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 THE TAMPA TRIBUNE

Saturday August 29, 2009

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Dog bite data doesn't add up for lovers of Labradors
Posted Jul 29, 2009 by Dennis Joyce
Updated Jul 30, 2009 at 07:53 AM

Fans of Labrador retrievers and other purebred dogs are standing up to defend the breeds against what they see as a critical report about dog bites in Hillsborough County.

Here at Fact Finders, we requested data on [dog bites](#) from the Department of Animal Services and wrote [this report](#) on the 2,400 cases recorded during the last 18 months. Animal services lists 103 different kinds of dogs as the culprits (you can search other kinds of [animal attacks](#) here, or see what we name our pets in the Bay area [here](#)).

Two things, at least, everyone can agree on: First, most of the dogs behind these numbers are unknown to the American Kennel Club and its pursuit of purity in breed, and second, the people who own dogs that made the list are more to blame than the dogs themselves.

Here are some highlights from the responses we got.

A letter to the editor from **Tim Golden**, president of the Hillsborough County Florida Dog Fanciers:

"The article ... states that dogs that are spayed or neutered are 1/3 less likely to bite, fostering the mistaken impression that surgery alone is sufficient to keep a dog from biting. Most experts, however, believe that the correlation between sexual status and a lower propensity to bite has more to do with responsible, educated dog owners who properly train and socialize their dogs in addition to altering them to prevent unwanted breeding, than the effects of the surgery alone."


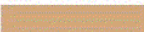









An e-mail from **Linda Haas**:

"The mere alteration of a dog (spay/neuter) alone will do little for a dog that was poorly socialized and whose training was neglected. The emphasis should be in EDUCATING the public about good socialization and training. There are dog training classes held nearly every day of the week, day and evening, so anyone who WANTS to socialize/train his/her dog can do it."

An e-mail from **Norman J. de Lapouyade** of Tampa: "Goldens and Labs are bred for hunting and retrieving. They have soft mouths. They don't know how to bite unless enticed and in the case of my current Labrador, couldn't bite if he were

struck. ... They are not the biters you are broad stroking and calling Labrador retrievers. I would suggest you speak to any owner of a bred golden or Labrador retriever. Not the variety type."

HILLSBOROUGH DOG BITES

Pit bull	 371
Labrador retriever	 151
German shepherd	 105
Chow chow	 80
Rottweiler	 63
Chihuahua	 52
Boxer	 49
Hound	 43
Terrier	 30
Dachshund	 28
Jack Russell	 28

Pit bulls bite more people than any other breed, but they account for just 15 percent of all dog bites during the 18 months ended this week. Hillsborough County Animal Services lists 103 breeds on its list of biters.

Tribune graphic; Source: Hillsborough Department of Animal Services

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- Today's number: 6 schools close as Pinellas County loses people. Florida is shrinking, too, a study Wednesday will show.