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BSL: Why it's BS...



Breed-Specific Legislation is problematic for the simple reason that the notion of 'breed' is itself questionable, and if the very essence of the idea has no legitimacy, then any legislation based on it must be hopelessly flawed.

Breed-Specific Legislation has no basis, either in a scientific or social context. It is rooted in preconception and ignorance concerning the relationship between breed and behaviour, and since 'breed' is not a scientific classification, we only have the opinions of a relatively ignorant majority to refer to.

"Politicians, prosecutors, attorneys, newspaper reporters, TV and radio station personalities, breeders, trainers, animal control officers, veterinarians, shelter workers, dog fighters, street thugs, and just about anyone able to speak has an opinion or personal theory about the strength and temperament of the American Pit Bull Terrier. These opinions and theories are based on a dizzying mixture of personal experience, media-induced images, rumours, myths, speculation, fear mongering, and personal or political agendas." ~ Karen Delise, Pit Bull Placebo

This is partly due to a lack of understanding of ethology (the scientific study of animal behaviour), statistics and their validity, integrity and reliability of media reporting, ability of the public to identify breeds or to recognise signals given by aggressive dogs, and the contribution of human factors to animal attacks on humans.

In combination, these elements all add up to such a significant misinterpretation of the events and the decisions made to combat the poorly-defined problem, that it is no surprise that Breed-Specific Legislation gets the solutions dead wrong.

In fact, in several places where BSL was introduced it has now been repealed (Holland) or is under review because the incidence of dog bites has not reduced and in most cases has increased.ⁱ Why? It simply does not, and cannot, work, because the problem is not the dog; the problem is the types of owners who buy certain 'breeds' and the manner in which they

train, keep and treat them. Focusing on the breed of the dog merely misidentifies the root cause, which is human behaviour.

Here are just a few reasons behind the futility of BSL:

1. There is no credible evidence that any particular breed of dog is more prone to biting. Controlled studies by the American Veterinary Medical Association have shown that pit bull type dogs are no more inherently dangerous than any other breed of dog.
2. Breed identification is a subjective and unreliable guessing game. A Matrix Canine Research Institute survey of over 600 people ranging from animal experts to the general population found that only 2% of people surveyed were able to correctly identify an American Pit Bull Terrier without also incorrectly identifying a different breed as an APBT (in fact, **none** of the animal control personnel or veterinarians surveyed were able to correctly delineate the various breeds).
3. BSL takes dogs out of the hands of law-abiding citizens and drives them underground into the hands of more nefarious owners.
4. Any breed can become dangerous when they're raised to be aggressive (whether intentionally or unintentionally)
5. Focusing primarily on the breed of dog at fault often results in the neglect of human and environmental factors that contribute to dog bites.ⁱⁱ

The fallacy of dog breeds

*"For the truth is, there **is no such thing in nature as an animal breed**. All distinctions in animal taxonomy below the species level are relative, transient, and ephemeral. Zoology does not even deal with "breeds" - it admits only subspecies and variations within a species and argues endlessly about those. When zoologists are often scarcely even able to say for certain which populations constitute species (as is emphatically the case within genus *Canis* where the domestic dog resides along with his wolf cousins), how then shall it be possible to distinguish something like a "purebred" dog breed?" ~ J. Jeffrey Bragg*

"What comprises a breed is not a unique set of genes, neatly packaged with clear boundaries that identify what is and what is not a member of the breed. AKC (Kennel Club) registration is not especially meaningful for defining the attributes of a dog breed. ...What distinguishes one breed from another is the relative allele frequencies of the aggregate set of genes that serve as blueprints for the breeds of dogs." ~ Dr. James E. Seltzer

In the paper, "Comparison of Visual and DNA Breed Identification of Dogs and Inter-Observer Reliability" by Victoria L. Voith, Rosalie Trevejo, Seana Dowling-Guyer, Colette Chadik, Amy Marder, Vanessa Johnson, Kristopher Irizarry, the following statements and conclusions were drawn concerning breeds:

*"Crosses of purebred dogs (particularly beyond the first generation) can result in unique combinations and a collage of features. In fact, the pictures of Scott and Fuller's dogs looked more like breeds other than their immediate ancestors. **Many current breeds were derived by crossing existing breeds or by selecting for morphological variations within a breed until a "new" breed was established.** It actually shouldn't be surprising that visual identification of mixed breeds does not always agree with DNA based breed identification"*

