: Injury Intent: Unintentional; Injury Mechanism: Motor Vehicle: overall; Year: 2010

Unintentional Fatalities from Falls

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Compressed Mortality File 1999-2009. CDC Wonder Online Database. Retrieved from: <http://wonder.cdc.gov/cmfi-icd10.html>
Query: Injury Intent: Unintentional; Injury Mechanism: Fall; Year: 2010

Homicide

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Compressed Mortality File 1999-2009. CDC Wonder Online Database. Retrieved from: <http://wonder.cdc.gov/cmfi-icd10.html>
Query: Injury Intent: Homicide; Injury Mechanism: All Injury; Year: 2010

Unintentional Pedestrian Fatalities (Motor Vehicle Traffic)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Compressed Mortality File 1999-2009. CDC Wonder Online Database. Retrieved from: <http://wonder.cdc.gov/cmfi-icd10.html>
Query: Injury Intent: Unintentional; Injury Mechanism: Pedestrian; Year: 2010

Unintentional Fatalities from Drowning

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Compressed Mortality File 1999-2009. CDC Wonder Online Database. Retrieved from: <http://wonder.cdc.gov/cmfi-icd10.html>
Query: Injury Intent: Unintentional; Injury Mechanism: Drowning; Year: 2010

Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities:

Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth, and Families, Children's Bureau. (n.d.). Child Maltreatment 2010. Retrieved from: <http://archive.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cm10/cm10.pdf>

Dog Bite-Related Fatalities:

National Canine Research Council. (2012). Investigative Reports for Dog Bite-Related Fatalities: 2010. Retrieved from: http://nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com/uploaded_files/tnymce/2010%20DBRF%20Report_Final_7.pdf

[4] For more on this process, read Karen Delise's methodology:

Delise, K. (2012). *Research Must Improve Understanding*. Retrieved from: http://nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com/uploaded_files/tnymce/Research%20Must%20Improve%20Understanding_Delise_NEW.pdf

[5] National Canine Research Council (2012)

AVMA



My Preferences

Username: _____

Log in

Password: _____

Help

Log out

Welcome Guest user

SEARCH

AVMA Journals

Enter keyword

Both journals

JAVMA

AJVR

Go

Advanced Search
Saved Searches

JAVMA News
Classified Ads
CE Listings

Register

Activate

- Individual
- Institution

AVMA Home
Journals Home
Contact Us
Help

Abstract

Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association

December 15, 2013, Vol. 243, No. 12, Pages 1726-1736

doi: 10.2460/javma.243.12.1726

Co-occurrence of potentially preventable factors in 256 dog bite-related fatalities in the United States (2000–2009)

Gary J. Patronek, VMD, PhD; Jeffrey J. Sacks, MD, MPH; Karen M. Delise; Donald V. Cleary, BA; Amy R. Marder, VMD

Center for Animals and Public Policy, Department of Environmental and Population Health, Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine, Tufts University, North Grafton, MA 01536. (Patronek); Sue Binder Consulting Inc, 3958 Preston Ct NE, Atlanta, GA 30319. (Sacks); National Canine Research Council, 433 Pugsley Hill Rd, Amenia, NY 12501. (Delise, Cleary); Center for Shelter Dogs at the Animal Rescue League of Boston, 10 Chandler St, Boston, MA 02116. (Marder)

The National Canine Research Council supported the efforts of Karen Delise from 2006 to 2011 for assembly of case reports and data abstraction and Kara Gilmore, JD, for assistance with data abstraction and validation from case reports.

Donald Cleary is Director of Communications and Publications at the National Canine Research Council and Treasurer of Animal Farm Foundation, parent organization of the National Canine Research Council.

Presented in part as an oral presentation at the AVMA Annual Convention, Chicago, July 2013.

Address correspondence to Dr. Patronek (gary_patronek@tufts.edu).

Objective—To examine potentially preventable factors in human dog bite-related fatalities (DBRFs) on the basis of data from sources that were more complete, verifiable, and accurate than media reports used in previous studies.

Design—Prospective case series.

Sample—256 DBRFs occurring in the United States from 2000 to 2009.

Procedures—DBRFs were identified from media reports and detailed histories were compiled on the basis of reports from homicide detectives, animal control reports, and interviews with investigators for coding and descriptive analysis.

Results—Major co-occurrent factors for the 256 DBRFs included absence of an able-bodied person to intervene (n = 223 [87.1%]), incidental or no familiar relationship of victims with dogs (218 [85.2%]), owner failure to neuter dogs (216 [84.4%]), compromised ability of victims to interact appropriately with dogs (198 [77.4%]), dogs kept isolated from regular positive human interactions versus family dogs (195 [76.2%]), owners' prior mismanagement of dogs (96 [37.5%]), and owners' history of abuse or neglect of dogs (54 [21.1%]). Four or more of these factors co-occurred in 206 (80.5%) deaths. For 401 dogs described in various media accounts, reported breed differed for 124 (30.9%); for 346 dogs with both media and animal control breed reports, breed differed for 139 (40.2%). Valid breed determination was possible for only 45 (17.6%) DBRFs; 20 breeds, including 2 known mixes, were identified.

Conclusions and Clinical Relevance—Most DBRFs were characterized by coincident, preventable factors; breed was not one of these. Study results supported previous

[Home](#) > [Journal home](#) > [TOC](#) > [Abstract](#)

[Prev. Article](#) | [Next Article](#)
[View/Print PDF \(287 KB\)](#)
[View PDF Plus \(285 KB\)](#)

[Add to favorites](#)
[Email to a friend](#)

[XML](#) | [TOC Alert](#) | [Citation Alert](#) | [What is RSS?](#)

Quick Links

- [Supplementary Material](#)
- [PubMed Citation](#)
- [Alert me when new articles cite this article](#)
- [Download to citation manager](#)
- Related articles found in:
[AVMA](#), [PubMed](#)
- [View Most Downloaded Articles](#)

Quick Search

AVMA for

Authors:


- Gary J. Patronek
- Jeffrey J. Sacks
- Karen M. Delise
- Donald V. Cleary
- Amy R. Marder

SEARCH

recommendations for multifactorial approaches, instead of single-factor solutions such as breed-specific legislation, for dog bite prevention.

[Full Text](#) [PDF \(287 KB\)](#) [PDF Plus \(285 KB\)](#)

American Veterinary Medical Association

[AVMA Home](#) | [Privacy Notice](#) | [Terms of Use](#) | [About the AVMA](#) | [RSS feeds](#) 
[AVMA Journals](#) | [JAVMA News](#) | [Discussion Groups](#) | [Professional Issues](#) | [Contact Us](#)

American Veterinary Medical Association
Copyright © 2012

Technology Partner - [Atypon Systems, Inc.](#)



- [About Us](#)
- [Responsible Pet Ownership](#)
- [Breed ID](#)
- [Dog Legislation](#)
- [Search](#)
- [Injurious Dog Bites](#)
- [Publications](#)
- [Press Center](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [Submit](#)
- [Blog](#)

Paving the Human-Canine Bond

- [Home](#)
- [About Us](#)
- [Staff](#)

Staff

Karen Delise, Founder & Director of Research



More than twenty years of research and investigation have led to Ms. Delise being considered the nation's leading expert on dog bite-related fatalities. During this time, she has been instrumental in shifting public attitudes toward canine aggression by focusing on reduction of risk through humane care, custody and control of companion dogs, as well as keeping the comparative risk of living with dogs in proper perspective. Ms. Delise has authored two books: *Fatal Dog Attacks: The Stories Behind the Statistics* and *The Pit Bull Placebo: The Media, Myths and Politics of Canine Aggression*. Ms. Delise retired from the Suffolk County, NY Sheriff's Office after twenty-nine years of service. She earned a degree in Veterinary Science Technology and is a licensed veterinary technician. Ms. Delise has worked for the East End

Small Animal Emergency Hospital, the Long Island Game Farm, and the New York State Marine Mammal Rescue Program. She also volunteered, for seven years, in the Bide-A-Wee Pet Therapy Program. [Read Ms. Delise's Research and Investigation Methodology.](#)

Donald Cleary, Director of Communications & Publications



In addition to serving as the Director of Communications and Publications for the National Canine Research Council, Mr. Cleary serves as Treasurer for the Animal Farm Foundation. Mr. Cleary recently retired as Director of Business Affairs for the Jane Rotrosen Agency, a New York literary agency. In addition to researching, writing, and speaking for the animals, he offers lectures on ancient and modern military history in adult school programs. Mr. Cleary lives in New Jersey with his wife and their two adopted dogs.

Janis Bradley, Associate Director of Communications & Publications



Janis holds a B.A. in Philosophy and a Masters in English. She first pursued a career as a college teacher, counselor, and administrator. Leaving academia, she then took up professionally her passion for the human-canine relationship. From 2000 through 2009, Janis trained more than 400 professional pet dog trainers.

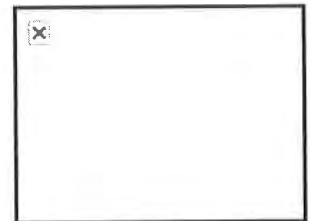
Janis is the author of *Dogs Bite, But Balloons and Slippers are More Dangerous* (James and Kenneth), the complete guide to research on dog bites; *Dog Bites: Problems and Solutions* (Animals and Society Institute); and *The Relevance of Breed in Selecting a Companion Dog* (NCRC Vision Series). All of this comes from an abiding interest in finding the very best information about the remarkable relationship between dogs

and people. She lives in Oakland, California with rescued Greyhounds Henry and Annie.

Elizabeth Arps, Manager of Research and Public Policy Services

Ms. Arps attained a B.A. in Biology from Hiram College in 2010, during which she worked at the college's field station caring for endangered waterfowl. During college, she also interned at animal shelters and sanctuaries, and traveled abroad extensively, all of which broadened her interest in studying a wide variety

Featured Video



NCRC Video Interview with Janis Bradley

[READ MORE](#)

Send to Friends

Publications

- [Visual Breed ID Poster: German Shepherd Mixes](#)
- [Visual Breed ID Poster: Labrador retriever Mixes](#)
- [Visual Breed ID Poster: "Pit Bull" Mixes](#)
- [Dog Bites: Problems & Solutions](#)
- [The Problem of Dog-Related Incidents and Encounters](#)
- [The Pit Bull Placebo](#)

[READ ALL PUBLICATIONS »](#)

View Points

Humane Communities are Safe. Safe Communities are Humane.
by Cynthia Bathurst

Click [here](#) to read entire Viewpoint.



of animal welfare issues. Elizabeth was able to explore those interests as she pursued a M.S. in Animals and Public Policy from Tufts Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine in 2011, where her thesis focused on the effects of a local dog breed-specific ordinance. She also spent time volunteering at feral cat clinics and with orphaned wildlife through the school's wildlife rehabilitation clinic. Ms. Arps was delighted to join the National Canine Research Council in 2012, where she can apply her background in science and policy. Elizabeth lives in New York City with her adopted dog, Walter.

About

Reading Suggestions



The Relevance of Breed in Selecting a Companion Dog

Janis Bradley is author of *Dogs Bite, but Balloons and Slippers are More Dangerous* and *Dog Bites: Problems and Solutions*. She explores the relevance of breed in selecting a companion dog in this publication.

READ NOW »

[Us](#) [Responsible Pet Ownership](#) [Breed ID](#) [Dog Legislation](#) [Injurious Dog Bites](#) [Publications](#) [Contact Us](#) [Sitemap](#)

© 2013 National Canine Research Council, LLC. Trade/service marks are the property of National Canine Research Council. All rights reserved.

Website Design by Blue Fountain Media

RESIDENT DOG VS. FAMILY DOG WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

All dog owners are responsible for the dogs in their care. Consider the difference between Resident dogs and Family dogs:



Windsor as a Resident dog.



Windsor as a Family dog.

A RESIDENT DOG

Resident dogs are dogs, whether confined within a dwelling or otherwise, whose owners maintain them in ways that isolate them from regular, positive human interactions.

The isolation and lack of exposure to the family unit results in the display of behaviors different from Family dogs.

A FAMILY DOG

Family dogs are dogs whose owners keep them in or near the home and also integrate them into the family unit, so that the dogs learn appropriate behavior through interaction with humans on a regular basis in positive and humane ways.

We will achieve safer, more humane communities when we hold owners of all dogs accountable to high standards of humane care, custody, and control.

Updated January 22, 2013



Happy Retales
 PET SUPPLY & MORE!
 100% of Profits Benefit Middle TN Animal Rescues!

Dogs The latest news in the world of dogs

- [Print Issue](#)
- [Digital Issue](#)
- [Directory](#)
- [Lifestyle](#)
- [Wellness](#)
- [Welfare](#)
- [About Us](#)
- [Shop](#)



Bully Breed Resources

Text Size:



Bully Breed Education & Resources

Bullies get a bad rap, which is why we're on a mission to clean up their undeserved reputation! We hope that the links, articles and resources on this page will help you to better understand our bully friends. We encourage you to share these links with friends via email, blogs, Facebook, Twitter and other social media outlets in order to help us get the word out that our pitties are friends, not foes! Together, we can help protect these beautiful dogs from further abuse, exploitation and public misunderstanding.

I am a pit bull.

I am muscular and compact. I have an unusually **large head**. I am incredibly strong, incredibly determined and incredibly loyal. I am **gentle with children**. I give sloppy kisses. I am convinced that I am a **lap dog**. I am very **intelligent**, playful and sensitive. I like to spoon in bed. And I will **do anything** you ask me to because, more than anything else, I just want your approval. If you **force me to fight**, I'll fight to survive... but if you ask me to love, I'll do it because I want to.



Learn more about me at nashvillepaw.com/bully.

About Pit Bull Breeds

Did you know that there is no such breed as a "pit bull"? The collective term "pit bull" is actually used to describe the dogs of three recognized bully breeds: the American Pit Bull Terrier, American Staffordshire Terrier and the Staffordshire Bull Terrier. The latter two breeds are commonly referred to as "AmStaffs".

To the casual observer, these breeds can be nearly impossible to distinguish from one another, yet their sizes, shapes and colors can vary widely. Some weigh in at a light 25 pounds, while others may be 85 pounds. All three breeds are well muscled with short, bristly coats that come in a variety of markings and colors.

Despite their physical variances, however, the bully breeds all have one thing in common: incredibly lovable personalities! As a rule, bully breeds are fun loving, spunky, intelligent, affectionate and often quite goofy dogs. What's more, they are extremely loyal to their families and can make truly wonderful companions!



Of course, like all breeds, a bully is not for everyone. While their strong desire to please, energetic nature and intelligence make them excellent for agility, flyball, obedience training and outdoor activities, their tenacity and strength also requires a guardian to provide firm but loving guidance and training, proper socialization and plenty of bonding and exercise. Making a bully breed a member of your family is a full-time commitment that should not be taken lightly. That said, the time and effort is well worth it for the loyalty, love and companionship of one of these amazing dogs!

Our Positive Pit Bull Articles

Following are a collection of our bully breed articles in PDF format, which can be viewed or downloaded by clicking on the links. We invite you to share this information on your blogs, websites, emails and more... we simply ask that you link the information back to this page!

[The Truth About Bullies](#)

Understanding America's Most Controversial Dog Breeds
By Heather Davis / Published in the Aug/Sep 2006 issue of Nashville Paw Magazine

[Tennessee Goes to the Pits](#)

First Annual Pit Bull Awareness Day Aims to Give Bully Breeds a Positive Spotlight
By Emily Volman / Published in the Oct/Nov 2007 issue of Nashville Paw Magazine

[Beautiful Bullies](#)

Pit Bull Awareness Day Celebrates Bullies on October 24th
By Heather Davis / Published in the Oct/Nov 2009 issue of Nashville Paw Magazine

[Promoting Compassion and Understanding for our Bully Friends](#)

Publisher's Page
By Heather Davis / Published in the Oct/Nov 2009 issue of Nashville Paw Magazine

[Adoption Spotlight](#)

By Heather Davis / Published in the Oct/Nov 2010 issue of Nashville Paw Magazine

Fun-to-Share Pit Bull Links

Promoting pit bull awareness can be as easy as spreading the message with a weblink. Share these fun links with your friends and family!

[YouTube Video: Pit Bull Blues](#)

This great song and video by John Shipe shines a happy light on our bully friends... a must-share!

[Find the Pit Bull Game](#)

Can you identify the American Pit Bull Terrier at this link? It's harder than you might think! Truth is, most people get this wrong. Banning pit bulls through BSL (breed specific legislation) is not effective for several reasons, one of them being that the general public as well as law enforcement often cannot identify the true breed of a dog. There are many breeds that are often mistaken for pit bulls, including Alapaha Blue Blood Bulldogs, Dodo Argentinos, Cane Corsos and even American Bulldogs. Give this quiz a try and see how you do, then share it with a friend!

Pit Bull Education & Resources

There is a plethora of pit bull information available on the internet, although it can take a while to sift through to the good stuff! That's why we've compiled this list of our favorite bully breed websites, making it easy for you to find pit bull information, education, advocacy and rescue resources.

[StubbyDog](#)

A 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to restoring the reputation and image of America's bully breeds

[Pit Bull Prejudice: The Problem and Pit Bull Prejudice: The Solution](#)

Our friend Scotlund Haisley, founder of Animal Rescue Corps, has written a great blog post about the misinformation surrounding pit bulls. A great place to start in your search for the real story!

