
Blame owners for dog bites

PIT BULLS

Posted 4 hours ago

George Hatton clearly has no knowledge of dogs, or pit bulls ("Face reality, have Heira put down," Aug. 29.) He has an anecdote, one in which no one was injured, not even scratched.

Given the space, I could give Hatton many, many anecdotes of dog bites by other breeds that actually did result in injury, including one by a collie that could have been fatal had it been a half-inch to the right or left on my husband's throat, and one by a golden retriever that required a child to have reconstructive facial surgery. I work with dogs and I know the truth. Dog bites are not breed specific at all; they are owner specific.

In his query as to whether the dog will attack a child, he claims that this is not uncommon in the breed. First of all, which breed? Staffordshire Bull Terrier, American Pit bull Terrier, and American Staffordshire Terrier are all different breeds.

Pit bull is a generic term used to describe any one of those dogs as well as any other dog or mix with short coat, athletic body and blocky head. Secondly, his statement is ridiculous in any case, since any one of those breeds attacking a child is incredibly rare.

Here is the truth: The Dog Owners Liability Act has not worked. It has been completely ineffective in preventing dog bites. All it has succeeded in doing is punishing innocent people and dogs that have not hurt anyone, and cost taxpayers an absurd amount of money defending the legislation from the legal challenge that is currently underway.

The Netherlands just removed its breed-specific legislation stating that it had been ineffective at decreasing dog bites over the 15 years it was in place.

Calgary, on the other hand, in spite of rapidly increasing population growth, has experienced great success with its non-breed-specific bylaw and its education program.

Perhaps it is time for municipalities and provinces to look at approaches that actually work instead of looking at laws based on misinformation that don't produce results.

Angela Gilbert Courtenay

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