



Wednesday, 11 June 2008

## Animal control chief opposes dog breed ban

**Animal control officers have argued against legislation banning specific dog breeds, saying even a labrador can be dangerous in the wrong hands.**

A parliamentary select committee is hearing submissions on the Dog Control Amendment Bill (No 2). The bill makes it mandatory for dogs classified as menacing, because they are of a certain breed or type, to be neutered.

It also simplifies the process for adding breeds or types to dog-control legislation.

A schedule to the legislation lists breeds or types of dogs that may not be imported and, if they are present already, that are subject to muzzling when at large.

John Payne, president of the Institute of Animal Control Officers, provided a long list of amendments that he said were needed to improve the legislation, which the Government introduced in response to dog attacks.

He said the institute did not support breed-specific legislation for several reasons, including the fact that the greatest influence on dogs' aggression was environmental.

He told the committee that an American pit bull terrier could be an "extremely good animal" in the hands of a responsible owner, while a labrador in the wrong hands could be a danger.

Councils needed more effective legislation to deal with extremely aggressive dogs:

"Many councils know which ones they're dealing with but are quite hamstrung to be able to actually do something about it until it's probably too late."

Mr Payne had no problem with a ban on importing certain dogs, as long as the justification for their reputation was there.

People had opinions about certain breeds, but not necessarily the statistics to back them up. "One of the breeds that's actually most responsible for human fatalities over the last four or five years is a rottweiler. There's plenty of those already in New Zealand, yet they're not on the menacing list."

Asked by Labour MP Marian Hobbs whether there was any breed not already in New Zealand that he wanted banned, Mr Payne said a wolf hybrid. "I think a wolf hybrid is another one that seems to feature quite a bit in a lot of the write-ups from America and I just can't see the point in allowing that in."

Mr Payne also said the institute did not support the compulsory neutering of dogs classified as menacing.

Waikanae woman Nedra Shand, breeder and shower of Staffordshire bull terriers, also opposed the emphasis on certain breeds in the legislation.

Little research had been done, Mrs Shand said, and it appeared "media hype" against certain breeds had led to the Government's "quick-fix" legislation.

Banning dog breeds would not stop the number of attacks or dog bites. "All dogs bite and, to my knowledge, since records have been taken, there have been less than 10 people killed in New Zealand due to dog bites.

"Not one has been caused by a dog of the same breed and most have been caused by crossbred dogs or mongrels."

*\* The Dutch Government plans to lift a 15-year-old ban on pit bull terriers because it has not led to any fewer biting incidents. It will focus instead on enforcing leashing laws and educating dog owners. NZPA*

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