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## 'Dangerous breed' ban in Denver yields few clear results

**By Dan Sorenson**

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Hundreds of municipalities across the U.S. have banned or restricted ownership of pit bulls and other so-called "dangerous breeds," but Denver's 1989 pit bull ban likely gives it the most experience with a breed-specific approach to stopping serious attacks on humans.

But even after 17 years — there were two brief periods of nonenforcement during legal challenges — the ordinance hasn't produced any solid answers about the ban's effectiveness, said Doug Kelley, director of Denver Animal Care & Control.

The Denver ordinance prohibits owning or keeping "American Pit Bull Terrier, American Staffordshire Terrier, Staffordshire Bull Terrier, or any dog displaying the majority of physical traits of any one or more of these breeds."

The ban was the result of four serious maulings by pit bulls in a 2 1/2 period in the 1980s in which two people — including a 3-year-old child who crawled into a neighbor's yard and was mauled by a chained pit bull — were killed, Kelley said.

There have been no deaths or serious injuries by pit bulls in Denver since the ordinance passed — and only one death by another breed — a child killed by a chow mix, Kelley said.

But the ban hasn't ended the popularity of the pit bull breed in Denver, he said. There are still pit bulls, apparently more every year.

"We've experienced a continuing upward trend of pit bull impounded since 2001," said Kelley. Pit bull seizures hovered between 50 and 70 annually until 2000, when 134 were impounded. In the first 10 months of 2006, 807 pit bulls were seized.

"We're blessed in that we haven't had a serious injury in quite a while" by any breed, Kelley said.

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