

**Calgary's dog licensing rate is over 93-98%, where 10-30% is the norm in most cities.** Bruce believes such a high number of dog owners license their pets because residents are aware of the value received for the money spent. There is no way to achieve this kind of licensing compliance in an environment where citizens feel they must hide their dogs and cats from pet limit laws, BSL, crushing differential licensing fees, or mandatory spay/neuter laws. Without the high licensing compliance, none of the rest of the success could have happened.

Bruce notes the program makes it extremely convenient to license a dog: licenses can be bought in person at two city locations, online, at banks, by mail, by night deposit or through any bylaw officer. "It's no hassle. And **every nickel we collect goes back to the animals. The humane society gets an annual grant from us and it pays for my officers and my salary and our education programs. If an animal needs emergency medical care because it's been hit and is injured, it's all covered. Dog owners see the value for their dollar.**"

The Calgary program not only pays for basics such as staff, equipment and the new shelter (Calgary built a new shelter for their animals about 5-8 years ago that is state of the art, and has never been filled to its capacity), but also for extras like a new clinic under construction that will provide free spaying and neutering to low-income families. Calgary Animal Services adoption program includes videotaping of every assessment and follow up even after adoptions. Officers even help neighbors resolve their animal-related problems.

The city has a strict fine structure that includes a \$250 penalty for chase incidents and \$350 fines for bites. Those whose dogs defecate on public property in Calgary are fined \$250. Dogs are not allowed to be "at large". This means they need to be attended or supervised (depending on whether it's public or private property). The fine for an "at large" dog is \$100. A person caught teasing or tormenting a dog is ticketed \$100. "Tormenting a dog is an offense here because if that dog gets out, it's going to bite the first kid it comes to, just because it's got this pent-up anger and frustration," Mr. Bruce said. The bylaw also allows the officers to declare specific dogs as "dangerous" and this label brings with it higher license fees, muzzling rules and age restrictions on the dog's handlers. The bylaw states that a dog can only be destroyed by owner request or court order.

They strongly encourage all people who license their dogs to also have them tattooed or microchipped. Every animal control vehicle is equipped with a scanner, so if they find a stray dog, the animal control officer can instantly scan for the chip, and

deliver the dog home free of charge (although there are fines if your dog becomes a frequent flyer). This home delivery is a service for people who obey the rules and saves money in animal control costs because stray dogs seldom even make it to their shelter. They are returned home where the dog belongs. The city then doesn't incur the costs of putting the dog in the shelter, maintaining it while it's there (food etc.) "Your pet's license is his ticket home" is the motto. Once the dog is back at home, the officer who delivered it will spend time with the owner offering suggestions on how to keep their pet properly contained. "They might suggest installing a \$14 spring for their gate," says Bruce. "The number one cause of dogs getting loose is because someone, like a kid or a meter reader, didn't latch the gate. Another inexpensive suggestion is to install a piece of pressure-treated wood at the bottom of the gate so the dog can't dig its way out."

If a dog does end up making it to the shelter, its photo is taken immediately and placed on their webpage within 15 minutes of the dog reaching the shelter. All the dogs in the shelter are treated for the basic diseases. And if a dog is found injured, animal control will take the dog to a vet. The vets treat the dogs because a) animal control is usually able to find the owner of the dog b) if they don't, animal control will cover the medical costs associated with treating that dog.

This approach helps facilitate a \$5 million annual operating budget, which is generated through license and penalty revenues, **with absolutely no cost to the taxpayer.** Fees generated from cat licenses have provided the community of Calgary with a state of the art facility, staffed by a full-time vet, providing no-charge spay/neuter services for pets from low-income homes.

