

# Making Communities Safer, for Both People and Pets



We all want safe and humane communities, which includes protecting citizens from dangerous dogs, regardless of breed. City officials should protect people and pets by passing and enforcing laws that emphasize public safety, personal responsibility, and individual accountability. When it comes to dangerous dogs, the focus should be on reckless or negligent owners, not the breed of the dog. The simple truth is that breed is not a factor in bites.

But reckless owners are a factor. Bad owners lead to bad dogs, and that puts everyone at risk. The best laws address the behavior of both dog owners and dogs, and put regulations in place to restrain and restrict any dangerous dog. All problem or nuisance dogs should be sterilized because studies have shown that the majority of bite cases come from unneutered male dogs.

Studies done in countries with breed-discriminatory laws, such as the United Kingdom, Spain and Germany, found that these laws didn't reduce the number of dog bites or improve public safety. Based on these studies, and concerns about property rights infringement, the American Bar Association, the National Animal Control Association, and the American Veterinary Medical Association don't support breed discrimination. Instead, they support laws that go after the real problem: the behavior of the individual dog and the behavior of the reckless or negligent owner.

Another problem with breed-discriminatory laws: They interfere with citizens' basic property rights. In America, every citizen who follows the safety rules as a responsible dog owner should be allowed to own whatever breed of dog he or she chooses. Nineteen states now prohibit breed discrimination, and one reason is that it violates property rights.

Scientific studies have proven that pit bull terriers are just as safe and gentle as any other dog. In fact, they have ranked better than golden retrievers or border collies on temperament tests, according to the American Temperament Test Society. Given a loving home and caring people, pit bull terriers can be man's best friend. There's a reason they used to be called "America's dog." Instead of punishing innocent dogs, let's hold owners accountable and responsible for animals who are actually dangerous.

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By working together, we can ensure that every loving pet receives a loving home. This humane goal is being achieved in many communities throughout the United States. Your community can achieve it, too, and Best Friends is there to help. For more information, contact Ledy VanKavage, senior legislative attorney, at [ledyv@bestfriends.org](mailto:ledyv@bestfriends.org).

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## BREED DISCRIMINATION FAILS BECAUSE:

- It violates basic property rights.
- It focuses on the wrong thing.
- It's arbitrary.
- It's expensive.
- It's ineffective.
- It's not practical.