*“A recent genetic study in dogs determined that very few regions of the canine genome encode morphological traits associated with breed-defining physical traits. Dogs have on the order of 20,000 to 25,000 genes and **fewer than 1% of the dog’s genes control the external morphological features associated with specific breeds of dogs**, such as ear shape and size, whether the ears are floppy, length of the legs, length of the coat, coat colour and shape of the head and length of muzzle. A dog could genetically be 50% a German Shepherd Dog and lack the genomic regions responsible for the German Shepherd Dog size, coat colour, muzzle length and ear properties.”*

Their conclusion:

“The disparities between visual and DNA identification of the breed composition of dogs and the low agreement among people who identify dogs raise questions concerning the accuracy of databases which supply demographic data on dog breeds, as well as the justification and ability to implement laws and private restrictions pertaining to dogs based on breed composition.”

A ‘breed’ is a socially-derived mental construct, not a scientific taxonomy. All breeds are arguably ‘mutts’ – some have lineages and histories and special names, but this is meaningless nonsense in scientific terms. The idea is the result of regarding human perception as scientific certainty.

Breed identification DNA tests are a sure-fire way to make money for those who sell them, including veterinarians who are paid for product endorsement.

Do they work? CAN they work?

No. In fact, the results are consistent: a pure-breed dog comes back as being a vague combination of three or four breeds.

Breed DNA tests are not too different from Astrology, Numerology and Tarot Card reading: If you give a vague enough answer, believers will rationalize whatever result you give them, reinforcing the preconception.

DNA-based breed identification tests suggest physical features and possible temperament traits, but they definitely don’t tell you what an individual dog’s behaviour is going to be like. As any animal or human behaviourist, psychologist, biologist, or anthropologist will tell you, a living creature’s behaviour is the result of a combination of genetics and environment.

Flawed interpretations of research

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centres for Disease Control and Prevention ("CDC"), commissioned a number of studies during the 1980s and 1990s to determine the scope and nature of the problem of dog bites in the United States.

In the twenty-year period of the CDC studies, the breed responsible for the most number of bites has changed. From 1979-1980, Great Danes caused the most number of fatalities with three deaths for the time period. However, four breeds were tied with two deaths each: Pit Bulls, Rottweilers, Huskies, and Malamutes. In 1981, Pit Bulls took over as the breed with the most number of fatal bites. Pit Bulls remained in that position until 1993 when Rottweilers began causing approximately ten fatal bites per two-year reporting period. The last available reporting period, 1997-1998, shows that Rottweilers caused ten fatal bites per two-year period, while Pit Bulls caused six, and Saint Bernards caused three. During the 20-year study, 90 deaths were excluded because the breed was "unavailable."

The oft touted and well-known studies have been quoted, misquoted, cited, misread, and misunderstood on a regular basis by politicians, attorneys, the media and others looking for a sound-byte or quick solution to a complex problem.

The CDC study, if read in its entirety, explains in detail the inherent problems in attempting to calculate breed involvement in fatal attacks. The CDC further explained that a major flaw in their study was the inability to factor in total breed populations relative to breed related fatalities. The CDC concluded that fatal attacks are so rare as to be statistically insignificant in addressing canine aggression.

Experts asked to comment on cases of dog attacks during the 1960s and early 1970s almost unanimously agreed the problem rests with owners failing to control their dogs, children attempting to interact with dogs unfamiliar to them, and the use and procurement of large dogs for guard/attack dog functions.

But by the 1980s the events contributing to a dog bite virtually disappear from newspaper reports. Dogs were now reported as biting without provocation and even some of the “experts,” relying on media accounts for their information on dog attacks, began to erroneously blame specific breeds.

One repeatedly finds in media accounts of dog attacks: inaccurate breed identifications, seriously flawed accounts of circumstances surrounding the attack and vital and relevant details concerning both human and canine conditions regularly excluded. Yet, all previous “scientific” studies on fatal dog attacks have used newspaper reports as either their sole source of reference or as an integral part of the study. ⁱⁱⁱ

Court findings in Denver, where BSL was introduced, illustrate perfectly the astounding levels of ignorance and preconception that exist among officials and the general public: ^{iv}

1. Biting

“The court finds no scientific evidence proving that the biting power of pit bull dogs exceeds that of other dogs. However, the City did prove that they inflict more serious wounds than other breeds. They tend to attack the deep muscles, to hold on, to shake, and to cause ripping of tissues. Pit bull attacks were compared to shark attacks.”

