

Subject: Open letter to Mat Antczak, Animal Control Officer for Ipswich Massachusetts,

Date: February 11, 2013 10:30:44 AM CST

To: general@dogsbite.org

From: Ian Pepper PhD
4 Rosewood Drive Ipswich MA

To: Mat Antczak, Animal Control Officer for Ipswich Massachusetts,

Sunday February 10 2013

cc to:

The Board of Selectmen, Ipswich Massachusetts

Robin Crosbie, Ipswich Town Manager

Paul Nikas, The Chief of Police, Ipswich Massachusetts

The Essex County Greenbelt Association

The Ipswich Chronicle

All Residents of Ipswich Massachusetts

Please reproduce and disseminate this letter

This is an open letter to Mat Antczak, the Animal Protection Officer of Ipswich Massachusetts,

I'm writing to thank you for getting back to me on Sat Feb 9 concerning an incident I reported late morning on Thursday February 7.

I called 911 to report a man walking with two off-leash pit bulls on Nichols Field off of Labor in Vain Road. I was birdwatching in the area, as I often do.

I was told that you would be sent to investigate, but you never showed up, and neither did the police, hence my phone message to you that day. I remained in the area (at a safe distance) to await your arrival, and eventually the man left in his car with the dogs.

Thank you for calling on Saturday the 9th to explain why you didn't show - you were busy with other (unspecified) matters.

Thanks also for explaining to me that you have a history of enforcement problems with this particular individual, that you regard the older dog specifically (the one trained as a guard dog) as being a public danger, which you had earlier ordered muzzled in public (it was not wearing a muzzle at Nichols Field). I am glad you decided to fine the man for these infractions, and I hope you can persuade him not to endanger the public in the future.

But I still have several questions:

If you were unable to respond to the call, why wasn't a police cruiser sent instead? Why was I, along with other walkers in the area, left unprotected? What exactly took priority over 2 pit bulls, one known to be especially dangerous, wandering loose on public lands? Should an individual with a record of training pit bulls to be dangerous be permitted to walk 1 of the 2 dogs without a muzzle? Shouldn't **both** dogs be muzzled? What happens when an individual like this one proves incorrigible and continues to deliberately endanger the public in this way? Shouldn't he lose the privilege of keeping dogs in Ipswich?

But I also want to raise further questions regarding your attitude toward pit bulls in general, and to make some recommendations.

Frankly, I was absolutely horrified to hear you repeating some of the myths and talking points currently being disseminated by pit bull lobbyists – a typical instance being Ipswich resident and professional pit bull breeder Holly Sheltry (formerly Stump), of 263 Topsfield Road in Ipswich.

Let me be clear: I was appalled to hear an animal control officer repeat the favorite lie – yes LIE – of the pit bull lobby, that these animals (American pit bull terrier, American Staffordshire terrier, Staffordshire bull terrier, and American bulldog) - which as everyone should know were bred to fight to the death in pits - were "bred as nanny dogs" and were the favorite dogs for children in jolly old Victorian England because they were so affectionate and safe (documentation please??).

Pit bulls were bred to fight to the death – an activity that is now illegal in the United States.

How is it possible that they were – simultaneously – bred to be harmless and affectionate, to care for small children??

Doesn't this simply contradict all the fundamentals of biology, genetics, and breeding science??

It seems to me that if you are to effectively inform and protect the public, you need to have accurate information concerning pit bulls.

Currently, there's quite a bit of nonsense being disseminated by pit bull breeders and promoters, but it is easy enough to see through this fog of lies and get to the facts.

A good to start your belated education is the website DogsBite.org, with its excellent FAQ on pit bull myths:

<http://www.dogsbite.org/dangerous-dogs-pit-bull-myths.php>

Also required reading is an excellent article that totally demolishes the vile "nanny dog" myth, a ridiculous invention that has unfortunately been swallowed hook, line, and sinker by too many people:

<http://thetruthaboutpitbulls.blogspot.com/2010/08/nanny-dog-myth-revealed.html>

As for the garbage about "good with children," please have a look at:

<http://blog.dogsbite.org/2010/05/1909-fatality-john-p-colbys-fighting.html>

And why not listen to what a surgeon has to say about the particularly nasty and difficult to reconstruct wounds left by pit bulls?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w2LI1oEQnQI>

Exceptionally, DogsBite.org is not owned or controlled by the pit bull lobby – and is hence one of the few sources of **credible** information on pit bulls.

Key points that are getting this miasma of deception are:

1) according to the Centers for Disease Control, pit bulls are responsible for **well over 50%** of all dog attack fatalities in the United States (the same report says clearly that pit bulls and Rottweilers combined account for at least 75%). Obviously, they are also responsible for a comparable proportion of serious attacks and injuries.

2) Pit bulls are extremely dangerous and unpredictable **by nature** (and by design). It is absolutely false to assert, as you did in our conversation today, but they make excellent pets, and are harmless unless trained to be aggressive.

3) Because of their exceptional strength, pit bulls are impossible for their owners to control. When they bite, the tremendous strength of their jaws ensures that the injury will be very serious, and to make what is worse, they tend to refuse to let go, even when beaten with heavy objects. They do not simply bite, like most dogs, **they chew through flesh**.

I do not mention Holly Sheltry by accident. As a professional pit bull breeder, she is responsible for disseminating numerous myths and lies about pit bulls. She and the organizations to which she holds memberships successfully pressured governor Duval Patrick to sign into law a ban on all breed-specific regulations in the Commonwealth.

