

Specific breeds dropped from Sandy dog plan

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SANDY - Owners of pit bulls and Rottweilers in this east-side Salt Lake Valley city won't be put on a tighter leash - yet.

Sandy's City Council dropped breed-specific provisions in a proposed animal control ordinance on Tuesday, but vowed to revisit the new law in six months if high rates of pit bull and Rottweiler attacks continue.

But residents who have any dog that is deemed "dangerous" by the city soon will have to comply with tighter restrictions. The council plans to pass, at its next meeting, an ordinance that would require overly aggressive pups to be kept inside, or in a locked-and-roofed backyard kennel or muzzled and on a leash at all times.

Sandy revised the proposed ordinance with the help of a committee, which included a veterinarian, a dog trainer and a Sandy resident concerned about pit bull attacks, after many dog owners protested reining in all Rottweilers and pit bulls, regardless of behavior.

"Pick any breed and there's wonderful dogs in that breed and there are dangerous dogs in that breed," said committee member and veterinarian Jolie Pope.

But Kristi Ellis, also a member of the committee, urged the City Council to enact breed-specific restrictions and ban additional pit bulls in Sandy. Last year, in her neighborhood, a 13-year-old girl was chased by a pit bull and trapped on the roof of a car, screaming for help.

"This ordinance is still kind of a Band-Aid instead of a cure for these attacks," she said. "Will the council feel like they did everything they could to protect that one child who is mauled?"

City Councilman Chris McCandless pointed to a requirement in the proposed ordinance for education and training both for dangerous-dog owners and their pets as a way to stem violent attacks. He also backed expensive licensing fees and fines for troublesome canines.

Councilman Dennis Tenney suggested breed-specific restrictions or bans could be considered again.

"I don't think there's anything that's not on the table in the future if [the revised ordinance] doesn't produce the results that we want . . . of a safer community," he said. "We're very open to making this a whole lot stiffer."

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