



**Dog Federation of Wisconsin**  
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## **The Dog Federation of Wisconsin Opposes Breed Specific Legislation**

Breed specific legislation causes normally responsible pet owners to become criminals if their preferred breed of dog is included in the arbitrarily chosen list of banned dogs. It can cause otherwise responsible people to go into hiding and at times to stop all veterinary treatments, including routine vaccinations (rabies). Responsible individuals want to follow the law, but are forced to choose between the law and their pets. State and local municipalities should not be in the business of choosing what domestic dogs we may own. Information used to create such laws is based on inaccurate information and/or personal bias.

Dog bites can be prevented using just one existing local or \*State code. The code we speak of is typically called a "leash law or dogs at large", but this law is rarely enforced. Irresponsible pet owners are the problem, not the dog. Any dog can bite and cause damage, from the smallest Yorkshire Terrier to the largest Irish Wolfhound. By enforcing a leash law in the community, there is very little opportunity for any dog to randomly attack people.

The Centers for Disease Control published a study of dog bites occurring between 1979 and 1998, and they conclude the following:

*"Although fatal attacks on humans appear to be a breed-specific problem (pit bull-type dogs and Rottweilers), other breeds may bite and cause fatalities at higher rates. Because of difficulties inherent in determining a dog's breed with certainty, enforcement of breed-specific ordinances raises constitutional and practical issues. Fatal attacks represent a small proportion of dog bite injuries to humans and, therefore, should not be the primary factor driving public policy concerning dangerous dogs. Many practical alternatives to breed-specific ordinances exist and hold promise for prevention of dog bites."*  
(*Journal American Veterinary Medicine Assoc* 2000; 217: 836-840)

Due to irresponsible journalism, many dog attacks are reported to be caused by "pit bulls". In a recent national case, the dog in question was actually a Labrador retriever. This situation gives credence to the statement by the CDC above. This is why breed specific legislation does not work.

If "dogs at large" are a problem in your community, let your citizens know that you will start writing citations for those that allow their dogs to roam. Many times, especially in rural communities, owners allow their dogs to roam, just because they've always done so. They may not be aware of existing leash laws at local and State levels. A public service reminder to be a responsible dog owner may be the only thing needed to take care of the problem.

Rather than using punitive measures, we suggest offering your citizens a program on responsible pet ownership. The American Kennel Club has many publications available on how to be a responsible dog owner:

[http://www.akc.org/public\\_education/responsible\\_dog\\_owner.cfm](http://www.akc.org/public_education/responsible_dog_owner.cfm)

The Dog Federation of Wisconsin would be happy to work with local communities to promote responsible pet ownership as well as assist with legislation pertaining to dogs. Let us know how we can help – we are your best resource as it pertains to dogs.

***\*WI Statute 174.042 Dogs running at large and untagged dogs subject to impoundment***