



Breed Specific Legislation

Position

Calgary Humane Society does not support the banning of any breed of dog and opposes labeling any specific breed as inherently aggressive, vicious, or dangerous, as these approaches result in inequitable governance and unfairly target animals based on appearance rather than behaviour.

Calgary Humane Society maintains that each dog must be regarded as an individual and assessed on its behaviours displayed. Rather than breed-specific bans, the Society supports effective approaches to preventing aggression that include responsible animal ownership, which encompasses ethical breeding practices, lifelong veterinary care, proper socialization, humane training methods, and thoughtful rehoming when required.

Rationale

Evidence consistently indicates that breed is not a reliable predictor of whether a dog may act aggressively or pose a danger to the community. Behaviour and an individual dog's temperament and likelihood of exhibiting aggressive behaviour result from a combination of factors, including:

- Genetics and breeding practices
- Training and socialization
- Health and physical condition
- Reproductive status (intact, in heat, pregnant, or recently given birth)
- Daily care, treatment, and level of enrichment provided by guardians

While serious dog bites incidents may receive intense media coverage, research shows that these cases are not representative of overall risk and that public narratives often rely on stigma rather than broad, evidence-based statistical data. Studies also indicate that the primary or foundational causes for dog attacks are:

- Dogs kept chained or tethered without proper enrichment
- Allowing dogs to run loose and roam in packs
- Failure to spay or neuter
- Lack of proper training, socialization, enrichment, exercise, and companionship
- Multi-dog households where owners are unaware of the behavioural dynamics and risks associated with dog to dog interactions

Many dog bites go unreported, contributing to incomplete and distorted data that can drive public calls for breed-specific legislation (BSL). While some studies are cited in support of BSL, the broader body of evidence shows that such legislation also carries risks, including inconsistent enforcement, misallocation of public resources, increased shelter intake, and the penalization of responsible owners without demonstrable benefit. It also does not reduce overall bite frequency or improve public safety outcomes. Calgary Humane Society maintains that a more humane and effective approach focuses on responsible ownership, behaviour-based assessment, education, training, and breeding practices rather than breed-based regulation. This position aligns with the Calgary Model of animal control, which emphasizes owner accountability and graduated enforcement based on behaviour, rather than assigning collective blame to animals based on breed or appearance.

References

[National Canine Research Council – Comparison of Behaviour Tendencies Between Dogs](#)

[National Canine Research Council – The Responsible Pet Ownership Model](#)

[ASPCA PRO – Are Breed-Specific Laws Effective](#)

[The Calgary Model – A Successful Alternative to BSL](#)

[In Opposition: Effectiveness of Breed-Specific Legislation in Manitoba](#)