

P.O. Box 186. Sai Kung. N.T.

16<sup>th</sup> Nov 1999

Dear Sirs/Mmes,

I am amazed that the government is still seeking to impose the illogical, arbitrary and discriminatory legislation it is proposing for “large dogs”.

Sensationalist rhetoric about “reconstructive surgery on bite wounds” should not be allowed to win out against a rational analysis of the statistics.

All of the figures below, are derived from the government’s own statistics, as quoted by the AFD:

During the three-year period of 1995-1997, from a total of more than 12,000 dog bite cases presented to hospitals for treatment, licensed large dogs caused only seven serious bites.

This represents a total of *less than 0.06%* of bites presented to hospitals for treatment over this period.

This figure, must also be compared to the more than 6,300 bites caused by local chow and mongrel dogs, representing 52.5% of all bites presented to hospitals for treatment over the same period.

*Every single day of the year*, on average, six members of the public are bitten severely enough by these local chow and mongrel dogs that they require hospital treatment (over 2,100 per annum).

This compares with an average of just two serious bites *per annum* caused by licensed large dogs.

The fact is therefore, that the public is 900 times (90,000%) more likely to require hospital treatment due to a local chow or mongrel bite, than to be seriously bitten by a licensed large dog.

The above figures, give some indication of the vast numbers of these unlicensed, potentially rabid, semi-feral dogs which are roaming uncontrolled around Hong Kong. Further, these numbers only reflect those few out of the total, that have actually bitten someone!

Under existing legislation, the AFD is mandated with the task of controlling these animals in order to ensure that public safety is adequately protected.

The vast numbers involved clearly demonstrate that any suggestion the current legislation is being rigorously enforced is patent nonsense.

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After studying these figures, it becomes apparent that the proposed “large dog” amendment will do nothing to address the dog bite problem. It will however, wrongly penalise the vast majority of those law-abiding, responsible owners whose dogs are already properly licensed and looked after.

Irresponsible owners (whose dogs are not fully and properly licensed,) will not suffer, they will simply evade all responsibility by denying ownership.

The above statistics provide ample evidence that the very real problem of dog bites will be solved only when and if the AFD is prepared to proactively undertake its obligations under *existing* legislation.

It is understandable that the government is under severe pressure to be “seen to be doing something”, especially following the recent flurry of sensationalist reports in the local media.

If it is the case that the AFD currently lacks the resources to respond to this problem, then surely for the sake of public safety, this issue deserves to be accorded a higher priority when budgets are allocated.

However, to table an ill thought through amendment that does not address the real issues and in reality, will only be targeted at, will discriminate against and will criminalise those responsible dog owners who are already fully complying with the law, is not a sensible solution.

To my knowledge, there is no other country in the world that has laws specifically targeting large dogs. The reason? It does not make sense.

Surely before seeking to promulgate such an arbitrary measure, the AFD should first put its own house in order? The statistics suggest that a rethink is in order, to ensure that the real problem may be properly and effectively addressed.

Fighting dogs? Yes.

Known dangerous dogs? Yes.

Every “large” dog? NO!

The large dog amendment must be dropped.

Yours faithfully,

Graeme C. Alford