

PENNSYLVANIA FEDERATION OF DOG CLUBS, Inc.

A Statewide Organization for the Benefit of
Dogs and Dog Owners

HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE TESTIMONY ON DANGEROUS DOGS October 3, 1996

Members of the Committee and Ladies and Gentlemen

My name is Dotsie Keith and I am legislative chairman of the Pennsylvania Federation of Dog Clubs, representing 108 clubs across the state. I am also a member of the State Dog Law Advisory Board and the State Committee on Ethics in Animal Exhibitions.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you today about our mutual concern for the need to control dogs that are a danger to people and other animals.

In the late 1980's our Federation and other animal groups began work with the legislature on revisions both to the animal cruelty laws and to Act #225, The Dog Law, to address the growing problem of dog attacks. The results of these efforts was a new law making training and fighting any animal a 3rd degree felony and, under the Dog Law, adding a new section, Article V-5, that deals specifically with dogs that cause injuries or deaths.

Both of these laws were designed to help remove these kinds of dogs from society by punishing the owners and restricting the dogs, regardless of the type of dogs involved. They were done in this manner, unlike bills that have been recently introduced, to curtail offending dogs and irresponsible owners, while protecting well mannered, innocent dogs owned by responsible citizens.

The law making dog fighting a felony offense was directed at both the old, organized, back woods, clandestine blood sport fighting and the new macho street fighting, which posed more of a threat to the average person as it is usually done in urban areas. The "old" fighting dogs were people friendly, due to the owners having to be in the "pit" with the dog during the fight. Unfriendly ones were quickly disposed of. Since the purpose of the "street" dog is to prove that "my dog is tougher and meaner than yours", being "people friendly" is usually considered a fault.

These street dogs are, in most instances, mixed breeds of any kind of dog that seems to have the qualities they want. The young pups are then trained with exercise to build up their muscle strength, including tread mill work and holding on to hanging tires with their teeth, and given small animals, such as kittens and small dogs, which they are encouraged to tear apart. From these, the dogs graduate to gentle, larger dogs that do not know how to

fight this way. Often these animals are pets that have been stolen for this part of their dogs's "education". Philadelphians had to cope with this several years ago when the bodies of missing pets were found in a nearby park. These dogs are abused and brutalized by their owners to the point that they will attack anything or anyone. They are often used as guard dogs by those persons who are also involved in other types of illegal activities, such as drugs and illegal firearms. When one of these dogs gets loose in the community, they truly are a danger.

The primary reason that we worked to have dog fighting made a felony offense, was to give our police sufficient authority and reason to stop it. Prior to that, it was only a summary offense, which meant that it was pretty far down on their priority list. This also brought the District Attorneys into the cases, rather than having only non-profit S.P.C.A.s prosecute them. We are dealing, too often, with people, as well as dogs, that are a threat to society. Unarmed State Dog Wardens and humane society personel cannot be expected to cope with these situations without the assistance of our police force.

When this law is strictly enforced, the numbers of these dogs will, undoubtably, diminish also. When it is not, we are teaching our young people that cruel behavior is perfectly acceptable. In Chester, juveniles hang their dogs that lose a fight, cut out their tongues and set them on fire. After these children become immune to the suffering of animals, it is easy to torture and kill fellow humans, as has been proven in many studies. This law must be taken seriously and enforced by public officials, if the proliferation of these dogs is to be stopped!

As for the Dog Law, revisions and improvements to the Dangerous Dog section are being included in House Bill #2702, which has passed the House Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee. This amendment would make anyone guilty of a summary offense if a district justice declares their dog is a "dangerous dog", under the law's provisions. The owner would have to keep the dog confined during the appeal process, which current law does not, and the owner could not dispose of the dog except by having it destroyed. Again, this law applies to any dog and is none breed specific to protect the innocent.

The recently proposed bills try to describe certain types of dogs that would automatically be considered "dangerous". They are based on phenotype, the way a dog looks, and activities that many dogs do. The American Kennel recognizes 141 breeds of dogs for registration and participation in its shows, field trials and other events. Many of these breeds fit one of more of the descriptions in this bill. Approximately 80% of the pure-bred dogs owned by Pennsylvanians would automatically be declared "dangerous". It would include most of our working breeds, dogs used as "seeing eye" dogs, dogs that aide the handicapped, "police dogs", military dogs, search and rescue dogs; many hunting dogs and sight hounds, many

dogs used in herding and protecting livestock, a number of those in the Non-Sporting (companion dog) group and even some Toy breeds. And who can tell by looking exactly what breeds make up a "Heinz 57 variety"?

Many owners of loving family dogs would either then hide their innocent pets, meaning not licensing them or having them inoculated against rabies or have to have them killed or give them up or turn them loose on the streets due to the cost. This would fill up our shelters, which would have to kill most of them due to lack of kennel space and because no one would adopt them. Is this what the legislators have in mind?

Representative Caltagirone has said that he wants to stop a dog from biting before it bites. How can anyone know what a dog's intentions are? Children and adults need to be educated on the proper care, training and treatment of a dog. Each breed was created by man to serve a purpose in our lives. Buyers have to educate themselves as to which breed suits their own lifestyle and family. In regard to bites, we need education on prevention. The solution is not arbitrary discrimination. Can the authorities come into this room today and arrest and sentence someone just because they think that their appearance or "type" causes them to "look" dangerous?

Enclosed in the information given you are national and international studies done on dog bites. The first study was published in the journal of Pediatrics in June of 1996. It's conclusion states "The dog bite problem should be reconceptualized as a largely preventable epidemic. Breed-specific approaches to the control of dog bites do not address the issue that many breeds are involved in the problem and that most of the factors contributing to dog bites are related to the level of responsibility exercised by dog owners. To prevent dog bite-related deaths and injuries, we recommend public education about responsible dog ownership and dog bite prevention, stronger animal control laws, better resources for enforcement of these laws, and better reporting of bites."

The second article, published in Great Britain, states, "In the United States at least 50,000 dogs are produced each year in "puppy mills" for the mass pet trade. Usually the most popular breeds are represented in these intensive breeding operations and any animals of the desired breeds capable of producing young are likely to be bred and sold, regardless of temperament. The result has been the proliferation of physically and behaviorally unsound animals from among the most popular breeds, including those not traditionally associated with aggression to people, such as cocker spaniels, golden retrievers, malamutes and Siberian huskies. This problem has been widely documented in the American media." In other words, poorly bred dogs that have little early socialization, bred only for the money, with no concern for quality, are contributing to our country's dog bite problem. We see this in my breed made popular by Walt Disney, Dalmatians, with uncontrollable deaf ones

and those with unstable temperaments coming from our "puppy mills". The parents of these Dalmatians probably had the same inherited traits, but were bred anyway, with the puppies sold to the unsuspecting public.

I hope that you will read the enclosed studies to gain a better understanding of the problems that we are trying to address. We definitely do need to enforce the laws that we already have, which include the licensing law, rabies law, the law requiring that dogs be kept under control, and the fighting law and improve our non breed-specific law.

Please remember that 38% of your constituent families own a dog. That dog is a beloved member of their family. Most are responsible owners. To declare their pets "dangerous" would be a tragedy!

I have brought with me a chart showing most of our dogs that would be effected by the current bills and also pictures of dogs that I would like for you to identify as to their breed. Do not feel badly if you cannot identify them. It takes a great deal of training and a written and a "hands on" test to judge any one breed of dog according to it's A.K.C. standard at it's shows. There are only about 2 dozen people in this whole county that are considered qualified by the American Kennel Club to judge all breeds of dogs. We cannot and should not expect our State Dog Wardens to be able to have this kind of expertize.

Respectfully submitted

Dotsie Keith, Legislative Chairman
Pennsylvania Federation of Dog Clubs.

Enc.

Fatal Dog Attacks, 1989–1994

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ABSTRACT. *Objectives.* To update data on fatal dog bites and see if past trends have continued.

Design. To merge data from vital records, the Humane Society of the United States, and searches of electronic news files.

Setting. United States.

Subjects. U.S. residents dying in the U.S. from 1989 through 1994 from dog bites.

Results. We identified 109 dog bite-related fatalities, of which 57% were less than 10 years of age. The death rate for neonates was two orders of magnitude higher than for adults and the rate for children one order of magnitude higher. Of classifiable deaths, 22% involved an unrestrained dog off the owner's property, 18% involved a restrained dog on the owner's property, and 59% involved an unrestrained dog on the owner's property. Eleven attacks involved a sleeping infant; 19 dogs involved in fatal attacks had a prior history of aggression; and 19 of 20 classifiable deaths involved an unneutered dog. Pit bulls, the most commonly reported breed, were involved in 24 deaths; the next most commonly reported breeds were rottweilers (16) and German shepherds (10).

Conclusions. The dog bite problem should be reconceptualized as a largely preventable epidemic. Breed-specific approaches to the control of dog bites do not address the issue that many breeds are involved in the problem and that most of the factors contributing to dog bites are related to the level of responsibility exercised by dog owners. To prevent dog bite-related deaths and injuries, we recommend public education about responsible dog ownership and dog bite prevention, stronger animal control laws, better resources for enforcement of these laws, and better reporting of bites. Anticipatory guidance by pediatric health care providers should address dog bite prevention. *Pediatrics* 1996;97:891–895; *dog bites, children, injury.*

ABBREVIATIONS. DBRFs, dog bite-related fatalities; MCMTs, multiple-cause mortality tapes; NCHS, National Center for Health Statistics; HSUS, Humane Society of the United States.

From 1979 through 1988, dog attacks claimed at least 15 lives annually in the United States.¹ During this same period, pit bull breeds were involved in 41.6% of the deaths, almost three times more than German shepherds, the next most commonly re-

ported breed.¹ Alarming, the proportion of deaths attributable to pit bulls had increased from 20% during 1979–1980 to 67% by 1987–1988. Publicity about such attacks led to many jurisdictions adopting pit bull-specific bans to prevent such episodes. However, the wisdom of such a breed-specific approach has been called into question.² To monitor the problem and see if past breed involvement trends still held, we studied fatal dog attacks from 1989 through 1994.

METHODS

We used three sources of data to identify dog bite-related fatalities (DBRFs): the NEXIS search service of Reed Elsevier Inc,⁴ the multiple-cause mortality tapes (MCMTs) from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), and reports compiled by the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) sources, ie, press clipping services, local humane society and animal care and control agency reports, law-enforcement contacts, and legal consultations. We searched for accounts of DBRFs from 1989 to 1994 in the NEXIS database using the search strategy previously reported.¹ Briefly, this consisted of scanning for words or word combinations suggestive of DBRF in electronic files of newspapers, magazines, wire services, and broadcast transcripts. MCMTs from 1989 through 1992 were used to identify DBRFs in U.S. residents occurring within the U.S. DBRFs were defined as those with the underlying cause of death coded as dog bite (*International Classification of Diseases, Ninth Revision* [E906.0]). We also reviewed records where E906.0 or E906.9 (unspecified injury caused by an animal) was mentioned anywhere in the chain of events leading to death.