#### **Key to Calgary's success:**

- **no – mandatory spay/neuter**
- **no – breed specific legislation**
- **no – pet limit laws**
- **no – anti-tethering laws**
- **yes – providing valued services rather than simply punishing citizens into compliance**
- **yes – buy in and cooperation among community stakeholders**
- **yes – extensive education and PR campaign to emphasize responsible pet ownership**
- **yes – low license fees and modest differential fees for intact pets**

The net results of their efforts have been impressive. **Calgary's dog attacks fall to lowest level in 25 years despite the absence of breed-specific legislations. Over the past 20 years, Calgary has cut their number of dog bites and chases by more than 75% (all the while, the human and dog population of Calgary has doubled). So much has been accomplished by focusing on root issues of problems,** providing service to their "customers" and getting people to obey their current laws. "Its not about enforcement, it's about compliance" says Bruce.

Canada Post has also noticed a slight reduction in dog incidents involving its letter carriers in Calgary that bucks the trend nationally. From January to August last year, 25 dog incidents were reported by carriers, two of which resulted in time off work. In the same time period in 2007, 28 incidents were reported, with three requiring time away from work. Partnerships with the city and other organizations that send employees into residential neighbourhoods has helped reduce dog attacks. Even though the numbers are low, Calgary plans to delve deeper into the causes of dog attacks to try to bring the incidents even lower. "We want to look at everything that led up to an aggressive dog attack," said Bruce. "We're hoping to find four to six common things that people do that causes dogs to bite. Our goal is not to have anyone bitten by a dog."

Calgary bylaw officers recorded 340 reported aggressive dog incidents in 2008 which included chases, bites and damage to property. Of those, 145 complaints were bites. In 2007, 374 aggressive dog calls were made, including 137 bites, and in 2006, of 402 aggressive dog complaints, 199 were for bites. By comparison, back in 1985, the city received a whopping 1,938 aggressive dog complaints, including 621 bites, at a time when Calgary had a population of just over 600,000.

**While dog bites have been going down, the number of pit bulls coming to the city has been increasing.** Yet "pit bulls" fare significantly better in Calgary, where there are no breed bans or breed restrictions. Pit Bulls For Life brings the dogs in from jurisdictions with breed-specific legislation that sees many breeds deemed dangers, including pit bulls, targeted for euthanasia. She said **20 per cent of the dogs they help come from Ontario. "We have a lot more pit bulls in Calgary now,"** said Campbell-Briggs. "Part of the reason is we don't have breed-specific legislation. I'm proud to be a Calgarian because our animal by-law officers deal with specific incidents and don't deal with it as a breed issue. There's no bias and that's so important." **"If you've got a 'pit bull' and it's properly licensed**

and it's not bothering anybody and it's well cared for, it's none of the government's business," said Bruce. "But if the dog becomes a threat to the community, oh yeah, it's my business."

The Calgary system was built to penalize and correct relatively minor behaviors before they can escalate into something serious. "No dog wakes up and decides to start biting people today," said Bruce. "It always starts with lesser behaviors that are left unchecked." Fines increase with the severity of the offense. Owners are ticketed \$350 if their dogs bite and \$750 if the bites are serious enough to require some medical attention. A severe bite or all-out attack results in a \$1,500 fine. Staff will seize vicious dogs who attack and hold them for 30 days until the matter goes to court. His department will then destroy the animal if the judge orders so. **"When you have a vicious dog, you can almost guarantee the owner's a jerk," Mr. Bruce said. "The dog reflects the owner's behavior."**

**Ontario's Mistake:** Rather than take an opportunity to make a statement to aggressive dog owners, the province of Ontario has decided to ban an entire breed of dog. The irony is that this action in itself goes against everything Canada stands for. **Our country has invested years in fighting against segregation of any specific group based on a generalized stereotype about that group. In fact, we label such behavior as prejudice, and call such actions a violation of our civil rights. After years and years of moving our country forward and taking a stand against such actions, the province wide ban on pit bulls in Ontario has just set the clock back.**

#### The expert input on Bill 132:

**"Bill 132 willfully legislates profiling, prejudices and paranoia, which is what it will create."** - Cathie Cino, expert cited by Bryant in legislature.