Even more notoriously, it was Sheltry who persuaded State Representative Brad Hill – fortunately unsuccessfully! – to promote legislation that would have wiped clean the records of all pit bull incidents, so that the owners of dangerous pit bulls could continue to rack up lengthy records of attacks without having police records.

What **exactly** is the intended purpose of this piece of diabolical legislation - if pit bulls are "harmless" and "gentle" as claimed??

Fortunately for the citizens of Ipswich on the Commonwealth, this incredible attempt to pervert and subvert law enforcement, to shield pit bull owners from the legal consequences of their actions was not successful. What will they come up with next?

I also mentioned Holly Sheltry in particular because it was she who organized the grotesque nursing home stunt to which you referred approvingly – of taking her pit bull to visit nursing homes, and having it lick the faces of elderly residents – including one woman who was blind and senile, and therefore cannot possibly have given informed consent to subject yourself to this incredible level of danger – in order to create photo opportunities, which are then published on her website and in newspapers to illustrate the so-called harmless character of pit bulls.

As an antidote to the tidal wave of propaganda about the "harmless, sweet-natured" pit bull," I strongly suggest a visit to a hospital where a child who is been maimed by a pit bull

is being treated.

Perhaps Ms. Sheltry would like to accompany you: it might be therapeutic for her to have some of her delusions confronted with harsh reality.

The two of you might want to have a friendly chat with a surgeon who has tried to reconstruct some semblance of a human face on one of these children – he could perhaps explain to you the difference between being nipped at by a Chihuahua and being irreversibly maimed by a pit bull.

Perhaps you could watch doctors fitting an 3-year-old pit bull attack survivor for a prosthetic limb - maybe that will penetrate your denial mechanisms.

Ms. Sheltry has chosen to breed pit bulls across the street from Foote Brothers Canoe Rentals where families with small children paddle on the Ipswich River. And we all know what kind of people who will be showing up to purchase her wares. Incredibly, the town of Ipswich has chosen to allow this atrocity. Is the public aware of the danger at this location? What measures been taken to protect the public from the presence of potentially dozens of pit bulls at this location?

Let me be perfectly clear: by repeating the lies and myths propagated by professional pit bull lobbyists, **you are directly endangering the public**. Your endangering the public people by actively denying the danger of pit bulls rather than informing citizens about them.

You are in effect doing the job of the pit bull lobbyists instead of the job of animal control officer.

You cannot do both, they are in direct conflict.

You should be making appropriate recommendations to the Ipswich town government. You might want to take a look at what is been done in other regions and countries: Germany, where I live part of the year, has banned the breeding of pit bulls (and several other dangerous breeds), and pit bulls must be muzzled in public.

It would be wrong for me to raise such criticisms without making some positive recommendations, so here they are:

- 1) as the Animal Control Officer for Ipswich, you should be working – together with your colleagues – to reverse the ban on breed-specific legislation in the Commonwealth.
- 2) You should be working to inform the public of the facts about pit bulls – not disseminating the talking points, myths, and lies disseminated by professional pit bull breeders.
- 3) Once the ban on breed-specific legislation has been reversed, you should press for a muzzle law on all pit bulls in the town of Ipswich – and ultimately, a town-wide ban on pit bulls. Until it goes into effect, a breeding ban should be enforced in the town, and all pit bulls neutered.
- 4) Individuals who own dangerous dogs and who consistently flaunt the law should lose the privilege of owning dogs in Ipswich.
- 5) Finally, and slightly off-topic, I want to make a recommendation concerning Nichol's

Field:

This beautiful and unique property was given as a gift to the citizens of Ipswich. It offers sweeping views of the Ipswich River looking north, and is a place where you can observe numerous bird species, including bald eagles, any number of duck species, songbirds, etc.

This property was not gifted as a dog toilet, but that is basically what it is today. (Dogs are rarely leashed there, as required.) I recommend Nichol's Field be closed to dogs to it to recover from this onslaught of toxic waste and to revert to a flowering meadow where songbirds can breed again.

In closing, I want to make the following observations: whether the issue is gun or traffic safety, hunting laws, helmet laws, etc., public officials like yourself will have to face a stubborn and vociferous opposition to rational legislation and responsible behavior. Facing down these fanatics is simply a part of your job. It will never be easy, but simply accommodating yourself to the loudest voices is not the solution.

Throughout the town of Ipswich, there are quiet, modest, decent unassuming individuals who have been menaced or attacked or had their dogs – or even horses!! – injured or worse in pit bull attacks. Others have just barely avoided having children and infants attacked by pit bulls only by moving swiftly in dangerous situations. These people are not as loud, as well-organized, as fanatical, as persistent, as well-funded as pit bull breeders and lovers. It is your job to listen to these quiet, decent people as well as to the noisy, crazy, aggressive fanatics who lack any regard for public safety.

The most serious danger presented by animals in Ipswich is – by a very wide margin – the presence of pit bulls. Protecting the public from these dangerous animals is the most important aspect of an animal control officer's job.

I simply do not see how you can do your job if you have been brainwashed by the pit bull lobby to believe something as preposterous as false as that a dog bred for strength, viciousness and sheer killing power was actually bred in order to... *care for infants?? Really??*

I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely
Ian Pepper PhD
4 Rosewood Drive
Ipswich Massachusetts

About myself: live in Ipswich Massachusetts and Berlin Germany. Earned a PhD in art history from Columbia University in 2010, BA from New England Conservatory of Music. I work as a freelance writer and translator, am an avid birdwatcher.