

香港獸醫學會有限公司的信頭
Letterhead of The Hong Kong Veterinary Association ^{LTD.}

The President,
Hong Kong Veterinary Association
C/-The Laboratory Animal Services
Centre
Chinese University
Shatin, NT
Hong Kong
19/7/99

Ms. Leung Siu-kum
Clerk to Subcommittee
Subcommittee on Resolution
under section 3 of the Dogs and Cats
Ordinance (Cap 167) and Dogs and Cats
(Amendment) Ordinance 1997 (97 of 1997)
(Commencement) Notice 1999.
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Dear Ms Leung

The proposed Dangerous Dogs Ordinance is a good compromise for what is a problem without a clear-cut solution. It has been shown in Australia, that besides the fighting dog breeds, the heavy dogs such as German Shepherds and Dobermans feature significantly in attacks on humans and that if these attacks are directed at children the injuries invariably result in head, neck and facial trauma. The proposed ordinance, in defining large dogs as having a body weight of 20kgs, will without a doubt cause concern amongst dog owners whose animals, although quite placid, exceed that weight. However, I do not believe that an alternative exists. A proposal to “play” with the legislative criterion that defines a large dog by setting its weight higher at 25kgs would still be unsatisfactory for those dog owners who own dogs bordering on the weight limit. At least the 20kgs limit will include the breeds mentioned above and that have been identified in scientific studies, as being frequently involved in dog attacks.

The requirements set out in the proposed legislation are not that onerous for large dog owners. The muzzle requirements (which only apply while the dogs are in the confined spaces of the building where there are no opportunities for escape for humans that are co-occupying confined spaces, such as the lift) and leash requirements, still consider the well-being of the dog. Furthermore, exemptions using an obedience test protocol are possible, making it legal for a dog to be allowed in a confined area without a muzzle. Dog owners may consider the muzzle and leash requirements to be unfair, but in reality the requirements

protect both the dog owner and the non-dog owner and allow for their peaceful co-existence. It is important to realise that muzzles that do allow the dog to pant, exist. Therefore, it is highly unlikely for the muzzled dog to overheat, particularly as the dog only needs to wear the muzzle inside the public areas of buildings. One suggestion for legislators to consider in order to satisfy the concerns of individuals that fear that dogs may not be able to cool themselves by panting, because of the muzzle, is to stipulate, in the legislation, the type of muzzle that must be used. The muzzle and leash requirements of the proposed ordinance become an obligation of the dog owner for the privilege of owning a dog in the urbanised environment of Hong Kong.

The HKVA believes that it is also essential that the proposed compensation plan is administered efficiently to avoid any misuse by unscrupulous breeders attempting to breed “dangerous dogs” in order to receive the compensation while it is being offered.

In conclusion, the general population of Hong Kong is not well educated about dog behaviour and are not familiar with dog body language, when compared with communities renowned for their high level of dog ownership (e.g. UK, USA and Australia). For this reason the general population of Hong Kong has little knowledge on how to interact with pet dogs especially when confronted by a dog in a confined space. This lack of familiarity results in a significant number of people being afraid of large dogs and this fear increases the possibility that the individual/s may inadvertently do something to the dog that could provoke an attack. If this attack is directed towards a child or it occurs in a confined space, the consequences may be tragic. For this reason, the proposed ordinance is definitely a step in the right direction.

The HKVA would also like to be present when the Subcommittee meets on the 23rd of July 1999.

Anthony E. James
Secretary
Hong Kong Veterinary Association