We also reviewed death tapes from 1987 and 1988, which were unavailable at the time of our previous report.¹ Information extracted for each case included decedent's age, sex, state of occurrence, and date of death. Mortality data through 1992 were used because they were the most recent data available at the time of analysis. The HSUS listing of DBRFs contained date of death, city and state of attack, number and breeds of dogs involved, and information on circumstances.

Information from the three sources were merged. Because breed characterizations of dogs involved in fatal attacks are a continuing source of controversy³ and because press accounts of dog attacks may be erroneous with respect to breeds of dogs involved, we primarily used breed data from the HSUS. These data generally involved a significant effort to obtain accurate breed designations through review of police or animal control reports, statements by owner or victim, or photographic evidence reviewed by knowledgeable animal control professionals. When multiple dogs of the same breed were involved in a fatality, we counted that breed only once. When crossbred animals were involved in a fatality, each breed in the dog's parentage was counted once. Thus, if three German shepherds killed a man, the German shepherd breed was counted once. If three German shepherd-labrador crossbreeds killed a man, the German shepherd crossbreed was counted only once, as was the labrador crossbreed. Dogs were also classified as on or off the owner's property and unrestrained or restrained (eg, chained, leashed) at the time of the

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attack. We also noted if the dog had any prior reported history of aggression and the dog's gender and neuter status.

Dog bite-related death rates per 100 million population were calculated for 1989 to 1994 using population estimates from the U.S. Bureau of the Census.⁴ Children less than 1 month of age were assumed to represent one twelfth of the population less than 1 year of age.

RESULTS

We identified 109 deaths from 1989 to 1994, a rate of 7.1 deaths per 100 million population per year. For the period 1989 through 1992 when all three data sources were available, 84 deaths were identified. The NEXIS/HSUS data identified 62 total deaths; death certificates identified 41 of these 62 deaths as dog bites and detected an additional 22 deaths from dog bites. Of the 21 deaths found by NEXIS/HSUS but not recorded as a DBRF on the death certificate, 11 were coded as E906.9; the other 10 deaths did not have E906.0 or E906.9 anywhere on the certificate. Given that NEXIS/HSUS data found 73.8% of total dog bite deaths during this 4-year period, we estimate that for the period from 1993 to 1994 an additional 9 deaths occurred for a total of 118 deaths during the 6-year study period.

Of 82 deaths that could be classified, 1 (1.2%) involved a police or guard dog at work, 18 (22.0%) involved an unrestrained dog off the owner's property, 15 (18.3%) involved a restrained dog on the owner's property, and 48 (58.5%) involved an unrestrained dog on the owner's property. Of 85 deaths where the number of dogs involved was known, 62 (72.9%) deaths involved one dog, 18 (21.1%) involved two dogs, and 5 (5.9%) involved three to seven dogs. For the 18 deaths involving unrestrained animals off the owner's property, 10

(55.6%) resulted from a dog that had escaped a fence, pen, or restraint and 7 (38.9%) involved two or more dogs.

We found no obvious trend in the number of fatalities over the years (1989 = 16, 1990 = 32, 1991 = 19, 1992 = 17, 1993 = 14, 1994 = 11). There was some variation by season (winter = 27, spring = 25, summer = 22, and fall = 35). The fall increase was noted primarily for attacks by unrestrained dogs off the owner's property. The three states with the largest number of fatal attacks were California, Texas, and Illinois (Figure). Only 16 states had no fatal attacks during the 6 years and only six states had no attacks from 1979 through 1994 (Figure). By NCHS region, the South had the most fatalities (49). The South also had the highest death rate per 100 000 000 (9.3) followed by the West (7.6), Midwest (6.4), and Northeast (3.9).

Of those killed by dog attacks, 56.9% were less than 10 years of age (Table 1). The death rate was particularly high for those less than 1 month of age and then fell continuously until age 29 when it began to climb. Males, whose death rate was 8.8% higher than that of females, accounted for 55 (50.5%) of the deaths. Between the ages of 1 and 29 years, there were more male than female victims; after age 49 years, the reverse was true.

Of the 18 deaths in infants less than 1 year of age, all but one occurred on the dog owner's property and involved an unrestrained dog (the exception involved a penned wolf hybrid). Three attacks involved two dogs. In 11 attacks, the infant was sleeping in a crib or bed. Malamutes and pit bulls were involved in four attacks each, huskies and German

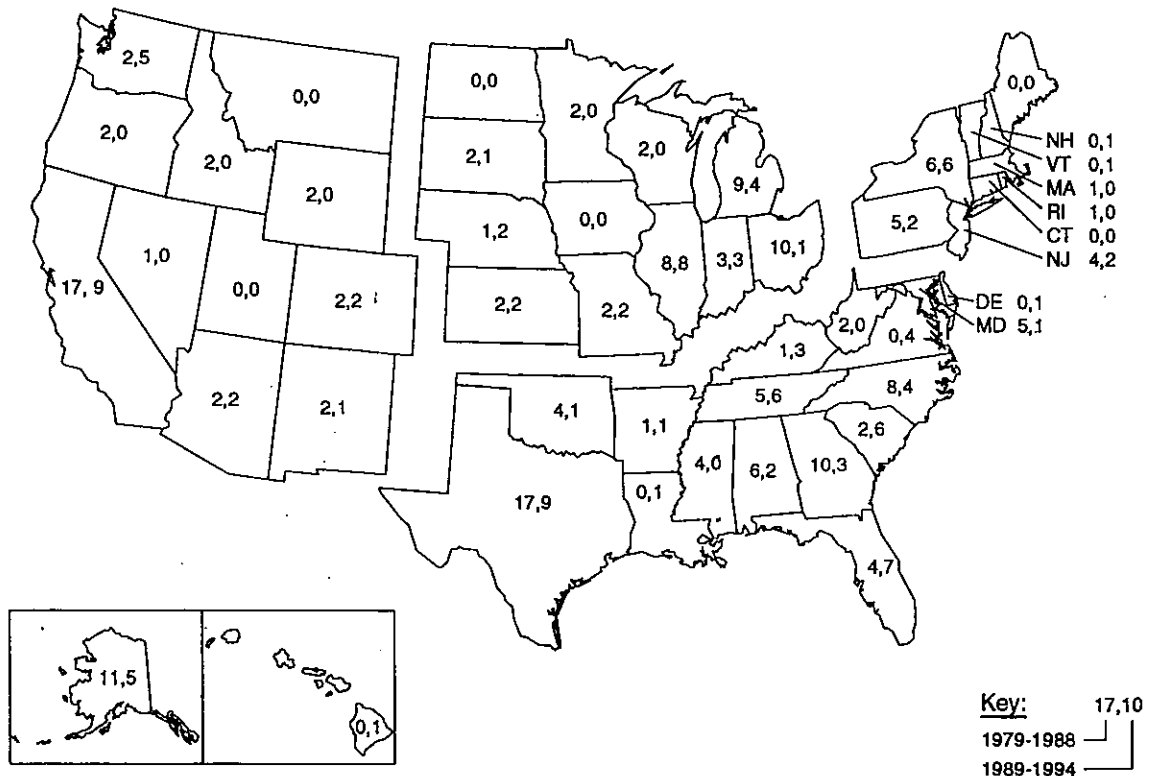


Figure. Number of dog bite-related fatalities, by state and region of occurrence, United States, 1979-1994.

TABLE 1. Dog Bite-Related Fatalities and Death Rates, by Age and Sex, United States, 1989-1994

Age group	Number of Deaths (Death Rate*)		
	Males	Females	Total
< 1 month	3 (298.5)	2 (208.5)	6† (305.4)
1-11 months§	4 (36.2)	8 (75.8)	12 (55.5)
1-4 years	18 (38.3)	9 (20.1)	27 (29.4)
5-9 years	11 (19.5)	6 (11.2)	17 † (15.5)
10-29 years	4 (1.8)	1 (0.5)	5 (1.1)
30-49 years	5 (2.2)	5 (2.2)	10 (2.2)
50-69 years	3 (2.5)	8 (5.8)	11 (4.3)
≥70 years	6 (11.5)	14 (16.9)	20 (14.9)
Total	55¶ (7.4)	53 (6.8)	109 (7.1)

* Per 100 million population per year.

† Includes one neonate of unknown sex.

§ There were three deaths in 1-month-olds, four deaths in 2-month-olds, two deaths in 6-month-olds, and one death each in 5-, 7-, and 9-month-olds.

¶ Includes one male of unknown age.

|| Includes one male of unknown age and one neonate of unknown sex.

shepherds in three each, wolf hybrids and rottweilers in two each, and a chow in one.

Full circumstances were known for 38 of the 44 deaths among children aged 1 through 9 years old. Seventeen (44.7%) of the attacks involved an unrestrained dog on the owner's property; 11 (28.9%) involved a child wandering too close to a chained dog, and 10 (26.3%) involved an unrestrained dog off the owner's property. Only 7 (17.9%) of the 39 deaths involved more than one dog.

From 1989 through 1994, pit bulls and pit bull mixed breeds were still the most commonly reported breed, involved in 24 (28.6%) of 84 deaths where breed of dog was reported (Table 2). Although the proportion of fatal attacks with reported pit bull involvement had increased from 20% in 1979 through 1980 to 67% by 1987 through 1988,¹ the

proportion fell steadily thereafter. The next most commonly reported breeds during the study period were rottweilers (16) and German shepherds (10). For 78 attacks with data on breed and circumstances, 6 of 24 (25.0%) pit bull-associated attacks involved an unrestrained dog off the owner's property, compared with 10 of 54 (18.5%) for all other breeds. In 7 deaths (29.2%), the pit bull was chained compared with 7 of 58 attacks (12.1%) for other breeds. For 82 attacks with data on breed and number of dogs involved, 8 of 24 pit bull attacks (33.3%) involved more than one dog, compared with 20.7% for 58 attacks involving other breeds. Of 11 pit bull attacks for which data were available, 7 (63.6%) had a prior history of aggression compared with 12 of 31 (38.7%) for other breeds.

For 41 fatal attacks, we had information on the gender of the dog involved. Twenty-five had a male dog involved (20 of the 24 single dog attacks). For 20 of these 41 fatal attacks, we also had information on the neuter status of the animal. In only one attack had the dog (a male chow) been previously neutered; 15 attacks involved an unneutered male dog.

Review of death tapes for 1987 and 1988 identified 9 additional deaths (5 in 1987 and 4 in 1988) not included in the prior report,¹ and additional news accounts that became available identified 4 more deaths (2 in 1986, 1 in 1987, and 1 in 1988) for a total of 170 deaths from 1979 through 1988 and a revised death rate of 7.2 per 100 million population.