Because severe and, to a much larger degree, fatal attacks are relatively rare, and since the focus of most epidemiological studies in the past two decades has been on breed only, there was a scarcity of comprehensive data on the types of injuries other breeds of dogs have inflicted and, as such, no valid comparison could be made between the types of wounds inflicted by Pit bulls versus other breeds of dogs.

Shaking, holding and tearing are NOT breed-specific behaviours—they are canine behaviours. Injury to deep muscles and the ripping of tissue are easily and frequently accomplished by any large dog during the process of a severe attack. The fact is, one cannot examine autopsy reports or autopsy photographs and determine the breed of dog by the injuries inflicted. There are hundreds of examples of grievous, tearing- type injuries inflicted by other breeds of dogs.

The power of the bite is proportional to the size of the jaws and the jaw muscles. There is no anatomical structure that could be a locking mechanism in any dog. Neither Bulldogs, Pit bulls, nor any other breed of dog have a jaw structure that would allow for gripping with their front canine teeth and simultaneously grinding or chewing with their back molar teeth, a popular myth. It is generally agreed that all dogs bite at approximately 200–450 psi (the higher end numbers apply to larger dogs).

2. Destructiveness

“The Court finds that some pit bull type dogs, due to their strength and athletic ability, can damage facilities and equipment. There is a disproportionate number of attacks by chained pit bull dogs which is indicative of their strength.”

There is simply no way to explain how the Court could possibly have come to the conclusion that being attacked by a chained dog is indicative of strength. It simply is not a reasonable or valid conclusion.

The only possible explanation is that they were basing this finding on a chained dog breaking a restraint and then attacking a person (breaking a chain allegedly being indicative of strength)—see Finding #6 addressing this.

3. Fighting Ability and killing Instinct

“Importantly, there was no evidence that any AKC registered American Staffordshire Terrier or Staffordshire Bull Terrier or any UKC registered American Pit Bull Terrier was involved in any severe or fatal attack. Nevertheless, the City did prove that unregistered pit bull type dogs were responsible for a disproportionate number of severe or fatal attacks on other dogs and human beings. Credible testimony also proved that, when a pit bull dog begins to fight, it often will not retreat.”

Since the data on fatal attacks presented by the City was so significantly flawed and biased (see Finding #1), it is little wonder that Pit bull attacks appeared “disproportionate” to the Court. As for the “often will not retreat” remark, see Finding #4.

4. Frenzy

“Many aggressive and vicious dogs can become uncontrollable when excited or challenged. No credible evidence proved that pit bull dogs were more likely to enter a frenzied state than other dogs. However, the evidence proved that once pit bull type dogs do attack, they are less likely to retreat than other dogs.”

These two findings of the Court contradict each other. The Court found that Pit bulls are *not* more likely to become frenzied or uncontrollable than other breeds of dogs, but were less likely to retreat. A frenzied, uncontrollable attack by a dog is highly aberrant and abnormal behaviour. The very definition of “frenzied” is “wildly uncontrollable or abnormally excessive.” What the court is implying is that other breeds behave “normally” during a frenzied attack and Pit bulls behave “abnormally” during a frenzied attack.

Also, how can retreat be defined or measured in a frenzied and uncontrolled attack? At what point in time is retreat during a frenzy determined to be normal versus abnormal? One minute or five minutes after the attack? When the victim stops moving? When the dogs are subjected to other stimuli or interference? None of these components were defined or accounted for, yet the court, nevertheless, concluded that anecdotal evidence presented by the City was sufficient to find that Pit bulls “were less likely to retreat.”

There are untold numbers of other cases involving many breeds and types of dogs involved in these behaviours (tearing, shaking, and holding) during an attack, seen consistently over the last century. Throughout the history of the human/dog bond, owners have witnessed their puppies or adult dogs vigorously shaking and tearing at everything from stuffed toys to captured small animals. For anyone to claim this is a behaviour exclusive to Pit bulls demonstrates how statements made with no factual basis can easily wind up in “official” court records, especially in a climate of fear and hysteria.

5. Manageability

“American Staffordshire Terriers, Staffordshire Bull Terriers, American Pit Bull Terriers, and their mixed breeds can make excellent, gentle pets. Nevertheless, credible testimony proved that proper handling, including early socialization to humans, is very important for these dogs. Even their most ardent admirers agree that these dogs are not for everyone and they require special attention and discipline. The Lockwood study reported that 13.3 percent of pit bull type dogs attacked their owners as compared with 2.2 percent of other dogs.”

