







New Law Targets Pit Bulls

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City leaders are taking tough new action on animal owners, approving a new animal ordinance Tuesday. While it doesn't just target pit bulls and their owners, they do bear the brunt of it.

Pit Bulls account for up to 30% of all of Wichita's dog-related animal control calls, a statistic that led the city council to action adding new restrictions on the breed.

It's a move that pleases many.

"Keeping in the fact that the safety and the health of the citizens of Wichita, Kansas is what counts," said one supporter.

Starting in July people can own a max of two Pit Bulls and the dogs must be micro-chipped and sterilized.

The only exception is for licensed breeders and those who already have more than the limit can be grandfathered in.

Even though it's not an outright pit bull ban, several Wichitans still aren't happy.

exactly

"This new ordinance is persecutory, is discriminatory and it's profiling this animal. As far as I'm concerned it's dog racism," said one opponent.

The head of the Kansas Humane Society says, "Breed-specific ordinances punish responsible pet owners, are difficult to enforce and so little to deter irresponsible behavior.

"Both the American Veterinary Medical Association and the Wichita Veterinary Medical Association strongly oppose Pit Bull bans. Our position is we have so many Pit Bull patients that are excellent dogs," said a local vet.

And opponents say the tougher dangerous dog ordinance passed by the council just a year ago is working fine on its own.

Since then, the number of Pit Bull dogs put to sleep is down 19% and the number of Pit Bulls found running at large is down 13%.

That's why Council Member Paul Gray voted against the new regulations.

"It hasn't given due time for the existing ordinance to really take effect and see where it's at," said Gray.

While the Pit Bull restrictions are the most controversial part, the new ordinance will now also change rabies vaccination rules so owners only have to get a three year vaccination instead of an annual one. Pet owners who let their animals defecate in or otherwise damage someone's property can also be penalized. Certain livestock must be kept on at least one acre of land. And the city's authority to inspect businesses such as pet groomers has also been expanded.

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