



# ANY dog can be aggressive.

## B.C.'s Dangerous Dog Law

On August 30, 2000, new legislation came into force in British Columbia that will allow quick action to be taken to protect people and animals from dangerous dogs. A dangerous dog is one that has killed or seriously injured, or is likely to kill or seriously injure a person. A dog is also dangerous if it has killed or seriously injured a domestic animal in a public place or while on private property other than the dog owner's property.

The new law respects the rights of responsible dog owners who make sure their pets are properly cared for, well socialized, trained, and do not pose a threat. The law deals with situations where irresponsible dog owners who, even when faced with evidence that their dog is dangerous, refuse to take the necessary measures to prevent a dog attack.

When an incident concerning a dog occurs, an animal control officer will assess each case on an individual basis. If the officer believes the dog is dangerous and the owner of the dog refuses to give the dog up to the authorities, the officer may obtain a warrant to seize the dog from private property. Once a dog has been seized, it may be impounded pending a provincial court order of destruction.

The animal control officer must be able to convince a justice of the peace that there are reasonable grounds for the dangerous dog assessment and that a warrant should be issued for the seizure and impoundment of the dog. In an application for a provincial court order, the judge must be convinced that the destruction of the animal is in the public interest. The dog owner would have the opportunity to be heard by the judge.

**All dogs can bite.** A dog may show aggression when protecting its young, its owner, its owner's property, its food or its toys. A dog may bite or growl if it is injured, frightened or threatened. This does not mean that all dogs are necessarily dangerous.

## **Steps to take if your dog shows signs of inappropriate aggression:**

- First, talk to your veterinarian. Your veterinarian can help with advice and, if appropriate, medical intervention. It is important to establish a relationship with your veterinarian through regular veterinary examinations to check that your dog is healthy and is pain-free.
- Make sure that your dog is kept in a secured environment-a fenced yard or locked enclosure (your local animal control office or SPCA branch can provide you with guidelines on space, fencing and tethering). Make sure your property is well marked, warning people that a potentially dangerous dog is present. Never leave children unattended with any dog.
- When you take the dog off your property, make sure the dog is leashed and, if appropriate, muzzled. Some local governments have bylaws requiring the muzzling and/or leashing of dogs in public places. Keep your dog well away from other pedestrians and pets.
- Consult with a reputable dog trainer or dog behaviour specialist. The younger the dog is when training begins, the more successful the outcome. All dog owners are encouraged to socialize their young dogs by attending puppy-training sessions before a problem with aggressiveness arises.
- Have your dog spayed or neutered. Sterilizing your dog can significantly reduce aggressive behaviour.
- As the owner, if you feel that your dog's aggressive behaviour cannot be controlled and the risk of injury to a person or animal is too great, you should have your dog euthanized.

### **More Facts:**

For more copies of this fact sheet, please go to the following Web site:  
[www.ag.gov.bc.ca/public/DogFactSheet.pdf](http://www.ag.gov.bc.ca/public/DogFactSheet.pdf).

For further information on the BC SPCA and their "Bite Free" program, please refer to the following Web site: [www.sPCA.bc.ca](http://www.sPCA.bc.ca)

The Web site for the BC Veterinary Medical Association is: [www.bcvma.org](http://www.bcvma.org)



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