The study from which these claims are based (Lockwood) did not identify or define the relationship between the “owner” and the dog. Was the owner an abusive owner? Was the dog maintained on a chain 100 feet from the owner’s residence? How long did the owner have the dog: 1 day, 1 month or 5 years? These are extremely important details that explain behaviour and aggression, yet they were not defined, accounted for, or qualified, rendering any conclusions or statistics about aggression towards owners meaningless.

The court found that Pit bulls can make “excellent and gentle pets,” yet stated it was important for Pit bulls to receive “proper handling and early socialization to humans.” If Pit bulls can become excellent and gentle pets with proper handling and socialization, then how is this evidence that the breed is “different” than any other breed? This “finding” of the court about the “manageability” of Pit bulls has been recognized for centuries as the essence of all dogs—it is the very foundation on which thousands of years of dog ownership and management have been based. “Proper handling and early socialization to humans” is how *all* dogs come to be “excellent and gentle pets” and certainly is not a characteristic particular to Pit bulls.

6. Strength

“Pit bull dogs are stronger than many other dogs. The evidence showed that 42.7 percent of the pit bull type dogs attacked while restrained (Defendants’ Exhibit CC and Plaintiffs’ Exhibit 50).”

The court came to this totally inaccurate conclusion quoting data that in no way implied or supported this. The statistics used to prove “strength” was a study that stated, “42.7% of Pit bull type dogs attacked while restrained.” The entire quote from this study reads: “Virtually all the dogs in the cases we studied were owned. A surprising number, however, were restrained at the time of the attack. In the case of pit bull bites, 61 of 143 (42.7%) involved animals that were fenced, chained, or inside prior to the incident. Twenty cases (14%) involved pit bulls that escaped by jumping fences or breaking chains immediately before the attack. Of the 135 cases involving other breeds, 36 (26.7%) involved restrained animals, but only 1(0.7%) broke restraint to initiate the attack.”

The authors of this study did not imply or suggest that this statistic was indicative of strength. The authors of this study defined “restrained” to be “animals that were fenced, chained, or inside prior to the incident.” How does 42.7 percent of Pit bulls attacking someone while fenced, chained or inside a house indicate strength?

An equally disturbing possibility is that Denver, and/or the trial court, used the wrong statistic, meaning they should have used the 14% quoted in this study of Pit bulls jumping fences or breaking chains as indicative of strength. But again, this would be an inaccurate and totally baseless conclusion since the type and strength of the “restraint” is not defined and therefore cannot be used as evidence of strength. For example, was the fence these Pit bulls jumped three feet high or five feet high? Did all of these owners use chains with the same thickness and gauge? Did the Pit bull break loose of a bicycle chain or a logging

chain? None of these vital qualifiers were taken into account or measured; therefore any conclusions about the strength of any of the dogs in this study are invalid.

7. Unpredictability

“The evidence showed that most dog attacks (by all breeds) are unprovoked. However, pit bull dogs, unlike other dogs, often give no warning signals before they attack.”

This is simply not true. All information about provocation and warning signals from any breed of dog is anecdotal at best and, at worst, unreliable. A large majority of victims of dog attacks are very young children. *Young children are most frequently bitten by dogs precisely because they are unable to read and understand the warning signals that dogs so often give prior to an attack.* Also, in a highly litigious society, both victims and owners are increasingly less than truthful about their involvement or behaviour preceding a dog attack, making their testimony about provocation suspicious. Additionally, any cases in which media accounts were used as evidence to support the argument that dog attacks are unprovoked are meaningless, as the media is NOT a credible or impartial source of information on the nature or behaviour of dogs involved in attacks.

The classification of an attack as unprovoked is usually based on the declarations of a negligent owner who does not care to understand canine behaviour, an owner who is unable to read (understand) canine behaviour, a busy owner who is too preoccupied with the tasks of daily living to see the signs and signals dogs usually display, or persons who deliberately misrepresent the facts to limit their culpability.

Dogs have evolved over thousands of years (both from their ancestor the wolf, and as domesticated dogs in a human society) to be social animals. Social animals communicate by body language and with vocalization. Dogs do this with stares, body stiffening, positioning of ears, tail and head, and growling, to name only a few. Pit bulls do this as much as any other breed of dog.

In addition, there is a preconception that Pit Bulls are more tolerant to pain.

