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Italy out to end the corgi menace

By Bruce Johnston in Rome

(Filed: 15/09/2003)

A new law that took effect in Italy yesterday brands border collies, corgis and St Bernards as dangerous dogs which children and criminals are barred from owning.

The legislation, passed by emergency decree after a series of pit bull attacks made front-page headlines this summer, places a number of restrictions on ownership of 92 kinds of "threatening" dogs.

Understandably, the new category includes dobermanns, bull mastiffs and German shepherds, as well as pit bulls, of which there are about 16,000 in Italy.



Corgis: not for criminals

But it also embraces Newfoundlands, a breed with a reputation for mildness - whereas Staffordshire bull terriers, and their close American relation, are nowhere to be found on the list.

Minors, delinquents and criminals who have caused harm to people or animals, will all be barred from owning such dogs, the law states. In cases of illegal possession, it provides for the animal's seizure.

Those people who are deemed to be suitable owners will be required to keep "dangerous" category dogs muzzled and on leads in public.

In addition, they will have to take out special third-party insurance - expected to cost 200 euros (about £140) a year - in the event that their pet causes anyone physical harm.

The provisions were greeted with a mixture of incredulity, cynicism and concern in Italy's media. They also came under fire from animal rights groups - even if the law's general terms met with widespread approval.

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▶ [Pitbull, ancora un'aggressione Grave un uomo di Frascati \[14 Sept '03\] - La Repubblica \[in Italian\]](#)

▶ [Working Dogs.com](#)



"If it wasn't a television series, Rin Tin Tin would have to be sequestered, because his owner, little Rusty, is a minor," said La Repubblica of the decree passed by Silvio Berlusconi's government.

Ciro Troiano of Italy's Anti-Vivisection League said: "There is now a risk that thousands of dogs will be abandoned as owners seek a way out of the problem."

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