[Pit Bulls: Saving America's Dogs](#)

One of our favorite organizations is Best Friends Animal Sanctuary in Kenab, Utah. And one of our very favorite pit bull resources is the website dedicated to their "Saving America's Dogs" campaign! Not only will you find perhaps the best collection of bully breed information, education, advocacy tools, breaking news and awareness campaigns, but you'll also find details on BSL (breed specific legislation), media galleries and more. Check it out today!

[Bay Area Dog Lovers Responsible About Pit Bulls](#)

Check out their website for heartwarming updates, photos and stories about the dogs they took in from the Michael Vick case. A great source of education and information for all things bully!

[Pit Bull Rescue Central](#)

A great website for pit bulls facts, information and education as well as a network for rescue and adoption.

[HSUS Dogfighting Campaign](#)

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) has a wonderful nationwide animal cruelty and fighting campaign, aimed at educating the public about the tough reality of animal fighting and offering tips on how we each can do our part in putting an end to the suffering. This link focuses on dogfighting in particular and is a great resource for those wanting to become involved as an advocate.

[Bless the Bullies](#)

Based in Cookeville, Bless the Bullies is Middle Tennessee's foremost organization for bully advocacy and rescue. Group founder Jodi Preis created National Pit Bull Awareness Day in 2007.

[For Pits' Sake](#)

This great site highlights pit bulls in their truly heroic roles as animal-assisted therapy dogs, search and rescue canines and more. It also covers topics such as breed legislation and canine safety.

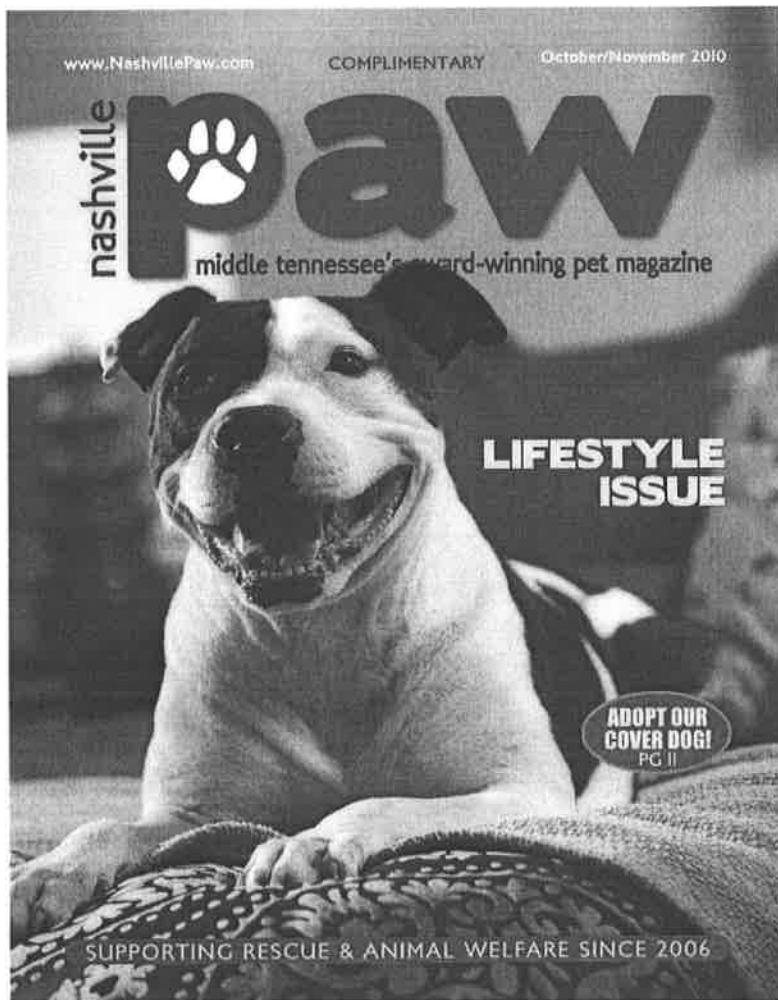
[Happy Pit Bull](#)

A wonderful resource, this site is written by a couple whose life was changed the day they took in a stray pit bull. Filled with the story of their journey to understanding these amazing dogs, as well as lots of great tips, advice, information and links, it's a great place to learn about bullies!

[The Lost Dogs: Michael Vick's Dogs and their Tale of Rescue and Redemption](#)

A must-read book for learning the truth about dog fighting as well as understanding how these dogs CAN be rehabilitated and rehomed!





Local Groups that Help Pit Bulls and/or Chained Dogs

PLEASE NOTE: While there are many groups that claim to rescue and adopt out pit bulls, please use caution when placing any bully breed. Pitbulls can often end up in the wrong hands despite the best of intentions. Please NEVER surrender a pit bull to a "rescue" that seems overly eager to take them in or that you do not have valid references for. There are unfortunately a few groups that pose as rescues and then dump the dogs at animal control to be euthanized, such as the one operated by Casey Phelps according to this [News Ch 5 report](#). Always do your homework and gather references for any rescue group or organization prior to working with one or turning over a dog.

To the best of our knowledge, the following groups are known to do good work in rescuing bully breeds and/or promoting humane education and resources for bullies and/or chained dogs.

[Bless the Bullies](#)
Cookeville, TN

[Companion Pet Rescue & Transport](#)
Nashville, TN

[Dogs Deserve Better of Nashville](#)
Nashville, TN

[East Community Action Network \(East CAN\)](#)
East Nashville, TN

[Hearts of Gold Pit Rescue](#)
Memphis, TN

[Middle Tennessee Pet Resource Center](#)
Nashville, TN

[Music City Pit Brigade](#)
Nashville, TN

[Nashville Pittie](#)
Nashville, TN

[Silver Rescue](#)
Nashville, TN

Anti Dog Fighting Campaigns

[American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals \(ASPCA\)](#)

Dog Fighting Q&A Fact Sheet

Humane Society of the United States
End Dogfighting Campaign

Join our Email List

**SIGN UP
FOR OUR
FREE EMAIL
NEWSLETTER**



Join our growing community of 50,000+ pet lovers!

Learn how *Nashville Paw* can connect you with our loyal readership through our effective online and print media options. Call us today at (615) 474-5710 or learn more by clicking [here](#).



- A Magazine with a Mission
- *Nashville Paw* is proud to be Middle Tennessee's community pet magazine, celebrating the pet lifestyle and supporting animal rescue and welfare since 2006. Learn more about us [here](#)... and be sure to connect with our community of pet lovers on **Facebook, Twitter, YouTube**, Instagram and through our [email list](#)!

© 2014 Paw Media Group Inc.



The fun loving, spunky and affectionate attitude of the Pit Bull Terrier is what most admirers come to love best about these dogs.

"To know them is to love them." Pit Bulls are impressively loyal, bold and courageous animals. They are naturally clownish, alert and intelligent ... In other words, a whole lot of fun to have around! Many participate and excel in various dog sports and activities, including Obedience Trials, Search and Rescue work, Agility Trials, Flyball and Frisbee Competitions, and Weight Pulling events. With their tenacious work drive and strong desire to please their owners, they are natural competitors and win impressive titles wherever they're worked.

The soft side of the breed shows up in their gushing affection for humans - a desirable trait that was very important to the original breeders of this animal and remains so today. For this reason, many Pit Bulls work as Certified Therapy Dogs in hospitals and nursing homes.



About the Pit Bull

Breed Information

The American "Pit Bull" Terrier was bred for game purposes; both bull baiting and hog hunting, as well as the more widely known pit fighting. In mentioning the gameness of the breed, it is not meant to tag him as a fighting machine, nor is it the intent to praise this trait. The origin of the gameness is important in understanding the breed, the requirements for owning the breed, and why it is crucial that the Pit Bull be placed into homes that will not abuse the origin of the breed. The Pit Bull has an unprecedented origin of being game. However, these dogs were NEVER bred to be human aggressive, and quite contrary to many beliefs, they make excellent family pets for the right individuals. As to character, the Pit Bull is an unsurpassable companion, one of undeniable loyalty and intelligence.



These dogs are docile, and with a little training are even tractable around other dogs. They are intelligent and make excellent guardians, though the Pit Bull is much too people-friendly to be considered a guard dog. They are territorial with regards to other dogs, and favor a dominant position in the home. They easily discriminate between strangers who mean well and those who do not, a unique and useful trait.

The real Pit Bull obtains its characteristics, such as indomitable courage, high intelligence, and loyalty, from the past history of the Staffordshire Bull Terrier. This is a breed that is willing to please by any means possible, which is undoubtedly the reason they have been used for centuries in the pits. The Pit Bull is a breed that will easily accept and adjust to changes, resulting from their love of people. These dogs are docile, agile, independent, and strong-minded. These qualities, coupled with its affection for humans, and children in particular, its off-duty quietness and trustworthy stability, makes it a foremost all-purpose family dog if researched properly and your lifestyle allows it. Pit Bulls adore attention, and are suited for indoor homes. Outdoor homes are not recommended with this breed, as they have come to be the number one target for [dog] theft. As with any breed, consideration needs to be taken to make sure that this breed is one that will fit your lifestyle, and that you can offer what this breed needs in a responsible family.

I'm Just a Pit Bull

by Jason M. Flatt, Founder, Friends to the Forlorn

A scowl genetically embedded on my face, as I didn't come from the greatest place.
 I was born out of brutality and cruelty. Any act of kindness towards me would be something completely new to me.
 I never win the popularity contest, as I am not liked by many. When they handed out chances, I never received any.
 I always walk alone, but not by choice, I can't even plead my case, as I have no voice.
 The jury is out before my trial even begins. I have become a storage facility that is full of humanity's sins.
 My friends are sentenced to death without committing a crime..The hurt and the pain that is inflicted on me is overlooked all the time.
 I have been racially profiled because of my breed... Fought to the death for other peoples greed.
 I have viewed much of my life on chains, or behind bars... You can't even see my smile, because its been hidden by scars.
 You read horrific stories of all my heinous acts... the press exploits me without knowing all the facts.
 My neck has grown heavy with your weights and your chains...I have been fed nothing but torture, and I have absorbed all the pain.
 My life can be compared to that of slavery... Is this the path that society has made for me?
 I am resilient by nature and I have way too much pride... That's why it is rare to see someone like me ever cry.
 What I really want is to be by your side. I'm loyal to you forever, or at least until I die.
 What few of you know is how emotional I can be. All I want is to be part of your family.
 I am not saying that all of us are perfect or great. Humans come in both and good and bad, so you should be able to relate.
 I don't want to be beaten down any longer... you need to make laws to protect me, much stronger.
 Don't stand there and let this happen one more day. The cruelty I am subjected to, is not OK.
 I know it will take time and your schedule is full. Why would you want to try and help me???

I'm just a Pit Bull.

Banfield Pet Hospital - State of Pet Health 2013

BREED TRENDS

Small Dogs and Exotic Cats Are More Popular than Ever

The most common dog breeds and sizes seen in Banfield hospitals have changed over the past decade. As first noted in the State of Pet Health 2011 Report, we're still seeing an increase in smaller dogs and mixed-breed dogs, plus a decline in larger dogs.


Top 10 dog breeds in 2012

1 Labrador Retriever	5 Pit Bull	9 Dachshund
2 Chihuahua	6 German Shepherd	10 Standard Poodle
3 Shih Tzu	7 Mixed Breed	
4 Yorkshire Terrier	8 Maltese	

Changes in popularity from 2001 to 2012:

152% Yorkies	143% Maltese
33% German Shepherds	22% Labs

COMMON NAMES:
Max, Buddy, Bella, Daisy



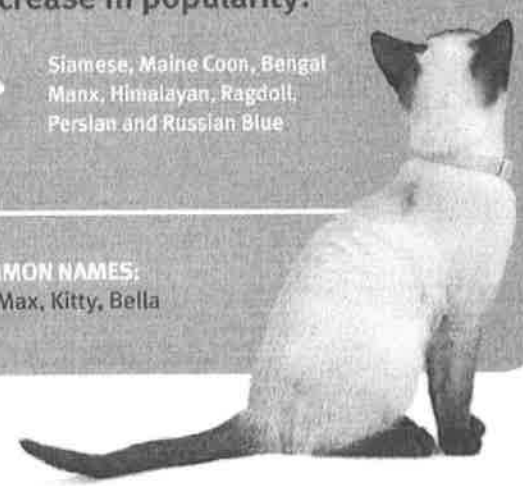
The most common cat breeds have remained consistent over the past 10 years and accounted for more than **88%** of cats seen in Banfield hospitals in 2012:

Domestic Shorthair, Medium Hair & Longhair

Exotic cat breeds continue to increase in popularity:

Siamese, Maine Coon, Bengal, Manx, Himalayan, Ragdoll, Persian and Russian Blue

COMMON NAMES:
Tiger, Max, Kitty, Bella

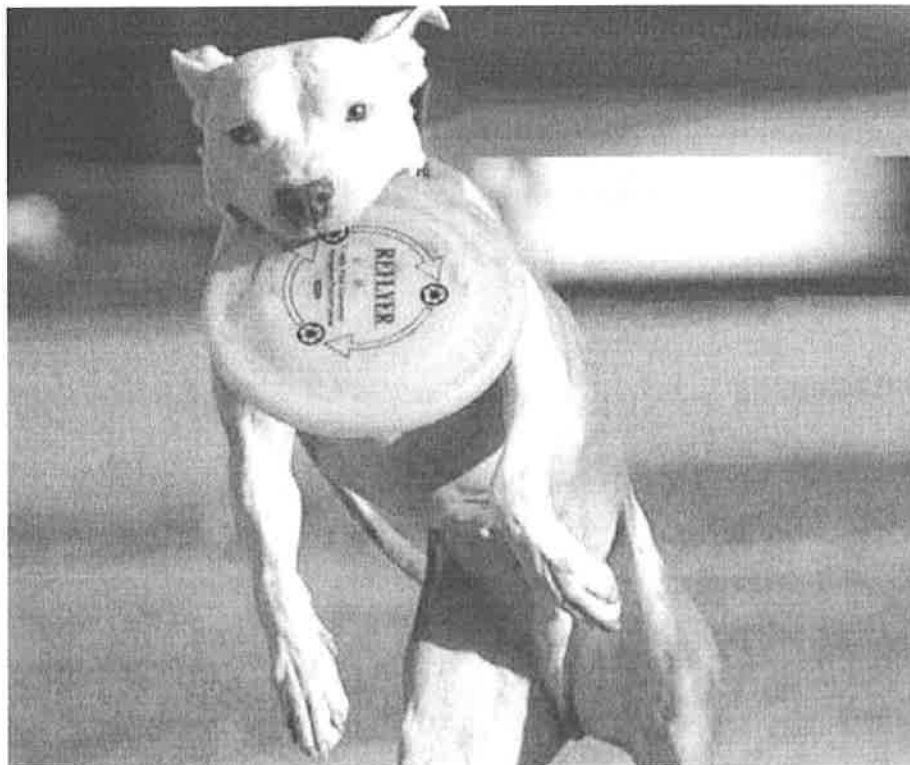


[Text Version of Infographic](#)

Search...

HOME PAST ISSUES RESOURCES ADM SHOP DIGITAL EDITION SUBSCRIBE MEDIA KIT ABOUT CONTACT

Wallace the Pit Bull Changing Minds One Disc at a Time!



By Julia Szabo
Photos by Joshua Grenell

The greatest athletes in American sports history—people like Jesse Owens, Jim Thorpe, Muhammad Ali—all shared a sporting attitude that went well beyond the arena. These contenders taught us important lessons about pride, self-respect and endurance. Now add to that elite group an athlete named Wallace, who has the true heart of a champion. The only thing that makes him different from the aforementioned sports legends? Wallace walks on all fours and has a tail he can wag.

Wallace, a.k.a. "Waz," is the beloved pit bull of Andrew "Roo" Yori, and together the pair, whose home base is Rochester, Minn., has cut quite a swath in the freestyle flying-disc arena. In September 2007, Wallace and Roo won the 10th annual Purina Incredible Dog Challenge. By the end of this nail-biting competition, Waz and Roo had scored 87 points, putting them in first place.

"It was one of the closest competitions they've ever had," Roo recalls proudly. "The dogs in second and third place tied at 86.5." It was also the first time a pit bull had taken home the top trophy. Wallace is a rescue pit, whose story with Roo began three years ago as Roo, who already had several dogs, intended to foster Wallace temporarily until a permanent home was found.

"A couple of months after we got him out of the local animal shelter, a friend started a disc dog club," Roo remembers. "I took one of my other dogs and Wallace was just sitting there. We'd planned to do weight-

OVER 265,000+
JOIN THE ADI



SPRING 2014 ISSU



SPECIAL PROMO



Facebook Followers :

20%

ON ALL PET KISS PRO

Use coupon code: facebook

Offer good only for first new order, will cancel for a

pulling with him, but then I figured, he likes to play fetch, his energy and drive are ridiculous, so why not give him a shot?"

Wallace proved himself an immediate natural. "He started doing all kinds of tricks within a couple of days," Roo says. Four months after trying his paw at the sport, Waz was entered in Indiana's Skyhoundz regional event. "We took 8th place in freestyle," Roo says. "Everybody there thought we'd been doing this for a lot longer than we had, which was kind of cool. At this point, I was still announcing to everyone that Wallace was up for adoption, because he was still technically a foster dog. And everybody kept looking at me like, 'Dude, that dog is not up for adoption.' So after that competition, my wife Claire and I officially adopted him. We realized we had a great opportunity to showcase this breed and do some really good things."

