



November 1, 2016

Dear Bexley City Council,

For All Animals thanks you for considering an ordinance that would repeal your city's current ban on pit bull terriers. For All Animals is a national advocacy organization dedicated to the protection of animals. As part of our work, we consult with municipal governments, state legislators, and animal control agencies to develop humane laws for companion animals. Breed-discriminatory legislation (BDL) has failed in countries across the world and imposes a serious strain on already limited animal control resources. The only way to improve public safety is through breed-neutral legislation that focuses on owner responsibility and aggressive dogs.

Breed-Discriminatory Legislation has been Unsuccessful in both Studies and Real-Life Cases

Multiple peer-reviewed studies have concluded that breed-discriminatory legislation does not improve public safety. In the United States, the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) carried out an exhaustive review of dog bite studies in 2014. The review spanned over forty years and ten countries (including the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia). The AVMA concluded:

“There is no evidence that breed-specific bans reduce the rate or severity of bite injuries.”¹

In light of these outcomes, many areas have repealed their breed-discriminatory laws in favor of breed-neutral ones. The Public Health Department of Aragon, Spain studied dog bites in the community before and after BDL was enacted. Researchers determined that BDL was “not effective in protecting people from dog bites in a significant manner.”² Similarly, in the United Kingdom, a study of a law prohibiting pit bull terriers found that the policy did not reduce the incidence of dog attacks.³ Since Ireland placed severe restrictions on the ownership of pitbulls

¹ American Veterinary Medical Association: Animal Welfare Division. (2015). *Dog Bite Risk and Prevention: The Role of Breed*. Retrieved from: <https://www.avma.org/KB/Resources/LiteratureReviews/Pages/The-Role-of-Breed-in-Dog-Bite-Risk-and-Prevention.aspx>

² B. Rosado et al., Spanish: Dangerous Animals Act: Effect of the Epidemiology of Dog Bites, 2(5)JOURNAL OF VETERINARY BEHAVIOR 166-74 (2007).

³ 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)



and other “dangerous dogs” in 1998, the occurrence of dog bites has risen by 50% - a statistic that remains significant even after accounting for population growth.⁴

Breed-Neutral Legislation is the Only Effective Approach to Reducing Dog Bites

Breed-neutral laws address owner behavior and mandate responsible pet ownership. The research surrounding dog bites and attacks has found, “preventable human decisions regarding care, husbandry, and control of their canine charges” are more relevant factors than breed.⁵ A dog’s treatment in his home is a far more accurate predictor of his behavior. A 2013 study by the National Canine Research Council established the concepts of “family” dogs and “resident” dogs.⁶ A resident dog was defined as “a dog, whether confined within the dwelling or otherwise, whose owners isolated them from regular, positive human interactions.” A “family dog” was defined as a “dog whose owners kept them in or near the home and also integrated them into the family unit.” Over 76% of dog bite-related fatalities involved a “resident dog.” Other major factors were (1) absence of a person to intervene, (2) no familiar relationship of victim with dog, (3) dog was not neutered, (4) compromised ability of victims to interact appropriately with dog, (5) owners’ history of abuse of dogs. Breed was not a relevant factor.

Please repeal the current law banning pit bulls and introduce breed-neutral legislation. Not only will this prove more effective, it will conserve the resources of taxpayer-funded animal control facilities.

Best,

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⁴ Ó Súilleabháin, P.S. (2015). Human hospitalisations due to dog bites in Ireland, 1998-2013: Implications for current breed specific legislation. *The Veterinary Journal*, 204(3), 357-359.

⁵ National Canine Research Council, Dog Bite-Related Fatalities: A Literature Review

⁶ 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.