



May 24, 2012

Dear Maryland Legislator:

There has been much controversy and misunderstanding around the recent Maryland Court of Appeals ruling regarding landowner responsibility and pit bull attacks. PETA agrees with the court's decision, which holds guardians and landowners responsible for the adequate supervision and humane treatment of pit bulls in their care. PETA opposes legislation introduced to overturn the court decision.

The court decision does not ban pit bulls or dissuade responsible guardians from caring for pit bulls who are kept indoors as part of the family, spayed and neutered, well fed, walked, and otherwise kept humanely and responsibly. Rather, it holds negligent owners and those who knowingly harbor pit bulls on their properties responsible for the damage that the dogs may do when they attack.

Our office receives calls on a daily basis about pit bulls who are neglected or abused, many of whom, not surprisingly, retaliate by attacking, injuring, and sometimes even killing people and animals. Almost without exception, [those who seek](#) out this breed are attracted to the "macho" image of this animal as a living weapon and seek to use the dogs for protection (as opposed to companionship), putting the animals in heavy chains, taunting them into aggression, and leaving them out in all weather in order to "toughen" them. Shelter workers across the nation see firsthand on a regular basis the horribly cruel treatment that pit bulls are subjected to. Infected wounds left untreated, eyes swollen shut and oozing blood and pus, broken or torn limbs left to "heal" without veterinary care, and ear-cropping "home jobs" allowed to rot away are just a few of the atrocities that we routinely witness while working in our local community. Pit bulls comprise the majority of dogs in a growing number of animal shelters, the majority of victims in cruelty-to-animals cases, and the majority of dogs euthanized in animal shelters across the country.

Pit bull bites are far more severe than bites by other dog breeds. The April 2011 issue of the medical journal *Annals of Surgery* published a report by doctors and nurses at University Hospital in San Antonio, Texas, who examined 15 years of medical records of patients admitted to the hospital's level one trauma center with dog bite injuries. They found that attacks by pit bulls were associated with a higher risk of death, caused more serious injuries, were more likely to require hospitalization, and resulted in higher medical-care costs than attacks by other breeds. Examining national statistics, the authors report the following:

- One person is killed by a pit bull every 14 days.
- Two people are injured by pit bulls every day.
- One body part is severed and lost every 5.4 days as a result of pit bull attacks.

The report concludes, "These breeds should be regulated in the same way in which other dangerous species, such as leopards, are regulated."

It is critical that the issue of pit bull overpopulation, abuse, and attacks be addressed without delay, in a logical and humane way. You can help pit bulls in Maryland by introducing legislation requiring the sterilization of pit bull dogs. Unsterilized dogs are nearly three times as likely to attack as spayed and neutered dogs are, according to a 1998 *Journal of Veterinary Medical Association* report on a 12-year study of dogs involved in fatal human attacks in the United States. *Intact dogs account for 95 percent of all fatal*

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maulings. Spaying and neutering eliminates an animal's instinct to roam and reduces aggressive tendencies.

In San Francisco, Calif., the number of pit bulls euthanized at the city's animal control facility [dropped a remarkable 24 percent](#) just 18 months after the city passed a law requiring that owned pit bulls be sterilized. The law was passed after a 12-year-old boy was fatally mauled by his family's two unsterilized pit bulls.

Just one year after San Bernardino County, Calif., [passed a law](#) requiring the sterilization of pit bulls, that community experienced a nearly 10 percent decrease in dog bites and quickly looked to expand the law. The law was originally passed for pit bulls exclusively, "in response to an increasing number of attacks by pit bulls in recent years that resulted in four deaths—two of them young children—in the last five years."

Pit bulls are bred, fought, abused, neglected, and used as guards specifically because of their breed. At this time in history, it is not only fair but also essential that we protect them based on their breed as well.

As a resident of the Baltimore area and a longtime resident of Maryland, I can assure you that pit bull abuse is rampant in our community. When these dogs act on the frustration caused by irresponsible ownership and inhumane treatment, citizens suffer death or permanent disfigurement, the loss of their companion animals and other family members, and the loss of feelings of personal safety, and they deserve the right to seek compensation from negligent owners and the landowners who facilitate them.

Attached is PETA's factsheet about pit bulls, which explains in more detail why we support legislation to protect them.

My contact information is listed below. Thank you for the opportunity to share our position with you. We would be honored to meet with you and/or to arrange for a meeting with others who have experience with this difficult issue.

Thank you for your compassion for animals and your hard work for the citizens of Maryland.

Very truly yours,



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Enclosure: "The Straight Scoop on PETA and Pit Bulls," PETA Fact Sheet

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