



AMERICAN
KENNEL CLUBSM

January 2, 2009

The Honorable Frank Tower
Mayor, City of Oshkosh
P.O. Box 1130
Oshkosh, WI 54903-1130

Dear Mr. Mayor:

Concerned dog owners and citizens of Oshkosh have recently contacted the American Kennel Club regarding legislation that will dramatically affect their ability to own dogs. We respectfully write to you on their behalf.

The American Kennel Club was established in 1884 to promote the study, breeding, exhibiting, and advancement of purebred dogs. AKC now represents over 4,600 dog clubs nationally, including 114 clubs in the state of Wisconsin. The American Kennel Club supports the adoption of reasonable, enforceable, non-discriminatory laws to govern the ownership of dogs. We understand that it can be a daunting task to develop legislation that will allow responsible citizens to enjoy a myriad of activities with their dogs while at the same time protecting all people from the actions of irresponsible dog owners. We believe, however, that this balance is attainable.

We understand that the Oshkosh City Council is considering legislation that would restrict the ownership of "pit bulls," defined as Bull Terriers, Staffordshire Bull Terriers, American Pit Bull Terriers, American Staffordshire Terriers and any dog which has the physical characteristics of these breeds. The AKC believes that dog owners should be responsible for their dogs and that laws should impose appropriate penalties on irresponsible owners. Communities must establish a well-defined procedure for dealing with dogs proven to be dangerous which includes, if necessary, the destruction of such animals.

In order to be effective, such legislation should not single out specific breeds or phenotypic classes of dogs. Deeds, not breeds, should be addressed. Enforcement of a breed-related law is difficult because of inability to accurately identify breeds, unfair negative impact on responsible citizens and their mannerly dogs, and lack of attention to the real issue of irresponsibility. Enactment of a breed-specific law can also increase administrative costs at local shelters with additional euthanasia of the targeted breeds.

For these and other reasons, breed-specific legislation is opposed by the American Kennel Club, the American Veterinary Medical Association, National Animal Control Association, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and a host of other respected national animal organizations who recognize the inequities and inherent fallacies of such law.

The AKC also strongly opposes the mandatory spay/neuter of purebred dogs. According to the American Pet Products Manufacturers Association 2007-2008 survey, more than 75% of owned dogs and 87% of owned cats are spayed or neutered. With an overwhelming majority of dog and cat owners already choosing to spay or neuter their pets this ordinance is unnecessary and would only place additional restrictions on responsible owners who choose to keep their animals intact.

Responsible breeders produce well-bred, properly socialized purebred puppies. By carefully screening potential buyers, these breeders insure that a puppy placed in a new home represents a lifetime commitment by the new owners to the welfare of the dog. Local responsible breeders should be viewed as assets to their communities as they are in a unique position to support new pet owners and exemplify responsible animal ownership.

The American Kennel Club opposes the concept of breeding permits, breeding bans, or mandatory spaying or neutering of purebred dogs. We and our affiliated clubs support and conduct thousands of programs each year that are dedicated to teaching the pet-buying public how to find a responsible breeder and how to make well-informed decisions when buying a dog. These programs help to ensure that pet purchasers find a puppy or dog that is a good match for their lifestyle, at an appropriate time in their lives, thereby increasing the likelihood that the animal will stay with the owner for its entire life.

The American Kennel Club also supports the recommendation of our local club, the Oshkosh Kennel Club, with regard to the leash law. In suburban and urban communities it simply makes sense to require that everyone leash their dogs when off their owner's property.

As you consider new legislation, the American Kennel Club, the Oshkosh Kennel Club, and your constituent dog owners are willing to assist you in developing a workable animal control ordinance that protects the public, does not unduly burden responsible owners and promotes responsible animal ownership. We look forward to working with you as this issue progresses.

Sincerely,



Sarah Sprouse
Manager, Government Relations

cc: Members of the Oshkosh City Council
Paul Spiegel, Oshkosh Health Director
Oshkosh Kennel Club