

# GREAT INFORMATION!

## BREED-SPECIFIC LEGISLATION FAQ

Q: What is breed-specific legislation?

A: Breed-specific legislation (BSL), also referred to as **breed-discriminatory legislation (BDL)**, is a law or ordinance that **prohibits or restricts the keeping of dogs of specific breeds, and/or dogs presumed to be mixes of one or more of those breeds**. The most drastic form of BSL is a complete ban; but BSL also includes any laws or governmental regulations that impose separate requirements or limitations, including but not limited to: mandatory spay-neuter, mandatory muzzling, special liability insurance requirements, special licensing, property posting requirements, confinement requirements, breed-specific pet limits, sale or transfer notification requirements, and prohibitions in government and military housing. BSL, in all of its forms, results in the destruction of many pet dogs.

Q: What breeds of dogs have been targeted by BSL?

A: Various breeds have been or currently are targeted by BSL. Until the law was repealed in 2009, Italy regulated the keeping of 17 breeds. In the United States, jurisdictions have either banned or put discriminatory restrictions on one or all of the following: American Bulldog, American Staffordshire Terrier, American Pit Bull Terrier, Bull Terrier, Cane Corso, Chihuahua, Chow Chow, Doberman Pinscher, Dogo Argentina, German Shepherd Dog, Miniature Bull Terrier, "Pit bull" (**please note that "pit bull" is not a breed of dog**), Presa Canario, Staffordshire Bull Terrier, Rottweiler, and wolf-hybrids. These ordinances also target dogs suspected of being mixes of one or more of the named breeds.

*7 breeds in IL*  
*15 breeds*

Q: What position do the leading animal-related organizations take on BSL?

A: All of the following national organizations oppose BSL: American Animal Hospital Association, American Dog Owner's Association, American Humane Association, American Kennel Club, American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, American Veterinary Medical Association, Association of Pet Dog Trainers, Best Friends Animal Society, Canadian Kennel Club, **Humane Society of the United States**, International Association of Canine Professionals, National Animal Control Association, National Animal Interest Alliance, and National Association of Obedience Instructors. In addition, many state and local-level veterinary medical associations and humane organizations oppose BSL.

*14 major animal organiz-*

*Humane*

Q: **Aren't certain breeds of dogs more likely to injure or bite than others?**

A: No. There is no scientific evidence that one kind of dog is more likely than any other to injure a human being.<sup>1</sup> In fact, there is evidence to the contrary.<sup>2</sup> A recent survey of the controlled study of dog bites covering 40 years and two continents concluded that no group of dogs should be considered disproportionately dangerous.<sup>3</sup>

Q: **Does BSL reduce dog bites?**

A: No. BSL has not succeeded in reducing dog bite-related injuries wherever in the world it has been enacted.

- An analysis published in the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* explains why BSL does not reduce serious dog bites. The authors calculated the absurdly large numbers of dogs of targeted breeds who would have to be completely removed from a community in order to prevent even one serious dog bite-related injury. **For example, in order to prevent a single hospitalization resulting from a dog bite, the authors calculate that a city or town would have to remove more than 100,000 dogs of a targeted group.** To prevent a second hospitalization, double that number.<sup>4</sup>
- **Denver, CO** enacted a breed ban in 1988. Citizens of Denver **continue to suffer a higher rate of hospitalization from dog bite-related injuries after the ban, than the citizens of breed-neutral Colorado counties.**<sup>5</sup>
- A study published in the *Journal of Veterinary Behavior* (2007), compared medically treated dog bites in **Aragon, Spain** for 5 years prior to and following enactment of Spain's **Law on the legal treatment of the possession of dangerous animals** (sometimes referred to Spain's Dangerous Animal Act) (2000). The results showed **no significant effect in dog bite incidences when comparing before and after enactment of the BSL.**<sup>6</sup>
- The Netherlands repealed a **15-year-old breed ban in 2008, after commissioning a study of its effectiveness.** The study revealed that BSL was not a successful dog-bite mitigation strategy because it had not resulted in a decrease in dog bites.<sup>7</sup>
- **The Province of Ontario in Canada** enacted a breed ban in 2005. In 2010, based on a survey of municipalities across the Province, the Toronto Humane Society reported that, **despite five years of BSL and the destruction of "countless" dogs, there had been no significant decrease in the number of dog bites.**<sup>8</sup>
- Winnipeg, Manitoba enacted a breed ban in 1990. Winnipeg's rate of dog bite-injury hospitalizations is virtually unchanged from that day to this, and remains significantly higher than the rate in breed-neutral, responsible pet ownership Calgary.<sup>9</sup>

BSL DOES NOT REDUCE DOG BITES!