While it may seem logical that increased tolerance to pain would be a significant factor in Pit bull attacks, in reality it is not. Most dogs do not respond to pain while in the frenzied state of a severe attack. This is a behaviour observed in many different breeds of dogs and is found repeatedly in many of the earlier examples given of dog attacks. However, forceful and direct intervention, by either separating or shielding the victim from the dog(s) has prevented many a severe attack from becoming a fatality in both Pit bull and other breed attacks.

There is also a pervasive belief that certain dogs are ‘inherently’ dangerous, that the ‘breed’ is genetically predisposed to aggression:

“In breeding dogs some humans have created and continue to select for traits that will increase their tendencies to inflict injuries and to fight one another for the exclusive purpose of our “enjoyment.” To claim that the dog is dangerous because we seek out, select for and encourage these behaviours is just another example of the transference of cruel human traits and behaviours unto our dogs.

The Pit bull’s history of being bred for dog fighting is used by some politicians, experts, courts of law, the media, and even Animal Control personnel as proof of the dangerousness” of the breed.

Those who claim the Pit bull is destined by its genetic code to behave a certain way

are denying the very fact that man has selected for these traits, continues to select for them and could just as easily select against them. It is this claim that Pit bulls cannot revert back to normal behaviours; that they are permanently altered as to render them unable to behave like “normal” dogs, which is the basis for the flawed argument of “inherent dangerousness.”” ~ Karen Delise, Pit Bull Placebo

Effects of BSL

What does happen under breed-specific legislation?

1. Innocent people continue to be threatened, bitten, traumatized, disfigured, and killed - by non-targeted breeds and types of dogs.
2. Innocent dogs are killed because they look a certain way.
3. Millions are wasted and animal control resources stretched thin in order to kill dogs and not save people.
4. Abusive and irresponsible owners carry on with “business as usual.”
5. Good owners and their families are outcasts (if they keep their targeted dog) or devastated (if they give up their targeted dog).
6. Reason, science, and expertise gets ignored or, even worse, scoffed at.
7. Nobody learns anything about the real reasons why dogs bite and attack, safety around dogs, or responsible dog ownership.^v

“Not until false claims, both of anatomical and behavioural issues, are cast aside, not until breed identification issues are addressed, and not until the circumstances that contributed to dog attacks are examined can aggression be addressed in a way which may provide viable solutions and offer preventive measures to decrease the number of attacks on humans. Solutions to canine aggression are doomed to fail if they are based on “facts” not founded on evidence or on unproven claims of canine anatomy or behaviour. Unfortunately, much of the information presented about Pit bulls falls under the category of pseudoscience. Pseudoscience can best be described as information presented as fact, with the appearance of a scientific basis, which, however, is found upon examination to have no evidence supporting such claims.” ~ Karen Delise, Pit Bull Placebo

In the end, who suffers when breed-specific legislation passes?

- People who live next to non-targeted breeds that are being dangerously mismanaged by irresponsible owners
- People who have been bitten or attacked by non-targeted breeds
- People who don't realize that any dog can inflict serious injury or kill
- Children, parents, the elderly, adults, and dog owners of all breeds
- In other words, everyone

“In Scotland, the Dangerous Dogs Act (DDA) 1991 was introduced at a time where several high-profile dog attacks on humans had caused alarm amongst the public. This legislation was hurriedly produced and poorly drafted, and has failed to make the public any safer from dangerous dogs. The DDA outlaws specific breeds of dog, but takes no account of the behaviour of dog owners. Furthermore, dog attacks are not criminal offences when they occur on private property. The police also report that, for various reasons, the DDA is difficult to enforce, and a huge drain on resources.

It is important to mention the role of the owner in a dog's behaviour. Someone with the best intentions and a genuine love of dogs may not have the skills, experience or physical strength, necessary to train and handle a powerful dog. In addition, a study carried out in the U.S. sought to determine what kind of person would own a 'vicious' dog, by comparing hundreds of owners of 'vicious' dogs with owners of other dogs.

'Vicious' dogs included pit-bull type dogs and any dog that had attacked humans or other dogs. This study found that owners of 'vicious' dogs were significantly more likely to have a criminal record than those who owned non-vicious dogs. This highlights a major flaw with breed specific legislation – it focuses on the dog, and takes no account of the ability of the owner to look after the dog, or how the dog has been trained, if it has been trained at all. It is clear that a dog's breed is only one factor which may affect its behaviour. Attempting to define the law purely in relation to breed has failed to protect the public." ~ Alex Neil, the MSP for Central Scotland.