DISCUSSION

The death rate from dog bite-related fatalities in the 6-year study period has remained relatively constant compared with the prior 10 years. Dog bites continue to produce about 18 deaths per year in the United States. The main victims of fatal dog bites are children; the death rate for neonates was two orders

TABLE 2. Breeds and Crossbreeds* Involved in Dog Bite-Related Fatalities, by Two-Year Periods, United States, 1979-1994

	Prior Study ¹					Current Study			Total
	1979-1980	1981-1982	1983-1984	1985-1986	1987-1988	1989-1990	1991-1992	1993-1994	
No. known	10	20	27	24	22	35	24	25	177
Purebreed									
Pit bull	2	5	10	9	12	8	6	5	57
Rottweiler	0	0	1	1	3	1	3	10	19
Shepherd	2	1	5	1	1	5	2	0	17
Husky	2	1	2	2	0	2	2	1	12
Malamute	2	0	3	1	0	2	3	1	12
Doberman	0	1	0	2	2	2	1	0	8
Chow	0	1	0	0	0	2	3	0	6
Great Dane	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	5
St Bernard	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	4
Akita	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	4
Crossbreed									
Wolf	0	1	1	2	1	4§	1	2	12
Pit bull	0	1	0	3	2†	3	1	1	10†
Shepherd	0	2	0	2	2	2	0	1	9
Husky	0	1	1	2	1	1	0	0	6
Malamute	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	3
Rottweiler	0	0	0	0	1†	1	0	1	2†
Chow	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2

* Data shown only for breed and crossbreeds involved in ≥4 fatalities; data from prior study¹ is updated. Each breed contributing to the crossbreed is counted only once.

† One fatality also involved a pure breed, so pit bull total involved = 67 and rottweiler total involved = 21.

§ One fatality from a pet wolf occurred in 1989 in Minnesota and was not included.

of magnitude higher than that for adults and the rate for children one order of magnitude higher.

Fatal dog bites represent the most extreme manifestation of a much more common problem. In 1986, dog bites caused an estimated 585 000 injuries resulting in medical attention or restricted activity, an estimate that placed dog bites among the top 12 causes of nonfatal injury.⁵ In 1994, an estimated 1.8% of the U.S. population was bitten by a dog and 0.3% of the U.S. population sought medical care for a bite, ie, 4.7 million bites, of which 800 000 bites resulted in medical attention (1.4 attended bites per minute).⁶

Injuries from playground equipment cause about 17 deaths each year and 170 000 injuries seen in emergency departments,⁷ a similar level of mortality but lesser amount of morbidity than dog bites. Nevertheless, the playground injury problem has resulted in the development of standards for equipment and playgrounds, training and inspection programs, dedication of staff to maintenance, and, most recently, the creation of a federally-funded national center for playground safety to educate the public.⁸ The dog bite problem has not enjoyed a similar prevention effort, despite the fact that 35% of American households owned a dog in 1994 representing a dog population exceeding 52 million.⁹ To counteract this lack of attention we need to reconceptualize the dog bite problem as a largely preventable epidemic, rather than as an endemic problem about which little can be done.

The current incidence of fatal and nonfatal bites and the large dog population underscores the need for a more aggressive approach to the prevention of dog bites. Physicians, health care providers, and those concerned with containment of health care costs can contribute to ameliorating the dog bite problem in several ways:

Patient Education

Victim behavior is only one of several factors contributing to a bite. Reviews^{3,10} have noted that the majority of victims are engaging in normal, nonprovocative activities before the bite incident. For example, in this study, 11 fatal attacks were to sleeping infants. Adults need to be informed that dog owners, through their selection and treatment of a pet, may be able to reduce the likelihood of owning a dog that will eventually bite.¹¹ For example, male dogs appear more likely to bite than female dogs, and unneutered dogs appear more likely to bite than neutered ones.¹¹ Educational efforts directed at high-risk groups, particularly children, could have a significant effect on the incidence of dog bites. Pediatric anticipatory guidance should address strategies for bite prevention, including the need for appropriate supervision of children (Table 3). Health care professionals should take an active role in helping to disseminate existing bite-prevention materials¹² and in helping develop new resources for patient education.

Community Advocacy

At the community level, health care providers should actively support school-based educational programs on bite prevention, canine behavior, and educa-

TABLE 3. Possible Messages for Anticipatory Pediatric Guidance on Preventing Dog Bites

Parents
Consider the selection of any dog carefully*
Dogs should be sterilized to reduce aggressive tendencies
Never leave infants or young children alone with any dog
Make certain that any dog entering the household receives proper training and socialization. Try to teach submissive behaviors such as rolling over to show stomach, taking food away without growling, etc
Dogs with prior histories of aggression should not be considered appropriate for families with children
Teach children basic safety around dogs and review these ideas regularly
If your dog develops aggressive or undesirable behaviors, seek professional help immediately
Don't play aggressive games with your dog (eg, wrestling, "sicking")
Children
Never approach an unfamiliar dog
Never play with a dog unless supervised by an adult
Immediately report stray dogs or dogs displaying unusual behavior to an adult
Never run from a dog and scream
Avoid direct eye contact with a dog
Don't disturb a dog that is sleeping, eating, or caring for puppies
Don't pet a dog without letting it see and sniff you first
Remain motionless when approached by an unfamiliar dog
If knocked over by a dog, lie still and remain in a ball
If bitten, report the bite to an adult immediately

* Realistically evaluate your environment and lifestyle to help decide the type of dog. Speak with a professional to make an informed decision. Ask questions about the dog's background. Although genetics play a contributing factor in aggression, each dog should be judged on an individual basis. Involve the family in the selection; be sensitive to cues that a child is fearful or apprehensive about a dog (if so, delay getting the dog). Spend time with a dog before bringing it into your home. Use caution about bringing a dog or puppy into the home of an infant or toddler.

tional programs regarding responsible dog ownership and training. There should be strong advocacy for supporting animal control programs and laws for regulating dangerous or vicious dogs.¹³ For example, in at least 19 deaths in this study, the dog had a reported prior history of aggression; moreover, 21% of DBRFs were from free roaming dogs off the owner's property. More stringent animal control laws and enforcement might prevent some of these deaths. Although several breeds appear overrepresented in the population of animals involved in fatal attacks, this representation fluctuates over time. Thus, it may be unproductive to view this as a problem that is unique to any one breed. Community responses that address the problem of chronically irresponsible dog owners may be an effective approach.¹⁴

Bite Reporting

Because improved surveillance data for fatal and nonfatal dog bites are needed if we are to better understand how to evaluate prevention efforts, providers should report dog bites as required by local or state ordinances. Reports of bite incidents should, whenever possible, include detailed information about the circumstances of the bite including ownership, breed, sex, spay/neuter status of the animal, history of prior aggression, and the nature of restraint before the bite incident.

Finally, it is important to recognize that most of the

52 million dogs in this country never bite or kill anyone. However, the problems caused by the highly visible minority of animals and their owners have far-reaching consequences.

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9 The ethology and epidemiology of canine aggression

RANDALL LOCKWOOD

In *Man Meets Dog* (1953), Konrad Lorenz praised the wonders of domestication that, in a few thousand years, had transformed the wolf into the docile Alsatian dog which his children could playfully and fearlessly torment. He added (p. 75):

I have a prejudice against people, even very small children, who are afraid of dogs. This prejudice is quite unjustified for it is a completely normal reaction for a small person, at the first sight of such a large beast of prey, at first to be anxious and careful. But the contrary standpoint, that I love children that show no fear even of big, strange dogs and know how to handle them properly, has its justification, for this can only be done by someone who possesses a certain understanding of nature and our fellow beings.

Lorenz admitted in his later years that much of what he had written about dogs was simply wrong. His assumption that domestication had largely purged the wolf of the behavior that made it potentially dangerous to man was one of his more serious errors.

For many years the phrase 'dog bites man' was a cliché for an event that is the antithesis of news, largely because it is such a common occurrence. Recently, however, media around the world have given enormous attention to dog attacks. This has created the popular impression that such attacks have become more numerous or severe.

Dog bites can affect anyone, from commoners to Queen. Recent articles in the *Washington Post* seriously raised the question of whether the Royal corgis should be allowed into the United States, given their well-publicized penchant for biting. From an epidemiological perspective, dog bite is a problem of epidemic proportions, affecting more than 1% of the US population annually and accounting for widespread exposure to many zoonotic diseases (Greene, Lockwood & Goldstein, 1990) and more than 20 fatalities each year. Yet it is a problem that for years has been described by public health officials as an 'unrecognized' epidemic (Harris, Imperato & Oken, 1974).

Several factors have led to increased recognition of the problem. First, a growing body of epidemiological reports have clearly described the extent of the issue (Beck, Loring & Lockwood, 1975; Lockwood & Beck, 1975; Berzon, 1978; Beck, 1981; Pinckney & Kennedy, 1982; Sacks, Sattin & Bonzo, 1989). Second, there has been widespread reporting of some of the more shocking fatal dog attacks in the

media. Third, a growing number of bite cases have been brought before the courts. In the US, settlements in excess of \$1 million and imprisonment of dog owners on charges of manslaughter have not been uncommon. Finally, a significant proportion of fatal and severe bites have been attributed to a relatively small number of breeds including pit bulls and Rottweilers. This has resulted in highly publicized efforts to restrict such breeds, with resulting conflicts between dog owners and authorities.

This chapter will first review the natural history of canid aggression, and some of the biological factors involved in bite incidents. It will then consider the general epidemiological findings for non-fatal attacks and recent dog-bite fatalities. Finally, some possible solutions to this problem will be proposed.

Why canids bite

Biting is obviously a key component of predatory behavior in canids. However, most social canids show surprisingly low levels of intra-specific aggression. Despite the strong restraint on the use of aggression, biting can occur in many contexts including expressions of dominance, territorial defense, food-competition, protection of young or other pack members, pain-elicited aggression and fear-elicited aggression. Dog attack can occur in any of these contexts, and may also involve components of inter-specific predatory behavior.

It is important to recognize that artificial selection, which has resulted in the production of various breeds of dogs, frequently produces exaggerated physical or behavioral characteristics that would be maladaptive in free-living wild canids. For example, racing breeds such as greyhounds and whippets can outrun most wolves, yet the changes mankind has produced in these animals would render them virtually helpless in the world of the wild wolf.

A major human objective in the production of dog breeds has been the creation of animals more aggressive than their wild ancestors. This has been done to provide protection through inter-specific aggression (e.g. most guarding breeds) or for 'entertainment', in the form of the heightened intra-specific aggression of fighting breeds, including 'pit bull' type dogs.

Although for practical reasons there have been no comprehensive studies of the biology or ethology of fighting breeds, several biological trends have been

suggested by veterinarians called upon to treat fighting animals, as well as the experiences of myself and Humane Society field investigators in working with several hundred such animals seized in actions against illegal dog fighting.

Scott & Fuller (1965) reported a genetically based decrease in the latency to show intra-specific aggression in terriers. This simply confirmed a characteristic long-associated with such breeds. Within fighting breeds this characteristic can be even more exaggerated. Among dog fighters, an animal's tendency to attack other animals, despite fatigue or injury, is termed 'gameness'. It is a quality that is strongly selected for by breeders within the 'sport', but which has not been subjected to any formal genetic analysis.

Fighting breeds also appear to have a much higher tolerance of pain, which may be mediated by peculiarities in neurotransmitters or opiate receptor sites. A single anecdotal report of unusual responsiveness to morphine and naloxone in a pit bull (Brown *et al.*, 1987) suggests that there may be physiological differences in the breed, although no definitive studies have been reported in the literature.