Wallace quickly became an ambassador for American Pit Bull Terriers and related bully breeds everywhere. He has his own Web site, www.wallacethepitbull.com, and is the subject of a forthcoming documentary that's scheduled for release in the fall. Not content to have one K9 role model at home, last year Roo began looking at www.BADRAP.org (Bay Area Dog Lovers Responsible About Pit Bulls) to inquire about adopting one of the pits who'd survived Michael Vick's notorious dogfighting operation, Bad Newz Kennels. And that's how Hector came to join the Yori pack. Although unique in his own right, handsome Hector just didn't receive the flying-disc gene—"lightning doesn't usually strike twice in families of extraordinarily gifted athletes.

"Hector's talent is being a clown," Roo says. "He's got a lot of entertainment value!" But that doesn't mean he's off the hook as a role model; in fact, Roo has been training Hector for animal-assisted therapy work, hoping to soon achieve certification from Therapy Dogs International (TDI).

Together, Wallace and Hector are brave soldiers in the ongoing battle against anti-pit prejudice, and anyone who meets these loverboys would say they could win through sheer charm and determination alone.

"I knew that pairing Wallace with Hector was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to get positive images of pit bulls in front of as many people as possible," Roo concludes. "Hopefully we'll be a force to be reckoned with!"

For more information visit:

www.wallacethepitbull.com

www.badrap.org

[Joomla SEO by AceSEF](#)

SECTIONS

- [Home](#)
- [Amazing Authors](#)
- [Business Profiles](#)
- [Canine Cooking](#)
- [Celebrity Profiles](#)
- [Cover Stories](#)
- [Creative Professionals](#)
- [Dog Profiles](#)
- [Dog Heroes](#)
- [Dog of the Month](#)
- [Role Models](#)
- [Working Dogs](#)

COLUMNS

- [Book Reviews](#)
- [Dog Culture](#)
- [Dog Law](#)
- [Relax](#)
- [Safety](#)
- [Entertainment](#)
- [Fitness](#)

FEATURED PRODUCTS

Acadia
Our Moose Antlers are



Order online at: www.acadia.com

MAGAZINE

- [2010 Awards](#)
- [American Dog PSAs](#)
- [Badges/Banners](#)
- [Beautiful Eyes Contest](#)
- [2011 Halloween Contest](#)
- [YouTube Videos](#)

American Humane Association™

The nation's voice for the protection of children & animals

Pit bull named year's top "American Hero Dog" At the 2013 American Humane Association Hero Dog Awards

News Release | October 6, 2013

Therapy Dog "Elle" Teaches Children About Dog Safety, Reading, and Overcoming Prejudice

Hero Dog Awards Premieres on Hallmark Channel October 30, 2013 at 8PM/7PM Central

LOS ANGELES, October 6 – The nation's top therapy dog, a pit bull named Elle (*pronounced Ellie*) from Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina who helps teach children about dog safety, reading, and overcoming prejudice and stereotypes – something a pit bull knows too much about – has been named this year's "American Hero Dog" at the 2013 American Humane Association Hero Dog Awards™. Elle and her human companion Leah Brewer were presented with the nation's top honors last night at the star-studded Hero Dog Awards gala at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Los Angeles. The awards are presented by the Lois Pope LIFE Foundation, Inc., broadcast nationally on Hallmark Channel, and produced by Emmy® award-winning MRB Productions.

Elle is saving lives by teaching children dog safety (more than 2 million children are bitten by dogs each year) and making positive life changes for people by helping them overcome their fear of dogs. Since becoming a volunteer, Elle started a therapy dog reading program called "Tail Wagging Tales," helping children enjoy books and improve their reading skills. Elle is also making a difference by creating happiness all around while visiting her friends at an elementary school, a middle school, and a retirement home. Elle also reaches out to educate families about being responsible pet parents, sharing stories about her job as a therapy dog, and spreading positive awareness about dogs that are misunderstood, including pit bulls. This year's therapy dog category sponsor, as well as the online sponsor, is the leading animal health company, Zoetis. Elle's charity partner, which will receive \$6,500 in financial support from the Hero Dog Awards, is the nonprofit organization, Hand in Paw.

The sold-out, star-studded awards honoring America's most courageous canines were hosted at the Beverly Hilton Hotel last night by television and movie star Joey Lawrence, accompanied by a galaxy of stars and presenters including Betty White, Jennifer Coolidge, Tsai Morales, Ryan O'Neal, Naomi Judd, Pauley Perrette, Lisa Vanderpump, Emmanuelle Vaugier, Bailee Madison, Rico Rodriguez, Brian Baumgartner, Megan Blake, Max Carver, Torrey DeVitto, Matt Leinart, Lauren Potter, Eric Christian Olsen, Ben Savage, Austin Stowell, Chef Michael Voltaggio, Danielle Fishell, Lori Loughlin, Daphne Zuniga, Victoria Stillwell and many more. Popular TV stars Jenni Pulos and Lisa Vanderpump served as Red Carpet hosts. The phenomenally talented Frankie Moreno, who in addition to his many hit records and accolades was named Las Vegas' Headliner of the Year, provided the lead musical performances with striking and original songs written especially for the awards that brought down the house. Before the show, singer and Billboard recording artist Shara Strand turned in a stirring performance of "I Will Carry You," which she wrote for American Humane Association, and guitarist Tom Caufield set a sensitive and lyrical tone during the Red Carpet, silent auction and gala dinner.

The Hero Dog Awards were created to celebrate the powerful relationship between dogs and people and recognize extraordinary acts of heroism performed by ordinary dogs. The event will be broadcast nationwide by Hallmark Channel on October 30 at 8 pm/7 Central. The 90-minute program will air as part of Hallmark Channel's Pet Project, the network's cross-platform advocacy campaign designed to celebrate the joy and enrichment animals bring to our lives.

During a nationwide search over the course of six months, 141 dogs from all across the country were nominated and more than a million votes were cast by the American public, culminating in the selection of eight extraordinary canine finalists.

"The American Humane Association Hero Dog Awards were created to honor some of the most extraordinary heroes the world has ever known, the very best of our 'best friends' – ordinary dogs who do extraordinary things," said Dr. Robin Ganzert, President and CEO of American Humane Association. "These courageous canines have gone above and beyond the call of duty, saving lives on the battlefield, comforting the ill, aged and afflicted, bringing hope to those who have lost it and reminding us of the powerful, age-old bond between animals and people. Choosing a top dog is difficult because they are all so terrific, but we are proud to announce Elle as the top American Hero Dog for 2013. As an organization that for years has fought breed-specific legislation (BSL), we are also pleased to honor a breed that has been often been unjustly maligned. We hope that Elle's story will help to underscore the many tremendously positive qualities of this breed."

The winner is chosen through a combination of public votes and voting by a panel of animal advocates and celebrity judges including Victoria Stillwell, Kristin Chenoweth, Candy Spelling, Miranda Lambert, Dr. Marty Becker, Michelle Forbes, Megyn Price, Prince Lorenzo Borghese, Blake Koch, Tara Harper, Jerry Means, Nancy Otte, Michael Hingson, Shara Strand, Maria Milito, and Ashley Rhodes-Courter.

All Finalists Are Winners

Elle was the one chosen as 2013 American Hero Dog, but all eight finalists were winners in their categories, and we salute them for their courage, service and compassion:

EMERGING HERO DOGS CATEGORY (sponsored by Paul Mitchell Schools)

WINNER: Cassidy (Midvale, UT) -- Three years ago a good Samaritan pulled over to pick up a pile of trash on the side of the highway. Under the garbage was a skinny, matted, scared little black dog who had been hit by a car. Cassidy was rushed to the emergency vet where his front leg was amputated. Sheltie Rescue of Utah took him into their program and Cassidy found his forever home with Kathy. But Cassidy's amazing journey did not stop there; he is an advocate for special needs rescues and works to show that every life has value. He is proof that dogs are not disposable. Cassidy and his mom also do presentations for children about disabilities, acceptance

and how everyone is different, special and has something positive to give to the world. Cassidy visits rehabilitation centers and is living proof that there is always hope and that anything is possible. Despite everything he has been through he has a very loving and trusting nature. He snuggles into each person's arms and shows them that he is perfect the way he is and that they too are perfect the way they are. (Charity Partner: Sheltie Rescue of Utah)

GUIDE DOG CATEGORY

WINNER: Jingles (Amsterdam, NY) -- Jingles is a Lab/Golden cross guide dog who works as part of a heroic team with a diabetic alert canine to help Karen Ann, who is multiply disabled. Jingles is joy unbounded, full of exuberance, and works hard to guide Karen Ann safely in every situation. Crossing streets Jingles maintains focus in the face of blaring horns, screeching brakes, and quiet hybrid vehicles that sneak up out of nowhere. She's adept at avoiding kids on scooters, people bustling by, construction barriers and the distraction of yapping pet dogs on flexi leads. In stores she steers Karen Ann clear of day-dreaming shoppers darting out of aisles with loaded carts, and guides her safely to where she wants to go. Jingles was trained to work on the left side of her partner but since Karen Ann is unable to work a dog on that side, Jingles underwent additional training and now she is Karen Ann's "right hand" girl. Jingles is unusual among guide dogs as she's trained to work in tandem with a second service dog. Together they offer a profoundly special gift to Karen Ann, offering her independence, safety and dignity. Karen Ann says both dogs are her heroes, but "Jingles is absolutely a one of a kind guide dog." (Charity Partner: The Seeing Eye)

HEARING DOG CATEGORY (Sponsored by MRB Productions)

WINNER: Lola (Bellingham, Washington) – Lola, a dog rescued from abuse and neglect, is paying it forward—daily helping and rescuing her partner Charlene, who is deaf. Charlene relies on Lola for so many things, connecting her to the world of sound around her. Lola is her alarm clock, her exercise companion, and her reason to move beyond depression and self-imposed isolation. Lola expands her activities, reminding Charlene to improve, not compromise, her quality of life. Whenever the oven-timer buzzes, the phone rings, or someone knocks at the door—Lola alerts her and insists on Charlene's paying attention to the world around her. She's always game for going to the ballpark, hospital visits, grocery store, rides on airplanes – even canoeing. Lola is a gem of a partner; she lightens Charlene's spirit as a source of courage and peace. When Charlene is alone, she helps her cope with the impact of hearing loss. Says Charlene, "Let the trumpets blow, fireworks blast, and the parade begin—my hearing dog Lola is a life-saver—an unsung heroine who gives her best daily to fulfill a higher purpose and for whom I'll be forever grateful." (Charity Partner: Dogs for the Deaf)

LAW ENFORCEMENT/ARSON DOG CATEGORY (sponsored by State Farm®)

WINNER: K9 Lakota (Locust Grove, Georgia) -- K9 Lakota served alongside Officer Travis Fox for less than four years but made remarkable achievements in his short career, among them more than 80 apprehensions, 28 drug seizures, \$60,000 seized, six vehicle seizures, the recovery of stolen property, and the seizure of \$60,000. K9 Lakota's career was ended prematurely in route to a home invasion call when Officer Fox and K9 Lakota ended up in a serious car accident. The accident split the car in two, ejecting both the officer and the dog from the car. K9 Lakota was not expected to live but his strong spirit fought on and after four surgeries (with more expected in his future), he is enjoying life in retirement. His work and his will to fight and live have shown his heroic side and he has brought people all over the world together for his cause. His story is now being used to help change laws for Law Enforcement Officer K9s so that they are better protected by their departments in case they are injured in the line of duty. K9 Lakota has been a true hero both in the line of duty and in retirement. (Charity Partner: K9s4COPs)

MILITARY DOG CATEGORY (sponsored by Royal Canin®)

WINNER: CWD Carlos EDD (Colorado Springs, CO) -- Explosive Detection Dog CWD Carlos retired in 2011 at the age of eight, after protecting U.S. and ISAF forces in continuous deployment for nearly five years. CWD Carlos, who worked with the U.S. Army's 3rd & 4th Infantry Divisions in Baghdad for two and a half years, was then transferred to Kandahar in 2009 to work in direct support of U.S. Special Forces on the front lines. Carlos is credited with finds on missions that saved the lives of many American soldiers. As Carlos aged, he was transferred to work with the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), a NATO-led security mission in Afghanistan that was established by the United Nations Security Council. Sadly, upon retirement Carlos seems to have been the victim of neglect. To this day, Carlos still carries ligature mark scars on his back legs from hobble-style restraints. Fortunately for this hero, he was reclaimed, eventually adopted by the Ridpath family, and got a "Freedom Flight" HOME! Carlos continues to bring awareness to the contributions of all working dogs. A warrior with a zest for life in spite of his challenging medical issues, CWD Carlos is a true hero who saved uncounted lives while deployed, attends events, visits schools, and is an inspiration to everyone he meets. (Charity Partner: Military Working Dog Adoptions)

SEARCH AND RESCUE DOG CATEGORY

WINNER: John D (Little Rock, AR) -- John D is a Search and Rescue dog, human cancer detective and all-around humanitarian. When needed, John D is called in to find the missing in kidnappings, disasters, drownings, and other emergencies. One day, John D was called in for a river search. Moments after he arrived, a woman approached and asked to pet him. She hugged him and whispered in his ear, "YOU are my only hope. Please go find my child. Please bring my baby back to me." There was an immediate bond between them. John D then boarded a boat and went out on the river. For hours he searched. John D was drawn to the water, completely focused on it and began dipping his nose at the same spot. When the boat returned to shore, this hero dog leapt off the boat, running straight to the woman who had greeted him. He leaned hard against her. She bent down and hugged him. When she lifted her face from John D's fur, there were tears. John D had found her son who had drowned two days before. John D also works to save lives by using his remarkable scenting ability to advance the use of canines in detecting ovarian cancer and other cancers, which may help save a mother, daughter or sister from a devastating disease. John D's determination to work, despite his own severe hip dysplasia, provides inspiration to others. Once a rescue dog saved by people, now John D spends his life helping and saving them. (Charity Partner: The Sage Foundation for Dogs Who Serve)

SERVICE DOG CATEGORY

WINNER: SD Bronx (Brunswick, GA) -- Can you imagine having your whole world change? Can you imagine having no friends? For 14-year-old Christopher those two questions were his reality. At the age of nine, Christopher began having seizures and was spending most of his childhood in the hospital trying to get answers. The answers were coming, but none of them were good. The doctors found out what was causing the seizures and they tried to use medicine to control them - one medicine after another. The seizures made it impossible for Christopher to attend school and other kids no longer wanted to be his friend - they were afraid of the seizures. Even Christopher was too afraid to sleep in his bedroom and didn't like leaving the house – the seizures had taken his childhood from him. Enter SD Bronx! Suddenly Christopher was not alone in his terrifying fight. His hero dog would tell him when seizures were about to happen and quickly alert others to help. SD Bronx stayed by his side at all doctor visits, and was there when Christopher lost half his world of vision, stepping into another role and working with Christopher and his sight cane. The challenges were hard but hero dog SD Bronx has helped Christopher to do more than he ever dreamed he could. (Charity Partner: Texas Hearing and Service Dogs)

Each of the eight finalists received \$1,500 to be donated to one of American Humane Association's charity partners. Elle won an additional \$5,000 for her charity. In this way, more heroes may be nurtured.

Human Heroes Also Honored

The Hero Dog Awards honors heroes "on both ends of the leash," as well as outstanding contributors to the fields of child and animal welfare. The evening featured a special tribute video to philanthropist Lois Pope, who was awarded American Humane Association's coveted "Legacy Award" for helping millions of children, veterans, and animals through her support of American Humane Association's Red Star™ rescue services, her presenting sponsorship for two years of the Hero Dog Awards, and many other charities. "We are honored to count Mrs. Lois Pope as a true friend to American Humane Association because of her unyielding passion for helping our most precious treasures, our children and animals," said Dr. Robin Ganzert, American Humane Association president and CEO. "We now our work is never done, but because of Mrs. Pope's grace and generosity, we will be able to continue our 136-year old mission for many generations to come. Indeed, she is a true humanitarian in every sense of the word."

Country star Miranda Lambert was awarded the National Humanitarian Medal for her longtime dedication to helping animals in need. In 2011 she and her MuttNation Foundation worked with American Humane Association to get relief to the animals affected by the Japanese earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster. In 2012 she and her foundation sponsored the winning Military Dog category of the Hero Dog Awards. And this year, following the EF-5 tornado that devastated Moore, Oklahoma, she, her foundation, and her family all worked to help our Red Star rescue team save animals in the disaster zone.

Gus Arrendale, president of Springer Mountain Farms, was recognized for being the first major poultry producer to voluntarily enroll in the American Humane Certified® program, the nation's first, oldest, and largest farm animal welfare auditing and certification program, now ensuring the humane treatment of nearly 1 billion of the 10 billion animals living on America's farms and ranches. Mr. Arrendale's vision is for all-natural animals raised humanely on a vegetarian diet without the use of antibiotics, steroids, growth stimulants or hormones. For his early and forward-looking commitment to the welfare of the animals in his care, he was awarded the National Humanitarian Medal.

Finally, we honor the many generous sponsors who support the Hero Dog Awards and made them possible. "We thank the animals, their dedicated owners and handlers, and the generous sponsors who have helped bring about that recognition," says Dr. Robin Ganzert, president and CEO of American Humane Association. "Thank you to the Lois Pope LIFE Foundation, Hallmark Channel, national online sponsor and Therapy Dog sponsor Zoetis®, Military Dog sponsor Royal Canin®, Law Enforcement and Arson Dog sponsor State Farm®, Emerging Hero Dog sponsor Paul Mitchell Schools, Hearing Dog sponsor MRB Productions, Best Producer sponsor Merial, print sponsor Modern Dog magazine, and Pet Life Radio whose Super Smiley served as our 2013 National Spokesdog. Dogs may be our best friends, but these caring organizations are theirs."

