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Animal Advisory Board: No dog breed ban in Grand Island

By **Tracy Overstreet**

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GRAND ISLAND — While the Nebraska cities of Osceola and Minden have added dog breed bans to their city laws this summer, Grand Island will not pursue such a ban.

The Animal Advisory Board met on Monday and was adamant that a ban on any dog breed not become a part of the Grand Island city code.

City Attorney Dale Shotkoski had asked the board if it wanted to pursue a ban after his office received calls recently about pit bulls.

"Any type of dog can do severe damage," said Laurie Dethloff, Central Nebraska Humane Society executive director. "We prefer to make the owners accountable, not the breed."

Dethloff and Humane Society Shelter Manager Jane Kuehn said that accountability comes through things such as property insurance, leash laws, kennels and muzzles for dogs that have a demonstrated history of biting.

"Dogs don't have a thing to do with their own behavior -- people do," advisory board member Doug Jensen said.

Jensen is a Doberman pinscher breeder and expressed concern that a ban on any one particular breed would lead to a ban on more and more.

Bans are simply not appropriate, Jensen said, because they are an infringement on people's civil rights.

Breed bans are also virtually unenforceable, he said.

Jensen, who judges internationally for the American Kennel Club, said the pit bull is actually a crossbreed known as the Staffordshire bull terrier.

Determining the lineage and breed of a dog can be a challenge and would make enforcement of any breed ban difficult, he said.

"There are so many crossbreeds. How do you determine what is and what isn't?" Shotkoski asked.

Grand Island Police Chief Steve Lamken said, based on calls for service from his officers, pit bulls aren't the problem. The owners are.

"If a person wants a mean dog, they can make it mean," he said. "If you won't allow pit bulls, those people will find some other dog and make it mean."

"If they use the dog as a weapon, they will find another weapon," Shotkoski agreed.

Jensen said the breeds most prone to biting are actually cocker spaniels, poodles and Chihuahuas.

Shotkoski said bite cases the city has dealt with also include Lab mixes and German shepherds.

If the city simply enforced its current regulations on leash laws, Jensen said, bite problems wouldn't exist.

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