In addition to a lowered threshold for attack and higher pain thresholds in many fighting animals, selection for fighting has apparently resulted in the disruption of normal communication in individuals from recent fighting lineages. Under natural conditions, the aggression of wild canids is held in check by a detailed set of postural and facial signals that clearly indicate mood and intent (Fox, 1971a; Schenkel, 1967). In addition, aggressive encounters are normally ended rapidly when one individual emits the appropriate 'cut-off' behavior, such as infantile vocalizations (whining, yelping) and submissive displays (Fox, 1971b). Dogs from fighting lineages have been under selective pressures that suppress or eliminate accurate communication of aggressive motivation or intent. It is to a fighting dog's advantage for its attack to be unexpected. Many accounts of such attacks on people note that the incident occurred 'without warning'. Similarly, once initiated, such attacks are often not ended by the withdrawal of the opponent or the display of species-typical submissive behavior. Combat involving fighting dogs can continue for several hours and separation of the animals may require the use of a 'parting stick' to physically pry the animals apart.

The extent to which such characteristics are genetically determined within the fighting breeds has been the subject of considerable controversy (Lockwood & Rindy, 1987; Clifford, Green & Watterson, 1990). Although complex behaviors such as pointing, retrieving, herding and livestock guarding are generally accepted to have a strong genetic component, many fanciers of the fighting breeds attribute the comparatively simple lowering of the threshold for aggression to purely environmental influences of irresponsible owners.

It is also important to distinguish between selective influences on inter-specific vs. intra-specific aggression. Dog fighters and advocates of fighting breeds note that, historically, fighting animals that showed aggression to people were generally removed from the gene pool, either by being destroyed or being deemed unsuitable for breeding. It is true that contemporary dogs still employed in fighting are often easily handled by others (such as Humane Society investigators). However, there is no indication that the same selective pressures are in operation since there is currently a market for even the most intractable animals in the guard dog trade.

Clearly, genetic history can influence aggressiveness of breeds and individual dogs, either increasing or decreasing these tendencies. Throughout the history of dogs, many breeds such as the Irish wolfhound and Great Dane have earned a reputation for ferocity, only to become far more docile as trends in breeding shift. Indeed part of the problem with the 'pit bull' controversy is that the lineages of fighting and non-fighting animals within the fighting breeds have been separated for many generations, but have shown relatively little physical divergence. As a result, an American pit bull terrier from recent fighting stock may be physically indistinguishable from an American or English Staffordshire (bull) terrier 50 generations removed from the fighting pits, yet the two animals could be behaviorally very different.

Selective breeding can increase or decrease the tendency for dogs to bite in different contexts. Since the level of aggressiveness can be affected by several factors with likely genetic influence, including basic temperament, timidity and the presence of painful genetic disorders, it is possible for the lack of any directional selection in breeding to produce an increased tendency toward aggressiveness. For example, genetic factors underlying fearfulness may

increase the likelihood of fear-biting. Other genetic factors contributing to painful congenital physical defects could increase pain-elicited aggression. In the United States at least 50 000 dogs are produced each year in 'puppy mills' for the mass pet trade. Usually the most popular breeds are represented in these intensive breeding operations and any animals of the desired breeds capable of producing young are likely to be bred and sold, regardless of temperament. The result has been the proliferation of physically and behaviorally unsound animals from among the most popular breeds, including those not traditionally associated with aggression to people, such as cocker spaniels, golden retrievers, malamutes and Siberian huskies. This problem has been widely documented in the American media (see Anon., 1990).

Any or all of the influences outlined above can help to account for biological predisposition of a dog toward aggression. Additional biological factors that can influence the tendency toward aggression include the animal's age, sex, reproductive status (intact vs. spayed or neutered) and overall health. However, the likelihood that a particular individual will bite is also strongly influenced by many environmental variables including the training of the animal, the extent of its socialization to people (especially children), the quality of the animal's supervision and restraint, and the behavior of the victim (Lockwood, 1986). This multiplicity of interacting factors in dog bite makes it difficult and often meaningless to base predictions of a particular animal's aggressive behavior on a single characteristic, such as breed.

The epidemiology of dog bite

Having reviewed the factors that can contribute to a dog-bite incident, let us briefly examine some epidemiological findings surrounding this problem. In the United States there is no centralized record-keeping of dog-bite incidents. Communities vary widely in the extent to which these cases are investigated and bites are generally vastly under-reported (Jones & Beck, 1984). However, a general picture of bite epidemiology has emerged from a number of comprehensive surveys including Beck *et al.* (1975), as well as reports from local animal control agencies (Miller, 1986; Moore, 1987 *in lit.*; Oswald, 1991). Additional insights can be obtained from press accounts of dog bite incidents (Lockwood & Rindy, 1987) and the

study of the 'worst-case' scenarios, those attacks which involve human fatalities. An overview of such attacks in the last decade is provided by Sacks *et al.* (1989), and in-depth analysis of a smaller number of incidents is provided by Borchelt *et al.* (1983). I will also review the most recent evidence from the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) investigations of 37 fatal dog attacks occurring during 1989 and 1990.

The victim

Age of victim

Dog bite is a health problem that disproportionately affects children. Beck *et al.* (1975) found that 38% of reported bites in St Louis involved children under nine, who constituted only 15% of the population. Adults over 50 comprised 30% of the city's population, but only 11% of the bites. All other studies show a similar overrepresentation of young children among bite victims.

Fatal attacks show a bimodal age distribution, affecting the very young and the very old. Of the 157 victims of fatal dog attack reported by Sacks *et al.* (1989), 70% were under ten years of age and 22% were less than a year, while 21% were over 50. In the 1989 and 1990 cases, 60% were under five and 25% were over 72. Most of the victims falling outside of these age ranges were in some way debilitated, including one acute alcoholic and another victim attacked while having a seizure. It is interesting to note that this pattern of attacking the very young, the very old, and the infirm is consistent with the usual selection of 'prey' by wild canids, although predation was not considered a primary motivation in many of these incidents.

Sex of victim

Non-fatal dog attack is disproportionately directed against males. In the Beck *et al.* (1975) survey, 65% of the victims were male. Moore (1987 *in lit.*) reported 59% of bite victims in Palm Beach County, Florida, were male. There is no consistent pattern in the case of fatal attacks. Pinckney & Kennedy (1982) reported only 33% of the victims of fatal dog attack to be males in their review of cases from 1975-90. In Sacks *et al.* (1989) 60% of the victims during 1977-88 were male, while HSUS 1989-90 data indicated 48% male victims. This variability may be due to the

fact that the majority of fatal dog attack victims are young infants whose behavior played a less important role in the attack than in the far more numerous non-fatal attacks on older children.

Activity of victim

Under principles of Common Law there is the assumption that dogs are harmless unless they have previously demonstrated a vicious propensity. This often leads to the related assumption that victims of dog attack have provoked or otherwise precipitated the attack. However, those studies that have attempted to document the context in which an attack has occurred generally show that bite victims are rarely engaging in activity that could legally be considered provocation (i.e. teasing, tormenting or causing physical injury to the animal, or attempting to commit a crime). In the non-fatal bites surveyed by Beck *et al.* (1975) the victims had no interaction with the dog, or were walking or sitting in 75% of the cases. In 9.6% of the cases, the victim was playing with the dog and in only 6.5% of the cases could the victim's behavior be classified as provocation.

Lockwood & Rindy (1987) compared contexts reported in press accounts of non-fatal attacks by pit bulls ($N = 101$) and all other breeds ($N = 62$). In the pit bull incidents, 58% of victims were walking or had no interaction with the dog prior to attack, 19.8% were bitten coming to the aid of a person or animal that had been attacked, 7.9% were playing with the animal and 5% were provoking the animal. In the cases involving all other breeds, 48.4% involved no direct interaction, 27.4% play and 1.6% provocation.

In their report on fatal attacks, Sacks *et al.* (1989) did not provide details of victim behavior prior to the bite, but they noted that 6.9% of these incidents involved attacks on sleeping infants. The HSUS analysis of 1989–90 fatalities found 20% of the incidents involved attacks on sleeping infants, 43% occurred while the victim was walking near the dog, 30% involved play and 6.7% provocation (victims attacked during commission of a crime).

The dog

Number of animals

Most epidemiological reports do not mention the number of animals involved in non-fatal attacks. It is

likely that most of these involve a single dog. Earlier investigations of dog-bite fatalities suggested that these severe incidents were more likely to involve packs of animals (Borchelt *et al.*, 1983). Recently the majority of fatal attacks have involved a single, usually large, animal. Sacks *et al.* (1989) reported that 70% of the fatal attacks from 1979–88 were by individual dogs, 20% were by two and 10% involved groups ranging from 3 to 22. The 1989–90 incidents follow an identical pattern.

Ownership of animals

The popular perception of dog bite is that it is largely a problem caused by stray dogs. Beck *et al.* (1975) pointed out the important distinction between problems caused by true strays (i.e. ownerless or feral animals) vs. *straying*, unrestrained owned dogs. Of the biting animals in that survey, 14.5% were considered stray, 5.9% were owned by the victim or victim's family and the rest were otherwise owned. Sacks *et al.* (1989) identified 70% of the dogs involved in 1979–88 fatalities as owned pets and 27% as strays. In its investigations of 1989–90 incidents, the HSUS made a greater effort to locate owners of the dogs in question for the purposes of filing criminal charges where appropriate. Of the 37 dogs in these cases, 51% were owned by the victim's family and 37% by a friend or neighbor. Only one animal (3%) was a stray with no known owner.

Restraint

Although many bites are attributed to dogs running loose, animal control officers frequently comment on the role of chaining or other restraint in producing an animal that is actually more likely to bite. Such an animal might already have a predisposition to bite (and is therefore chained), but this may only exacerbate the situation by removing opportunities for socialization and by aggravating frustration, defensive aggression and other undesirable behavior.

None of the major epidemiological surveys comment on the nature of the restraint of dogs in non-fatal attacks. In the Lockwood & Rindy (1987) survey, 42.7% of the cases of pit bull attacks involved animals that were fenced, chained or inside prior to the incident. Another 14% involved the dogs jumping fences or breaking chains. For bites involving other breeds, 26.7% of the animals were similarly restrained but only 1% involved breaking restraint.

Sacks *et al.* (1989) reported that 28% of the animals in the fatal attacks they studied were chained at the time. Of the dogs involved in fatal attacks during 1989–90, 26% were chained, 32% in the house and 32% running loose.

Sex and spay/neuter status

Since much canid aggression is under hormonal influence, and since animal control agencies make spaying or neutering of pets a significant priority, it is important to attempt to get evidence on the reproductive status of animals involved in attacks. Serious dog bite seems to be a phenomenon primarily associated with male dogs. In the Beck *et al.* (1975) survey, 70% of the biting animals were male. Moore (1987 *in lit.*) was able to collect more detailed information on biting animals, recording information on breed, sex and reproductive status. Overall, 87% of all biting animals in that survey were males and 60% were unneutered males. Of the remaining 13% of bites attributed to females, half were by unspayed females. These statistics varied somewhat with breed. The breeds most frequently associated with bites also had the highest proportions of bites attributed to males (German shepherds, 86%; pit bulls, 90%; chow chows 92%; and Rottweilers, 98%).

