

Amnews.com

http://www.amnews.com/public_html/?module=displaystory&story_id=18331&format=html

Breed bans are ineffective, expensive

Dear Editor:

Lincoln County Attorney John Hackley recently stated that he would not prosecute anyone within the county who kills a pit bull ("Lincoln May Ban Pit Bulls," Dec. 14). Giving a community an open invitation to commit heinous acts of animal cruelty is not an acceptable practice for the county attorney. All dogs deserve equal protection under animal cruelty laws, and it is inappropriate for a county attorney to decide that some breeds are more worthy of that protection than others.

The recent attack on young NaFanielle Blevins is tragic and he is quite lucky to have escaped with limited injuries. Clearly the owner of the dog involved was negligent in his responsibilities as a pet owner, regularly chaining the dog up outside as well as frequently allowing him to run loose through the neighborhood.

There are over four million dog bites every year in the United States, and communities have a duty to address this issue in a responsible manner. Many communities turn to breed bans after a well-publicized dog attack, but there are many factors besides breed that contribute to a dog's temperament, including gender, health, levels of training and socialization, and whether the dog has been spayed or neutered. Breed bans fail to address these traits as well as the larger problems of abuse, neglect, and aggression training.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, intact (not neutered) male dogs represent over 70 percent of the dogs involved in biting incidents. It is essential for communities to acknowledge this statistic and provide subsidized spay/neuter services for local pet owners. Not only will sterilizing dogs make them significantly less likely to bite, but it will also make them happier, healthier, and less likely to roam.

If Lincoln County wants to be a safer place, then thoughtful, non-breed specific legislation should be enacted and enforced. Such legislation would address responsible pet care and severely punish irresponsible owners, as well as provide local animal control with the power and funding to enforce such laws. Breed bans are ineffective and expensive and will not curtail the problems caused by dangerous dogs.

Adam Goldfarb, issues specialist
Companion Animals department
The Humane Society of the United States
www.HSUS.org

Copyright The Advocate-Messenger 2005