"Our position will always be that breed-specific legislation as part of the Dangerous Dogs Act is fatally flawed and wastes limited police resources on seizing dogs of a particular breed, rather than focusing on dogs of any breed that are out of control. Unfortunately, breed specific legislation has the unintended consequence of turning banned breeds into status symbols, so that they are taken on by the wrong people who train them for the purposes of fighting or aggression." ~ Caroline Cisko, Kennel Club Secretary, UK

"Every dog has the capacity to be aggressive and dangerous when it is not properly trained so we need to better educate dog owners and potential dog owners about their responsibilities." ~ Robin Hargreaves - president-elect of the British Veterinary Association

One of the problems associated with BSL is that of identification as Janis Bradley says in 'The relevance of breed in selecting a companion dog', a USA National Canine Research Council report:

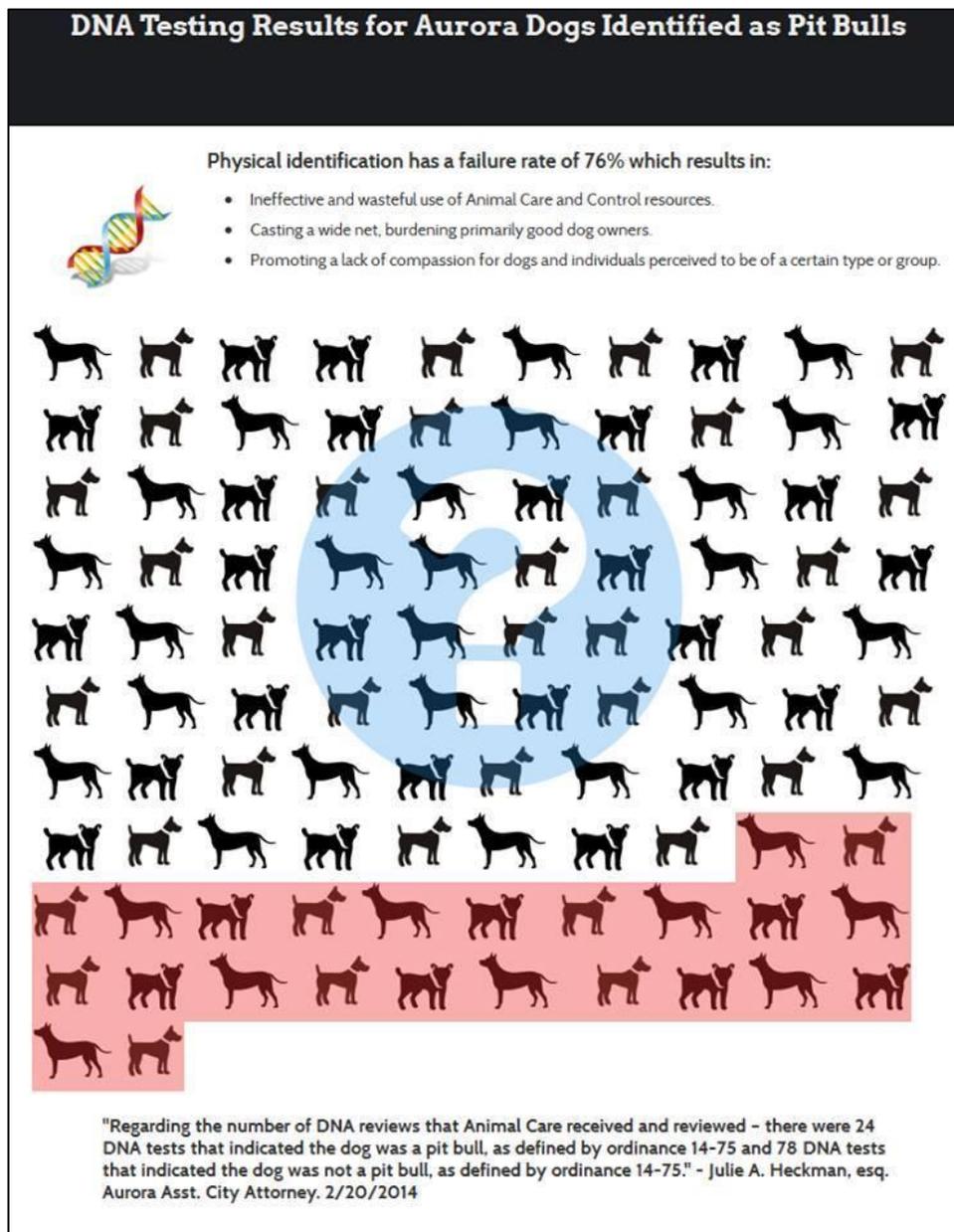
"...since, even among purebreds, breed is an unreliable predictor of behaviour, and since most of the behaviours associated with specific breeds are only tangentially related to desirable and undesirable qualities in pet dogs, the practice of relying on breed identification as a primary guide in either pet-dog selection or dangerous-dog designation should be abandoned. As casual attributions of breed ancestry to mixed-breed dogs are inherently misleading, dog professionals should create new schema for referring to this population. The focus of predicting behaviour should shift to the particular dog's personality as developing from the interaction of genes and environment and to dogs as multifaceted individuals, bearing in mind that the guardian's choices about how to live with a canine companion are likely to shape the dog's behaviour. Public policy decisions should focus on the actual behaviour of both the individual dog and the human guardian."

