

City Council Fails to Act

The Siouxland District Health Department has reported that, since a pit bull ban was enacted in 2008, the city has had more problems with dog bites.

Prior to the ban, there were 5.9 dog bites reported each month. Since the ban, that number has increased to 8.5 dog bites per month. For all of 2010, two years after the ban was enacted, Sioux City had more bites reported than in any year since 2001.

In addition, according to statistics released by the Iowa Department of Public Health, the number of persons hospitalized each year in Woodbury County -- Sioux City is in Woodbury County -- has not been effected by the ban.

In October 2010, three veterinarians whose sub-specialties included epidemiology, animal behavior and statistical analysis, published an article in the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association employing the tools of evidenced-based medicine to determine whether or not it was possible to ban a breed or type of dog in a community and thereby reduce the number of persons hospitalized because of dog bite injuries. That the Sioux City ban has not reduced hospitalizations is exactly the result their analysis predicted. ([See NCRC's discussion of this important paper here.](#))

The Sioux City Council has effectively ignored its own dog bite statistics, the report from the Iowa Department of Public Health, as well as the findings of evidence-based medicine, and passed up an opportunity to repeal the breed ban. The Council also failed to approve an ordinance crafted by City Attorney Andrew Mai that would have dealt more harshly with irresponsible pet owners.

One of Sioux City's most severe dog-related injuries occurred in August 2010, when 19-month-old Samuel Van Donslear was critically injured by a neighbor's dog. Earlier the same week, the Van Donslears' own dog had been impounded by Sioux City Animal Adoption & Rescue Center, following allegations that it had killed another dog.

Neither the Van Donslears' dog nor the dog that had injured Samuel Van Donslear was identified as a pit bull.