

History

- Animal Control Code 3-185.01, the “breed ban” became law on February 2, 1997. It defined “pit bull” as American Staffordshire Terriers, American Pit Bull Terriers, Staffordshire Bull Terriers, mixes thereof, or any dog ever identified as a “pit bull” as illegal without annual registration and subject to certain restrictions. Registrations of new dogs entering the county ceased on or about 2003.

Cost/Budget

- The county's 2003 “Vicious Animal Task Force” estimated the cost to confiscate, maintain, and dispose of a “pit bull” is \$186 per dog per day. The county spends between **\$250,000 and \$500,000** every year on benign family pets.
- The ban diverts resources by forcing the county to deal with non-threatening dogs. ACOs spend an average of 2 hours a day on ban-related calls-for-service. It would be time better spent picking up dogs running loose, educating the public about proper pet care and containment, and responding to calls about problem dogs and dog owners.
- In many instances, the law requires police officers to be dispatched to ban-related animal control calls, even for benign pets; increasing the cost-to-enforce and unnecessarily diverting law enforcement resources.
- Repealing the ban would redirect scarce funds to improve more effective animal control programs.
- Dog shows once held in the county have moved to other counties, taking \$1.5 million in annual revenue with them.
- The ban was designed to “eliminate” banned dogs within 10 years, but animal control data indicate **NO meaningful decrease** in dog intake numbers.

Under and Overinclusive

- Breed-specific law (BSL) is both underinclusive and overreaching. It unnecessarily persecutes families with innocent dogs but fails to capture all dangerous dogs and reckless owners.
- Dogs subjectively -- often incorrectly -- lumped together and labeled “pit bulls” are a genetically diverse and expanding group of pure- and mixed-breed dogs with a variety of personalities, behaviors and characteristics. It is impossible to attribute breed traits to such a genetically incoherent array of dogs.

- There is no list of policies or distinguishing characteristics of “banned breeds” published by the county.
- The county rips benign pets from their families and kills them or gives them to other families elsewhere.

Impact on Public Safety

- Experts have demonstrated that breed **bans DO NOT** make communities safer.
- Laws that deem pets dangerous simply based on their physical appearance rather than behavior divert our finite and ever-shrinking fiscal and personnel resources away from dealing with truly problematic dogs -- actually **diminishing** our ability to respond to dogs of community concern!



- Prince George's animal control law has been a model for the region, long before the ban. It was fully updated and strengthened again in 2002 – still the most comprehensive code in the region.
- If the breed ban was repealed today, all dog owners would STILL be held to the same standards of care, custody, and control of their dogs by the other animal control laws already on the books. We have nuisance laws, running at-large laws, dangerous dog laws, pet limit laws, leash laws, licensing laws, cruelty and neglect laws...there is **no transgression** a dog or owner can commit that is not covered by breed-neutral county law.



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Regionally, our County BSL is seen as regressive.

- The night the General Assembly voted for a casino both sides of the aisle also voted nearly unanimously to stop breed discriminatory law.
- In 2010, then-county executive candidate Rushern Baker, III, agreed that the county breed ban was costly, unfair, and should be repealed.
- The city of Frederick, Maryland, issued a press release on May 3, 2012 stating it “**will not profile pit bulls** into extinction”.



- Town of North Beach, Maryland, **repealed** its longstanding breed ban in June 2012, citing difficulty in determining breed. Hagerstown **rejected** breed specific law (BSL) in 2012 as well.
- PA, VA, NJ, and NY are among 13 states that prohibit breed bans. MA became the most recent state to prohibit breed bans; NM and CT are considering anti-BSL laws. In 2012, OH repealed its statewide breed-specific vicious dog law; major Ohio cities repealed their local bans too!
- We all expect to be safe in our communities. Fair, effective, **behavior-based** laws citing the best scientific evidence available provide that safety.
- Animal, health and legal experts from the Centers for Disease Control, American Bar Association, Maryland Bar Association, Maryland Veterinary Medical Association, American Veterinary Medical Association, American Kennel Club, the Maryland Dog Federation, various local and national animal control organizations advocate for safe communities via behavior-based, **non breed-specific** animal control laws.
- Howard County is enjoying the \$1.5 million every year in business brought to their county by the large scale dog shows that left Prince George's because of the ban.

Bans: reliably unsuccessful

- The breed ban does not improve public safety.
- Many reasons given for the ban in 1996 have been refuted:
 - We already had good, behavior-based laws in place in 1996 before the ban; they were just not being adequately enforced.
 - Myths and misinformation played a role when the law was passed:
 - “targeted” breeds do not have double jointed jaws or biting strength unusual for their size.
 - Not just owned by bad guys or reckless owners, their popularity spans socio-economic demographics and smashes owner stereotypes...we're doctors, families, government employees, teachers, nurses, attorneys, plumbers, truck drivers and senior citizens! Why? Because they're good dogs!
 - It's been estimated that the dogs are among the top ten most popular in 48 states (and the second most popular dog in Maryland).
 - Studies show the breed doesn't have increased propensity for severe bites.
- Fifteen years after the ban started, county data do not indicate a significant drop in the population of the targeted breeds.

“The hardest thing we have to do...is go to someone's house, knock on their door, see their American Pit Bull Terrier laying in the living room watching television with the kids and the family...and tak[e] that dog away. A dog that has done nothing wrong, caused no problems, but just because of his breed he has to be removed.”

-- Rodney Taylor, Director, Prince George's Animal Management

- Of approximately 154,400 dogs living in the county in 2011, 153,730 (99.6%) of them injured no one.
- Of some 700 bites and scratches each year, approximately 90% are caused by non-banned breeds. +/-90% of all dog-related incidents are NOT severe.
- Dog incident data from Prince George's and across the country indicate it's adequately enforced breed-neutral dangerous dog laws reduce dog-related injuries, **not BSL**.
- The percentage of dog-related incidents attributed to targeted breeds has not changed significantly over the period of the ban.
- As predicted, the county has seen increased bites by “replacement” breeds.