

Orting's dangerous dog ordinance has real teeth
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Orting officials have decided to ban dangerous dogs from the city. The rules are stricter than ones adopted in nearby communities. Have an aggressive or dangerous dog? It's not welcome in Orting.

The City Council in the East Pierce County valley community unanimously voted this month to ban all dangerous dogs from the city.

The approach is stricter than in neighboring Puyallup, Sumner or unincorporated Pierce County, which all allow dangerous dogs as long as they're securely muzzled or penned and their owners pay for a \$500 permit.

Orting's new rules follow the other jurisdictions' steps for declaring a dog dangerous: It has to severely injure or kill a human without provocation, or injure or kill livestock on private property.

But Orting council members didn't see any reason why a dog that would do those things should be allowed to stay in town at all, Mayor Cheryl Temple said last week.

"We think it will just help with people feeling safer," Temple said.

City officials revisited the rules in part because they were concerned about dogs that had been declared dangerous in other cities coming to Orting and getting a free pass, Temple said.

The city's new rules state that a dog declared dangerous in any other jurisdiction is not welcome in Orting.

City Administrator Mark Bethune said city officials don't have any solid numbers showing that incidents with dangerous dogs are on the rise, but he's noticed more citizens have complained the past couple of years.

"I would say in the public hearing we had, a lot of people came forward to talk about dangerous dog incidents in town," Bethune said Friday. "I'm aware of more calls in the past two years than ever before."

City Councilman Joachim Pestinger said the new rules support Orting police by giving them a clear-cut standard to enforce.

Like most neighboring cities, Orting was careful to base its rules on an animal's behavior rather than its breed, he said.

Auburn is one of the few Puget Sound cities to take a breed-specific approach. In 2006, Auburn adopted an ordinance that lists 12 dog breeds, including pit bulls and bull terriers, as potentially dangerous and requires owners to register them with the city.

In Orting, owners are allowed to appeal the dangerous designation of their dog to the police chief.

The result is a process that is fair to both the dog and its owner, Pestinger said.

"There are a lot of steps that happen beforehand in order for a dog to be declared dangerous," he said Friday. "There are checks and balances and opportunities for appeals. But once a dog is declared dangerous, we don't want it in town."