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The Calgary Model

The animal control bylaw in Calgary, Alberta, Canada has been hailed by many as a HUGE success. While other cities and provinces in Canada are banning breeds, Calgary is choosing education program and stronger enforcement. What's the end result? By all accounts, reports and statistics, the bylaw is working! Not only that, the bylaw works so well and the results are so highly praised, Calgary is inspiring animal control officials outside of Canada to use the bylaw as a model for their own animal control ordinances.

The following is written by Dana Grove:

The bylaw officers in Calgary have taken a stand against breed banning, and responded to dog bite concerns with a tougher licensing program and stronger enforcement. The City of Calgary also spends considerable funds on dog safety public awareness and education campaigns. Research shows that just 1 hour of dog safety training in grades 2 and 3 can reduce these attacks by 80%.

"We don't punish breeds, we punish behavior," said chief bylaw officer Bill Bruce. "The bottom line is, we believe all dogs are capable of biting."

In Calgary, 90 per cent of dogs are licensed, allowing bylaw officers to keep track of pets and owners. The city also has a strict fine structure that includes a \$250 penalty for chase incidents and \$350 fines for bites. The bylaw also allows the officers to declare specific dogs as "dangerous" and this label brings with it higher license fees, muzzling rules and age restrictions on the dog's handlers. The bylaw states that a dog can only be destroyed by owner request or court order.

The county of Newell in Alberta received dozens of letters and e-mails from around the world from people who oppose breed restrictions, said deputy Reeve Jack Harbinson.

"We decided after listening to the people, they were right," he said.

The success of their actions? Approximately 1000 reported dog bites in 1985 and 260 reported dog bites in 2003.

Calgary's dangerous dog legislation was implemented in response to the bite problem. Dangerous dog, not dangerous breed. The results speak for themselves – a 70% drop in the number of OVERALL dog bites.

The measures Calgary has taken have shown results, and set a model and a precedent that should be implemented across Canada.