



Société pour la prévention  
de la cruauté envers les animaux



## **An evidence-based dangerous dog by-law**

**Au service des animaux du Québec depuis 1869**



## **AN EVIDENCE-BASED DANGEROUS DOG BY-LAW**

The Montreal SPCA recognizes that canine aggression represents a serious threat to public safety and must be addressed in order to ensure for safe communities in which humans and dogs co-exist and enrich each other's lives.

The Montreal SPCA believes that the most effective way to tackle this issue is for humane societies, municipalities, and experts in canine behavior and health to work together on multi-faceted strategies that target dangerous dogs of all breeds, with a strong emphasis on prevention. These strategies must focus on the underlying factors that lead to canine aggression, owner responsibility, and remedial measures to deal with aggressive dogs based on their actual behavior.

Any dangerous dog by-law should include the following components<sup>1</sup>:

### **1. An emphasis on preventative measures targeting the underlying causes of canine aggression, including:**

- a. Requirement that all dogs to be kept on leash in public places unless in specific designated off-leash areas;
- b. Mandatory licensing and identification of all dogs;
- c. Mandatory permits for the breeding of dogs, requiring, at a minimum, a prior veterinary exam and attestation stating that the dog is physically and behaviorally suitable for reproduction;
- d. Mandatory sterilisation of dogs unless the owner holds a valid breeding permit or a veterinarian attests that sterilisation is contraindicated for medical reasons;
- e. Mandatory permits for any individual or entity selling or giving away dogs;
- f. Prohibition on the permanent chaining of dogs;
- g. Prohibition on aversive training methods, including prohibiting the use of prong, choke, and shock collars;
- h. Prohibition on the use of dogs for the purposes of guarding or protecting property;
- i. Mandatory standards of care for dogs including requirements related to food, water, shelter, socialisation, training, environmental enrichment, and veterinary care.

### **2. A clear and fair procedure for dealing with dangerous dogs, including:**

- a. Reporting procedures enabling citizens to make a complaint or report a dog that may be considered dangerous;
- b. Procedures related to the seizure, housing, and behavioural evaluation of dogs involved in dog bite incidents or demonstrating aggressive behavior;
- c. A definition of 'dangerousness' that focuses on a dog's behavior - not on physical characteristics;
- d. A requirement that the designation of dogs as dangerous only be attributed by a veterinarian with expertise in canine behavior, and only once the dog has

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<sup>1</sup> Note that in conjunction with the adoption of a by-law regulating dangerous dogs, communities must also ensure that: (1) there are resources in place in order to properly enforce the by-law (2) they invest in education programs that focus on dog bite prevention including teaching children about how to properly interact with dogs and teaching the public how to recognize and appropriately react to aggressive dogs (3) they have the resources to assist low income families with sterilisation and basic care for their animals.



received a complete physical and behavioural assessment and once the dog's owner has been interviewed by the veterinarian;

- e. A means of dealing with situations in which a veterinarian with expertise in canine behavior determines that a dog may constitute a danger to the public with his/her current owner but not with a responsible third party;
  - f. Procedures enabling a dog owner to contest the designation of their dog as "dangerous" and to challenge a euthanasia order;
  - g. A list of conditions that may be imposed on the owner of a dog deemed dangerous, including, but not limited to, mandatory sterilisation, mandatory civil liability insurance, mandatory muzzling, mandatory behavioural consultations or training, and euthanasia.
3. **Appropriate penalties, including:**
- a. Significant fines for owners of dogs deemed dangerous;
  - b. Increased fines for repeat offenders;
  - c. Possible prohibitions on animal ownership for owners of dogs deemed dangerous;
  - d. Possible prohibitions on animal ownership for owners who have failed to comply with mandatory standards of care.