The American Humane Association Hero Dog Awards™

Now in its third year, the Hero Dog Awards competition searches out and recognizes America's Hero Dogs – often ordinary dogs who do extraordinary things, whether it's saving lives on the battlefield, lending sight or hearing to a human companion, or simply the tail-wagging welcome a pet owner relishes at the end of a hard day. Dogs compete in eight categories for the Hero Dog Awards: Law Enforcement & Arson Dogs, Service Dogs, Therapy Dogs, Military Dogs, Guide Dogs, Search and Rescue Dogs, Hearing Dogs and Emerging Hero Dogs (the category for "ordinary" dogs).

About American Humane Association

American Humane Association is the country's first national humane organization and the only one dedicated to protecting both children and animals. Since 1877, American Humane Association has been at the forefront of virtually every major advance in protecting our most vulnerable from cruelty, abuse and neglect. Today we're also leading the way in understanding the human-animal bond and its role in therapy, medicine and society. American Humane Association reaches millions of people every day through groundbreaking research, education, training and services that span a wide network of organizations, agencies and businesses. You can help make a difference, too. Visit American Humane Association at www.americanhumane.org today.

About Lois Pope, The Lois Pope LIFE Foundation, Inc., and LIFE (Leaders in Furthering Education)

Lois Pope is one of America's leading philanthropists and humanitarians. Through her various charitable mechanisms, including the Lois Pope LIFE Foundation, Inc., she is devoted to saving lives, helping people help themselves, improving the quality of life for families in need and encouraging young Americans to become leaders by helping others. Her foundations also provide awards for medical research, college scholarships, humanitarian relief, the performing arts, and animal welfare. Among the many organizations that benefit from her leadership are American Humane Association; the Disabled Veterans' LIFE Memorial Foundation, which she founded to spearhead the development of the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial, the nation's first and only permanent public tribute to the three million living disabled American veterans and the thousands who have died; the University of Miami, where her major contribution endowed the Lois Pope LIFE Center, the top catastrophic neurological research facility in the world and home to the renowned Miami Project to Cure Paralysis; Leaders in Furthering Education, which has provided a summer camp experience for more than 15,000 disadvantaged and special needs children, as well as college scholarship support to dozens of disadvantaged high school students who aspire to careers as physicians/researchers; Magen David Adom (MDA), Israel's Red Cross, for new ambulances; and the Peggy Adams Animal Rescue League for a new mobile pet adoption unit. A mother and a grandmother, Lois has trained for and completed five New York City Marathons. For more information about LIFE visit www.life-edu.org.

About Hallmark Channel

Hallmark Channel, owned and operated by Crown Media Holdings, Inc., is a 24-hour basic cable network that provides a diverse slate of high-quality entertainment programming available in high definition (HD) and standard definition (SD) to a national audience of 86 million subscribers. Hallmark Channel is the nation's leading destination for quality family programming with an ambitious slate of original TV movies and specials, as well as some of television's most beloved sitcoms and series, including *The Golden Girls*, *The Waltons*, *Little House on the Prairie*, and *Frasier*. The channel is also home to a range of lifestyle programming, anchored by *Home & Family*, a daily two-hour live show shot in a fully functional house located on the Universal Studios lot. Hallmark Channel's sibling network, Hallmark Movie Channel, available in HD and SD, focuses on family-friendly movies with a mix of original films, classic theatrical releases, and presentations from the acclaimed Hallmark Hall of Fame library. For more information, please visit www.crownmediapress.com. Hallmark Channel on Social Media: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) (Join the conversation at #HeartofTV), [Pinterest](#), [GetGlue](#), [YouTube](#)

About MRB Productions

Launched in 2001 by Emmy Award-winning Executive Producer Matthew Brady, MRB Productions has quickly become one of Hollywood's go-to production companies, garnering 15 Emmy nominations and 2 wins for its visually striking content. In features, MRB's political comedy, *GRASSROOTS*, starring Jason Biggs, opened theatrically in the US and Europe and is also available On Demand. *EMANUEL AND THE TRUTH ABOUT FISHES*, a psychological thriller starring Jessica Biel, premiered in competition at the 2013 Sundance Film Festival and was picked up for distribution by Tribeca Film. In television, MRB is the production company behind two seasons of *FREE RADIO* (VH1 and Comedy Central), *THE OTHER MALL* (ABC Family), and the annual *HERO DOG AWARDS* for

Hallmark Channel. MRB also produces content for HBO, ESPN, NBC, ABC, NFL Network, and Longhorn Network. In the digital space, MRB's work ranges from comedy shorts on Funny or Die to the critically acclaimed Webby Award winning THE CONFESSION, starring Kiefer Sutherland, produced exclusively for Hulu and distributed internationally by Sony Pictures Television.

About Zoetis

Zoetis (zō-EH-tis) is the leading animal health company, dedicated to supporting its customers and their businesses. Building on a 60-year history as the animal health business of Pfizer, Zoetis discovers, develops, manufactures and markets veterinary vaccines and medicines, with a focus on both farm and companion animals. In 2012, the company generated annual revenues of \$4.3 billion. With approximately 9,300 employees worldwide at the beginning of 2013, Zoetis has a local presence in approximately 70 countries, including 29 manufacturing facilities in 11 countries. Its products serve veterinarians, livestock producers and people who raise and care for farm and companion animals in 120 countries. For more information on the company, visit www.zoetis.com.

About Royal Canin USA

Royal Canin USA is a leader in science-based cat and dog health nutrition. Founded by a veterinarian in 1968, Royal Canin has more than 40 years of experience in delivering individualized nutritional solutions. In collaboration with an expert team of nutritionists, breeders, and veterinarians from around the world, Royal Canin places cats and dogs at the central point of the innovation process. The Royal Canin product line offers a range of diets based on size, age, breed, life style and therapeutic requirements. Royal Canin diets are available at veterinary hospitals and pet specialty stores nationwide. *Royal Canin is a subsidiary of Mars, Incorporated.* To learn more about Royal Canin visit www.royalcanin.us and "LIKE" us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/royalcanin.us.

About State Farm®

State Farm and its affiliates are the largest provider of [car insurance](#) in the U.S. and is a leading insurer in Canada. In addition to providing [auto insurance quotes](#), their 18,000 agents and more than 69,000 employees serve 81 million policies and accounts – more than 79 million auto, home, life and health policies in the United States and Canada, and nearly 2 million bank accounts. [Commercial auto insurance](#), along with coverage for renters, business owners, boats and motorcycles, is also available. State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company is the parent of the State Farm family of companies. State Farm is ranked No. 44 on the Fortune 500 list of largest companies. For more information, please visit <http://www.statefarm.com> or in Canada <http://www.statefarm.ca>.

About Paul Mitchell Schools

At Paul Mitchell Schools, we believe that education is an adventure and the learning experience needs to be fun. Our instructors—we call them "learning leaders"—are trained to draw out the artist in every student and prepare them to compete in the real world. Through our annual "FUNraising" campaign, we've raised and donated millions of dollars in support of many charitable causes. We've built homes with Habitat for Humanity, fed thousands of African orphans, and supported the victims of AIDS, breast cancer, homelessness, abuse, and hundreds of other causes. Established over 30 years ago, the Paul Mitchell network is nearly 100,000 salons strong and in 81 countries worldwide; every professional hairdresser knows the Paul Mitchell name. Now, with the arrival of Paul Mitchell Schools, we've taken the world of cosmetology education by storm! Visit www.paulmitchell.edu to learn more.

About Merial

Merial is a world-leading, innovation-driven animal health company, providing a comprehensive range of products to enhance the health, well-being and performance of a wide range of animals. Merial employs approximately 6,000 people and operates in more than 50 countries worldwide. Its 2012 sales were \$2.8 billion (€2.2 billion). Merial is a Sanofi company. For more information, please see www.merial.com.

About Modern Dog Magazine

A must-read for dog lovers! Get inspired with the best ideas and solutions for life with dogs. Each issue features breed profiles, budget buys, activities for you and your dog, health & wellness, dog-friendly travel destinations, rescue stories, product reviews, photo contests, giveaways and more! Modern Dog is your guide to a better bond with your dog.

[« Back](#)


[Home](#)
[Photos](#)
[Breed Profiles](#)
[Breeders](#)
[Forum](#)
[Fun & Games](#)
[Articles](#)
[Advertise](#)
[Links](#)
[Login](#)

[Link to Us](#)
[Archived Forums \(+/-\)](#)

Pit Bulls Debunked
- An essay describing the myths, falsehoods, and misperceptions of this wonderful breed.



Got a Great Pet?

We've got the Perfect Pet Sitter.



Find Tips & Tools
for Pet Parents
sitercity

Description:

Known for their intelligence and loyalty American Pit Bull Terriers make excellent, loving and protective companions despite the unfair press they receive. A common question regarding the APBT is, "How is this breed different from the American Staffordshire Terrier?". In the eyes of the United Kennel Club, they are the same breed, but many disagree. Some AKC-registered American Staffordshire Terriers are dual-registered as American Pit Bull Terriers with the UKC; however, this draws criticism from many who point out that the bloodlines have been separate for too long for these to be considered the same breed. The AKC, on the other hand, does not allow a UKC-registered American Pit Bull Terrier to be registered as an American Staffordshire Terrier. To be dual-registered, the dog must first be an AKC-registered American Staffordshire Terrier and then it can be registered with the UKC as an APBT -- but not vice versa... Choose from a responsible breeder and make sure the puppy is properly socialized and handled. Solid training will produce a tranquil, good, obedient, companion dog.

History/Origin:

His ancestors were brought to the United States in the mid - 1800's by Boston-Irish immigrants. Originally bred from a variety of bulldogs and terriers, American breeders increased his weight and gave him a more powerful head. A forbearer to the Staffordshire Bull Terrier, they were originally bred to be a fighting dog. Bull baiting was banned in England in 1835 and these dogs are no longer being bred to fight. There is some complication in registries of this breed. The AKC considers the American Staffordshire Terrier as separate and distinct from the American Pit Bull Terrier, yet the UKC will register both as American Pit Bull Terriers (APBTs).



Photo from 1930's

In 1898 the United Kennel Club was formed with the express intent of providing registration and fighting guidelines for the now officially-named American Pit Bull Terrier. Later, those who wished to distance themselves from the fighting aspect of the breed petitioned the American Kennel Club for recognition of the Pit Bull so that

American Pit Bull Terrier

[American Pit Bull Terrier Pictures](#)
[American Pit Bull Terrier Breeders](#)
[American Pit Bull Terrier Stud Dogs](#)
[American Pit Bull Terrier Photo Gallery](#)
[American Pit Bull Terrier Kennels / Breeders](#)


In America, the Pit Bull flourished. It was one of the most popular breeds, highly prized by a wide variety of people. The Pit Bull was used to represent the US in WW1 artwork; popular companies like RCA and the Buster Brown Shoe Company used the breed as their mascots. A Pit Bull named Petie starred in the popular children's television series, Our Gang; a Pit Bull mix named Stubby became a decorated WWI hero. Pit Bulls accompanied pioneer families on their explorations. Laura Ingalls Wilder of the popular Little House books owned a working Pit Bulldog named Jack. Famous individuals like Theodore Roosevelt and Helen Keller owned the breed. It was during this time that the Pit Bull truly became America's sweetheart breed, admired, respected and loved.

In 1898 the United Kennel Club was formed with the express intent of providing registration and fighting guidelines for the now officially-named American Pit Bull Terrier. Later, those who wished to distance themselves from the fighting aspect of the breed petitioned the American Kennel Club for recognition of the Pit Bull so that

it would be eligible for dog shows and other performance events. The AKC conceded in 1936 but only under the stipulation that the dogs registered with them be called "Staffordshire Terriers", the name of the province in England the breed supposedly originated in. Upon acceptance of the breed, many people dual-registered their dogs with both the AKC and the UKC. Lucenay's Peter (the dog that starred in the Our Gang series) was the first dual-registered Pit Bull/Staffordshire Terrier. The UKC evolved, eventually beginning to register other working-type breeds, and later holding shows similar to those of the AKC. Currently, the UKC is the second largest purebred dog registry in the United States, complete with strict bylaws that ban anyone who is convicted of dog fighting. The American Dog Breeders Association was formed in 1909 because of certain fanciers' opinions that the UKC was not doing its job protecting and preserving the Pit Bull breed as they felt it should be preserved. The ADBA's goal is the same now as it was then: to



Stubby, a decorated WWI hero

register, promote and preserve the original American Pit Bull Terrier fighting-type dog.



The AKC eventually closed its studbooks to American Pit Bull Terriers. They allowed registration only to those dogs with parents registered as Staffordshire Terriers. For a short period in the 1970's, the AKC reopened its studbooks to American Pit Bull Terriers. In 1973 the AKC added the prefix "American" to the breed's name in an effort to distinguish it from the newly recognized Staffordshire Bull Terrier. Today, only those dogs with AmStaff parents are eligible for registration. Both the UKC and the ADBA allow registration of AmStaffs, but in these organizations the dogs carry the original name, "American Pit Bull Terrier."

Today the Pit Bull has evolved into a marvelous working and companion dog, used for purposes as varied as those it originally performed. Pit Bulls are employed as police/armed services dogs, search and rescuers, therapy animals, and livestock workers. They compete in all manner of organized dog sports, from herding to agility to conformation to obedience and the bite sports like

Schutzhund and French Ring. They make loving pets for children and seniors, and everyone in between. They are indeed one of the most versatile breeds on the planet. Much of this is owed to the activities it once performed. The harshness and physical demands of the activities molded a strong, healthy, stable animal, one anyone should be proud to own.

Height: 18 - 22 inches

Weight: 30 - 60 lbs.

Colors:
Any color

Coat:
Thick, short, shiny hair

Temperament:
Courageous, loyal, full of energy; Should be socialized early on with children and other animals.

Care and Exercise:
Regular brushing with a bristle brush or rubbing down his coat with a chamois will keep the coat shiny and clean. Bath only when necessary. Needs a substantial amount of vigorous exercise which needs to be on-leash. Enjoys running along side a bicycle.

Health Issues:
Mange and heart murmurs. Breeders should be concerned with doing health testing on the sire or dam such as OFA, PENN HIP

Category: Terrier

Registries: UCA, UKC, ADBA, CKC, APBR

Living Environment: Either Indoor or Outdoor



'Web Ads'
Site
Blocked



McAfee

Web Protection

Reason: MX Logic Web Proxy

The Web site
<http://www.bulldogbreeds.com/americanpitbullterrier.html>
has been blocked by your organization's content filtering policies.

<https://portal.mcafeesaas.com/wds/policy/>

URLs that provide ad-hosting or programs that create advertisements.

If you feel that the Web site you requested has not been



Pit Bull T-Shirt

Boxer:	Breed Info Photos Breeders
English Bulldog:	Breed Info Photos Breeders
Olde English Bulldogge:	Breed Info Photos Breeders
American Bulldog:	Breed Info Photos Breeders
French Bulldog:	Breed Info Photos Breeders
Alapaha Blue Blood Bulldog:	Breed Info Photos Breeders
Valley Bulldog:	Breed Info Photos Breeders
Boston Terrier:	Breed Info Photos Breeders
Bull Mastiff:	Breed Info Photos Breeders

Didn't find what you're looking for? Use the form below to search this site or the web.

[Home](#) | [Bully Pics](#) | [Bully Breeds](#) | [Breeders](#) | [Bulldog Breeds Forum](#)
[Jokes, Games, & Funny Stuff](#) | [Books](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Links and Resources](#) | [Breeder Login](#) | [Contact Us](#)

Privacy Policy



- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| Basset.net | DobermanTalk.com | GoldenRetrieverForum.com | OurBeagleWorld.com |
| BoxerForums.com | DogForums.com | GoPitbull.com | PoodleForum.com |
| BulldogBreeds.com | FishForums.com | HavaneseForum.com | SpoiledMaltese.com |
| CatForum.com | GermanShepherds.com | Labradoodle-dogs.net | YorkieForum.com |

All content © 2002-2008 | [Terms of Service](#)

American Temperament Test Society, Inc.

Please **BEWARE!** ATTS tests are **NEVER** offered to individual dogs at the owner's home. If someone approaches you to test your dog at home, this person is **NOT** associated with ATTS. **ALL** official ATTS tests are sponsored by recognized dog clubs and organizations and are listed on the ATTS website. Please contact ATTS for more information if you are unsure if an event or individual is legitimately associated with our organization.

Welcome to the website of the American Temperament Test Society, Inc. (ATTS). We hope that you will be able to find the answers here to many of your questions about our organization and the TT (Temperament Tested) title for dogs.

Test listings last updated 12/31/2013

2012-2013 Breed Statistics updated 2/19/2013

ADDRESS & PHONE NUMBER

American Temperament Test Society, Inc.

PO Box 800130

Balch Springs, TX 75180

(972) 557-2887

Email: info@atts.org

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA

Richmond Division

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,)
)
 Plaintiff,)
) Civil Action No. 3:07cv397
 v.)
)
 APPROXIMATELY 53 PIT BULLDOGS,)
)
 Defendant.)

