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## **Position Statement**

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### **Breed Specific Legislation**

The Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers (CCPDT) recognizes that dog bites are a serious health issue in the United States and around the world, as well as having a significant impact on the dog training and behavior industry. According to the Centers for Disease Control:

- In the United States approximately 4.5 million people are bitten by dogs yearly (Gilchrist, Sacks, White, & Kresnow, 2008).
- Of those 4.5 million approximately 885,000 (1 in 5) seek medical attention for dog bite-related injuries with only around 40% electing to seek care in an emergency room (Gilchrist et al., 2008).

Many communities (and some countries) have attempted to address this issue by enacting “breed-specific legislation” that targets certain breeds of dogs believed by some to be more responsible for bites and dog-bite related fatalities than other breeds of dogs. In the current climate, “pit-bull type dogs” that resemble American Pit Bull Terriers, are most commonly singled out for this dubious distinction (Raghavan, Martens, Chateau, & Burchill, 2013).

Studies have identified that many factors contribute to a dog’s propensity to bite rather than only the dog’s breed: intact status of the dog; exposures and early experience; socioeconomic factors of the community; and community education to name a few (Sacks, Sinclair, Gilchrist, Golab, & Lockwood, 2000; Shuler, DeBess, Lapidus, & Hedberg, 2008). The “Pit-Bull type” is particularly ambiguous as a “breed,” encompassing a range of pedigree breeds, informal types and appearances that cannot be reliably identified and leaves the potential to be over-reported. Visual determination of dog breed is known to not always be reliable, and witnesses may be predisposed to a bias that assumes that a biting dog is of a particular type (Sacks, Sinclair, Gilchrist, Golab & Lockwood, 2000; Leavy & Croy, 2012).

It has not been demonstrated that breed-specific bans reduce the rate or severity of bite injuries occurring in the community (Clarke & Fraser, 2013; Ott, Schalke, von Gaertner, & Hackbarth, 2008; Raghavan et al., 2013). In fact, some communities that initially implemented such bans have since rescinded those bans (Clarke & Fraser, 2013; Ott et al., 2008). Factors that are reliably associated with serious dog bite injury requiring hospital treatment in the United States are age of the victim and familiarity with the dog, as in belonging to the family, a family friend or neighbor (Sacks et al., 2000).

It is in the opinion of the CCPDT that the solution to preventing dog bites is education of owners, breeders, and the general public about aggression prevention and responsible dog ownership, not legislation directed at certain breeds.



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Further, the CCPDT believes:

- 1) Singling out and publicly banning specific breeds is unwarranted and does an immense disservice to those breeds and the people who care about them.
- 2) Breed-specific legislation may encourage the faulty public perception of other breeds as being inherently safe. This can give a false sense of security and may lead individuals to engage in unsafe conduct with other breeds that can result in injury or death by individual representatives of those breeds mistakenly perceived as safe. All dogs can bite.

Therefore, the CCPDT aligns with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), The Association of Professional Dog Trainers (APDT), the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), The National Animal Care and Control Association (NACCA), and numerous others, in supporting the adoption or enforcement of programs for the control of potentially dangerous or dangerous dogs that are fair, non-discriminatory and address individual dogs that are shown to be dangerous by their actions; and in opposing laws that deem a dog as potentially dangerous or dangerous based on appearance or breed.

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