

香港中文大學的信頭
Letterhead of THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

Yr. Ref.: CB1/SS/10/98

By fax & mail

21 July 1999

The Chairman,
Subcommittee on Dangerous Dogs Regulation
Legislative Council
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road
Central
Hong Kong

Dear Sir,

**Re: 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**

In reference to the letter dated July 7, 1999 to The Vice Chancellor, Chinese University of Hong Kong, I would like to submit the following comments.

The proposed Dangerous Dogs Ordinance is, I believe, 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 20 kgs, 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 25 kgs would still be unsatisfactory for those dog owners who own dogs bordering on the higher weight limit. At least the 20 kgs 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. Dog owners may consider the 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.

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.

Yours sincerely,

Anthony E. James
Director
Laboratory Animal Services Centre

c.c. Prof. Arthur Li, Vice-Chancellor