



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CANINE PROFESSIONALS

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Position Statement on Breed Specific Legislation

The International Association of Canine Professionals strongly opposes legislation which discriminates against dogs and their owners by labeling certain dogs as "dangerous" or "vicious" based on breed or phenotype. Breed-specific legislation does not protect communities nor create a more responsible dog owner. Instead it negatively affects many law abiding dog owners and dogs within the targeted breeds.

Breed or breed type is only one factor which determines an individual dog's temperament. Many other factors also influence behavior. In the case of aggressive acts by dogs, factors may include, but are not limited to: genetic predisposition; irresponsible handling; lack of animal management; general care; improper socialization and training; poor housing conditions; physical ailment, and lack of education and supervision.

A common and serious error in the 'assumption of risk by breed' is the inability to identify individual dogs by breed, according to an established breed standard or breed type. Purebred dogs which are registered with national clubs may or may not fit the ideal standard for their breed. As dogs are further distanced from the "ideal" standard by phenotype, especially in mixed breeds, it may become all but impossible for accurate identification.

The vast majority of dogs typically affected by breed-specific legislation are not "dangerous" by any standard. Their physical appearance alone cannot be used as an indicator of an aggressive nature. Breed-specific legislation creates an undue burden on responsible owners of targeted breeds - dogs which are most often not dangerous to their communities.

Enforcing breed-specific laws is extremely difficult. It requires funding which would otherwise be available for the enforcement of more effective laws which target truly dangerous dogs on an individual basis. It is also costly to the court system.

Limiting the risk of dog bites should be the legal responsibility of the dog owner. The IACP believes in the importance of educating owners in the proper selection, care, socialization and training of dogs. We also recognize the importance of teaching the general public, and especially children, in bite prevention skills and techniques.

The IACP supports the creation and enforcement of laws which protect responsible dog owners while at the same time promote the safety of all. We support laws which penalize irresponsible dog owners on an individual basis. Current animal control laws should be enforced. In many communities, laws allow officials to confiscate the individual dog who has proven dangerous. This, along with the education we advocate, will help the public not to simply feel safer, but actually to be safer. A very small minority of dogs pose any significant threat to humans. Dog ownership, on the whole, improves quality of life for countless families.

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