



Canadian Federation of
Humane Societies

La Fédération des sociétés
canadiennes d'assistance
aux animaux



CANADIAN KENNEL CLUB
CLUB CANIN CANADIEN



Canadian Veterinary
Medical Association

L'Association canadienne
des médecins vétérinaires



Pet Industry Joint Advisory
Council of Canada

Le Conseil Consultatif Mixte
de l'Industrie des Animaux
de Compagnie
du Canada

Reducing the Incidence of Dog Bites and Attacks: Do Breed Bans Work?

This document reflects expertise from the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies, the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, the Canadian Kennel Club and the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council of Canada. They are members of the National Companion Animal Coalition (NCAC), which was created in 1996 to promote responsible pet ownership and enhance the health and well being of companion animals.

The National Companion Animal Coalition does not support breed-specific bans as an effective tool to protect the public from vicious or dangerous dogs.

There are several reasons why breed-specific bans are problematic:

- There is no objective method of establishing lineage of cross bred dogs or dogs which are not registered with a national kennel club. In addition, many municipalities do not have access to qualified persons that could accurately perform breed identification.
- Dangerous dogs may exist in **every** breed and breed cross.
- Dangerous temperament and behaviour are products of many factors other than just breed.
- This type of ban will result in exclusion of some dangerous dogs, and inclusion of dogs that are not dangerous.
- The incidence of dog bites has not been shown to be reduced by restricting the ownership of certain dog breeds.¹

The NCAC recognizes that dangerous dogs are a product of one or more of the following:

- Inappropriate breed choice for owner lifestyle.
- Lack of appropriate training and socialization.
- Genetic makeup as a result of inappropriate breeding practices or intentional breeding for aggressive traits.
- Lack of proper exercise and interaction with other people and animals.
- Mistreatment.
- Failure to spay/neuter.

The NCAC's recommendations to municipalities² regarding dangerous or vicious dogs are to use:

- Significant fines for owners of dogs that are involved in a bite incident.
- Well-established guidelines for professional temperament assessment of a dog as dangerous or vicious. Banning of specific breeds is not recommended because of the difficulty in identifying the genetic origin of many dogs.
- A protocol to deal with dogs that have been professionally assessed as dangerous or vicious (eg. euthanasia or confinement).
- Significant incentives for owners to spay/neuter, socialize, and train their pets.
- Confinement laws such as: leash laws, running at large laws, property confinement laws, use of muzzles.
- Public awareness and education programs promoting responsible pet ownership.

The NCAC supports responsible pet ownership by encouraging owners to:

- Choose an appropriate breed or breed cross for the owner's lifestyle and ability to provide for the needs of their dog.
- Enroll themselves and their dogs in basic training and obedience classes.
- Provide physical exercise and mental stimulation appropriate to the selected breed.
- Provide proper food, water and shelter.
- Provide proper veterinary care.
- Spay/neuter their pets.

¹ Szpakowski, NM et al. An epidemiological investigation into the reported incidents of dog biting in the City of Guelph. *Can Vet J* 1989; 30:937-942.

² For more information on guidelines for municipalities, contact an NCAC member organization for copies of the **Sample Municipal Bylaw Regulating the Keeping and Controlling of Companion Animals and An Enlightened Approach to Companion Animal Control for Canadian Municipalities.**

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