ORDER

The United States has filed a Motion for Order as to Final Disposition accompanied by a report of the court-appointed guardian/special master, Professor Rebecca J. Huss. Having considered the motion and Professor Huss' report and recommendation, and deeming it proper to do so, it is hereby ORDERED, pursuant to 7 U.S.C. § 2156(f):

1. As the Court is satisfied that an appropriate investigation has been made of the permanent placement options for the forfeited pitbulls, the summary report of the guardian/special master is hereby ADOPTED by the Court.

2. The United States Department of Agriculture is hereby AUTHORIZED to enter into agreements with the animal rescue organizations identified in the guardian/special master's report and recommendation for the permanent placement of the forfeited dogs on such terms as the Department of Agriculture deems appropriate.

Let the Clerk send five certified copies of the this order to counsel for the United States.

Dec 6, 2001
Date

HH /s/ _____
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE

I ask for this:
Brian L. Whisler

Brian L. Whisler
Assistant United States Attorney

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA

Richmond Division

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,)
)
 Plaintiff)
)
 v.) Civil Action No.: 3:07CV397
)
 APPROXIMATELY 53 PIT BULLDOGS,)
)
 Defendant.)

MOTION FOR ORDER AS TO FINAL DISPOSITION

COMES NOW the United States of America, pursuant to 7 U.S.C. §2156(f), and herewith moves the Court to enter an order as to final disposition of the forfeited pit bulldogs. In support of this motion, the government states the following:

1. This is an in rem forfeiture action pursuant to 7 U.S.C. §2156(f) seeking the forfeiture of approximately 53 pit bulldogs involved in an animal fighting venture.
2. On August 31, 2007, the Court entered a judgment forfeiting the seized dogs to the United States.
3. On October 16, 2007, the Court granted a motion by the government to appoint Professor Rebecca J. Huss as the guardian/special master to evaluate the permanent disposition options for the forfeited pitbulls. ¹

¹ Section 2156(f), unlike most forfeiture statutes which prescribe that forfeited property be disposed of “according to law” or “as the Attorney General may direct,” reserves to the court hearing the forfeiture action the disposition of the forfeited property: “Any animal involved in any violation of this section shall be liable to be proceeded against and forfeited to the United States . . . and upon a judgment of forfeiture shall be disposed of by sale for lawful purposes

4. Attached hereto is the Summary Report which explains how Professor Huss evaluated the animals, devised an application process for organizations seeking to provide placement facilities and services and her recommendation as to the permanent disposition of all of the forfeited pitbulls.

5. The government hereby moves the Court to adopt Professor Huss' report and recommendation and to authorize the United States Department of Agriculture to enter into agreements with the recommended rescue organizations setting the precise terms of the transfer of title to the dogs and their permanent placement.² Professor Huss has thoroughly evaluated all of the dogs in accordance with the Court's October 16, 2007 Order and considered all options for their disposition taking into account 1) the safety of the public and other animals with respect to any dogs which may be aggressive and 2) the quality of life for any dogs that may require long term housing in a restrictive environment. As noted in her report, Professor Huss has determined the best placement for each of the dogs, and her conclusions are explained in her report. The amount of effort and attention to detail by Professor Huss is nothing short of extraordinary. The United States urges the Court to adopt her recommendations. The costs associated with the

or by other humane means, as the court may direct.” (Emphasis added)

² The government initially proposed numerous criteria that prospective placement organizations should meet in order to be considered appropriate permanent placement options. See paragraph 4 of October 16, 2007 Order. In order to place all of the forfeited pitbulls, some modification of the initial criteria is required. The only significant revision to the initial criteria is that some relaxation of the confidentiality provisions is now necessary. The government believes that issue and the numerous details of placement can best be accomplished by permitting the Department of Agriculture, with the guidance of the guardian/special master, to resolve through negotiated agreements between the Department of Agriculture and the recommended placement organizations. The United States is satisfied that all of the proposed placement organizations meet the essential criteria of the Order designed to protect the public and the dogs.

United States v. Approximately 53 Pit Bull Dogs
Civil Action No.: 3:07CV397 (E.D. Va.)
Summary Report
Guardian/Special Master

Background

Pursuant to 7 U.S.C. § 2156, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) on behalf of the USDA-OIG seized and forfeited to the Federal Government (Government) 52 dogs which are believed to have been involved in animal fighting. United States v. Approximately 53 Pit Bull Dogs, Civil No. 3:07CV397 (E.D. Va.). On August 30, 2007, the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia (Court) issued an Order forfeiting the dogs to the Government.

From September 4-6, 2007, a team of certified animal behavior experts and others assembled by the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) conducted individualized behavior testing of all of the 49 remaining forfeited animals. Based upon the test results, each dog was classified by the evaluators into categories corresponding to one of five possible disposition recommendations: (1) Foster Care/Observation; (2) Law Dog; (3) Sanctuary 1; (4) Sanctuary 2; and (5) Euthanasia (ASPCA Evaluation).

On October 1, 2007, based upon the recommendation of the Government, the Court ordered that one of the dogs be euthanized. On October 15, 2007, based upon the recommendation of the Government, the Court appointed a guardian/special master to advise the Court as to the appropriate final disposition for the remaining 48 dogs (Second Order as to Disposition and Appointing Guardian/Special Master).

As the individual appointed as the Guardian/Special Master in the Second Order as to Disposition and Appointing Guardian/Special Master, the following is a summary report describing my activities and recommendations regarding the disposition of the dogs.

Activities

October Assessment

During the period of October 17-19, 2007, I traveled to each of the shelters where the dogs were located in order to assess the dogs' current condition and interact with shelter personnel regarding the behavior of the dogs. I was accompanied to the shelters by Mr. Tim Racer of Bay Area Doglovers Responsible About Pit Bulls (BAD RAP). Mr. Racer was a member of the team of experts assembled by the ASPCA to conduct the initial evaluation of the dogs in September. Mr. Racer and I interacted with each of the forty-eight dogs over this three day period. With the exception of five dogs located at one shelter, in addition to taking each of the dogs out of the kennel and interacting with him or her individually, another dog of the same gender was introduced in the evaluation area to determine whether the dog exhibited behavior that would indicate the dog would act inappropriately around other dogs. I spoke with animal control officers at each

facility about the status and behavior of each dog. I relied on Mr. Racer's extensive knowledge about American Pit Bull Terriers and his prior interaction with the dogs to provide me with feedback on each individual dog. I made notes on each dog and compared these notes with the information provided in the ASPCA Evaluation.

Interim Care – Ongoing Evaluations

In order to provide further evaluations on the dogs, I recommended that certain measures be taken to provide "interim care" for the dogs until a final disposition was ordered. BAD RAP arranged for foster home care for most of the dogs that the ASPCA Evaluation recommended as Foster Care/Observation dogs. Pursuant to the agreements entered into between the organizations providing the foster care and the USDA-OIG, I received bi-weekly reports on the behavior and veterinary issues for each of the dogs. For the dogs remaining in the shelters, BAD RAP entered into an agreement to provide continuing kennel evaluation services. Specifically, a representative of BAD RAP would visit each shelter in turn and interact with each of the dogs. This representative began her work on November 6, 2007 and has provided me with daily notes on her interactions with the dogs. In order to facilitate this work, dogs were moved so they would be located in fewer shelters. In addition, due to an unexpected staffing shortage at another Virginia shelter, the dogs from that shelter were moved to a private shelter in the Washington, D.C. area. In addition to housing and veterinary care, the Washington, D.C. shelter also provided evaluation services and reported weekly on the status and behavior of each of the dogs. In addition to reviewing and discussing with the interim care providers the written evaluations on the behavior of the dogs during this interim period, I also reviewed the information provided in and recordings made during the ASPCA Evaluation focusing on the dogs that were exhibiting behavior that would make placing the dog more challenging.

Application Process

I prepared and distributed an application for placement of the dogs with rescue organizations. In drafting the application I followed the standards set for the organizations by the Second Order as to Disposition and Appointing Guardian/Special Master. In addition, I consulted with animal welfare and rescue organizations, including but not limited to the ASPCA, about the information that the rescue organizations be required to provide.

I received several applications from rescue organizations and responded to inquiries from other organizations that wished to be considered in determining permanent placement of the dogs. Of the rescue organizations that completed an application, a few met all the standards set by the Second Order as to Disposition and Appointment of Special Master, except the requirement that the organization be in existence for at least three years. Each of these rescue organizations was organized by people who had been involved in the rescue of animals through other organizations for a lengthy period of time. The primary reason that the new organization was established was to serve a different geographic area. As the purpose of requiring an organization to have a certain amount of history was to determine the stability of an organization, I made further

inquiries into those organizations' ability to care for a dog in the long term if such care became necessary. I am confident that these organizations have the resources and commitment to be appropriate options for placement of these dogs.

In determining whether I would recommend a rescue organization be considered for placement of a dog I contacted the references provided by the organization as well performed independent research on the organizations. I considered whether the organization had trainers or access to trainers that were experienced in dealing with dogs with special needs and the standard policies of the organizations. During this time I was in contact with representatives of several breed specific and general rescue organizations. The purpose of these contacts was to discuss the requirements of these dogs and the issues involved in the placement of the dogs.

I contacted the rescue organizations that I believed would be best suited for the dogs and provided access and information about the dogs to those organizations so they could determine whether a dog was appropriate for placement with their organization.

I made recommendations to the USDA for language to be included in the transfer agreements with the rescue organizations to reflect the needs of the dogs and to safeguard the public and other animals from any dog that may have exhibited dog arousal issues during the ASPCA Evaluation or may become aggressive in the future.

Euthanization of Dog for Medical Reasons

The female dog identified as Sussex #2610 was euthanized for medical reasons on November 10, 2007. This dog had been identified as a Foster Care/Observation dog in the ASPCA Evaluation and she continued to exhibit positive behavioral attributes during my visit in October and for the BAD RAP representative providing kennel evaluation services of the dogs. While this dog was in one of the shelters in Virginia, the dog was evaluated by a veterinarian in anticipation of the possible removal of a mammary tumor. That veterinarian determined in addition to the mammary tumor, the dog also had a large growth in her abdominal cavity. The dog was not considered a good candidate for surgery due to limited lung capacity as well as other issues dealing with the size and likely status of the abdominal tumor. The dog was transferred to a rescue organization for foster care and continued medical observation. While the dog was in the custody of the rescue organization she began to have difficulty breathing. A veterinarian for the rescue organization was in attendance, provided pain relief and recommended that the dog be euthanized. Previously, I discussed with the U.S. Attorney's office the procedure to be followed in the event of a medical issue with one of the dogs. Pursuant to that procedure, I contacted the Special Agent-in-Charge of the case at the USDA and with her concurrence, authorized the euthanization of the dog.

November Assessment

During the period of November 28-30, 2007, I traveled to each of the shelters where the dogs were being housed. The purpose of the visit was to determine the final placement of the dogs based on all the evaluations of the dogs' behavior and in light of the options available for their care. Along with the representative of BAD RAP providing kennel evaluation services, I interacted with each of the dogs and discussed the

status and behavior of the dogs with the dogs' caretakers. On those same days, a team from Best Friends Animal Society visited each of the shelters to interact with and evaluate each of the dogs that could be placed with that organization. I observed the evaluations that the Best Friends Animal Society team performed. I also discussed the status and long-term prospects of these dogs with the Best Friends Animal Society team.

Recommendations

Based on the information available to me at this time, I recommend that the dogs be transferred to rescue organizations pursuant to the chart attached hereto as Exhibit A. Each of the rescue organizations that I am recommending for placement of the dogs has committed to the lifetime care of the dogs if necessary. Each dog is identified by the designation that was given to the dog when it entered the shelter where it was housed at the time of the ASPCA Evaluation. As stated above, since my appointment as Guardian/Special Master many of the dogs have been transferred from those locations.

The stipend amount per dog is derived on an estimate of the total cost of the care of the dogs that would be incurred by rescue organizations that was provided to the defendant in the associated criminal case prior to my appointment as Guardian/Special Master. I believe that the actual cost to care and place the dogs will be substantially higher. This is due to the fact that many of the supplies and services that will be provided to the dogs are donated or performed by volunteers.

An allocation of \$5,000 per dog was made if based on the evaluations and information available, it appears reasonably likely that after a period of time in a foster home where behavior could be assessed and training would occur, these dogs could be adopted by members of the public.

An allocation of \$20,000 per dog was made if based on the evaluations and information available, a dog is likely to spend a significant amount of time, if not the dog's remaining lifetime, in an environment that will control the dog's interaction with people or other animals while it receives necessary socialization and training. The environment may consist of a foster home or sanctuary environment depending on the needs of the dog. The need to control a dog's interaction with people is to make certain that a dog that is shy or withdrawn has only positive interactions with people. After meeting certain standards of behavior and a period of time in a foster home where behavior can continue to be assessed and training could occur, most of these dogs could be adopted by members of the public.

The agreement that each rescue organization would enter into with the USDA-OIG would set out the circumstances under which the rescue organization may either adopt the dog to a member of the public or transfer the dog to another rescue organization. In addition, the agreement would contain language that provides that the organizations may only euthanize a dog under certain specified circumstances. Due to the ongoing criminal proceedings, each of the rescue organizations has agreed not to disclose anything about the dogs unless prior approval of such disclosure has been granted by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Virginia. After the final sentencing in the federal proceedings, the organizations would be allowed to discuss the dogs as they would any other dogs under their care unless the dogs' safety would be compromised.

Each of the rescue organizations that I am recommending for placement of the dogs has experience in the care of dogs and access to trainers that can deal with any behavioral issues that may arise. There were many reasons to recommend each of the rescue organizations. The needs of each individual dog were considered when making my recommendations.

I recommend that twenty-two dogs be placed with Best Friends Animal Society. Best Friends Animal Society has a large sanctuary in Utah and regularly assists with large-scale rescue efforts. Best Friends Animal Society is accustomed to dealing with dogs that have special medical and behavioral needs. Best Friends Animal Society is committed to providing what each of the dogs' needs to be able to thrive in a sanctuary environment if it necessary for a dog to remain in such an environment for life. One of the dogs placed with Best Friends Animal Society appears likely to be able to be adopted by a member of the public within a relatively short period of time. In the ASPCA Evaluation, that dog appeared to be a potential candidate to be placed as a Law Dog, but further evaluation indicated that the dog would not meet the criteria for those types of programs.

I recommend that ten dogs be placed with BAD RAP. BAD RAP organized interim care for many of the dogs recommended by the ASPCA Evaluation as Foster Care/Observation dogs in addition to being an interim care provider for several of those dogs. BAD RAP's primary rescue mission is to prepare dogs for adoption to the public, however it has agreed to take one dog that may need lifetime care. BAD RAP regularly provides training for people with American Pit Bull Terriers and has a great deal of expertise with the breed.

I recommend that four dogs be placed with the Richmond Animal League (RAL). The dogs placed with RAL will be transferred directly to foster homes and will not be housed at the RAL facility. This organization has the capacity to take and train four dogs that have the potential to be adopted by members of the public.

I recommend that three dogs be placed with the Georgia Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Georgia S.P.C.A.). This organization has the capacity to take one dog that may need lifetime care in addition to two dogs that have the potential to be able to be adopted by members of the public.

I recommend that three dogs be placed with the SPCA of Monterey County. The SPCA of Monterey County provided interim care for these three dogs and provided reports showing progress of each of the dogs. The SPCA of Monterey County has the capacity to continue to train these dogs for potential future adoption by members of the public.

I recommend that three dogs be placed with Recycled Love, Inc. Two of the dogs that Recycled Love, Inc. has agreed to take may need lifetime care. This organization has expertise in providing the type of care that these two dogs need. In addition, Recycled Love, Inc. has agreed to care and train a dog that has the potential for future adoption to a member of the public.

I recommend that one dog be placed with Animal Rescue of Tidewater. This organization had the opportunity to meet several dogs and believed that this dog best met the mission of its organization. This organization has the ability to care and train for the dog for potential future adoption by a member of the public.

I recommend that one dog be placed with Our Pack, Inc. The intention of this organization is for this dog to be trained for therapy work in addition to preparing the dog for potential adoption by a member of the public.

