

**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**

Meeting on 23 July 1999

Address by Neil McLaughlin - 11.35am

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Firstly, the matter of relevant qualifications. I would like to explain that I am addressing this meeting both in a personal capacity as the joint keeper of several dogs and also as the Hong Kong representative of 'PuppyWatch', which is a UK based animal welfare charity. For your further information I would also add that I am an elected member of the Executive Committee of the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Hong Kong (SPCA) and an appointed and founding member of the SAR Government's Animal Welfare Advisory Group (AWAG). On a personal note my wife and I have lived in Hong Kong for eighteen years. We currently have six large dogs with which we share our home. My wife is the founder and Practice Manager of a well known veterinary clinic in Hong Kong and is wholly dedicated to animal welfare. I therefore believe I am qualified to speak on the following issues.

My comments today are in particular reference to the proposed Section 3 of the Dogs and Cats Ordinance. 'Potentially Dangerous Dogs', wherein dogs over 20 kilograms in weight are supposed to be dangerous. It is proposed that these dogs be muzzled and leashed in indoor public spaces and restrained by leash in outdoor public spaces.

THIS PROPOSAL IS WHOLLY WRONG AND INAPPROPRIATE

I would like to expand upon the following list of points.

There is no factual basis in the theory that dogs over a certain weight are aggressive

Majority of dog attacks are not by large dogs

Many dogs below 20kg weight can be more aggressive than those over 20kg weight

The 20kg limit suggested is not based on fact

Age of dogs versus 'aggression'

Discrimination by weight is wrong!

Weight and size do not necessarily correlate

Weight/size is irrelevant to aggression in dogs or any other animal

What causes aggression in normally benign dogs and other animals?

Instinct

Competition

Protection of the Pack (Family)

Aggression in dogs can be triggered by:

Fear

Threat

Defence of territory

Reaction to negative situation

All of which are exacerbated by:-

- Abuse
- Lack of proper care
- Lack of understanding, in both children and adults
- Poor living conditions
- Poor environment
- Aggression by others
- Negative environmental factors
 - being tied up
 - no exercise
 - frustration (frustrated guard dogs)
 - pain
 - teasing
- small living space
 - caged
 - dark room
 - no stimulation
- boredom
 - no fun
 - no friends
 - no games
- loneliness
 - sad
 - negative outlook
- home-alone
 - no stimulation
 - lack of awareness of outside world
- abuse by owner
 - mistreatment due to ignorance (children)
 - punishment without understanding cause
 - no love, no communication = no development

ALL OF WHICH REFLECT NEGATIVELY ON THE KEEPERS, NOT THE DOGS!

Some other factors :-

- pack instinct
- the weather
- normal mood swings
- not being spayed/neutered
- Murphy's Law - accidents do happen!

Some issues of importance:-

- Spay/Neuter programme
 - reduced aggression
 - reduction in stray population
- Stamp out bad breeding
 - puppy farms
 - reversal of pedigree - UK Retriever's aggression
 - horrendous conditions - scars for life
- Control Importation
 - large breeds
 - unsuitable breeds
 - smuggling from China

Policing of pet shops
Commodities
Profit
Status
Disease
= 70% Mortality

Building Site Dog
supposed to be 'aggressive'
usually sad/lonely/starved/abandoned
psychological cruelty

Abandoned/Strays
Discarded
Local attitudes
Frightened
Starving
Survival
SPCA - 90% put to sleep

THE WRONG END OF THE STICK

Dogs, companion animals, are FUN, they should not be portrayed as a threat
Dogs love to LOVE They want to please
Dogs deserve RESPECT They should not be demeaned
This proposed legislation is sending entirely the wrong message i.e.
muzzle = "I need to be muzzled"
in fact muzzles = increase in aggression
= address the symptom not the problem

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

GET TO GRIPS WITH THE PROBLEM NOT THE SYMPTOMS

Responsibility
Keepers must be made to understand their responsibilities
Education
Education Education Education.....
Government initiative required NOW
Start in the schools - Dr. Dog programme
Government Policy
Ag & Fish ineffective controlling strays
prevention better than cure
a supportive, positive, informed policy for animal welfare

RECOMMENDATION

That the proposed Section 3 regulations dealing with 'Potentially Dangerous Dogs' be rejected on the grounds that they are discriminatory, innappropriate and unsubstantiated by fact.

Presented by

Neil McLaughlin
23 July 1999