Breed

From an epidemiological perspective, it is difficult to draw scientifically sound conclusions about the relative dangers posed by different breeds. Accurate breed-specific bite rates are hard to obtain. Such statistics require good information for both the numerator (number of bites attributed to a particular breed) and the denominator (number of animals of that breed in the population). This requires comprehensive reports of all bites, reliable breed identification, and detailed information about the demographics of the entire dog population of the area in question. Such numbers are often unreliable since compliance with local dog licensing or registration requirements is usually below 20% in most US communities.

Several epidemiological studies attempted to draw some attention to breeds apparently associated with higher risks. Pinckney & Kennedy (1982) attempted to compute breed-specific bite rates using relative numbers of animals of different breeds registered with the American Kennel Club to compute the denominator, a procedure that is unlikely to reflect

the overall United States dog population (Lockwood & Rindy, 1987).

Others have attempted to compute rates based on local registration, licensing or impound figures that are incomplete, but which should more accurately reflect breed representation in local populations. For example, Berzón (1978) reported that German shepherds made up 45% of the dogs listed in Baltimore bite reports, yet comprised only 23% of the animals registered in the city. From Miller (1986) it is possible to compute an index of the extent to which the representation of various breeds in the population of biting dogs in that area (Pinellas County, FL) deviates from their representation among the animals registered in that region. The breeds showing the greatest over-representation in the bite population were pit bulls (17.8% bite population and 3.7% of overall population = 4.81 \times), chow chows (2.43 \times), German shepherds (2.02 \times) and Dobermans (1.37 \times).

A similar analysis is provided by Moore (1987 *in lit.*), who used registration data to compute the percentage of the registered population of various breeds that are involved in bites. The highest rankings in that survey were pit bulls (12.3%), chow chows (11.4%), German shepherds (6.5%), Dobermans (4.3%) and Rottweilers (4.1%).

The relatively small numbers of animals involved in fatal attacks does not lend itself to this kind of bite-rate analysis in the absence of any national census on dog population. However, the patterns that emerge are consistent with the above findings. Sacks *et al.* (1989) reported that, of the 101 animals in their survey for which breed could be determined, pit bulls and pit bull mixes comprised 43%, German shepherds and shepherd mixes 15%, Siberian huskies, malamutes and mixes 18%, Dobermans 5%, Rottweilers 5% and wolf-dog hybrids 5%. The HSUS analysis of the 39 animals involved in fatal attacks during 1989–90 showed pit bulls and mixes comprised 25.6%, German shepherds and mixes 17.9%, Siberian huskies, malamutes and mixes 15.4%, wolf-dog hybrids 10.2% and chow chows 7.7%. All of these figures are likely to be significantly greater than their representation in the overall dog population of the United States.

Conclusions

Although dog bite is a serious public health problem, it is important to remember that such encounters

represent a very small fraction of the hundreds of millions of human-dog contacts that occur each day, most of which are deeply enjoyed. Likewise, the HSUS's focus on the small fraction of dogs implicated in human fatalities should not obscure the fact that these 20 or so animals involved in such attacks each year represent an infinitesimal portion of the American dog population, less than .00004%! The proportion of American humans who kill other human beings is more than 200 times this fraction.

Humankind has made the dog in its image and, increasingly, that image has become a violent one. The breeds of dogs that have been chosen to reflect our aggressive impulses have changed over the millennia. In the last 20 years the choice has moved from German shepherds, to Dobermans, to pit bulls, to Rottweilers to a current surge in problem wolf-dog hybrids.

Problems of irresponsible ownership are not unique to pit bulls or any other breed, nor will they be in the future. Effective animal control legislation must emphasize responsible and humane ownership of genetically sound animals, as well as the responsible supervision of children and animals when they interact (Lockwood, 1988). I believe this can be encouraged in several ways:

- 1 By strengthening and enforcing laws against dog fighting and the irresponsible use of guard and attack dogs.
- 2 By eliminating the mass-production of poorly-bred and unsocialized animals in large-scale 'puppy mills'.
- 3 By introducing and enforcing strong animal control laws that place the burden of responsibility for the animal's actions on its owner.
- 4 By encouraging programs that educate the public about responsible dog ownership and the problems of dog bite.

It is possible to protect the health and safety of the public and at the same time preserve the rights of responsible dog owners. By placing greater emphasis on responsible and humane animal care, we can go a long way toward solving these problems and preserving the special human-dog relationship that has developed over thousands of years.

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Blood sport

Trained fighting dogs 'just tearing each other up' in Chester

By CINDY dePROPHETIS
Of the Times Staff

CHESTER — While taking one of her St. Bernards for a walk recently, Heather N. witnessed something that now haunts her.

"I saw a boy cutting a dog's tongue out," she said, not wanting to be fully identified for fear of retribution. "Then he set the dog on fire."

What she witnessed was the aftermath of the "sport" of dog fighting.

"I've been here nine years, and within the last two years it's been really bad," said Richard Higgins, who also lives in the West End, where the dog fighting appears to be most prevalent.

"It's mostly drug dealers," he said. "Saturday mornings or afternoons, they let two or three dogs go and let them fight them. I don't actually see money being exchanged, but I wouldn't doubt it."

There are different levels of dog fighting, according to Joe Pulcinella, director of the Delaware County Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

"One, you have teenage kids who have pit bulls. They walk down the street and come up against another kid with a dog and say, 'My dog's meaner than your dog,'" he said. "It's that kind of informal thing that is difficult to do anything about."

Then, there are the organized dog fighters, he said.

"That is a very, very dangerous situation. These people are very heavily armed and are also dealing drugs," he said. "It's really disgusting."

Bred to be killers; pits bulls are the dog fighter's favorite. But strays and Rottweilers are also fought.

Higgins and others say the dog fighters starve the dogs to make them mean. Sometimes, they leave them in abandoned houses for two or three days without food or water.

"The kids in the neighborhood get dogs and lock them in the house over there," said Heather. "One puppy was only about two months old. You hear these puppies out here crying and there's nothing you can do."

Higgins said he recently called police about a pit bull which had been left in an abandoned house. It took two dog catchers to pull the dog out of the house, it was so strong, he said.

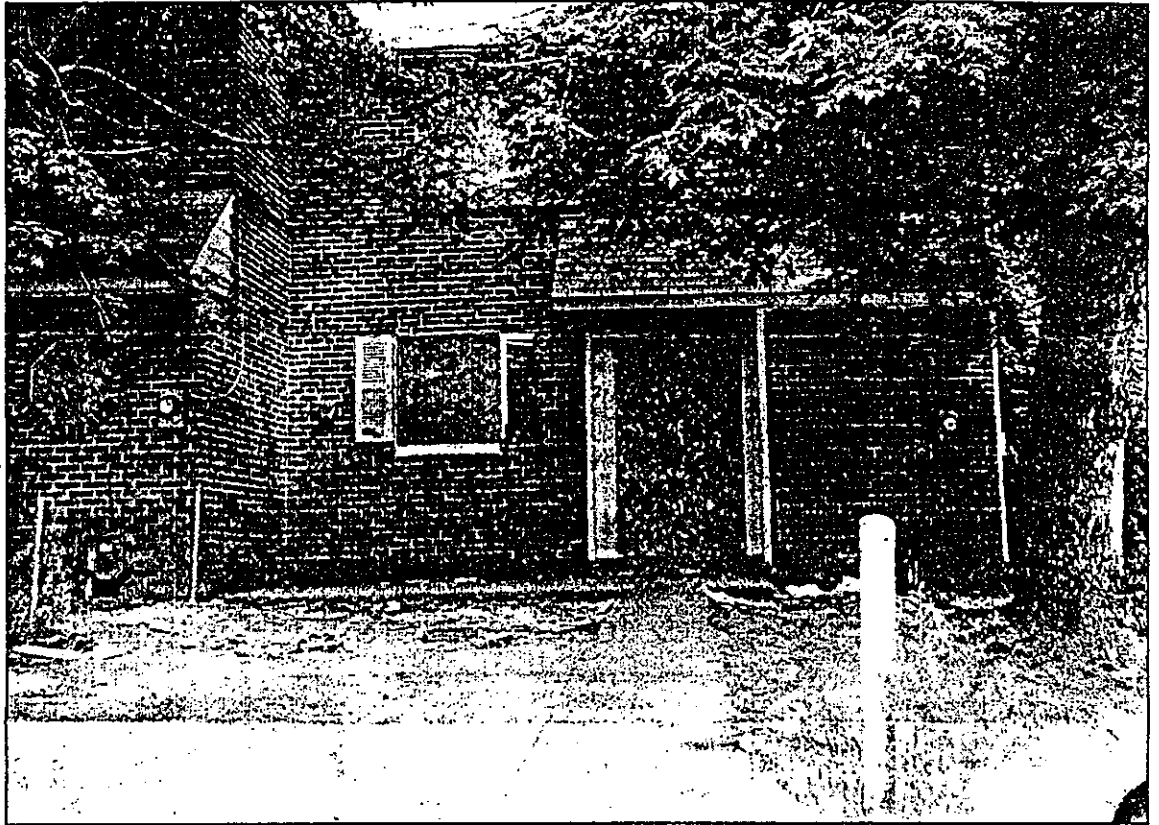
"The kid up the street has a pit bull," he said. "To make the dog strong, he ties a live-pound weight to the dog's harness, then they hold cats they've killed in front of the dog for bait and he has the dog chase them. I just cleaned up two cats today," he added.

Witnesses said there are several spots, where dogs are frequently fought — vacant lots near Swartz, Culhane and Curran streets are favorites.

"They hold dogs on chains, one on each side, and jerk the dogs at each other to make them mad," said Higgins. "They have break-away chains and let them go at each other until they are too tired, or one is dead. You can actually see the blood around the dogs' mouths, their jaws are so powerful.

"It's just a sport to them, something for them to watch," he added.

A dog fight is a fight to the death — one way or another.



This boarded-up Chester house is a suspected dog-fighting site. Police were unavailable to accompany a newspaper photographer inside the home.

Times staff photo by ROBERT J. GURECKI

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Whatever dog loses, they hang it up from a tree until it dies. The kids cut them down ... sometimes they set them on fire
CITY RESIDENT

“
“Whatever dog loses, they hang it from a tree until it dies,” said Heather. “The kids cut them down, then take them to the field. Sometimes they set them on fire or they’ll just leave them there.”
“I’ve seen them carry one out wrapped up in an old shirt with a lot of blood all over it and throw it in an abandoned car,” said Higgins.
Dog fighters often steal pets to use to train dogs. Heather said the dog fighters have tried to steal her two St. Bernards.
“They want to fight the male and mate the female,” she said. “They would probably make a lot of money off of them. We have four padlocks on our gates. That way they can’t get back there and take our dogs.”
Higgins said his wife has twice been

attacked by pit bulls, and now refuses to walk their dog. Neighborhood children are also afraid.

“I’ve seen them jump on top of cars and stay up there and wait until the dogs go by,” he said.

The people who fight dogs do not even bother to hide, most times. They fight dogs both day and night.

“I called (police) last Saturday. There were about 15 people in the field with three or four dogs fighting,” Higgins said. “I called once, then again a half hour later, but the police said it was not an important call. They said they take priority calls first.”

Dog fighting is illegal — a third-degree felony. Conviction can bring up to 10 years in jail and \$15,000 in fines.