Conclusion

My recommendations for placement consider the factors that were set out in the Second Order as to Disposition and Appointing Special Master. There have been extensive evaluations done on each of the dogs to determine if the dog exhibits any behavior that indicates that the dog may be aggressive towards people or other animals. While in the foster home, each dog must continue to exhibit behavior that indicates that the dog would be safe to the public prior to being adopted by a member of the public. In addition, I have considered the quality of life for any dog that may need to be housed in a controlled environment for the long term and believe that each of the dogs has the capacity to thrive in such an environment.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Rebecca J. Huss
Guardian/Special Master
December 3, 2007

**EXHIBIT A
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PLACEMENT OF DOGS**

Initial Placement Designation	Stipend Amount	Rescue Organization
Hopewell #002 491	\$5,000	Our Pack, Inc.
Hanover #43	\$5,000	Georgia S.P.C.A.
Hanover #42	\$20,000	Best Friends Animal Society
Hanover #41	\$20,000	Best Friends Animal Society
Hanover #27	\$20,000	Best Friends Animal Society
Hanover #28	\$20,000	Best Friends Animal Society
Hanover #32	\$5,000	BAD RAP
Hanover #29	\$20,000	Best Friends Animal Society
Hanover #30	\$20,000	Best Friends Animal Society
Hanover #31	\$5,000	RAL
Hanover #26	\$5,000	SPCA of Monterey County
Hanover #44	\$5,000	BAD RAP
Chesapeake #54919	\$20,000	Best Friends Animal Society
Chesapeake #54903	\$5,000	Animal Rescue of Tidewater
Chesapeake #54917	\$20,000	Best Friends Animal Society
Chesapeake #54918	\$5,000	BAD RAP
Chesapeake #54907	\$5,000	BAD RAP
Chesapeake #54906	\$20,000	Best Friends Animal Society
Chesapeake #54916	\$5,000	Georgia S.P.C.A.
Chesapeake #54902	\$5,000	BAD RAP
Chesapeake #54904	\$20,000	Best Friends Animal Society
Chesapeake #54905	\$5,000	BAD RAP
Virginia Beach #27	\$20,000	Best Friends Animal Society
Virginia Beach #38	\$5,000	BAD RAP
Virginia Beach #46	\$5,000	SPCA of Monterey County
Suffolk M-0383	\$20,000	Best Friends Animal Society
Suffolk M-0382	\$20,000	Best Friends Animal Society
Suffolk M-0384	\$20,000	Best Friends Animal Society
Suffolk F-0831	\$5,000	RAL
Suffolk M-0380	\$5,000	RAL
Sussex #2601	\$5,000	RAL
Sussex #2614	\$5,000	Recycled Love, Inc.
Sussex #2620	\$20,000	Best Friends Animal Society
Sussex #2606	\$5,000	BAD RAP
Sussex #2611	\$5,000	Best Friends Animal Society
Sussex #2603	\$20,000	Recycled Love, Inc.
Sussex #2615	\$20,000	Best Friends Animal Society
Sussex #2613	\$5,000	SPCA of Monterey County
Sussex #2608	\$20,000	Georgia S.P.C.A.

Sussex #2612	\$20,000	Best Friends Animal Society
Sussex #2604	\$5,000	BAD RAP
Sussex #2605	\$20,000	Best Friends Animal Society
Sussex #2607	\$20,000	Best Friends Animal Society
Sussex #2602	\$20,000	Recycled Love, Inc.
Sussex #2619	\$20,000	BAD RAP
Sussex #2616	\$20,000	Best Friends Animal Society
Sussex #2609	\$20,000	Best Friends Animal Society

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA

Richmond Division

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,)	
)	
Plaintiff)	
)	
v.)	Civil Action No.: 3:07CV397
)	
APPROXIMATELY 53 PIT BULLDOGS,)	
)	
Defendant.)	

ORDER

The United States has filed a Motion for Order as to Final Disposition accompanied by a report of the court appointed guardian/special master, Professor Rebecca J. Huss. Having considered the motion and Professor Huss' report and recommendations, and deeming it proper so to do, it is hereby ORDERED, pursuant to 7 U.S.C. §2156(f):

1. As the Court is satisfied that an appropriate investigation has been made of the permanent placement options for the forfeited pitbulls, the summary report of the guardian/special master is hereby ADOPTED by the Court.

2. The United States Department of Agriculture is hereby AUTHORIZED to enter into agreements with the animal rescue organizations identified in the guardian/special master's report and recommendation for the permanent placement of the forfeited dogs on such terms as the Department of Agriculture deems appropriate.

Let the Clerk send five certified copies of this order to counsel for the United States.

[donate & shop](#)



Five Years Post-Rescue - The Vick Dogs at Home

So much has happened since this group of ten left their kennels in Virginia in October 2007. This webpage offers a brief update on where they are now and the work they do to remind people that dogs are individuals who deserve to be treated with compassion. Updated November, 2012.

An important read: [Five Years Later: Has the Cruelty Ended?](http://badrap-blog.blogspot.com/2012/04/vick-dogs-five-years-post-seizure-has.html) (<http://badrap-blog.blogspot.com/2012/04/vick-dogs-five-years-post-seizure-has.html>)

Photo: Seven of the dogs who started their lives in California gathered with their adopters for this photo. Don't miss this humorous [VIDEO](https://vimeo.com/52493758) (<https://vimeo.com/52493758>) of the photographer working to bring this group together for the shot.



The Dogs

AUDIE

Canine Good Citizen (CGC), Excellent A Preferred Standard Title in Agility

Shy and insecure when he first arrived, Audie had two bad knees and was very timid in strange places and around new people. Adopter Linda Chwistek knew in her gut that he could be an agility star - a skill that would require sound knees as well as a good dose of bravado. But how would they do the impossible?



Five years and a lot of work later, Audie's knees have been rebuilt and he's so well-practiced that he's now a true contender in agility circles, finishing his Excellent A Preferred Standard Title in Summer 2012. His story inspired the favorite children's book "[Saving Audie](http://badrap-blog.blogspot.com/2011/05/lessons-avent-and-lesson-plans-for.html) (<http://badrap-blog.blogspot.com/2011/05/lessons-avent-and-lesson-plans-for.html>)," that describes his

life's journey and lessons of rescue, recovery and second chances. This [facebook page](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Audies-Journey/117776308273799?ref=ls) (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Audies-Journey/117776308273799?ref=ls>), managed by Saving Audie author Dorothy Hinshaw Patent, posts up to date photos of Audie's life today.

When he's not adding to his ribbon collection, Audie is goofing with his housemate dogs Aldo and Ruby in his home in Vallejo CA, and always enjoying his life as a cherished family companion. You've come a long way, baby!



HECTOR

CGC, ATTS, Therapy Dog and Breed PR Maverick

Hector wears his past on his sleeve in the form of terrible scarring, but despite this evidence of obvious abuse, he's been one of the most well-adjusted dogs from the case. He was friendly and comfortable with all people and dogs from the moment we met him and was greeting the press and its prying cameras with his classic laissez faire attitude just a few short weeks after his rescue, starting with this landmark news story in the [Associated Press](http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/files/specials/interactives/national/rescued_dogs/index.html?SITE=NVREN&SECTION=HOME)

(http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/files/specials/interactives/national/rescued_dogs/index.html?SITE=NVREN&SECTION=HOME). (Right: Hector was photographed for Melissa McDaniel's [Photo Book](http://www.amazon.com/Bulls-Bull-Type-Photo-Projects/dp/0984590323/ref=ia_B005GXLJL0_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1349415000&sr=1-1) (http://www.amazon.com/Bulls-Bull-Type-Photo-Projects/dp/0984590323/ref=ia_B005GXLJL0_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1349415000&sr=1-1) series.)

He was adopted to Roo and Clara Yori in Minnesota and has been one of the most active Vick dogs in terms of public education about pit bulls and canine victims of cruelty. Here's Hector doing what he does best: [classroom education](http://link.brightcove.com/services/player/bcpid350364910017?bid=58619653001). (<http://link.brightcove.com/services/player/bcpid350364910017?bid=58619653001>)

From Hector's own [website](http://www.hectorthebull.com/) (<http://www.hectorthebull.com/>): "He has since passed the AKC Canine Good Citizen test multiple times. He passed the ATTS Temperament Test, and can visit hospitals, nursing homes, and libraries as a Certified Therapy Dog. Hector has also done a lot of work in elementary schools teaching children compassion toward animals and how to safely act around dogs. Hector's work earned him a humane education award presented through Brooklyn Law School. His story has been highlighted in both local and national media outlets, including but not limited to, CBS Early Show, Good Day NY, People Magazine, E! Entertainment News, Entertainment Weekly and NPR's Fresh Air."



UBA

CGC, NW1 (K9 Nosework Title), Mentor for BADRAP's foster dogs

Originally shy and timid when he arrived from Virginia, Uba continues to blossom thanks to adopter Letti de Little who constantly reminds him that Life is good now. He was first photographed in the New York Time along with an unfortunate headline: [Menacing dogs from Vick case await their fate](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/01/sports/football/01vick.html?_r=0) (http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/01/sports/football/01vick.html?_r=0), a media bias that quickly faded when his at-home photos finally surfaced. Uba was introduced to the world through photos of him napping with his cats and sister dog Lulu in a photo spread published by the [Associated Press](http://www.vickdogblog.blogspot.com/)



(http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/files/specials/interactives/national/rescued_dogs/index.html?SITE=NVREN&SECTION=HOME). The [East Bay Monthly](http://www.themonthly.com/up-front-08-08.html) (<http://www.themonthly.com/up-front-08-08.html>) made good use of similar images in a favorite early article. He has since graced numerous news stories, photo essays and television reports with news and updates of his recovery, including this [PBS](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F3y6v2G97pg) (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F3y6v2G97pg>) Show 'The Dogs Are Alright.' He's a regular contributor to the [Vick Dog Blog](http://www.vickdogblog.blogspot.com/) (<http://www.vickdogblog.blogspot.com/>).

Uba lives a charmed life in Oakland, CA where he keeps his busy mind occupied with canine nosework trials and play sessions with a rotating crew of BADRAP foster dogs. He was recently photographed for Melissa McDaniel's [Photo Book](http://www.amazon.com/Bulls-Bull-Type-Photo-Projects/dp/0984590323/ref=ia_B005GXLJL0_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1349415000&sr=1-1) (http://www.amazon.com/Bulls-Bull-Type-Photo-Projects/dp/0984590323/ref=ia_B005GXLJL0_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1349415000&sr=1-1) series (photo, right)

GRACE

CGC, Pet Partners Therapy Dog Title

The tiny sized Grace made an appearance in **Sports Illustrated** (http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/2008/magazine/12/22/vick_dogs/) Magazine and later in the book **Lost Dogs** (<http://badrap-blog.blogspot.com/2010/08/jim-gorant-lost-dogs-our-review.html>), but for the most part has enjoyed living life with her family as "a normal dog" just one step outside of the limelight. Even so, some people still recognize her on the street during her walks.

She earned her CGC certificate once with her foster dad and then again with her adopter. She's now serving as a therapy dog through the prestigious Delta Society's Pet Partners program and visits hospitals where her favorite activity is curling up at the feet of the bed with patients who request a visit.

Her family updates Grace's adventures for her fans on the **Vick Dog Blog** (<http://vickdogsblog.blogspot.com/>). *Photo: Mark Rogers Photography*

**JONNY JUSTICE**

CGC, ATTS, Reading Assistant /Therapy Dog, Media Darling, GUND Doll Model

With his clownish personality, Jonny has shown up in numerous news pieces and photo essays over the years, including the **Rachael Ray Show** (<http://loop7.com/badrap/rescue/video/vick/index.html>), **PBS** (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F3y6v2G97pg>), **S** (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F3y6v2G97pg>) how 'The Dogs Are Alright,' the **CBS Early Morning Show** (<http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch?id=6884146n>), Carol Guzy's WA Post **photo essay** (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/photo/galleries/vickdogs/>), the Associated Press **photo essay**



(http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/files/specials/interactives/national/rescued_dogs/index.html?SITE=NVREN&SECTION=HOME), Melissa McDaniel's **Photo Book** (<http://blog.melissa-mcdaniel.com/blog/2012/04/inspirational-dogs-from-the-photo-books-pit-bull-jonny-justice.html>), series (right), and even the cover of **Parade Magazine** (<http://www.parade.com/celebrity/personality-parade/2011/08/21/michael-vick.html>). His adopters Cris Cohen and Jennifer Long described his recovery in detail in Jim Gorant's book **The Lost Dogs** (<http://badrap-blog.blogspot.com/2010/08/jim-gorant-lost-dogs-our-review.html>), and have always made sure he has a new trick to show off for the cameras during his appearances.

Jonny earned his Canine Good Citizen certification, then passed his American Temperament Test exam (ATTS) and went on to become a Reading Assistant dog, settling down next to children to encourage them to read out loud. He's currently bring joy to families at the **Family House** (http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10150995230067399&set=pb.21784607398.-2207520000_1349140013&type=1&theater) in San Francisco - a project that houses families whose children are being treated for severe illness at a nearby hospital.

Coming Soon! This San Francisco resident was recently selected to be the face of a new stuffed toy developed by celebrated toy manufacturer **GUND Toys**. (<http://www.sfgate.com/business/prweb/article/GUND-Announces-Top-Dog-Winner-Jonny-Justice-3818397.php>). It's expected to be out in 2013, and promises to give children everywhere their very own Jonny to cuddle.

ERNIE

Canine Good Citizen

Ernie appeared in several media stories including a photo spread by the **Associated Press** (http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/files/specials/interactives/national/rescued_dogs/index.html?SITE=NVREN&SECTION=HOME) and with his family in **Sports Illustrated Magazine** (http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/2008/magazine/12/22/vick_dogs/), and again in **The Lost Dogs** (<http://www.amazon.com/dp/1592405509?tag=badraporg->



[20&camp=14573&creative=327641&linkCode=as1&creativeASIN=1592405509&adid=0VC93P69T0415N2HDRXB&ref=refURL=http%3A%2F%2Fbadrap-blog.blogspot.com%2F2010%2F08%2Fjim-gorant-lost-dogs-our-review.html](http://www.amazon.com/dp/1592405509?tag=badraporg-)

After satisfying his fifteen minutes of fame, shining up his leash skills and earning his Canine Good Citizen certification, Ernie road off in the sunset to live a quite off-the-radar life with his favorite person, Sasha Gibbs. He enjoys a sister dog and all the comforts of home.

Like so many of the Vick dog adopters, Ernie's person is content to have a "dog" instead of a "Vick dog." We can relate!

ZIPPY*The Fabulous Family Dog!*

Zippy first made herself famous in this [Sports Illustrated](http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/2008/magazine/12/22/vick_dogs/) photo, surrounded by kids in her home. Pre-teens Eliana and Vanessa helped mom take care of Zippy at the time in addition to new arrival baby Francisco. Since then, new sibling Tatiana arrived on the scene and the family grew yet again. What a busy household! She loves every bit of the commotion and fun that the kids bring to the home. Zippy also earned fame by peeing on the shoes of 'Lost Dogs' author Jim Gorant when he went to the house to meet the energetic girl for his book, [The Lost Dogs](http://www.amazon.com/dp/1592405509?tag=badraporg-) (http://www.amazon.com/dp/1592405509?tag=badraporg-).



20&camp=14573&creative=327641&linkCode=as1&creativeASIN=1592405509&adid=0VC93P69T0415N2HDRXB&&ref-refURL=http%3A%2F%2Fbadrap-blog.blogspot.com%2F2010%2F08%2Fjim-gorant-lost-dogs-our-review.html. And later, when she entertained Washington Post editor Carol Guzy during a now famous series of [at-home photos](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/photo/galleries/vickdogs/) (http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/photo/galleries/vickdogs/).

That's the life of Zippy. Never boring, always full of some kind of excitement including the many voices of the friends and family who come by to celebrate life. She wouldn't have it any other way.

TEDDLES*Canine Good Citizen, Foster dog mentor*

Teddles was named by the two year old boy who lived in the foster home that first gave him a safe haven when he landed in CA. He was once so afraid of loud noises including gunfire that he was unable to pass the CGC exam until he learned to ignore the loud trains that rumbled by the training grounds. [Best Friends](http://network.bestfriends.org/5749/news.aspx) (http://network.bestfriends.org/5749/news.aspx) reported his progress. Once he passed that hurdle, it seemed he was well into his recovery. His progress was noted in several news and media outlets, including Carol Guzy's celebrated [photo spread](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/photo/galleries/vickdogs/) (http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/photo/galleries/vickdogs/) in the Washington Post and [Sports Illustrated](http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/2008/magazine/12/22/vick_dogs/) (http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/2008/magazine/12/22/vick_dogs/).



This sensitive boy now lives as a family companion in a home in Livermore, CA with three adults and a dog Lizzy. He was recently photographed for Melissa MacDaniel's [Photo Book](http://blog.melissa-mcdaniel.com/blog/2012/03/inspirational-dogs-from-the-photo-books-teddles.html) (http://blog.melissa-mcdaniel.com/blog/2012/03/inspirational-dogs-from-the-photo-books-teddles.html) (photo, right). He still enjoys making guest appearances for educational events and he serves as a foster brother and ever-enthusiastic play buddy to BADRAP orphans who come to stay. We all love the Ted Man.

FRODO*Cherished family companion*

Frodo doesn't wear any fancy titles, but he's probably one of the most accomplished Vick dogs of all, considering how shut down he was when we first met him in Virginia. He was once so timid that he couldn't look his caretakers in the eye, much less take treats out of their hands but he has since blossomed into a cheerful dog who prods his favorite humans for attention. He lives with a sister dog in Fremont, CA and loves all the dog favorite staples: Going for rides in the car, doing fast zoomies in his yard, sneaking up on the bed for cuddles with his adopter, Kim Ramirez.

Frodo showed his tender side in the PBS Show: [The Dogs Are Alright](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F3y6v2G97pg) (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F3y6v2G97pg). He was photographed for the [Sports Illustrated](http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/2008/magazine/12/22/vick_dogs/) (http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/2008/magazine/12/22/vick_dogs/) article and again in the Lost Dogs. For such an unassuming little guy, he's been quite a spokesdog for shy dogs everywhere.

**IGGY***Cherished family companion*

Like Frodo, Iggy was utterly terrified when he arrived in California although his progress has not been as encouraging. To this day, despite several years of living a stable environment and receiving gentle coaching and socialization, he is unable to approach strangers or leave his home for walks or car rides due to extreme fear issues. Caretaker Nicole showed the media what his fear looked like in local news reports ([LINK](#))

Securing the future of the American Pit Bull Terrier as a cherished family companion.