In addition, the faulty identification is invariably compounded by flawed accounts of the events and exclusion of important information relevant to the specific case:

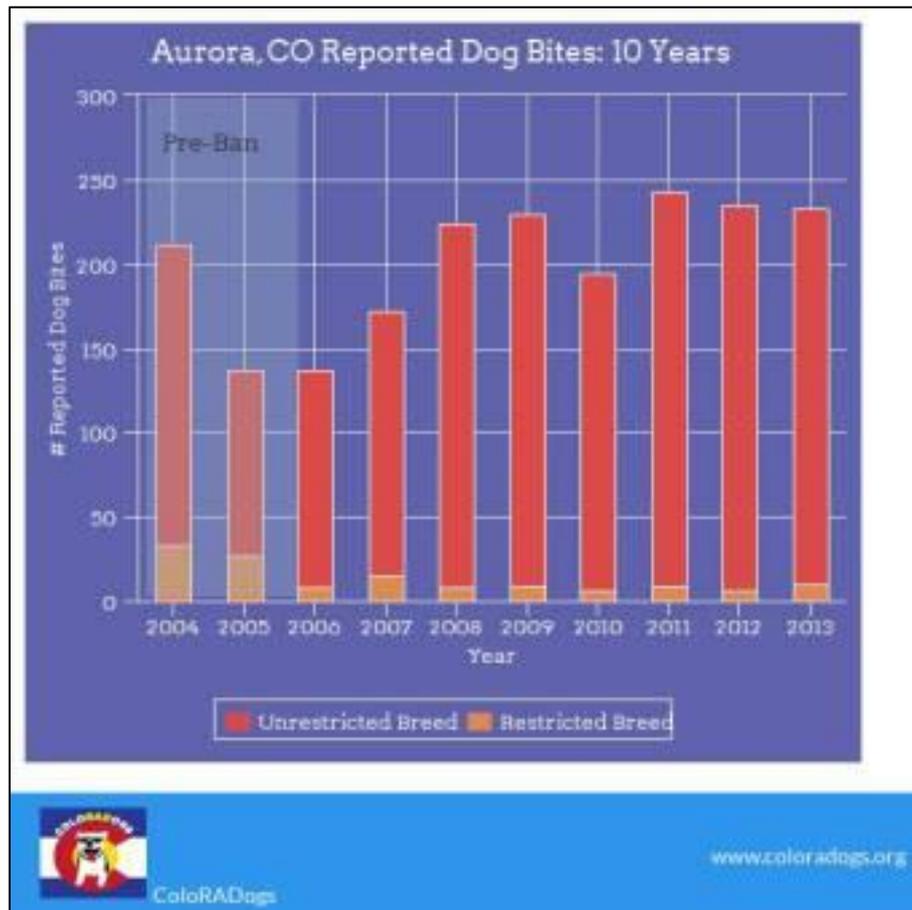
"One repeatedly finds in media accounts of dog attacks: inaccurate breed identifications, seriously flawed accounts of circumstances surrounding the attack and vital and relevant details concerning both human and canine conditions regularly excluded. Yet, all previous "scientific" studies on fatal dog attacks have used newspaper reports as either their sole source of reference or as an integral part of the study. Therefore, it is vital for both the scientific community and the public to

recognize that the media is under no obligation to provide balanced, comprehensive or accurate data on severe/fatal dog attacks, nor does it.” ~ Karen Delise, Pit Bull Placebo