“I’d like to see the police enforce the law,” said Higgins. “They don’t do it.”

Many residents agree. They blame police, and the SPCA, for ignoring the problem.

The top brass at the Chester Police Department denies receiving reports of dog fighting, something Higgins, Heather, and others dispute. Police Commissioner Wendell Butler Jr. said if it is occurring, the new state police presence and increased patrols will help abate the problem.

Pulcinella said dealing with dog fighting can be a dangerous pursuit.

“We get involved to a certain extent,” he said. “But when you go against the hardcore dog fighter, they are also smuggling guns and dealing drugs. We can’t get into those kinds of situations.”

“In order to combat this, you need to have

“
In order to combat this, you need to have people who are armed.
JOSEPH PULCINELLA,
Delco SPCA manager

“
people who are armed,” maintains Pulcinella. “If you can catch them in the act of an organized fight, it’s possible to press charges.”

Some would like to see new ordinances enacted banning pit bulls from the city — or, at least require owners to take out bonds on the dogs.

However, City Councilman Pete Seltzer said that the city had previously attempted to regulate pit bulls, but found that there are state statutes against doing so.

“People are afraid,” Higgins said. “Little kids are afraid to play, my wife is afraid to walk up the street.”

“It makes me sick to see these dogs just tearing each other up,” he added. “It’s just a big joke to them.”

Personal Health | Jane E. Brody

Dog bites man: No joke, but a hidden epidemic.

THE owner of a New Hampshire resort knew her dog did not like children. But she decided to "introduce" her pet to several cottagers under 12. Without so much as a warning growl, the dog lunged at an 11-year-old, Lindsey Flook, who then joined an estimated 4.7 million Americans — mostly children — who were bitten by a dog in 1994.

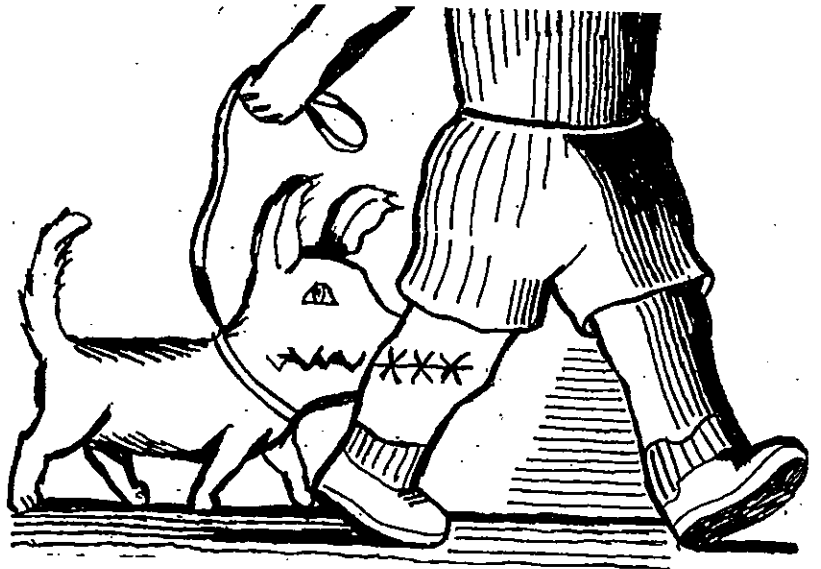
The owner's insurance company ultimately paid for her mistake, contributing a six-figure settlement to the \$1 billion in claims paid out by insurers each year for dog bites.

High Risk for Children

Lindsey was luckier than some. The dog, a Shar-Pei, was on a leash and let go right after biting her on the chin. Although 22 stitches were needed to close the wound, which left a prominent scar, a larger dog might have chewed up half her face, or worse, if the animal had persisted in its attack. Each year in the United States, about 20 people — again, mostly children — are killed by dogs and 800,000 need medical attention.

The injury rate from dog bites is five times that involving playground equipment, which is subject to standards and inspections. About 70 percent of dog-bite victims are children under 10, some of them infants asleep in a crib or carriage. Even when the physical scars are not serious, emotional consequences can be severe and long-lasting.

Dr. Jeffrey L. Sacks, an expert in unintentional injuries at the Federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, calls the dog-bite problem an unrecognized but largely preventable epidemic. With dog bites among the top 12 causes of nonfatal injury in the United States, it is time for everyone — dog owners, pediatricians, educators, parents, children and all other potential victims — to take the matter seriously.



David Suter

First of two columns on how to live safely with dogs.

help, but professional obedience training is much better. If you cannot spare the time and effort to train a dog properly, you should not own one. Get professional help for any dog that starts to display aggressive behavior.

Dogs should be properly restrained on a leash or chain when outside the house. As Dr. Sacks puts it: "This is not the Serengeti plain. Dogs should not be allowed to run loose in the neighborhood." A Cornell study found that feeding dogs a low-protein diet — 17 percent protein by weight — can help to curb aggressive behavior.

Learning Dog-Safe Behavior

In many ways, dogs know — or at least can sense — more about people than people do about dogs. Dr. Sacks said people need to learn how to read a dog's body language and recognize fear or anger that might result in a bite instead of a lick.

In a recent report on fatal dog bites, Dr. Sacks, Dr. Randall Lockwood of the Humane Society of the United States in Washington and their colleagues stated that infants and young children should never be left alone with a dog. A jealous dog may take this opportunity to become aggressive toward its competition.

Children should be taught how to act around dogs both familiar and strange. A child should never approach an unfamiliar dog and nei-

ther child nor adult should try to pet an unfamiliar dog unless the owner says it is safe to do so. Even then, the dog should have a chance to see you and sniff you first. Dr. Sacks suggests doing nothing for the first 30 to 40 seconds, then extending a fist rather than an open hand and allowing the dog to sniff your fist before you try to pet it.

A dog that is sleeping, eating or caring for puppies should never be disturbed. Children should be taught not to play with a dog unless they are supervised by an adult.

When approached by an unfamiliar dog, stand still and stay quiet. Remember, dogs evolved from carnivores that chase and capture prey. If you run from a dog or scream, this is a signal that you are prey and may prompt the dog to chase or attack you. Likewise, teach children, who are wont to run, to slow to a walk when passing a dog on the street. Avoid staring directly into the dog's eyes, as this is likely to be interpreted by the animal as an aggressive challenge.

If you are knocked over by a dog, roll yourself up into a ball with your hands over your ears and lie still. Stay still until the dog tires of you and walks away. If you are chased by a dog when walking, jogging or biking, stop, turn toward the dog, point and say firmly "No" or "Go home." Repeat as needed. I have found this effective even for dogs that do not "speak English."

Next: Choosing and taming a canine companion.

Dr. Sacks says the primary cause of bites is not the dogs themselves but how owners treat them and how unwary people unwittingly provoke them. He maintains that in addition to encouraging the proper selection and training of dogs by their owners, everyone should learn how to act around dogs and interpret their behavior. With dogs in more than a third of American households, these are lessons we can ill afford to skip.

Pet Selection and Treatment

Some breeds are more likely to be aggressive than others. In this country, pit bulls, Rottweilers and German shepherds (and in England chows and bull terriers) account for a disproportionate number of serious canine attacks. Male dogs are more likely to bite than females, and unneutered males and unspayed females are more likely to bite than those that have been surgically stripped of their sex hormones.

Dogs with a history of aggressive behavior are inappropriate pets for families with children. Dr. Katherine A. Houpt, director of the animal behavior clinic at Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine, suggests it is preferable to adopt a puppy from a dog pound, since most adult dogs in pounds have been relinquished because they were troublesome. But a puppy is best adopted after it is 6 to 8 weeks old, to give it time to be socialized by its mother to other dogs, as well as to people.

As dominance-seeking pack animals, dogs that are not taught who is boss are more likely to try to act aggressively toward the humans in their lives. Dogs, like children, need to be properly socialized into the human family. They should be taught submissive behaviors like rolling over to present the stomach and allowing food to be taken away without growling. Even a relatively calm dog can be turned into a wild beast that may bite unintentionally if you play with it aggressively, wrestling with it or goading it to "get" someone.

A dog should not have to be hit to learn. Books on dog training can

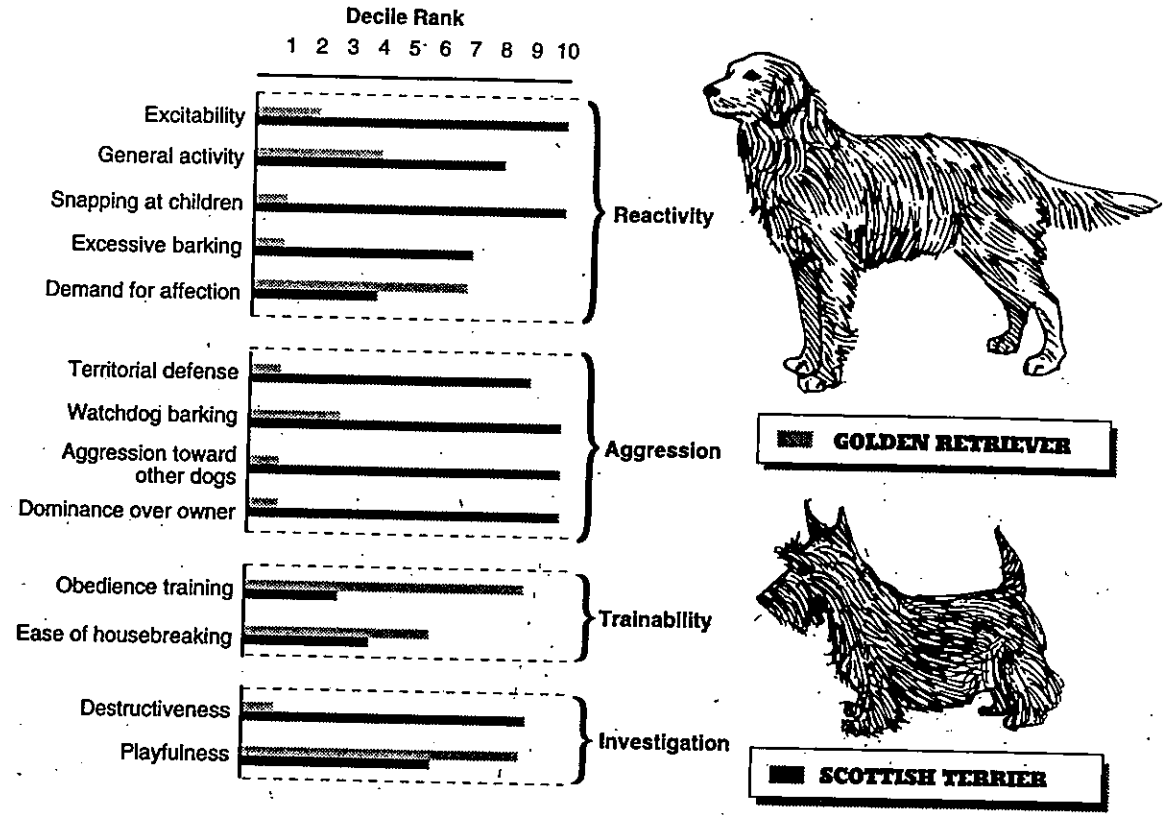
Finding a Trainer

Inexpensive, reliable dog training is often available through local animal shelters, humane societies and kennel clubs. Many offer puppy classes and obedience training for older dogs or can refer you to classes. Training is sometimes included in the adoption fee for those who adopt dogs through a shelter. Check the Yellow Pages under "animal shelters" for local listings.