(<http://www.10news.com/news/local-women-asks-vick-to-visit-dog-he-once-owned>.) back in 2009. His story was recorded in [Parade Magazine](http://www.parade.com/news/2010/08/15-can-you-teach-a-bad-dog-new-tricks.html). (<http://www.parade.com/news/2010/08/15-can-you-teach-a-bad-dog-new-tricks.html>)

Despite his traumas, he's been able to enjoy a simple life in San Diego that embraces routine, companionship and the most basic of pleasures. Iggy reminds us of the damage that can come from a life of cruelty and neglect. He also demonstrates that dogs are individuals, whose response to trauma will differ depending on the personality he or she is born with. Finally, Iggy's story reminds us that despite the ugly side of humankind, there are people like Nicole who refuse to give up on even the most broken of dogs.



News and updates from some of the other Vick dogs...

From shy girl to canine public figure, [Ginger's facebook page](http://www.facebook.com/SweetGingerGirl?ref=ts) (<http://www.facebook.com/SweetGingerGirl?ref=ts>) tells all.

Jhumpa Jones made an appearance on the Anderson Cooper show ([Here](http://www.facebook.com/video/video.php?v=2979695179253) (<http://www.facebook.com/video/video.php?v=2979695179253>)) then went on to become a therapy dog. Her [facebook page](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Jhumpa-Jones/153446921363926?ref=ts) (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Jhumpa-Jones/153446921363926?ref=ts>) posts regular updates.

Like Ginger, **Stella and Red** found homes with staff at the SPCA for Monterey County. Red died of cancer in 2010 after helping numerous dogs learn play manners. This [video](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=oFVBnnHyP1E) (http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=oFVBnnHyP1E) shows them both enjoying each other during happy times.

One of the most heavily abused dogs from the case - **Georgia** (<http://blogs.bestfriends.org/index.php/2012/02/10/victory-dog-georgia-adopted/>) - went home in February 2012, and **Oscar** (<http://news.bestfriends.org/index.cfm?page=news&mode=entry&entry=D1AF1C93-088C-813F-151880A166379DEC>) went home just a few weeks later and started enjoying plays sessions with now-adopted **Mel** (http://www.facebook.com/LittleEngines/posts/117596438394841?comment_id=74537&offset=0&total_comments=8), from the same case. **Piper** (<http://whatapittle.org/Piper.html>) was adopted and went on to become a therapy dog. So did **Leo** (<http://www.care2.com/causes/leo-former-michael-vick-dog-dies-slides.html>), who later died of a seizure disorder in winter 2011. **Handsome Dan** (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Handsome-Dan/159115694129875?ref=ts&ref=ts>) and **Sweet Jasmine** (<http://www.facebook.com/JHRescue?ref=ts>) both inspired their adopters to start rescue groups. Jasmine also graces the cover of *The Lost Dogs*. She died after being struck by a car in the summer of 2009. **Sweet Pea** (http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/multimedia/photo_gallery/0812/nfl_michael_vicks_dogs/content.5.html) was highlighted in *Sports Illustrated* with her adopter. **Cherry Garcia** (<http://www.facebook.com/Victory4cherry?ref=ts>) was adopted to a new family from Best Friends Animal Sanctuary. **Halle** (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Halle-and-Friends/215912261824372>) has a new family as well as her own facebook page.

Aubrie Kavanaugh

From: Ledy Vankavage [ledyv@bestfriends.org]
Sent: Tuesday, January 14, 2014 10:29 AM
To: Aubrie Kavanaugh
Subject: Fwd: Victory Dogs
Attachments: 01-09-14 VICTORY DOGS UPDATE.docx

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Barbara Williamson** <barbara@bestfriends.org>
Date: Tue, Jan 14, 2014 at 10:28 AM
Subject: Re: Victory Dogs
To: Ledy Vankavage <ledyv@bestfriends.org>

as it so happens Lezlie Sage just had a phone call last week from someone else asking the same question... so here you go and see attached document:

SEVEN (7) ARE CURRENTLY AT THE SANCTUARY

Lance
Tug
Mya
Curly
Meryl
Denzel
Willie

TEN (10) ARE LIVING WITH FAMILIES, OF THAT TEN THERE ARE NINE (9) ADOPTED AND ONE (1) IN FOSTER-TO-ADOPT

... there was a total of TWELVE (12) adopted, but two (2)* of them have died in their homes Oliver (from cancer) and Georgia (from complications of kidney disease and old age)

CURRENT ADOPTED LIST

Oscar
Squeaker
Mel
Little Red
Halle
Cherry
Shadow
Handsome Dan
Layla

FOSTER

**Ray is in the mandatory "foster-to-adopt" phase required by the courts and his adoption is scheduled to finalized Feb. 14, 2014

FIVE (5) PASSED AWAY -- THREE AT THE SANCTUARY AND TWO IN THEIR HOMES

Bonita at the sanctuary -- February 2009
Ellen at the sanctuary -- June 2012
Lucas at the sanctuary -- June 2013
*Oliver (adopted, died at home) February 2013
*Georgia (adopted, died at home) December 2013

On Tue, Jan 14, 2014 at 8:40 AM, Ledy Vankavage <ledyv@bestfriends.org> wrote:

hey is there any update you could forward to Aubrie?

Many thanks!

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Aubrie Kavanaugh** <AKavanaugh@lanierford.com>

Date: Tue, Jan 14, 2014 at 8:59 AM

Subject: Victory Dogs

To: Ledy Vankavage <ledyv@bestfriends.org>

Good morning, my dear juris. I'm still working on revising my research paper and wondered – is there a fairly recent story or link that has a status update for the 22 dogs Best Friends took as a result of the Vick case? I know that Lucas and Georgia passed away last year. I was hoping for some update which would help me understand how many are in homes (adopted v. foster) and how many remain at the sanctuary. I'm pretty sure Judge Hudson ordered 2 dogs to remain in Kanab for the rest of their lives and Lucas was one of those. I could search around on this but am looking for a short update if you know of one.

One of my earliest contacts in my advocacy was Tami Ci Thayne whose nonprofit now owns the Vick property. She is not entirely welcome there in Virginia but she is one tough cookie and I have a great deal of respect for her.

Aubrie

--
Ledy VanKavage, Esq.
Sr. Legislative Attorney
Best Friends Animal Society
PO Box 313
Maryville, IL 62062
618-550-9469 CELL
866-617-4798 FAX

All dogs are individuals. Together, we can Save Them All™.

--
Barbara Williamson
Media Relations Manager
Best Friends Animal Society
(35) 644-2001, ext. 4408 (office)
(435) 689-0200 (cell)
barbara@bestfriends.org



About Best Friends Animal Society®:

Best Friends Animal Society is the only national animal welfare organization focused exclusively on ending the killing of dogs and cats in America's shelters. An authority and leader in the no-kill movement since its founding in 1984, Best Friends runs the nation's largest no-kill sanctuary for companion animals, as well as life-saving programs in partnership with rescue groups and shelters across the country. Since its founding, Best Friends has helped reduce the number of animals killed in shelters from 17 million per year to 4 million. Best Friends has the knowledge, technical expertise and on-the-ground network to end the killing and Save Them All™.

>^..^< >^..^< >^..^< >^..^< >^..^< >^..^< >^..^< >^..^< >^..^< >^..^<

--
Ledy VanKavage, Esq.
Sr. Legislative Attorney
Best Friends Animal Society
PO Box 313
Maryville, IL 62062
618-550-9469 CELL
866-617-4798 FAX

All dogs are individuals. Together, we can Save Them All™.

MEET THE VICTORY DOGS/BEST FRIENDS ANIMAL SOCIETY
Updated August 26, 2013

AT THE SANCTUARY

LANCE

Lance lives in the adoption office. He not only spends the day with Kristi Littrell, the adoption manager, but also with several other dogs and a cat who lives in or visits her office. He is good with dogs of all sizes and cats. He attends meetings and the weekly shy dog classes to help him overcome his shyness around new people. One of his very favorite activities is going for car rides. He is working towards his Canine Good Citizenship because he has a family waiting to adopt him once he passes.



TUG

Tug's name fits him. He loves to pull on a lead so the staff has been working with him to have better leash manners. We've worked with Tug and but feel he would prefer to be an only dog. Tug thinks he is a lap dog. If you sit in his run with him, he gets so excited that he gets the "zoomies" and then jumps into your lap (all 75 lbs of him). He loves going for golf cart rides, and is very affectionate with his caregivers.



MYA

Mya lives in the Dogtown Management office with Curly, another Victory dog. She was very shy when she first arrived and would sometimes try to "scare" new people away by barking at them. She is working towards her Canine Good Citizenship certification. Mya loves to be praised and we have been using this as well as treats to help her learn that new people are a good thing (not scary). She now greets most people at the door with a smile and a tail wag. She has made so much progress overcoming her fears of strangers she now acts as a good role model for Curly. Mya is so good with other dogs that she has a new job socializing some of our puppies. She spends time with the puppies giving them an opportunity to meet adult dogs. Mya is also friendly with cats.



Curly

Curly is living in the Dogtown Management office with Mya. He is learning to be calm in this type of environment; when he gets too excited, he goes into his crate to settle. He does tend to have some fear issues which we are working on as well. He tries to help us with our paperwork by taking it off of our desks and shredding it. We now keep emergency cardboard boxes on hand so that he has something more appropriate to shred. Curly does love it when people (that he knows) sit on the floor with him or pick him up and put him in their lap for cuddle time. He goes for daily walks, outings and also has outdoor time with Mya. He also loves to go for car rides.



MERYL

Meryl is court-ordered to remain at the sanctuary for life. She gets along with most other dogs and is currently living with one other dog. Meryl also gets along with cats. She loves many staff with abandon. Meryl was filmed for the "Behind the Scenes" webcast, which she especially enjoyed because the videographer is one of her favorite people!



DENZEL

Denzel's caregivers work regularly with him on basic training and tricks. He is a quick learner and knows how to wave, go to his "place" and he can target your hand. These are only a few things he has learned. He loves playing with his giant ball and has even learned to balance it on his nose. Although Denzel cannot have regular dog beds or blankets (because he will shred them and ingest fabric) the caregivers have found other ways to spoil him.



WILLIE

Willie lives in an area where he also has a large inside area and a big yard to run around in. He gets new toys on a regular basis. We are working on helping him overcome his fears by taking him out on regular walks in Dogtown and by keeping his routine as consistent as possible. He is getting more comfortable with the outdoor elements so is able to go for walks in any temperature. (He used to be very sensitive and didn't want to go out if it was too hot outside or too cold.) Willie is also enjoying the company of two new caregiver friends.



ADOPTED, or in FOSTER TO ADOPT

OSCAR Adopted! 😊

Oscar was somewhat of a wallflower when he arrived, and suffered from some medical issues. After months of one-on-one training, **he was the first of the Victory dogs to earn his Canine Good Citizen certification**, and came out of his shell. Oscar lived at Parrot Garden where the parrot staff volunteered to be part of Team Oscar and help him get ready for adoption by giving him special one-on-one attention and helping the trainers develop his social skills. He went through the CGC testing again and passed with flying colors and now he is home.



Squeaker ADOPTED 😊

Squeaker was friendly to people when she arrived, but very reactive toward other dogs. By gradually introducing her to other dogs, Squeaker learned to like some dogs. She lived with Oscar, another Victory dog, before going to her foster to adopt home. **She passed her Canine Good Citizen test.** Squeaker is currently living in a home and getting monitored interaction with other dogs. Her new



foster mom just bought her a crystal bling collar and leash (like the one Georgia wore on the Ellen show).

Mel ADOPTED 😊

Mel lived with one of his caregivers, and came to the sanctuary every day to hang out with other dogs. Mel was extremely fearful and would bark defensively at his caregivers initially. Mel loved playing with and being with other dogs, though, so his caregivers used other dogs to help get Mel socialized with people. Now Mel is in his forever home, and has a doggy companion as well. (dog and cat friendly)



Little Red Adopted 😊

Little Red recently went to a family “foster-to-adopt” who plan to adopt her at the end of the foster period. She was a “kitchen dog” at the area called Old Town Hall & Hermosa’s. Kitchen dogs live in the center and kitchen area of the octagon and have access to a small fenced yard. Little Red is very charming and smiles at people. Little Red can be a bit shy, so she attended Wallflower classes at the sanctuary and blossomed into one of the friendliest dogs in class. To further help with her socialization Little Red spent time in one of the offices two times a week and **earned her Canine Good Citizen certificate** before going to her foster home.



Cherry ADOPTED 😊

Cherry was very fearful and shut down, refusing to walk on a leash upon arrival. Cherry lived in the Dogtown manager’s office with Mya, whom he played with when no one was looking. And he walked like a charm on a leash. Cherry is in his forever home, where he lives with another dog, a cat, and even goes to doggy daycare! Dogtown gets extensive updates every week from his family on Cherry’s new antics for the week. Cherry has his own Facebook page and was a celebrity guest at Best Friends’ Strut Your Mutt event in New York City.



Halle ADOPTED 😊

Halle was very fearful of people when she first arrived. She became the dog her caregivers used to introduce to other dogs and bring them out of their shells, and was our first dog to be fostered in a home and now she is “all the way home.” **Halle was the first Victory Dog to be adopted.** She has earned her CGC. She and her doggy housemate (also a pit bull) came for a visit to Best Friends in this year.



Shadow ADOPTED 😊

Shadow was in a foster home with a Dogtown caregiver, and lived with other dogs and cats. He came to us very shy and afraid of new situations, which is why we felt he would really benefit from a foster home. He has made so much progress and become so much more confident in his foster home that he went to a family and was adopted.



Handsome Dan ADOPTED 😊

Handsome Dan was shy and fearful of walking on leash when he arrived. Now Handsome Dan has been adopted and meets new dogs every day, as his person runs a dog-outing business. His family recently had a baby, and Handsome Dan is a great family dog. Handsome Dan's family and Cherry's family have gotten in touch with each other and given the two dogs play dates, as Handsome and Cherry were friends at Best Friends.



LAYLA ADOPTED 😊

She loves people and enjoys cuddling. Once Oscar left, Layla became the new Parrot Garden office dog and just like Oscar and Squeaker, Layla's time with the caregivers who tend to the birds was exactly what she needed to become ready to go into a home. She is a little nervous in new situations, but overcoming that. She recently passed her Canine Good Citizenship test. Layla is now in a home in the "foster to adopt" phase required before any Vicktory Dog adoption can be finalized.



RAY in Foster to Adopt (Adoption scheduled to be finalized Feb. 14, 2014)

Ray was the fourth Vicktory Dog to get special one-on-one time as office dog/mascot in the Parrot Garden. His three predecessors: Oscar, Squeaker and Layla are all now in homes and we hope Ray's time in the Parrot Garden will be the special boost he needs to be ready to live with a family. He receives regular training to pass his Canine Good Citizenship. He is a little afraid of men, but has had male caregivers helping him get over that. Ray gets so excited when he is going for a walk he is learning to act politely to get taken out. He is not afraid of cameras, and enjoys getting his photo taken. He is not able to live with other dogs but has learned to be calm around other dogs. He has learned to focus on his caregivers even in the presence of other dogs



OVER THE RAINBOW BRIDGE

Georgia Adopted 😊

Georgia was very food aggressive toward people when she arrived. Staff handled her regularly, and taught her basic manners, and had not seen any more aggressiveness over resources. Georgia was known as Best Friends' jet-setting diva, famous for her Swarovski crystal, "Barbie pink," collar and having made live appearance on the Ellen DeGeneres Show, Larry King Live, and appearing before the television critics in Hollywood. Georgia craved attention from everyone she met. She attended Reactive Dog classes at the sanctuary to help prepare her to pass her Canine Good Citizen certification and she **passed her Canine Good Citizen test**. She loved carrying large stuffed toys around with her and giving her favorite people special Georgia kisses. Georgia was a very happy girl in her home as an only pet and enjoys lounging on her pink couch. She passed away in her home in December 2013 from complications of kidney disease and old age, surrounded by love.



Oliver ADOPTED 😊

Oliver had no basic manners when he arrived. Oliver learned to sit, down, stay, come, loose leash walk, and play with other dogs, though he still got so excited that he often jumped up and grabbed caregivers' clothes. Oliver was fostered by a Dogtown caregiver for several months before going to his forever home. Oliver was dog and cat friendly. He lived with another dog in his home, and was referred to as the family's "baby." Oliver also passed his Canine Good Citizenship. In February 2013 Oliver passed away in the arms of his adopter after battling cancer.



Ellen

Ellen was friendly with people from the moment she arrived at Best Friends. She loved her food puzzles, belly rubs and car rides. She thrived under the love and care she received at Best Friends, and became a charming ambassador for pit-bull-type dogs everywhere. But sadly some unknown disease was causing weight loss and muscle loss, as well as preventing her stomach from emptying. Despite a barrage of tests, the medical team couldn't determine the source of the problems. Her quality of life was no longer at an acceptable level. We had to say goodbye to Ellen in June 2012.



Bonita

Bonita may have only lived at Best Friends for a little over a year, but she packed a whole lot of living into such a short time. She was withdrawn and shy when she first came to Best Friends. But she wanted affection so badly she was willing to take a chance and in time became a love-crazy lap dog. She thrived on learning good dog manners and tricks, including her specialty, "The Wave." Suffering from a disease common among dogs forced to fight, babesia, she had several medical issues. Bonita passed away in February 2009 from anesthesia complications during a dental surgery.



