

NEW ZEALAND OWNERS NEED YOUR HELP

You may already have read of a situation developing very quickly in New Zealand that is virtually identical to that in the UK in 1990 and Hamburg in 1999. Once again there have been several serious attacks by dogs, the media has rushed to call for breed bans and politicians are falling over one another to appear ever more willing to ban dogs and criminalise their owners with little or no regard for the mass of scientific evidence from all around the World that clearly demonstrates that "breed" is just not the significant factor in dog attacks.

The anger of the families of those injured in these attacks is quite understandable and the vast majority of dog owners will feel deeply for the injured children but it is surely the job of the politicians to provide a genuine response based on the evidence and not merely to pander to the excesses of the media.

The usual breeds are under threat immediately in New Zealand including Pitbulls, American Staffordshire Terriers, Tosas, Bull Terriers, Staffordshire Bull Terriers, Rottweilers, Dobes, Akitas and many others which appear indiscriminately in various news articles. Owners have already begun to respond and a 50 page submission has been prepared by Stafford owners and presented to the Auckland Council representatives. The document included letters from the UK from the British Veterinary Association, Kennel Club and National Canine Defence League as well as local veterinary and animal welfare organisations.

The following is a direct quote from a Staffordshire Bull Terrier owner in New Zealand and I'm afraid it bears tremendous echoes of events in Germany just 3 years ago! There is a saying that those who refuse to learn the lessons of history are doomed to repeat them! Referring to another incident that has appeared in today's (16th Feb) newspapers,

"I can confirm that the Animal Control Services of Manukau City Council describe the dog that attacked Angel Daniels is a cross breed, and DEFINITELY NOT a Staffordshire Bull Terrier, or SBT as reported. This is another huge injustice against our breed. And it couldn't have come at a worse time.

Needless to say, we must keep going and educate those around us. I am trying to keep cool here, but after having stones thrown at my wife and I and our dog on Saturday night on Long Bay beach, and torrents of extremely aggressive verbal abuse yelled at us (and two other Stafford owners), its very very difficult. Hysterical, ignorant members of the public are difficult to reason with."

Now we urgently need to demonstrate the views of people around the World to this kind of mindless response to dog attacks that leave the general public at risk because of the false basis on which the laws are targeted and leave perfectly law-abiding citizens marginalised by their own government and their own neighbours.

We do not want to attack the New Zealand authorities; we need to educate them with information about our dogs and the real value that they bring to our lives. We need to explain that it is bad owners and bad breeders who cause dog attacks and we need to support our colleagues in New Zealand at this very difficult time. Please write to the New Zealand campaign co-ordinators at nzstafford@ihug.co.nz and support a campaign to protect our dogs. The New Zealand campaigners will use the information we provide to demonstrate the level of support Worldwide. Please act NOW!

DAVID LEVY

KC Liaison Officer for SBT

New Zealand Herald, 19 February, 2003

Fast track for dog law changes

The Government has succeeded in fast-tracking a new law to control dangerous dogs.

Leader of the House Michael Cullen yesterday won majority support for a non-debatable motion to refer the Local Government Law Reform Bill (No 2), to the local government select committee.

The Bill has been before Parliament since 1999, although all parts but the one dealing with dangerous dogs have been passed into law. The part covering dogs was held back because of concerns about how it would work. As drafted it would specifically ban American Pitbull Terriers and allow other breeds to be added to a restricted list. At the select committee, which will hear public submissions, the Government plans to make a

series of amendments including clarification of the right of dog rangers to enter private property.

Prime Minister Helen Clark also said last week that it was clearly no longer satisfactory for some breeds known to be dangerous to wander the street unmuzzled and unleashed. Local authorities have been asked to complete a survey on the issue by the end of March.

Officials will report on policy options to a Cabinet sub-committee, also by the end of March. The new law will complete its passage through Parliament by June at the earliest.

Pressure for change came after a spate of attacks by dogs, mostly on children, including the mauling of 7-year-old Carolina Anderson.

See New Zealand News,
page 41 for more on NZ laws

BBC News, 17 February, 2003

Action demanded on cat and dog fur

Campaigners say cat and dog fur is finding its way to Europe

Members of the European Parliament are renewing demands for an import ban on cat and dog fur, which they say is finding its way onto European markets.

The fur is used as trims on jackets, handbags and other products, the MEPs say, with customers being misled or deliberately left in the dark about its origins.

The MEPs have signed a letter calling on the European Union to ban the products - although the European Commission insists that it currently has no powers to do so. "We are appalled by some of the pictures of this trade that we have seen, but we can only act within the laws that we have," said Beate Gminder, spokeswoman for Health and Consumer Protection Commissioner David Byrne. Italy has already banned the products, and the commission in Brussels says each individual country within the EU should decide whether it wants to follow suit, given the lack of European legislation.

Campaigners claim that up to two million animals are slaughtered every year in countries including China. An investigation by the Humane Society of the USA said cats and dogs were kept in cruel conditions in animal farms, and that many were skinned alive to prevent the furs losing their condition after the animals' death. The fur finds their way on to the market with misleading labelling, campaigners claim.

Cat fur might be labelled as rabbit, or dog fur might say "Asian wolf", says Louise Stevenson of the Coalition to Abolish the Fur Trade. "There are lots of euphemisms, as manufacturers know that consumers would not buy cat and dog," said Ms Stevenson. "Some shops are even assured by their suppliers that the fur is fake." British Conservative MEP Struan Stevenson, among those to sign the letter to Mr Byrne, disputes the Commission's claims to be powerless to act. "What we are dealing with here is massive consumer fraud," he said.

Campaigners also insist that the EU has a moral duty to act. "If you can have laws to ban child pornography, surely you can ban other things that are morally and ethically questionable," Ms Stevenson said. "I think it is a lack of will rather than a lack of legislation."

The European Commission says it believes only relatively small amounts of the fur are coming in, although campaigners say there has been a surge into Europe since a US ban on the fur was introduced two years ago.

THE OSCARS - STRANGER THAN FICTION

You have probably heard that one of the nominees for the Best Screenplay Oscar this year is fictitious. Charlie Kaufman invented a fictitious twin brother, Donald, as a character in the semi-biopic "Adaptation". Nicholas Cage plays them both in the film. Charlie then gave his "brother" joint credit for the screenplay. Consequently, both of them have been nominated for the Oscar.

Donald is not the first fictitious person to be nominated for an Oscar. There have been others in the past. But for National Dog readers, the most interesting strange nomination must be from the Tarzan film "Greystoke" and it wasn't a monkey.

Greystoke's writer, Robert Towne was so annoyed when the director rewrote parts of his script that he insisted his name be taken off the credits. He replaced it with that of his Old English Sheepdog, P H Vazak. This dog was subsequently nominated for the Screenplay Academy Award, but, unfortunately, he didn't win and there were no paws for applause.

Christine Cunningham

Lover of dogs, movies and writing!

Retirement

Old English Sheep dog Heidi Heidi gives a kiss to Oracle Corp Japan President Masaaki Shintaku at her retirement ceremony after 11 years of service as a canine employee, providing 'healing' and 'comfort' to fellow workers in Tokyo.

Heidi Heidi received a certificate of thanks and a one-year supply of beef jerky as her retirement pay.