Attached on Back.

Q: How costly is it to implement and enforce BSL?

A: BSL is very costly, penalizes responsible pet owners, diverts resources, and is open to challenge.

- Use the Best Friends Fiscal Impact Calculator: <http://bestfriends.querrilaeconomics.net/> to calculate an estimate of the additional expenses for your community (and you as a taxpayer) that will result from BSL: costs for enforcement, kenneling, euthanasia and litigation, among others
- Miami-Dade County banned "pit bulls" in 1989. The ban did not reduce dog bites, but has generated litigation costs. Hearing officer proceedings, as well as a circuit court case, have questioned the enforceability of the law.
- The Department of Justice guidelines for the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) state that it is contrary to the Act to deny a disabled person equal access to public facilities based upon the presumed breed of their service dog. This has exposed municipalities with BSL to litigation costs when they have attempted to deny such access based the presumed breed of a person's service dog.

Q: What is the trend in BSL?

A: There is a growing awareness that BSL does not improve community safety and penalizes responsible dog owners and their family companions. Both the Netherlands and Italy have repealed their BSL in recent years. From January 2012-May 2013, three times as many American communities have either considered and rejected a breed-specific ordinance, or repealed an existing one, as have enacted BSL. Massachusetts, Nevada, Connecticut and Rhode Island have recently enacted state laws that prohibit their towns and counties from regulating dogs on the basis of breed. Sixteen states now prohibit BSL. The Obama Administration has announced its opposition to BSL, stating that "research shows that bans on certain types of dogs are largely ineffective and often a waste of public resources."

Q: What is the best way to reduce dog bite-related incidents in a community?

A: Dogs cannot be characterized apart from people. At the heart of any public safety issue involving dogs is the need for responsible pet ownership. Effective laws hold dog owners responsible for the humane care, custody, and control of all dogs, regardless of breed or type. Humane communities are safer communities.

#### SOURCES

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- <sup>2</sup> Ott, S.A., Schalke, E., von Gaertner, A.M., & Hackbarth, H. (2008). Is There a Difference? Comparison of Golden Retrievers and Dogs Affected by Breed-Specific Legislation Regarding Aggressive Behavior. *Journal of Veterinary Behavior*, 3(5): 134-140.
- <sup>3</sup> American Veterinary Medical Association: Animal Welfare Division. (2012). *Dog Bite Risk and Prevention: The Role of Breed*. Retrieved from: <https://www.avma.org/KB/Resources/Backgrounders/Pages/The-Role-of-Breed-in-Dog-Bite-Risk-and-Prevention.aspx>
- <sup>4</sup> Patronek, G.J., Slater, M., & Marder, A. (2010). Use of a number-needed-to-ban calculation to illustrate limitations of breed-specific legislation in decreasing the risk of dog bite-related injury. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 237(7): 788-792.
- <sup>5</sup> National Canine Research Council. (2013). *Denver's Breed-Specific Legislation: Brutal, Costly, and Ineffective*. Retrieved from: [http://nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com/uploaded\\_files/inymce/Denver%20BSL%20Brutal%20Costly%20and%20Ineffective%20-%20Aug%202013.pdf](http://nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com/uploaded_files/inymce/Denver%20BSL%20Brutal%20Costly%20and%20Ineffective%20-%20Aug%202013.pdf)
- <sup>6</sup> Rosado, B., Garcia-Belenguier, S., León, M., & Palacio, J. (2007). Spanish dangerous animals act: Effect on the epidemiology of dog bites. *Journal of Veterinary Behavior*, 2(5): 166-174.
- <sup>7</sup> Cornelissen, J.M., & Hopster, H. (2010). Dog bites in the Netherlands: a study of victims, injuries, circumstances and aggressors to support evaluation of breed specific legislation. *Veterinary Journal*, 186(3): 292-298.
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- <sup>9</sup> National Canine Research Council. (2012). *Winnipeg, Manitoba Far Behind Calgary in Community Safety*. Retrieved from: [http://nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com/uploaded\\_files/inymce/Winnipeg%20Manitoba%20far%20behind%20Calgary%20in%20community%20safety\\_july%20%202012.pdf](http://nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com/uploaded_files/inymce/Winnipeg%20Manitoba%20far%20behind%20Calgary%20in%20community%20safety_july%20%202012.pdf)
- <sup>10</sup> The White House. (2013). *Breed-Specific Legislation is a Bad Idea*. Retrieved from: <https://petitions.whitehouse.gov/petition/ban-and-outlaw-breed-specific-legislation-bsl-united-states-america-federal-level/1WFR0a2>