Lucas

Lucas lived at Angel's Lodges where he lounged on his dog beds and played in his large yard. Visitors loved to sit and read to Lucas, take him for walks and just spend time with him. He seemed to enjoy having company when he ate, so this was a popular volunteer activity. He visited the administrative and executive offices every week where he got additional one-on-one time. He always had a big smile on his face for people. We said good-bye to Lucas June 20, 2013 after a long battle with babesia and a host of other medical complications.





DOGTOWN

[Explore the Sanctuary](#) | [Visiting](#) | [How the Sanctuary Works](#) |

- [Sanctuary Map](#)
- [Dogtown](#)
 - [Vicktory Dogs](#)
 - [DogTown Series](#)
- [Cat World](#)
- [Horse Haven](#)
- [Marshall's Piggy Paradise](#)
- [Bunny House](#)
- [Parrot Garden](#)
- [Wild Friends](#)
- [Angels Rest](#)

Home > The Sanctuary > Explore The Sanctuary > Vicktory Dogs

Vicktory Dogs



The Vicktory Dogs

It's the stuff that legends are made of.

These dogs have proved that there's no such thing as "too damaged." That there's no such thing as "beyond hope." And that no dog is inherently vicious, no matter her breed or background.

These are the dogs who were rescued from the property of NFL star Michael Vick. They'd been used and abused - some as fighters, some as bait. And when they were confiscated, they were in danger of being killed. Even some animal welfare groups argued that these dogs were too traumatized and had been made too vicious to live.

But Best Friends was among those who fought for these dogs' lives. And in the end, their lives were spared, and 22 of the most traumatized came here, to Best Friends Animal Sanctuary, where the quest to rehabilitate them began.

It wasn't easy. Some of these dogs would flatten themselves like pancakes to avoid being noticed by people. Some would threaten. And some needed medical attention. But like all of the 1,700 or so homeless pets who take refuge here at the Sanctuary on any given day, they received every bit of training, veterinary care, compassion, and in-depth emotional healing that they were so desperately in need of.

Today, they are called the Vicktory dogs, and with good reason. Many are now in loving homes, starting new lives as beloved family members. Some have been on TV, wowing audiences with their excellent behavior and kind, loving eyes. And a few were court-ordered to remain at Best Friends for life. But they too are healing and blossoming, and

Vicktory Dog links



Videos and Resources

- [Vicktory Dog video gallery](#)
- [Pit bulls and perception](#)

will enjoy a life of spacious beauty among the red rock canyons, their painful ordeals forever behind them. They are all Victorious.

EY ' ORE BEST FRIENDS

Follow us on:



[Our No Kill Mission >](#) [Sanctuary Map >](#) [Local Programs >](#)

OUR NO KILL MISSION

WHAT WE DO

Our Work

[Save Them All](#) | [Initiatives](#) | [Adoptions](#) | [Pet Spay & Neuter](#)

Events

[Upcoming Events and Promotions](#) | [Pet Super Adoptions](#) | [Workshops](#) | [Host an Event](#) | [Strut Your Mutt](#) | [Best Friends National Conference](#)

Network Partners

Local Programs

[Best Friends - Utah](#) | [Best Friends - New York](#) | [Best Friends - L.A.](#) | [Model Programs](#)

GET INVOLVED

Donate

[Donate Now](#) | [Monthly Giving](#) | [Sponsor an Animal](#) | [Golden Circle Society](#) | [Give a Tribute Gift](#) | [Create a Fundraiser](#) | [Planned Giving](#) | [Workplace Giving](#) | [Wish List](#) | [Other Ways to Give](#)

Volunteer

[At the Sanctuary \(Kanab\)](#) | [Across the Country](#) | [Featured Opportunities](#) | [Search Opportunities](#) | [Log In to Volunteer](#)

Become a Guardian Angel

[Guardian Angel Home](#) | [About Guardian Angel](#) | [Become a Guardian Angel](#) | [View All Current Animals](#) | [View Guardian Angel Alumni](#)

Action Alert Sign Up

Connect with Us

THE SANCTUARY

Explore the Sanctuary

[Sanctuary Map](#) | [Dogtown](#) | [Cat World](#) | [Horse Haven](#) | [Marshall's Piggy Paradise](#) | [Bunny House](#) | [Parrot Garden](#) | [Wild Friends](#) | [Angels Rest](#)

Visiting

[Travel Advisory 2014](#) | [Tours](#) | [Directions & Parking](#) | [Places to Stay](#) | [Things to Do](#) | [Sleepovers](#) | [Outings](#)

How the Sanctuary Works

[Information & Admission Policies](#) | [Behind the Scenes](#)

ADOPT A PET

Sanctuary Animals

[All](#) | [Cat](#) | [Dog](#) | [Rabbit](#) | [Horse](#) | [Pig](#) | [Birds](#) | [Small & Furry](#) | [Barnyard](#) | [Adoption Promotion](#)

Best Friends-Utah

Best Friends-L.A.

Near You

How to Adopt

Adoption Promotion

Recently Adopted



© 2012 Best Friends. All Rights Reserved - 5001 Angel Canyon Rd, Kanab, UT 84741

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms & Conditions](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Careers](#) | [Site Map](#) | [For the Media](#)

8

Get our issue, highlights, free stuff and more.

- [About Us](#)
- [Advertise](#)
- [Contact Us](#)

ORLANDO WEEKLY

FREE! NEWS. VIEWS. ARTS. ENTERTAINMENT. | ORLANDOWEEKLY.COM



Loading



- [Blogs](#)
- [News](#)
- [Arts+Culture](#)
- [Food+Drink](#)
- [Music](#)
- [Film](#)
- [Galleries](#)
- [Calendar](#)
- [Best of Orlando](#)
- [Jobs](#)
- [Classifieds](#)

[How-To Issue](#)[Annual Manual](#)[Bite](#)[College Guide](#)[Promotions](#)[Free Stuff](#)[1/2 Price Deals](#)[Restaurant Week](#)[Happy Hours](#)[Jobs](#)[Work Here](#)

Bloggytown

Orange County Animal Services says it will no longer label dogs by breed

February 5, 2014

By [Erin Sullivan](#)

Yesterday Orange County Animal Services announced that it will no longer be labeling the dogs that come into its facility according to breed. The decision comes after months of discussion about the shelter and its policies. Local animal advocates [have been attending the shelter's advisory board meetings](#) to demand change and make recommendations about how the shelter might improve its relationship with the public and animal rescues, and ultimately, its adoption rates. Some say the shelter's new policy gives dogs – particularly those mixed breeds who've been labeled pit bulls – a better chance at adoption. [As experts point out](#), breed labels issued at shelters are often wildly inaccurate – guesses by staff who don't really have anything to go on but the way a dog looks. As the [CDC](#), the [National Canine Research Council](#), the [ASPCA](#) and the [HSUS](#) have all pointed out, breed guessing is subjective and a breed label is not always the best indicator of a shelter dog's personality or behavior.

Related: [Advocates still calling for change at Orange County Animal Services](#)

From Orange County Animal Services' [Facebook page](#):

The world today is a richly diverse mix of humanity, and our shelter pets are no less intricate and distinctive. Each animal is unique, brimming with its own personality, preferences, and potential.

Orange County Animal Services receives approximately 20,000 pets every year. In an effort to afford every four-legged friend the greatest opportunity to find a forever home, Orange County Animal Services will remove breed identification from kennel cards and on our website at www.ocnetpets.com.

Our goal is to break down barriers associated with breed descriptions, leaving behind any division or stigma associated with breed classifications so that each pet can find a perfect match with a loving forever home. By allowing shelter pets to defy description, each pet can overcome any labels that might limit chances of adoption.

We hope this endeavor will boost adoption numbers for shelter pets. We want to be as effective as possible, and we welcome your feedback regarding this move.

No make fun of that bit about overcoming labels, but ... oh, what the hell ... dream big, dogs:



Thinking about adopting a dog? Check out this gallery of dogs currently available at [Orange County Animal Services](#):



Related posts:[A response to the guest column in today's Sentinel: Pit bull bans not the answer](#)[Orange County Animal Services accidentally puts dog to sleep ****Updated****](#)[Or **County Animal Services Advisory Board meeting is tonight**](#)[Dolly's Foundation offering **FREE spay/neuter for pit bulls**](#)Tags: [adoptable dogs](#), [animal control](#), [dog breeds](#), [OCAS](#), [Orange County Animal Services](#), [pit bulls](#)• *123tl78*

Awesome news.

• *Karen Batchelor*

Congratulations to Orange County Animal Services. Exit ignorance and discrimination, enter education and equity.

• *Cassandra*

It's about time! Especially when you see news stories about a "pit bull" being shot by police and it turns out to be a rott!

• *Wade Ramm*

Excellent decision!!! Thank you!!!

• *Mata*

Thank you Orange County Animal Services!

• *Kathy Pobloskie*

Thank you Orange County Animal Services. I hope that many other shelters around America follow your lead. This is a simple change that has the potential to save a lot of lives.

• *Branwen*

I don't think refusing to label pit bulls as pit bulls will have any impact on adoption rates. Over 60% of the dogs currently listed on the website are pit bulls and pit mixes. Several are listed as "aggressive toward other animals", one is listed as "food aggressive". Clearly, there is an issue with pit bull owners and breeders, so continue to produce dogs with dangerous temperaments, and abandon them in record numbers. Knowingly adopting out pit bulls with aggression issues won't help the shelter's reputation as a place to find a safe family pet. Laws regulating the breeding of pit bulls would solve the problem effectively, freeing up shelter space and resources that could be used to help more animals, and fund free spay/neuter campaigns.

• *123tl78*

You have to start somewhere. All sorts of dogs are mislabeled because of the attitude that you have to label dogs something. The majority of dogs in the shelter system are a Heinz 57 of some kind of indiscriminate breeding. You can guess all you want but you are guessing unless you have papers saying the dog is a purebred dog. The only breed of dog that has pit bull in its name is the American Pit Bull Terrier. A purebred dog. Each town and shelter system has a different idea of what they consider to be a pit bull which doesn't help the dogs at all and eventually the term gets overused and very confusing. The term pit bull has been overused for good and bad to either help these dogs or persecute them. The sooner we get away from labeling too many mixed breed dogs pit bull mix and something that is only guessed at, maybe the sooner the dogs will be looked at for their personalities instead of their label that was only a guess. Anyone who takes home a dog has to take time to get to know their dog. Unfair or inaccurate labels doom the dog before you even get a chance to know them. The key is how committed is that adopter to getting to know their new dog and doing right by them and being a responsible dog owner. These are dogs, like any other, with some type of block head with a mix of whatever in them, like any other mixed breed dog. They deserve a chance. The less the term pit bull is used inaccurately, the better. I am so thankful this shelter started the ball rolling for more fair treatment of dogs in general and away from the labeling trap.

• *Jaime*

I'm curious about what happens when someone who rents wants to adopt, and their landlord has breed restrictions. What does the shelter tell that person? What does that person tell their landlord? I understand the move and believe every dog should be treated as an individual, but at a certain point, I feel like someone is going to have to make an educated guess anyway...

• *123tl78*

Maybe the whole system has to change. They are mixed breed dogs, a Heinz 57 and most have more than two breeds mixed in them. It will take time but unless it's a purebred dog with papers confirming its a purebred why not just call them mixed breed dogs and by looking at the size of the dog you can decide whether you want a small, medium-sized or big dog because in the end it takes time to know that dog, whatever it is, and its personality to know exactly what it needs to be managed properly in your home.

• *Deb*

There are MANY other breeds, small designer breeds included, that are food aggressive, or do not like other dogs. It has nothing to do with breed. Humans, we don't like everyone we meet, and we don't love people to grab our food from us....we still deserve a home and love.

• *Michelle Laprad*

Most rental places will accept "mixed breed" or "mutt." They just don't want anything labeled according to their restrictions. Where I live they don't accept "aggressive" breeds including pit bulls. When my dog was called a pit bull I dug up papers saying that she was a "bull dog mix" and they were fine with it.

- [grannie](#)

The bloodhound breed is known to be food aggressive. Our rescue is filled with aggressive bloodhounds. WE currently have an aggressive Golden Retriever, thanks to a crappy former owner.

[ranwen](#)

Are you suggesting that a 6 pound chiweenie that "doesn't like other dogs" poses the same risk as a 50 pound, muscular pit bull that is listed as "aggressive with other animals"? Dogs that "don't like other dogs" may ignore them, may not want to play, or may even send a message by growling and posturing to make sure other dogs keep their distance. Dogs that are truly aggressive with other dogs may target them, attack without warning or provocation... even kill them.

Clearly there are shelters with different philosophies about what makes a safe family pet... adopting out powerful, muscular pits and pit mixes who may try to attack other dogs in the neighborhood, or bite an owner who comes too close while they are eating, seems acceptable to this particular shelter. Refusing to label dogs by breed won't make potential adopters adopt more pit bulls; and adopting out pit bulls with aggression problems certainly won't help the breeds reputation.

- [SC-Austin](#)

I agree in that it may or may not impact the adoption rate — but let dogs be adopted or not based on the tested and observed behaviors and not due to some guessed-at breed label. A 50lb dog that has aggression issues is not the same as a 50lb dog that is super sweet and dog & human friendly. Label them both as "pit mixes" and the public often sees them the same. Take away the breed label, and the sweet dog has a better chance.

- [Lisa Prince Fishler](#)

BRAVO!

What's Hot

- [BLOG POSTS](#)
- [STORIES](#)
- [LATEST COMMENTS](#)

Top Posts

- [Philip Seymour Hoffman found dead](#) 9,340 views
- [Orange County Animal Services says it will no longer label dogs by breed](#) 7,244 views
- [Dead Milkmen ARE coming to Orlando for the first time since 1993](#) 3,393 views
- [Orlando foodie Instagrams you need to be following](#) 3,380 views
- [Orlando metal band Trivium tops Billboard with new album 'Vengeance Falls'](#) 2,234 views
- [Clark Scott says totally badass thing to 8-year-old](#) 2,225 views
- [Popka dentist offers hamburgers, free dental work](#) 2,063 views
- [Suddenly Seymour: An abrupt farewell to Philip Seymour Hoffman](#) 1,967 views

Recent Comments

- [mgavallas](#)
says half the fuckin country! case closed!
[Rapper DMX to fight George Zimmerman](#) · 5 hours ago
- [LoveGod1962](#)
Says who? The other witness is dead! Self defense my @ss
[Rapper DMX to fight George Zimmerman](#) · 11 hours ago
- [LoveGod1962](#)
You ignorant, low class, barn rat soup eating insercure fool! What happen to Trayvon can easily happen to you, are someone you love deeply. George Zimmerman is need an sociopath. This will not be...
[Rapper DMX to fight George Zimmerman](#) · 11 hours ago
- [Amy W](#)

We booked an Amazon Local deal to spend \$42 for \$84 worth of food and drink. We called to make a reservation on Valentine's Day, and what transpired was the worst customer service I've experienced...

[Plenty of good going on at NOPA Grill · 15 hours ago](#)

- [Lisa Prince Fishler](#)

RAVO!

[Orange County Animal Services says it will no longer label dogs by breed · 22 hours ago](#)

What's Going On

- [EVENTS](#)
- [RESTAURANTS](#)
- [BARS+CLUBS](#)

CALENDAR

Search thousands of events in our database.

Date selected

Click the small date to load more random events.

[Linda Hall: Crossing Over](#)

Tallahassee artist exploring connection between animals and humans

[Mondays at Backbooth](#)

Live DJs

RESTAURANTS

Search hundreds of restaurants in our database.

NIGHTLIFE

Search hundreds of clubs in our database.

Orlando Weekly

1505 E. Colonial Dr.

Su 0

Orlando, FL 32803

Phone: (407) 377-0400

Classified Phone: (407) 377-0415

Fax: (407) 377-0420

[Contact OW](#) | [Advertise](#) | [National Advertising](#) | [Work Here](#)

All parts of this site Copyright ©2014 Orlando Weekly.

LIABILITY 'HYSTERIA'

Don't let liability 'hysteria' keep you from sending good dogs home.

In a misguided effort to manage liability, some agencies refuse to adopt out certain breeds of dogs, or place blanket restrictions on adoptions of certain breeds. If reduction in liability is the goal, neither of the above are viable solutions. Based on a review of cases in the United States, shelter liability for unlawful search and seizure, civil rights violations and disputed estate bequests far exceeds those for dog bite injuries.



Bonnie L. Lutz, Esq.
**President, American Veterinary
Medical Law Association**

**General Counsel, Inland Valley
Humane Society and SPCA**

Advisor to NCRC

You will fulfill your mission and manage risk when you:

- **Observe** the dog while in your care
- **Document** all observations and all information provided by previous owners
- **Disclose** all known facts to the new owner, including information received from the previous owner, and observations made and documented while in custody of your shelter. Liability may result if you omit **facts**. Further, in the absence of observations or of information received from previous owners, you should not make claims regarding the interaction of the dog with children; and should never make statements such as, "not recommended for children under 10," or anything similar. Blanket restrictions on the age ranges of children suitable for a given dog or characterizations of specific breeds of dog are unscientific, have little predictive value, yet may constitute an implied warranty on your part. Stick to **facts**.
- **Transfer** ownership of the dog, fully and finally, to the new owner. Whether your state follows strict liability or the "one bite" rule, the liability for a dog bite is on the owner. There is not a single reportable appellate opinion in which an animal shelter was found liable for a bite by a dog that it did not own.

If shelters observe, document, disclose and transfer, they will greatly decrease their chances of being on the wrong side of a lawsuit, and increase their ability to adopt out more dogs to loving families.