



Breed Specific Legislation

Association of Pet Dog Trainers Position Statement

The following statements reflect the opinion of the Association of Pet Dog Trainers.

The Association of Pet dog Trainers (APDT) supports the adoption or enforcement of a program for the control of potentially dangerous or vicious dogs that is fair, non-discriminatory and addresses dogs that are shown to be dangerous by their actions.

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.

The solution to preventing dog bites is education of owners, breeder, and the general public about aggression prevention, not legislation directed at certain breeds.

As an organization comprised of dog trainers, behaviorists and other animal professionals, the APDT is fully aware that any dog can bite, any dog can maim, and any dog can kill. A dangerous or vicious dog is a product of a combination of individual genetics, upbringing, socialization, and lack of proper training. The solution to preventing dog bites is education of owners, breeder, and the general public about aggression prevention, not legislation directed at certain breeds.

Singling out and publicly demonizing certain breeds as dangerous is unfair, discriminatory, and does an immense disservice to those breeds and the people who care about them. Even more chilling, breed specific legislation encourages the faulty public perception of other breeds as being inherently safe. This can lead misguided individuals to engage in unsafe conduct with other breeds that can result in injury or death by individual representatives of those breeds mistakenly perceived as safe. Also, designating certain breeds as inherently dangerous implies to the public that behavior is not effectively influenced, positively or negatively, by training. This misconception will likely produce a growing number of dangerous dogs as misinformed, complacent dog owners fail to practice responsible aggression-prevention measures.

Approved 2001

ASSOCIATION of PET DOG TRAINERS

Breed Specific Legislation Position Statement FAQ

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What is Breed specific Legislation?

Legislators have attempted to address the public safety concern related to the rising number of dog bites by passing stronger dangerous dog laws. An increasing number of these new laws are focusing on individual breeds. These new laws deem all dogs of a certain breed to be presumed dangerous/ vicious. This is called "Breed Specific Legislation" (BSL).

BSLs commonly either ban certain breeds or place special restrictions on certain breeds. If a person or persons designated by the law to have such authority determines that a particular dog is a member of one of the prohibited breeds or in any part a mix of one of those breeds, that dog is presumed dangerous. This opens up the possibility of many dogs being included in this category since many mixed breed dogs can have some physical characteristics of one or more of the targeted breeds. In many of these laws, there are no safeguards against adding more breeds or conditions to the "prohibited" list. For example, a proposed amendment in Ohio mandates death for any Pit Bull that has been de-barked, with no option of re-homing the dog.

What is meant by a breed "ban"?

Banned means just what the word implies. Citizens are forbidden to own a dog whose parentage derives wholly or partly from the named breed or breeds. Right now, in various locations in the United States, there are laws banning at least 8 different breeds and mixes of those breeds. Those breeds are:

- 1) American Pit Bull Terrier
- 2) American Staffordshire Terrier
- 3) Bull Terrier
- 4) Chow Chow
- 5) Doberman Pinscher
- 6) Rottweiler
- 7) Shar-Pei
- 8) Staffordshire Bull Terrier

The options available to the owners of those dogs options are to move out of the area, give the dog away to someone outside the area, or have the dog destroyed. In some areas it may be possible to keep the dog if the owner complies with very strict rules.

The Association of Pet Dog Trainers

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What is meant by a breed "restriction"?

A restriction means the dog owner is limited as what their dog can do, where it go, how it can get there and who it can have contact with. There are also usually special licensing and insurance requirements. Right now, in various locations in the United States, there are laws restricting at least 11 different breeds and mixes of those breeds. Those breeds are:

- 1) American Bulldog
- 2) American Pit Bull Terrier
- 3) American Staffordshire Terrier
- 4) Bull Terrier
- 5) Chow Chow
- 6) Doberman Pincher
- 7) Olde English Bulldog
- 8) Presa Canario
- 9) Rottweiler
- 10) Shar Pei
- 11) Staffordshire Bull Terrier

What are the usual restrictions that are imposed?

Restrictions vary from locale to locale, but common restrictions are as follows:

-Muzzling of the dog in public

- Use of a chain leash
- Dog can only be walked by someone 18 years or older
- Dog must wear a special collar or tag that denotes it as a dangerous dog.
- Posting of dangerous dog warning signs at house entrances
- A requirement for extra liability insurance (usually ranging from \$50,000 -\$100,000)
- Higher licensing fees (up to \$500.00 per year for an unaltered dog, even a show dog)
- The dog is not allowed contact with children, even as a puppy.
- Mandatory tattooing, and/or microchipping
- Mandatory neutering/spaying.

While these are not inappropriate restrictions for a dog designated dangerous as a result of behavior, they are not appropriate for dogs designated dangerous solely by breed.

BSLs only affect dangerous dogs right?

BSLs do not take into account the behavior of the individual dog itself. The sole criterion is the dog's appearance. Affected dogs may have no history of biting, growling, or even barking at anyone. They may be a breed champions, have obedience titles, or Canine Good Citizen certificates, or do therapy work local nursing homes. The temperament or personality of the dog does not matter, only the dog's appearance.

Why should the Association of Pet Dog Trainers be involved in BSL?

BSLs affect trainers in many ways. Consider these situations and decide if this would affect your training business. How would you feel if:

-You had to dismiss a student from your class just because her shelter dog had a short coat and a square head (Pit Bull features)?

-You had to tell a client with a 3-month-old American Staffordshire Terrier show puppy that she was not legally allowed to socialize her puppy, especially with children?

-You were not legally allowed to socialize your own puppy?

-Worse yet, how would you feel if, in these same scenarios, you legally had to bring that same dog/puppy to the authorities for mandatory euthanasia?

Unfortunately, in some places, nightmare situations like these are a reality. More and more localities are imposing restrictions or bans on certain breeds of dogs. This is why the APDT has become involved with BSLs.

Where does this fit in with the educational mission of the APDT?

BSLs are born out of lack of knowledge regarding dog behavior. The more we teach the public how to responsibly raise their dogs, the less of a perceived need/demand there will be for unfair laws. The more we teach legislators how to properly deal with dangerous dogs, the less of a public demand or perceived need there will be for unfair laws.

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