Remember that you must attend classes with your dog. Training the dog owner is as essential to success as training the dog.

What Kind of Dog Are You Getting? Behavior Profiles

When 96 dog experts were asked to rate the 56 most common breeds of purebred dogs, the tally gave an idea of where individual breeds stand in 13 characteristics, from the top 10 percent to the bottom 10 percent.



Source: "The Perfect Puppy," B. L. and L. A. Hart (W. H. Freeman & Company)

The New York Times; Illustration by Jody Emery

Personal Health | Jane E. Brody

Choosing a dog for your family's safety and sanity.

Second of two columns on how to live safely with dogs.

MANY dog lovers act on impulse when they acquire canine companions. They may find an appealing stray on the street and take it in "temporarily." Or they may fall in love with an adorable puppy in the local pound or pet store. Either way, little thought is given to the nature of the beast and how well it will fit into the household and lives

evaluations of 48 veterinarians and 48 obedience judges.

For example, the Scottish terrier (Scottie), a small dog much admired for its perkiness and spunk, ranks very high on excitability, snapping at children, aggression toward other dogs, watchdog barking, destructiveness and domination of its owner, which may prompt it to snap or growl when told to get off the couch. It is also difficult to train. This is hardly an ideal breed for a family with children, a working person who is away all day or an older couple with grandchildren who are seeking a quiet companion.

On the other hand, the Newfoundland dog, though as big as a small bear, is "a cream puff," the Harts wrote: quiet, nonaggressive, nondestructive, very affectionate and highly tolerant of all sorts of disturb-

training makes you more observant and teaches you how what you do shapes what the dog does. It focuses on problem avoidance and problem solving. By learning parenting skills, you build a bond with your dog and reinforce behavior that is fun, positive and safe."

To find a good trainer, Dr. Lockwood suggests that you check with your local veterinarian, humane society, dog club (if it is not show-oriented) and dog-owning friends. It is important that you be comfortable with the attitudes and methods the trainer uses. If the trainer is too heavy-handed and does not show proper respect for the animals or the owners, leave and find another.

For More Information

The American Dog Trainers Network offers free information on many questions of dog safety and health and can provide referrals.

The network sponsors the Canine

But experts on canine behavior and the characteristics of the more than 120 different breeds registered with the American Kennel Club say that while some who act on impulse are lucky and end up with a perfect pet, others pay a big price for failing to consider the kind of companion the dog they acquire is likely to be.

Is it a highly excitable or very active animal that would quickly wear out an older person? Is it wont to attack any stranger coming to the house? Does it snap at children? Does it attack other dogs? Does it frazzle your nerves with incessant barking at every passerby?

The safety and sanity of dog-loving households may depend on the care taken in choosing dogs wisely and training them properly. It may also depend on prompt recognition of a developing behavioral problem, exploration of its cause and intervention to modify it, if possible, before a disaster ensues.

Dr. Randall Lockwood of the Humane Society of the United States in Washington, who has been studying the dog bite problem for 25 years, said: "Many people have trouble with their dogs because they acquire animals for the wrong reasons and without knowing their special needs. An increasing percentage of people are using dogs essentially as weapons. Your dog should be your friend, not your gun."

Furthermore, Dr. Lockwood pointed out, as certain breeds surge in popularity, careless breeders who pay little or no attention to the quality of the dogs they breed are creating animals with unstable temperaments as well as physical problems that could prove costly economically and emotionally to their owners. For example, he said, "Rottweilers have grown in popularity sevenfold in 10 years, and we're seeing an increasing number of problems now in what was once a trouble-free breed."

Selecting Wisely

Whatever characteristics may be attributed to a particular breed of dog may not apply to every individual, since dogs, like people, have their own personalities. Furthermore, dog lovers are often very loyal to a breed, and may choose it despite certain distressing characteristics. So it is often helpful to consult more than one authority before choosing your pet.

Nonetheless, one very balanced and sensible guide is "The Perfect Puppy: How to Choose Your Dog by Its Behavior," by Dr. Benjamin L. Hart and Linette A. Hart of the School of Veterinary Medicine at the University of California at Davis. The book, published in 1988 by W. H. Freeman (\$11.95), describes 13 behavioral characteristics that could make or break a successful dog-owner relationship, then rates 56 popular breeds on each trait based on the

same children and frisky puppies.

Then there is the matter of the sex of the dog. In general, the Harts say, within a given breed, females are less aggressive than males and less likely to snap at children, but they are no less excitable or less likely to bark excessively. Also, neutered males are less aggressive and spayed females are less nervous than hormonally intact animals of the same breed.

Experts are divided on the relative merits of mutts versus pure-breeds. Many dog owners insist that mutts make nicer, less temperamental and physically healthier pets. If you know the parents of the mutt and consider the characteristics of each, you can get a fair idea of the animal's likely behavior as an adult dog.

But Dr. Katherine A. Houpt, director of the Cornell Animal Behavior Clinic in Ithaca, N.Y., cautioned against adopting mutts of mysterious parentage. "You don't know what you're getting in a mixed breed," she said. "You may wind up with the aggressiveness of one breed and the biting tendency of another."

Training Your Dog

A dog must be socialized to other dogs and to people. The dog's mother does the former and the mother's human family and the puppy's adoptive family do the latter. To learn doggie rules, a puppy is best kept with its mother for six to eight weeks. During that time, it should be played with often by its owners. But the bulk of orientation into human households occurs after the puppy is adopted.

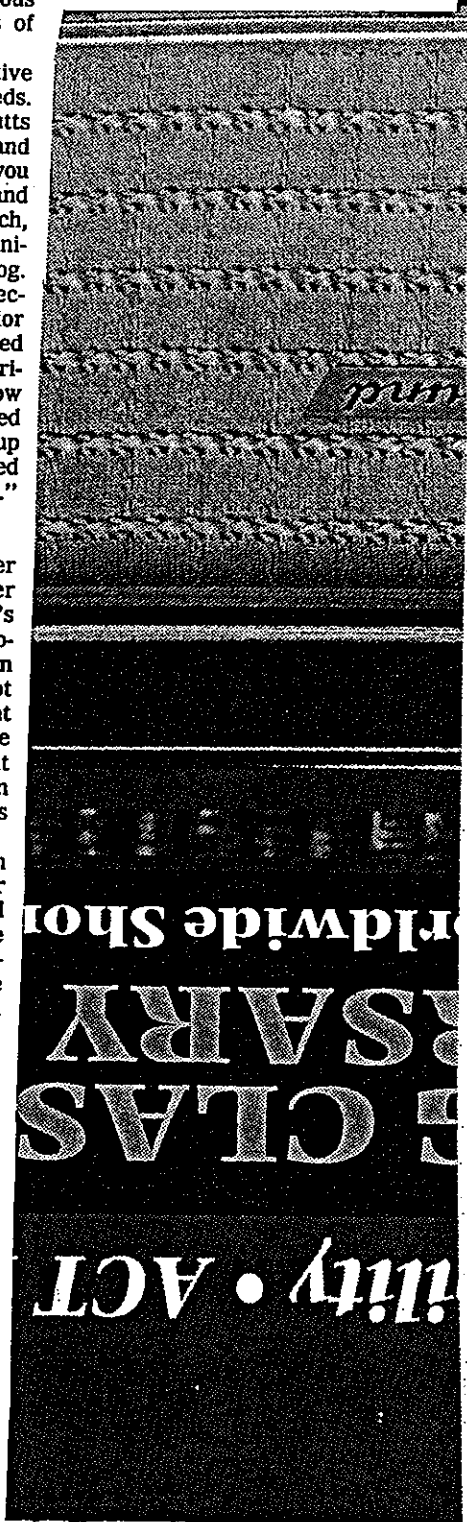
It is important for the dog to learn who is boss. It is more important for the dog to learn to come when called than to walk at your heel. Obedience training, which is growing in popularity, can help you avoid disruptive and dangerous behavior problems in your pet.

"Training should be a family affair," Dr. Lockwood said. "You don't send the dog off to school without you. You have to go and learn how to work with the dog, and everyone involved in its care should be consistent in the limits set and the techniques used to reinforce good behavior."

One should never have to hit a dog to get it to behave, Dr. Lockwood insists. "In 20 years of watching wolves, I never saw a wolf hit another wolf with a rolled-up newspaper," he remarked. "Violence begets violence. Praise and harsh reprimands are all that should be needed. Dogs want to please their owners, and animals, like people, respond much faster to rewarded outcomes than to punishment."

Also, training is not a one-time affair. "Like child rearing, it's an ongoing experience as the animal ages and situations change," Dr. Lockwood said. "Good obedience

(212) 727-7257 (long-distance calls will be returned collect). It can be reached through E-mail at dogs@inch.com, or by regular mail at 161 West Fourth Street, New York, N.Y. 10014. A web site at <http://www.inch.com/~dogs/> is also operated by the network.



Proposed law barking up wrong tree

8/25/96

Other voices

Mary Nicholas
York

In the article about proposed changes to Pennsylvania's dangerous dog law last Sunday, you reported that American Staffordshire terriers and pit bulls are one and the same. Unfortunately, this is misinformation. And such misinformation illustrates one reason why breed-specific dog laws are unworkable.

The American Kennel Club (AKC) recognizes the pit bull not as a purebred, but rather as a mixed-bred dog, but it does recognize two breeds of dogs that might be considered cousins of the pit bull: the American Staffordshire terrier and the Staffordshire bull terrier. The United Kennel Club (UKC), however, does recognize the American pit bull terrier and the Staffordshire bull terrier as purebred dogs. True, the UKC may think of pit bulls and amstaffs to be the same breed, but the AKC does not.

So in other words, two breeds of dogs are often labeled incorrectly as pit bulls, and probably some so-called pit bulls are not even purebred American pit bull terriers. Though all three breeds have similar features, they do not have identical ones. These similar features will present problems for those who have to enforce breed-specific legislation. Will such legislation aimed at pit bulls include a definitive description of the dogs, so those who have to enforce it can tell the difference among the three breeds?

In addition, there are other reasons why breed-specific legislation is unworkable. Even though certain breeds of dogs are more aggressive or more amiable than others as a breed, there are always exceptions. Therefore, each dog must be considered on a case-by-case basis. Such consideration was probably the intent of the present dangerous dog law.

But with the proposed legislation, lawmakers apparently just want to add the words "pit bull" rather than work through some serious questions about dogs and the law. Why condemn one breed of dog as dangerous? Or, why condemn other breeds? When should a breed be condemned? What percentage of dogs of a breed must behave in such a way in order to consider it a dangerous breed and to add it to breed-specific legislation? I doubt if lawmakers are prepared to answer these questions.

