

# DEALING WITH DANGEROUS DOGS

By: Elaine Gower



**S**an Diego Animal Services receives over 2,500 reports of dog bites, annually. Many bite victims are seriously injured with children suffering most of those injuries.

Typically, homeowners associations have narrow definitions of what constitutes undesirable behavior in a dog such as acting out, growling, or snapping. In most of these cases, an association can determine that such behavior constitutes a vicious dog. Once the issue is identified, the board should take action

such as requiring the dog be on a leash when it is in common areas, that the leash be no longer than six feet, and that the person holding the leash be able to control the dog. When an owner cannot control the dog, they become a danger to the homeowners and a liability to the association.

A dog can be declared a public nuisance animal or a dangerous dog if it has repeatedly violated state and local laws, damaged or inconvenienced the community, and/or injured or killed another animal. If a dog attacks or



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bites two people within 48-month period, or has bitten a person causing substantial injury or death, then they can be deemed a "dangerous dog."

In cases where dog bites or attacks are reported to Animal Control, authorities will sometimes open an investigation into the case. In some instances, the case might be referred to as a Dangerous Dog Task Force requiring certain steps be taken to evaluate the case further.

Sometimes the destruction of the dog may be requested. In other cases, certain restrictions may be imposed on the dog and its owner such as obtaining and maintaining a liability policy of insurance, building a specific fence to restrain the dog from getting out, and requiring a muzzle. Getting the dog microchipped and altering the dog may help with such aggressive behavior.


As a last alternative for getting Fido out of the association if the owner does not comply with these restrictions, a misdemeanor citation may be issued to the association to impound or euthanize the dog.

The best protection your association can have when pets go rogue is to make sure that the associations governing documents clearly spell out in advance what steps will be taken by the association. It takes a proactive Board to implement the appropriate discipline, which may require that the dog be removed from the community.


For further guidelines regarding regulating dangerous and public nuisance animals, please refer to County of San Diego Animal Services. 

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