

**Q** : AREN'T CERTAIN BREEDS OF DOGS MORE LIKELY TO BITE OR INJURE THAN OTHERS?

**A** : NO. THERE IS NO SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE THAT ONE KIND OF DOG IS MORE LIKELY THAN ANOTHER TO INJURE A HUMAN BEING.

• “If anyone says that one dog is more likely to kill – unless there is a study out there that I haven’t seen – that’s not based on scientific data.” – Julie Gilchrist MD, Centers for Disease Control, co-author of a CDC special report.<sup>1</sup> The CDC says of its report, “It does not identify specific breeds that are most likely to bite or kill, and thus is not appropriate for policy-making decisions related to the topic.”<sup>2</sup>

• Extensive temperament tests conducted by university veterinarians in the German state of Lower Saxony found no significant differences between breeds of dogs targeted for separate regulation and Golden Retrievers, with respect to aggression.<sup>3</sup>

• You can’t judge a book by its cover or a dog by the shape of its head! Visual breed identification of dogs, compared with DNA analysis of the same dogs, is highly inaccurate: “The discrepancy . . . draws into question the validity and enforcement of public and private policies pertaining to dog breeds.”<sup>4</sup>

**Q** : WHAT ABOUT MEDIA REPORTS THAT DOG BITES ARE ON THE RISE IN THE U.S.?

**A** : THOSE REPORTS ARE WRONG. DOG BITES ARE DOWN, AND NOT AS A RESULT OF BREED DISCRIMINATORY LEGISLATION.

• Official records from across the country show that the number of dog bites has plummeted to historic lows, despite the significant increase in both the human and dog population. Many areas of the country have recorded dramatic reductions from 1971-2007.

*For example:*

- Minneapolis: 86% reduction
- New York City: 90% reduction
- Baltimore: 91% reduction

These cities, and others, are seeing reductions in reported dog bites with breed-neutral dangerous dog regulations.<sup>5</sup>

**Q** : OK. BUT AREN'T THERE NEWS REPORTS THAT SERIOUS DOG BITES ARE ON THE INCREASE?

**A** : PANICKY AND BIASED NEWS ACCOUNTS ARE ALSO WRONG. IN FACT, THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE GOING TO AN EMERGENCY ROOM ANNUALLY COMPLAINING OF A DOG BITE HAS NOT RISEN IN THE 21ST CENTURY.<sup>6</sup>

**Q** : DOESN'T BREED DISCRIMINATORY LEGISLATION (BDL) REDUCE DOG BITES?

**A** : NO. BDL HAS NEVER MADE ANY COMMUNITY SAFER.

• Denver, CO enacted a breed ban in 1989. The ban did not reduce reports of dog bites. And citizens of Denver continued to suffer a higher rate of hospitalization from dog bite injuries after the ban, than the citizens of breed-neutral Colorado counties.<sup>7</sup>

• The United Kingdom enacted breed restrictions in 1991. In the last 10 years, dog attacks have risen more than 50%!<sup>8</sup>

• In June 2008, the Netherlands repealed its 15-year-old ban on “pit bulls” because it had not resulted in a decrease in dog bites. The Dutch now focus on local leash laws and owner education programs.<sup>9</sup>

**Q**: WOULDN'T BDL BE CHEAP TO ENACT AND THEREFORE A USEFUL PRECAUTION TO TAKE ANYWAY?

**A**: NO—BDL IS COSTLY, PENALIZES RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERS, DIVERTS RESOURCES, AND IS OPEN TO CHALLENGE.

• Not convinced? Try the Best Friends Fiscal Impact calculator at <http://www.guerrillaeconomics.biz/bestfriends/>. Develop an estimate of the additional expenses for your community (and you as a taxpayer) that will result from BDL: costs for enforcement, kenneling, and litigation, among others.

• For example, in Minneapolis, (which has seen a 86% dog bite reduction without BDL), enforcing BDL could have cost taxpayers \$585,000 in the first year alone!

• Miami Dade banned pit bulls in 1989. The ban did not reduce dog bites, but has generated litigations costs. Recently, a hearing officer ruled that the law was unenforceable

• It gets worse. According to the Fiscal Impact Calculator, if every community in Florida, ignoring Miami-Dade's bad example, enacted BDL, the total cost to Florida taxpayers, would be almost \$26 million!

**Q**: BUT DOGS ARE THE REAL ISSUE, AREN'T THEY? WHAT'S THE BOTTOM LINE FOR ME AS A CITIZEN AND A TAXPAYER?

**A**: PEOPLE ARE THE BOTTOM LINE.

The Italian government maintained a list of 17 breeds of dogs that it classified as "dangerous." In 2009, the government scrapped its dangerous dog list, and replaced it with laws holding owners responsible for their pets training and behavior.<sup>10</sup>

Dogs cannot be characterized apart from people. At the heart of any public safety issue involving dogs is the need for responsible pet ownership. Communities need to hold dog owners responsible for the humane care, custody, and control of all dogs, regardless of breed or type. Humane communities are safer communities.

*Your community leaders need to think about these questions, and know the answers!*

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2. CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL (CDC) STATEMENT AT [HTTP://WWW.CDC.GOV/HOMEANDRECREATIONSAFETY/DOG-BITES/DOGBITE-PUBS-HTML](http://www.cdc.gov/homeandrecreationalsafety/dog-bites/dogbite-pubs-html)
3. S. OTT ET AL, "IS THERE A DIFFERENCE? COMPARISON OF GOLDEN RETRIEVERS AND DOGS AFFECTED BY BREED-SPECIFIC LEGISLATION REGARDING AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR" JRNL OF VET BEHAVIOR, 2008, 3, 134-140
4. S. VOITH, "A COMPARISON OF VISUAL AND DNA IDENTIFICATION OF BREEDS OF DOGS," PROCEEDINGS OF ANNUAL AVMA CONVENTION, JULY 2009, 1-3
5. [HTTP://NATIONALCANINERESARCHCOUNCIL.COM/DOG-BITES/](http://nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com/dog-bites/)
6. CDC, WEB-BASED INJURY STATISTICS QUERY AND REPORTING SYSTEM (WISQARS).
7. "DENVER: SELECTIVE COUNTING AND THE COST TO DOGS AND PEOPLE," [HTTP://NATIONALCANINERESARCHCOUNCIL.COM/CONTENT/UPLOADS/2008/11/\\_DENVERNCRG.PDF](http://nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/11/_DENVERNCRG.PDF)
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9. ASSOCIATED PRESS. DUTCH GOVERNMENT TO LIFT 25-YEAR BAN ON PIT BULLS. [HTTP://WWW.TUCSONCITIZEN.COM/SS/RELATED/87691](http://www.tucsoncitizen.com/ss/related/87691)
10. [HTTP://STOPBSL.COM/2009/03/17/ITALY-BREED-BLACKLIST-TO-BE-ELIMINATED/](http://stopbsl.com/2009/03/17/italy-breed-blacklist-to-be-eliminated/)

## Will Laws that Discriminate Against Dogs on the Basis of Breed Make Your Community Safer?



*Six questions to help your community make the right decision!*

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