And finally, how will such legislation affect reputable breeders of American pit bull terriers who register their dogs with the UKC and who show their dogs in breed, obedience and performance events because they love the breed and the sport of purebred dogs? Are those the type of people that should be punished because a certain class of people commit crimes with a certain breed of dog? Breed-specific legislation will not solve the problem of dangerous dogs, but responsible breeding and pet ownership will.

If legislators and law enforcement officials want to do something about the problem of dangerous dogs, then they need only look to the dangerous owners. Why not muzzle and lock them up rather than the dogs?

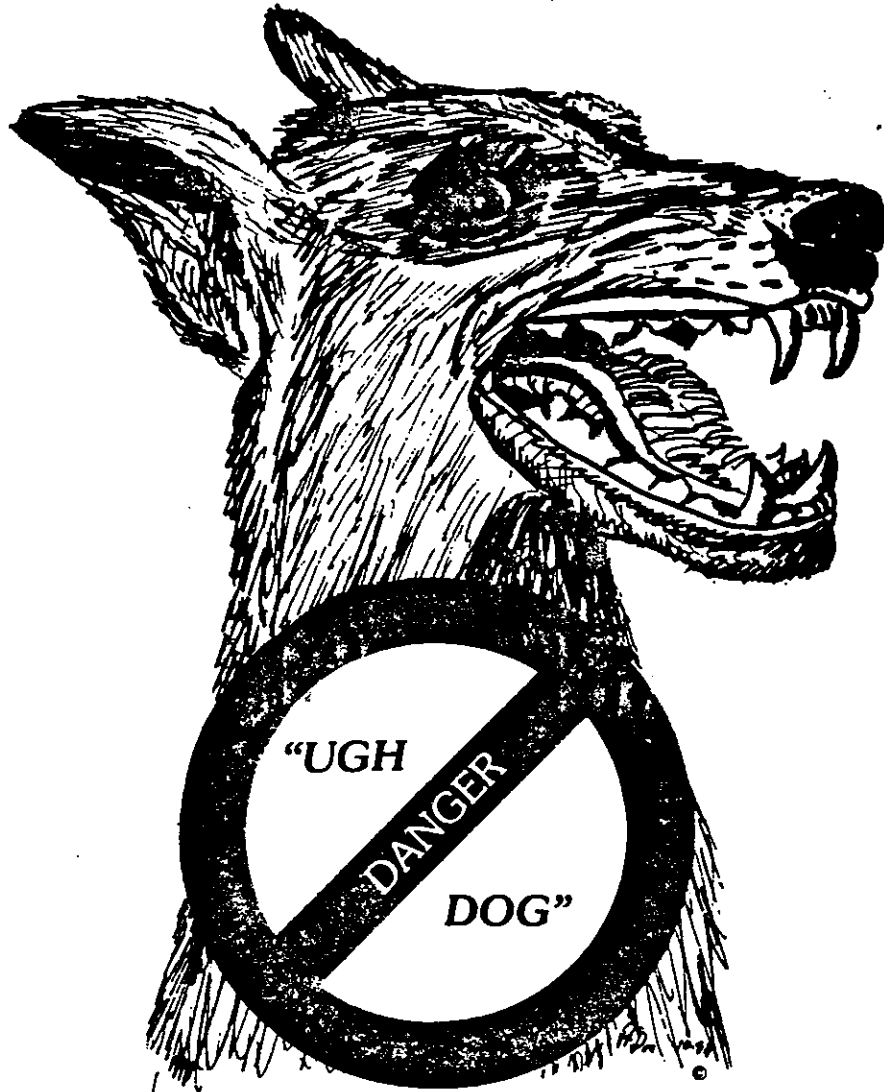
Dotsie;

F.Y.I. ~

Randy

**THE "UGH DOG" SIGNALS DANGER FOR THE
PRE-SCHOOL VICTIM AND THE PERSON WHO CAN NOT READ.**

Teach your child the
"TEN COMMANDMENTS OF DOG BITE PREVENTION".
DISCUSS them with all family members.



THIS DOG MAY BITE BECAUSE

1. HE HAS A "BITE RECORD"
2. HE IS TRAINED TO ATTACK AND PROTECT
3. EVEN IF HE IS A PET, HE IS AN ANIMAL WITH AGE OLD INSTINCTS.

(MOST BITE WOUNDS ARE CAUSED BY THE FAMILY PET, THE NEIGHBOR'S DOG, NOT THE STRAY DOG. MOST BITE WOUNDS ARE FACIAL AND MOST ARE POTENTIAL SOURCES OF INFECTION.)

UGH DOG BITES!

(Courtesy of Animal-vues and Dr. Alan Beck)

1. **DO** Teach children not to disturb dogs during periods of eating and sleeping. Teach them not to mistreat, or tease a dog or take away its food or toy when playing. **Teach them not to pet or play with a strange dog or animal.**

2. **DO** Consider postponing purchasing a dog, especially a large dog, until your children are at least 6 years old.

3. **DO** Supervise small children around dogs including family pets. There should **always** be responsible adults present to inhibit threatening and aggressive behavior directed at children **and adults.**

4. **DO** **Obey the dog law.** Keep your dog on a leash and do not permit a young person to lead a large dog. Loose pets are more aggressive closer to their homes and with their owners. Serious bites which often result in maiming or death usually occur when no one except the victim is present.

5. **DO** Remember that dog owners have a responsibility to their neighbors not to keep aggressive dogs in residential areas and to ensure that fences are adequate to prevent easy access by small children.

6. **DO** Vaccinate your dog **and your cat** against rabies!

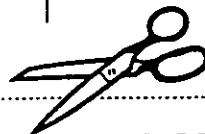
7. **DON'T** Try to outrun an attacking dog or use defense mechanisms such as kicking or screaming, which may escalate dog attacks especially of groups of dogs. Stand still and present your side, not the front of your body to the dog....a smaller target.

8. **DO** Avoid territorial invasions whenever possible. If all else fails, take off your jacket or another object and "feed" it to the dog. A vicious dog is not particular about what it bites!

9. **DO** If you are bitten by a dog try to observe where it goes and try to memorize its description, so it can be found and correctly identified for testing. Wash the wound thoroughly with lots of soap and water. Let the wound bleed but control excessive bleeding. **Always seek medical attention as soon as possible and insist** the bite is reported correctly to the proper authorities.

10. **DO** Promote in schools and groups public awareness of dog bite prevention and treatment of wounds. A simple education program in dog bite avoidance directed toward likely victims (for example, children, the elderly, letter carriers, meter readers) could further reduce the incidence of dangerous encounters resulting in maiming, death, and unnecessary doctor bills.

Ugh Dog or material can not be reprinted or reproduced without written permission



BITE WOUND TREATMENT

1. **REPORT ALL** animal bites. These will then be a matter of record for future diagnosis. (See Dog Law sec. 502)
2. Try to **IDENTIFY** biting animal.
3. **IMMEDIATE THOROUGH CLEANSING** of a bite wound can probably prevent more cases of all infection even rabies than anything else the victim can do. Use an antiseptic preferably Zephiran Chloride. If possible have a doctor cleanse the wound.
4. See a Doctor **EVEN** if the animal is **YOUR PET OR WELL KNOWN TO YOU** to determine: (a) extent of injury; and (b) if it is a tetanus prone wound.
5. Have the biting pet or animal examined by a Veterinarian and confined for observation.

Animal-ues

A tax-exempt nonprofit educational corporation

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PENNSYLVANIA FEDERATION OF DOG CLUBS, Inc.

DOES YOUR DOG BEHAVE ?

Does your puppy or dog have good manners and behave? Or, are there times when it seems as if the pet is in charge, not you? If you answered no to the first question and yes to the second, it's time to get some basic training for your pet. There are many good training books available to get you started, however there is no substitute for a class with someone observing you and your pet. That way, many problems can be caught before they get too hard to solve. Private lessons can be helpful, but usually it is best to go to a class, where your pet will learn to listen to you even with distractions. Besides group classes and private lessons, one other way to get your pet under control is an instructor who will keep your pet for a week or two, or more, teaching the commands then having a lesson with you so you know what your pet has learned and can give the commands yourself. Be very careful of this type of training, try to get references from satisfied clients or referrals from someone who knows the instructor. You will not know how your pet is being treated and trained. It is much more satisfying, although it does take work on your part, to train your pet yourself.

Where does one start looking for a class? Contacting a local obedience or kennel club and looking in the newspaper want ads will probably give some results. Many states have an organized federation of clubs which publishes an informational booklet listing breeders, clubs and classes. At a show, talk to obedience exhibitors about where they train. Don't be too quick to sign up without first observing training classes. Most clubs and private trainers welcome observers, if you are not allowed to observe, it may be better to look elsewhere.

Once you're at class to observe, keep the following in mind : 1. What training methods are used? Training should not be excessively harsh, the correction should suit the dog's error. Corrections should be followed by praise. 2. Is the instructor knowledgeable, organized and is the class under control? The class should not be too large, or assistants should be helping the instructor. Eight to ten handlers and dogs per teacher is good. Assistants, too, should be knowledgeable. 3. Are the training conditions suitable? The footing should be either not slippery or rubber matting should be used. At advanced levels, the jumps should be in good condition. Overall, the atmosphere should be pleasant and enthusiastic. The dogs should be generally working happily. If you are looking for a show handling class, most of the same criteria would apply.

You've narrowed down your class selection to one or two groups, if you're lucky! Good training in some areas is hard to find. Early puppy training (eight to sixteen weeks) can be done in kindergarten puppy classes, or KPT. These are mainly for basic good manners and socializing, extremely important in young puppies. Some light training but mostly play and interacting with other puppies and their people are done in KPT. Practice at home should be kept to just a few minutes at a time. The Beginner, or Basic class should cover heeling work, sit, down, stay and come. General problem solving should be addressed and any individual problems. This class should also give a good foundation for both those who simply want good manners from their pet and those who may decide to continue and show. Advanced classes may or may not be divided into levels : Pre-novice, for those just out of Basic, or Novice, Open and Utility. This training especially should be done by experienced instructors, preferably those who have achieved the level taught with their own dogs. There is no licensing of trainers, and unfortunately for unknowing pet owners anyone can set up classes, qualified or not.

Working with an adopted or rescued dog can be a special problem. These dogs generally have little or no training, what training done may have been too harsh. Many times adoptive dogs are very insecure, due to little or no socializing as a puppy or being passed from family to family. It's best to give the adoptive dog at least two weeks to settle in it's new home. A basic obedience class will help socialize your "new" dog and brush up any prior obedience the pet had. This will also help you and the dog better understand each other and most importantly start developing a bond between you. It's a good idea to advise the instructor of your pet's special circumstances. Those past, unknown experiences should be taken into consideration during the training process.

Obedience showing can be whatever you want it to be : everyone starts the class with a perfect score of 200 and points are deducted depending on handler and dog errors. Your aim can be to show and have a pleasant day with your dog and other people with a common interest, or you can aim to try and keep that perfect score. Showing in obedience is fun, you are mainly competing with yourself, each time trying to improve your score. It is exciting, though, to win one of the four placings in your class. Ask your instructor for information about obedience competition. The American Kennel Club has recently authorized the Canine Good Citizen Test, which consists of several basic obedience commands. These tests are usually run by local obedience or kennel clubs.

Written by Carli Bates

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