“Bear in mind, all previous “statistical” studies on fatal dog attacks (Winkler, Pinckney, and the CDC) have relied on newspaper articles for breed identification. The frequency of media-reported errors in breed identification is so great (and biased) as to render all numbers on breeds obtained from media sources invalid.” ~ Karen Delise, Pit Bull Placebo



Aurora, Colorado is one of the few places where DNA testing is codified in the law. Because of this, we can see exactly how good animal control is at the job of identifying “pit bulls.” 76% of the time, dogs being targeted under the ban are not covered under the wording of the law. 76% of the time, resources in the form of man hours and money are wasted on dogs that are unlucky enough to look the part. This information was also readily available via the city attorney’s office, but, yet again, both animal control and the media neglected to mention, even once, how abysmal the breed identification track record is.



Aurora's ban had not reduced attacks. While attacks by the restricted breed reduced in number, overall the incidence of attacks increased. When you remove one breed from the population, another breed takes its place.

What's more, the task force expressed concern that the ban might actually be having a negative effect on public safety; animal control facilities and workers were stretched thin because they were constantly having to respond to "pit bull" complaints and house alleged pit bulls. The task force felt that this had a negative effect on animal control's ability to respond to other types of violations.

BSL can be compared to gender profiling or racial profiling. Simply because a dog appears to be a dog on the restricted list it is treated as one.

Dogs are not the problem and BSL does not recognize this. People are the problem and until we find a way to punish people for their neglectful actions which allow dogs to bite and terrorize the public we will never stop the problem.

Breed-Neutral Legislation

A breed-neutral approach should include the following, according to the American SPCA:

- Enhanced enforcement of dog license laws, with adequate fees to augment animal control budgets and surcharges on ownership of unaltered dogs to help fund low-cost pet sterilization programs in the communities in which the fees are collected.

- Laws that mandate the sterilization of shelter animals, ideally before adoption, and make low-cost sterilization services widely available.
- Enhanced enforcement of leash/dog-at-large laws, with adequate penalties to ensure that the laws are taken seriously and to augment animal control funding.
- Dangerous dog laws that are breed-neutral and focus on the behaviour of the individual guardian and dog (taking care to ensure that common puppy behaviours such as jumping up, rough play and nipping are not deemed evidence of dangerousness). Graduated penalties should include mandated sterilization and microchipping (or other permanent identification) of dogs deemed dangerous, and options for mandating muzzling, confinement, adult supervision, training and owner education. In aggravated circumstances—such as where the dog seriously injures or kills a person, or a qualified behaviourist who has personally evaluated the dog determines that the dog poses a substantial risk of such behaviour—euthanasia may be justified.
- Laws that hold dog guardians financially accountable for a failure to adhere to animal control laws, as well as civilly and criminally liable for unjustified injuries or damage caused by their dogs.
- Laws that prohibit chaining or tethering (taking care also to prohibit unreasonable confinement once a dog is removed from a chain), coupled with enhanced enforcement of animal cruelty and animal fighting laws.^{vi}

“However, for every Pit bull that attacks someone, there are tens of thousands of his brethren that tolerate all the conditions humans place them in, from loving homes to horrific conditions of abuse, without ever biting or attacking. There are no highly publicized reports or scientific journal articles on the behaviours of these dogs. The tolerance of Pit bulls in extremely abusive situations is almost never reported or given recognition by the scientific community or the public. Only a few of these long-suffering dogs can be found as a footnote in a report on a completely unrelated matter or in newspaper articles or reports of dog fighting and cruelty investigations. Yet, the behaviours of these dogs are the behaviours which define the breed - the hundreds of thousands of dogs that reside in homes with small children and elderly persons, from doting owners to distracted owners, from abusive owners to demented owners.” ~ Karen Delise, Pit Bull Placebo

In conclusion: we must focus on the dog guardian, not the dog; on the behaviour of people, who must be fully accountable for their dogs' behaviour, and we must educate the public concerning basic prerequisites of animal welfare and public safety.

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i <http://stopbsl.org/bsloverview/the-failure-to-improve-safety/>

ii <http://lifeofdrool.blogspot.com/2013/09/breed-specific-legislationits-pits.html>

iii Pit Bull Placebo, Karen Delise

iv Pit Bull Placebo, Karen Delise

v <http://stopbsl.org/bsloverview/the-failure-to-improve-safety/>

vi <http://www.aspca.org/about-us/aspca-policy-and-position-statements/position-statement-on-breed-specific-legislation>