



January 8, 2018

The Honorable Mike Summers, Mayor of Lakewood
Members of the Lakewood City Council

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Dear Mayor Summers and Members of the Lakewood City Council,

We hope you're well. I'm writing on behalf of PETA—the world's largest animal rights organization, with more than 6.5 million members and supporters worldwide—to express our **support** of [pit bull-specific laws and regulations](#). Many people are surprised to learn that PETA supports laws that strictly regulate pit bull ownership. We do so in the interest of protecting these dogs, other companion animals, and the community at large.

Our office receives calls every day about pit bulls who have been neglected or abused, many of whom—not surprisingly—retaliate by attacking, injuring, or sometimes even killing humans and other animals. Last month in Dayton, a teenager walking his dog was badly mauled by two roaming pit bulls. A 911 caller said that she could hear his bones being crushed and pleaded for a fast response, saying, "They are gonna kill him!"¹ The pit bulls had to be shot by responding police officers, and the teen's dog later died from his injuries. Another pit bull in Dayton broke into a backyard and killed a poodle, "rip[ping] the dog to pieces."² The pit bull had previously attacked a child, biting her in the chest. In Jeromesville, a 12-year-old girl sustained facial injuries and had to be transported via Life Flight to a Cleveland hospital after she was "viciously attacked" by her family's pit bull mix.³ Three roaming pit bulls in Butler County killed two miniature horses, disemboweling one of the animals and tearing off his eyelids. One of the dogs was shot at the scene, and two others went on to kill a standard-size horse at another property.⁴ And a one-year-old baby had to be hospitalized in Cleveland with "injuries to her face and chest" after being attacked by her family's pit bull.⁵ **Cases like these occur across the state and throughout the nation on a regular basis.**

It's well established that pit bull bites are far more severe than those of other dog breeds. The April 2011 issue of the medical journal *Annals of Surgery* published a report by doctors and nurses at University Hospital in San Antonio who examined 15 years of medical records of patients with dog-bite injuries who had been admitted to the hospital's level-one trauma center. They found that attacks by pit bulls were

¹WHIO.com, "Dayton Teen Remains Hospitalized After Pit Bulls Attack Him," 29 Dec. 2017 <<http://www.whio.com/news/crime--law/report-police-put-down-dogs-after-man-seriously-injured/4bWNhgxDBq3N5ewRGw1VnI/>>.

²Breaking News Staff and Max Filby, "Local Dog Likely to be Euthanized After Mauling a Poodle to Death," 18 Dec. 2017, DaytonDailyNews.com <<http://www.daytondailynews.com/news/area-woman-poodle-killed-neighbor-pit-bull/xKvTNKYjkCKv4TYdD9yatO/>>.

³Joe Lyons, "Family Pet Pit Bull Attacks Young Girl," 29 Dec. 2017, WMFD.com <<https://www.wmfd.com/news/single.asp?story=74755>>.

⁴Todd Dykes, "Dogs Fatally Maul Miniature Horses, Full-Sized Horse in Butler County," 18 Dec. 2017, WLWT.com <<http://www.wlwt.com/article/two-of-3-attacking-dogs-remain-on-the-run-after-friday-attacks-off-west-elkton-rd/14456726>>.

⁵Drew Scofield, "1-Year-Old Hospitalized After Being Bitten by Dog," 29 Dec. 2017, News5Cleveland.com <<https://www.news5cleveland.com/news/local-news/cleveland-metro/1-year-old-hospitalized-after-being-bitten-by-family-dog>>.

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associated with a higher risk of death, caused more serious injuries, were more likely to require hospitalization, and resulted in higher medical-care costs than attacks by other breeds. After examining national statistics, the authors reported the following:

- One person is killed by a pit bull every 14 days.
- Two people are injured by pit bulls every day.
- One body part is severed and lost every 5.4 days as a result of pit bull attacks.

The report (attached) concludes, "These breeds should be regulated in the same way in which other dangerous species, such as leopards, are regulated."⁶

Shelter workers see firsthand on a regular basis the horribly cruel treatment that pit bulls are subjected to. Infected wounds left untreated, eyes swollen shut and oozing blood and pus, broken or torn limbs left to "heal" without veterinary care, deeply embedded collars, and ear-cropping "home jobs" are just a few of the atrocities that we often witness while working in our local community. Pit bulls constitute the majority of victims in cruelty-to-animals cases as well as the majority of dogs taken in by and subsequently euthanized in shelters across the country.

No one blames the dogs themselves for the current crisis, but it's the duty of decent people who care about them to try to resolve it. PETA runs several mobile spay/neuter clinics in southeastern Virginia, and for years, we've sterilized pit bulls free of charge (1,349 in 2016 alone, and more than 1,200 so far this year). While many people take advantage of our program, those who make money from breeding or fighting these dogs have no motivation to do so and continue to breed them while hundreds of others await homes in area shelters. *Some people won't do the right thing unless the law requires them to.*

If you decide to revise Lakewood's current pit bull ordinance, we hope you'll do, at a minimum, the following: require that pit bulls be spayed and neutered, without exception; prohibit dog chaining and caging (including long-term crating indoors, which can [cause frustration](#) and [aggression](#)); and require owners to keep pit bulls indoors unless they're being walked by a trained adult with a leash and secure harness. Additional safety requirements that have been considered or implemented in other communities include requiring pit bull owners to complete [criminal background checks](#) and professional training courses and to carry valid liability insurance.

Attached is PETA's factsheet about pit bulls, which explains in more detail why we support legislation to protect them, other animals, and the public. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to share our position with you. Please don't hesitate to contact me if I can be of assistance.

Very truly yours,



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Attachments

"Mortality, Mauling, and Maiming by Vicious Dogs," by John K. Bini, M.D., *et al.*
PETA Factsheet, "The Straight Scoop on PETA and Pit Bulls"
"Pit Bulls Can Cause Severe Damage," by Guilford Marvin Bass Jr.

⁶John K. Bini, M.D., *et al.*, "Mortality, Mauling, and Maiming by Vicious Dogs," *Annals of Surgery* 4.253 (April 2011): 791–797
<http://journals.lww.com/annalsofsurgery/Abstract/2011/04000/Mortality,_Mauling,_and_Maiming_by_Vicious_Dogs.23.aspx>.