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Is Breed to Blame in Fatal Dog Attack?

Is Breed to Blame in Fatal Dog Attack?



Bans on pit bulls scapegoat the breed, when laws should focus on irresponsible owners, the ASPCA and AKC say. (AP Graphics Bank)

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A judge in Denver's District Court upheld the law in May, ruling the state Attorney General's Office had not provided any new scientific evidence in the field of animal behavior or other new information that would make the ordinance unconstitutional.

The same judge had also ruled in December that "home rule" gives Denver the right to ban specific breeds of dogs, despite the state law.

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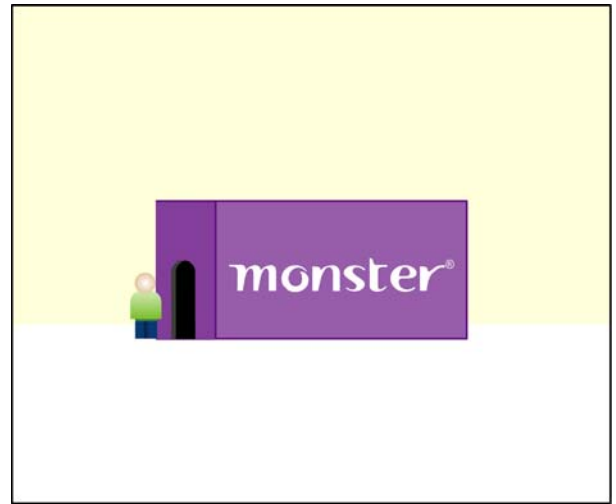
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"The urban environment of Denver is a heck of a lot different than the outback of Australia," Assistant City Attorney Kory Nelson said after the court ruled in the city's favor last month. "These dogs pose such a risk should they attack. We think as a community we shouldn't have them."

A Dangerous Breed?

Other places in the country that have breed-specific legislation — either outright bans of certain breeds or specific requirements for owners of certain breeds — include Iowa and Ohio; the cities of Boston;

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Providence, R.I.; and Muskegon, Mich.; as well as Miami-Dade County, Fla.; Prince Georges County, Md.; and more than a dozen cities in Washington state.

Washington, D.C., also has been considering a ban on pit bulls.

"This is a dangerous breed," city Councilman Jim Graham, who has introduced a ban three times since 1999, told The Washington Post. "On this issue, I get thousands of e-mails from people across the United States who tell me this is not a dangerous breed. There is not a week that goes by without a report of violence regarding pit bulls. What we're waiting for is some young child or someone else to be violently attacked, and then there will be outcry."

In Canada, the province of Ontario has also enacted a ban on pit bulls, due to take effect in August.

"Breed bans boil down to the public and the government needing someone to blame and they don't know how to handle it, so they put the blame on pit bulls," said Jason Mann, the creator of PitBullLovers.com, a Lexington, Ky.-based Web site for pit bull owners.

Pit bulls, which are a popular dog with dog fighters and have developed a reputation for being vicious, were once known as "the nanny dog," because they were used to watch out for children. The dogs are considered extremely intelligent and trainable, but need a great deal of exercise to keep them happy, Mann said.

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