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## Westminster's winner is deemed dangerous in some areas

### Dogs like Rufus are destroyed in some parts of the country

**NEW YORK (AP) -- Rufus cuddled up beside the couch, ready for a good nap. Belly full from his favorite steak dinner and tuckered out from a romp around the house, he put down the head that has become the signature of dogdom in America.**

"He's a wonderful pet," owner Barbara Bishop cooed. "My grandson used to sleep with him in the crate."

But in some parts of the country, dogs that look like this Best in Show winner are seized, muzzled and in some cases, destroyed.

Cities in about 20 states have either enacted or are trying to pass "BSL," short for breed specific legislation designed to control certain types of dogs that are deemed dangerous.

Pit bulls and pit bull mixes are the main target of such laws and ordinances, along with American Staffordshire terriers and Staffordshire bull terriers -- part of the so-called "bully" breeds, with stout bodies and distinctive heads. Owners can be fined and even jailed.

Rufus is a colored bull terrier, the same breed that spawned Spuds McKenzie and the Target store mascot. Nearly 6, he took the top prize at the Westminster Kennel Club show this week, thanks to a perfect, egg-shaped noggin the size of a football.

Tan and white, Rufus also is a marked dog because some of the BSL includes references to dogs that have similar physical traits as the outlawed breeds.

"There are places we won't go because of the BSL," Bishop said Thursday from her home in Holmdel, New Jersey. "You just don't know what might happen."

Rufus, in fact, is now retired as a show dog and has no plans for any kind of nationwide tour. BSL, however, continues to gain strength all over.

"It's our No. 1 concern," said Dale Schuur, president of the Bull Terrier Club of America.

"It has shown no signs of letting up," he said. "Are we going to be able to have these dogs in the future?"

Denver banned pit bulls in 1989 after a local minister was mauled. It is illegal to own one in the city -- if spotted, they could be seized and euthanized. Last year, more than 500 of them were killed.

"It's not a fun job," said Juan Zalar, the city's animal control manager.

Zalar, still mourning the loss of his beloved German shepherd, said Rufus would be fine in Denver.

"We do get calls on bull terriers, people asking us to come out and check. We try to do a good job of educating our staff on breed identification," he said. "As far as we're concerned, we don't have a problem with that dog."

Many cities modeled their BSL after Denver's law. Bull terriers are banned by name in Alburnett, Iowa, for example; in Grandview, Missouri, dogs that look like pit bulls are prohibited, but bull terriers are allowed.

"You err on the side of the public," said Tom Weber of Grandview's neighborhood services.

California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger recently signed a bill that let cities and counties pass ordinances for specific breeds.

Bull terriers are split into two breeds -- white and colored -- that can be born in the same litter.

They were the 62nd most popular breed in the country last year, according to the American Kennel Club. There were 1,744 registered, putting them ahead of Dalmatians and Irish setters.

Kathy Kirk, who handles Rufus, admitted he could be a bit "bullheaded." Owner Bishop acknowledged that "not everyone in the world should own a bull terrier," saying correct breeding and care were essential to ensure they were properly socialized and not overly aggressive.

"They were originally meant to be a family pet," Bishop said. "Rufus loves when my grandchildren come to visit. They jump over couches and run around and play together.

"He's under my feet right now," she said. "He's really more like a cat."

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