

 Best Friends Social Networking to Save Lives

NETWORK



Help Create a Time of No More Homeless Pets

News

The High Costs of Breed Discriminatory Legislation

May 29, 2009, 3:58PM MT

By Sandy Miller, Best Friends staff writer

Study shows breed bans not only unfair, but expensive to enforce



It's happening in cities across the country, and it usually begins with a dog attacking someone. If the dog is, say, a Labrador retriever or a springer spaniel, chances are people will hear little, if anything about it. If the dog is suspected to be a "pit bull"—even if it's not—the media can't get enough of the story. "If it bleeds, it leads" is a common mantra among most mainstream media organizations. They know their newspaper readers and television news viewers will eat it right up.

Studies Show Breed Bans Don't Work

City leaders, anxious to pacify voters in their communities and quell fears, often enact laws banning pit bulls,

and other breeds of dogs, from their communities. The problem is breed bans don't do anything to keep their communities safer.

"We've had studies that show these laws don't work," says Ledy VanKavage, Esq., senior legislative analyst for Best Friends Animal Society. "The problem is the reckless owners, not the dogs."

Julie Castle, Best Friends director of Community Programs and Services, agrees.

"What these laws create is a false sense of security," Castle says. "People think they're going to be safe from vicious dogs. What they need to do is focus on irresponsible owners."

Taxpayers Pay for Breed Bans

But there's another element to add to the mix—the costs to taxpayers to enforce these laws. And now, thanks to a groundbreaking study commissioned by Best Friends and funded by the [National Canine Research Council](#), local lawmakers can find out just what those costs would be in their own cities, counties and states with a simple click of a mouse.



The study, "The Fiscal Impact of Breed Discriminatory Legislation in the United States," conducted by the New York City-based John Dunham and Associates, shows it would cost governmental entities more than \$450 million to enforce a nationwide ban on pit bulls. That number includes the costs of enforcement, kenneling, veterinary care, euthanasia and disposal, litigation and DNA testing.

There are an estimated 72.1 million dogs in the U.S. of which approximately 5 million—or 6.9 percent—are pit bulls or pit bull mixes. Pit bull is a generic name for American pit bull terriers, American Staffordshire terriers, Staffordshire bull terriers and their mixes.

Tool Calculates Cost of Breed Ban in Your Community

The [online calculator](#) allows anyone to estimate by city, county or state the costs for implementing and enforcing a breed-specific law.

"It's great we now have a tool that calculates these costs," VanKavage says. "These laws are knee-jerk reactions that don't work and are fiscally irresponsible. They cost taxpayers an arm and a leg, especially in a recession with unemployment soaring."

The website page also contains information about how the study was conducted, facts about breed bans and their ineffectiveness, and talking points to help guide people while speaking with local lawmakers.

"It puts activism in the hands of the public and gives them the tools necessary to fight

