

Dog Breed Restrictions

Position:

The Edmonton Humane Society does not support the labelling of a particular breed of dog as “aggressive,” “vicious,” “dangerous,” or any other derogatory term. Instead, each animal within a breed grouping must be regarded individually.

Rationale

- Dog bite statistics can be incomplete and misleading. All dog bite statistics are reliant on the victim’s or owner’s willingness to make a report to local authorities. In 2014, 530 dog bites were reported to the City of Edmonton Animal Control Department (City of Edmonton Animal Control Department statistics, 2014). However, 1,184 people were treated for dog bites at Edmonton hospitals. (Alberta Health Services).
- Often, dog breed restrictions are considered in municipal government directly following a well-publicized dog bite or attack. 1,184 people were treated for dog bites in Edmonton hospitals in 2014, however, the media only reported a small percentage of these cases. Their choice of stories will generally be based upon the highest potential for reader interest. Media stories reporting dog bites often lack (1) a complete understanding of factors involved in the attacks and (2) a desire to portray an accurate cross-section of the risks of every breed.
- Larger, stronger dog breeds have the potential and the body features to cause a great deal of damage in an attack. The incidents that involve a great deal of damage to the victim are generally the most publicized; therefore, the larger, stronger breeds are generally the target of media stories about dog bites.
- Simply possessing the strength and body features to cause damage do not cause a dog to develop aggression or bite. An individual dog’s temperament is determined by numerous factors, including breeding (genetics), amount and method of training and socialization, and treatment by its owner or guardian. The influence of humans on acts of canine aggression is frequently downplayed or ignored.

References

1. American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. “Breed-Specific Legislation.” ASPCA position statement, New York, n.d.
2. British Columbia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. “Dangerous Dogs and Public Safety.” BC SPCPA position statement, Vancouver, 2004.
3. Canadian Federation of Humane Societies. “Breed Specific Legislation.” CFHS position statement, Ottawa, 2004.
4. Delise, Karen. The Pit Bull Placebo: The Media, Myths and Politics of Canine Aggression. New Jersey: Anubis Publishing, 2007.
5. Humane Society of the United States. “Breed-Specific Policies: No Basis in Science.” HSUS fact sheet, Washington, 2015.