



media release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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ONTARIO BANS PIT BULLS

It's official – as of August 29, 2005 the Province's amendments to the *Dog Owner's Liability Act* and the newly created pit bull control regulations took effect. As a result of these new rules and regulations, it is now illegal for any resident of Ontario to own a pit bull dog in the Province of Ontario unless they meet both of the following requirements:

- the resident owned the dog(s) before August 29, 2005 or have a pit bull that was born prior to November 27, 2005; and
- the dog has been sterilized.

Pit bulls that meet the above requirements are considered a 'grandfathered' or restricted pit bull under the legislation. Ontario residents who own a restricted pit bull are also required to comply with the following strict Provincial regulations:

- a pit bull must be leashed and muzzled in public areas
- a pit bull must remain in an enclosed area when on private property
- the breeding of pit bulls is prohibited

Individuals found guilty of contravening the Act or the regulations may be fined to a maximum of \$10,000.00, and with up to a maximum of 6 months in jail.

"The Town's Animal Control Services is the main point of contact and enforcement agency for residents who have questions, or who wish to register a formal complaint about an alleged violation of the Act," stated Mark Sruga, Director of Building & By-Law Enforcement for the Town of Caledon. "The Province has positioned these new rules and regulations as related to public safety, and there is a concern that the public's expectations about dog safety and animal control in our community with respect to pit bulls, has been unrealistically raised."

This is in part due to the public's unclear understanding of the new rules and regulations, especially around what is considered a pit bull. The Province's definition of a pit bull includes the following breeds: pit bull terrier, Staffordshire bull terrier, American Staffordshire terrier and American pit bull terrier. Furthermore, the definition encompasses dogs that have an appearance and physical characteristics that are substantially similar to the dogs specifically identified in the definition.

The new legislation places the onus on the dog owner to prove their dog is not a pit bull. Documentation signed by a member of the College of Veterinarians of Ontario is the only acceptable form of breed verification. Pit bull owners – as defined by the Provincial list of breeds – who do not comply with the Provincial requirements and regulations will be charged for non-compliance, and the dog will be seized.

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“Any pit bull dog that is seized by an Animal Control officer may or may not be returned to the owner,” said Mr. Sraga. “This will depend on the owner’s history of non-compliance with the rules and regulations, and Town staff’s assessment of the owner’s ability to keep their dog in compliance with the legislation and regulations. In addition, staff must be satisfied the dog will not pose a menace to the safety of persons or domestic animals.”

In Fall 2004, the Town of Caledon proactively amended the Dog and Kennel By-law (93-90) to incorporate regulations that placed restrictions on all dogs determined by an Animal Control Officer to be “threatening” or “dangerous” to the community. Penalties exist for all dog owners – not just those who own pit bulls – who fail to comply with the Town’s regulations.

In order to facilitate the tracking of pit bulls in Caledon along with ownership, Town staff will create a pit bull database. This information will assist in determining if a pit bull qualifies as being restricted (or not), along with the number of pit bull dogs owned by an individual. This information will be gathered under the *Municipal Freedom of Information & Right of Privacy Act*, for internal use only – contact information about pit bull owners will not be available to the general public.

The Town of Caledon requires that every owner of a dog shall license their dog (as per By-Law 93-90), and limits the maximum number of dogs in a house to three. Dog tags are available for pick-up at either the Animal Shelter located at 12889 Coleraine Drive, Bolton, or at Town Hall on 6311 Old Church Road, Caledon East.

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