- 81 of 103 presenters spoke against BSL
- 49 organizations representing dog experts spoke against the ban; 4 represented breeds named in the bill and two represented animal rights organizations.
- None of the expert organizations representing dogs approved of this approach.
- These experts included animal control from Mississauga and Sudbury.
- Victims of bites by other breeds spoke against breed specific legislation

#### The experts' professional opinions:

- 'Pit bulls' are not inherently or genetically different than other breeds.
- **Bites by 'pit bull' type dogs account for less than 5% of all serious bites in Canada.**
- It is a myth that "pit bull" type dogs are unique in how they attack. Other breeds also have a bite and hold pattern.
- There is no qualitative difference between a serious attack by a 'pit bull' and one by another breed of a comparable size.
- A bite and hold attack is not qualitatively more severe than a series of slashing bites typical for other breeds.
- Dogs in attacks are regularly misidentified as "pit bulls". If "pit bull" attacks were qualitatively different then this confusion should not exist.

**In fact, the Staffordshire Bull Terrier, one of the breeds on the "banned breed" list, has NO known attacks in Canada.**

- Breed bans are unenforceable.
- Breed bans are extremely expensive.
- Breed bans unfairly punish responsible owners while irresponsible owners ignore the laws.
- 80% of bite victims are children who will be bitten in their home or at a neighbour's by the family dog. Research shows that just 1 hour of dog safety training in grades 2 and 3 can reduce these attacks by 80%.

This presents the question – are breed bans really based on based on proof of inherent danger?

#### If you really want improved public safety, speak up!

How can you help?



Tell your family and friends about what you've learned and encourage them to act as well. [www.stopk9profiling.com](http://www.stopk9profiling.com)

#### The Calgary Model – Responsible Ownership

**"We don't have a pet problem. We have a people problem."** Bill Bruce, the Director of Animal Services & Bylaws in Calgary. "We don't punish breeds, we punish behavior. The bottom line is, we believe all dogs are capable of biting." "It's not controlling pets, it's about holding people responsible for their pets."

Bruce (who took the reins of animal control in 2000) targets owners, rather than pets, saying "any animal that ends up in a shelter is there because the human end of the relationship failed." **His approach to responsible pet ownership incorporates licensing, providing permanent identification, training, physical care, socialization and medical attention, and not allowing pets to become a threat or nuisance in the community, public education and enforcement,** with supporting agencies all working together to achieve the same goals. **Educational programs, developed for school age children through to adults, address responsible citizenship and responsible animal ownership.** Educational programs are based in the curriculum and include PAWS: Dog Bite Prevention, Dogs in Our Society, Urban Coyotes and the Junior By-Law Project, just to name a few for students from kindergarten to Grade Six. The educators visit schools, present the programs, and supply resource material for students and teachers, free of charge. The team also speaks to community groups and attends any animal-related events held in the city. There is strong public support for the efforts of Bill Bruce from the citizens of Calgary. They know that their kinder friendlier Animals Services Department is there to help, not harm.

"To encourage a safe, healthy, vibrant community for people and their pets, through the development, education and compliance of bylaws that reflect community values", their mission statement says it all. Bruce believes **people "have a right to have pets and we want to ensure they're properly cared for,** so we don't end up with more unwanted pets." None of the 5000 dogs per year that end up in Calgary shelters are euthanized for population control. **Aggressive animal incidents are almost non-existent.** Of the 203 dogs euthanized last year at Calgary's shelter, 145 were considered irredeemably vicious. Thirty-six were put down for health reasons and 22 for serious injury, according to Bruce. **"We don't euthanize anything that is healthy and adoptable,"** he said. "I euthanized 203 dogs last year in a city of 1.1 million people." **"Within three to five years, we'll be a no-kill city. No animal will be killed unless it's in the best interest of the animal."**