

YANK THE LEASH ON ENTITLED DOG OWNERS

It's not the dogs' fault — it's the self-indulgent, irresponsible humans

When (dogs) demonstrate aggressive behaviour towards humans there's a problem.

Out for my early morning walk. Over 10 kilometres, I was challenged several times by aggressive dogs — two off-leash, two lunging while on leash, three charging to fences. Two Yorkshire terriers, one Labrador, one golden retriever, one German shepherd, two indeterminate breeds.



A private member's bill proposes making dog owners liable for damages caused by their pets.

In other words, a typical morning walk where the hyperventilation comes as much from surprise dog encounters as it does from the brisk pace prescribed for fitness.

Why do so many of my fellow citizens feel comfortable owning dogs like this, which are clearly either untrained, undisciplined and poorly socialized, or have been trained to be aggressive?

When I take my daily constitutional, I now routinely carry a heavy walking stick. It doubles as a shillelagh. Why should I feel compelled to arm myself when I wish to go for a simple walk?

Before the dog-lovers begin reviling my anti-canine prejudice, permit me to reiterate: I like dogs, I have owned dogs, my wife has owned dogs, there are many dogs — well-trained dogs — in my extended family and those dogs and I get along just fine.

Sure, most dog encounters are benign. But too many involve off-leash dogs on walking paths clearly signed as on-leash areas. Furthermore, I don't care whether dogs are behind fences or tethered — when they demonstrate aggressive behaviour towards humans there's a problem.

I don't blame the dogs. The dogs do what dogs naturally do without responsible human intervention and control. It's the missing "responsible human" part that ticks me off.

I blame entitled, self-indulgent and irresponsible dog owners who acquire their pets in ignorance of the animals' natures and of their own duties. Lazy dog owners too often see pets as disposable cosmetic accessories rather than lifelong obligations of stewardship.

Personally, I want the authorities to make those irresponsible owners both responsible for their dogs and fully accountable for their dogs' behaviour — which, just to remind everyone, includes five savage maulings, one that was fatal, to kick off 2016 in British Columbia.

Andrew Weaver, leader of the Green party of British Columbia, last week introduced a private member's bill addressing this. The Animal Liability Act would make dog owners directly liable for damages to individuals or other dogs caused by their pets.

In addition, the bill calls for a fine of up to \$5,000 and six months in jail for dog owners who contravene the act. The penalty would rise to \$10,000 and a year in jail for a second offence. Frankly, I say take legislation further. Anybody whose dog mauls, maims or kills somebody should be prosecuted as though they'd been using a firearm or motor vehicle in a criminally negligent fashion. Meanwhile, Weaver's bill offers the government an opportunity to begin the accountability process.

Weaver, in introducing his bill, cited the Canada Safety Council's estimate that more than 460,000 people are bitten by dogs each year. Dog apologists, of course, challenge this number. In fact, we don't have a clear understanding of the size and extent of the problem.

A 2009 research project by UBC master's candidate Nancy Margaret Clarke concluded that dog attacks are widely underreported because municipal, regional and provincial animal control authorities generally do a thoroughly incompetent job of collecting data and accurately reporting it.

There's no comprehensive, coherent provincewide requirement for animal control, bylaw enforcement or emergency response agencies to report dangerous dog complaints or dog bite incidents. Instead it's a jurisdictional jigsaw puzzle.

The UBC researcher, after studying 36 animal control agencies across Canada's five regions in cities representing about 10.4 million people, concluded that "inasmuch as Canadian dog-bite data are calculated from emergency room data only — and do not include untreated dog bites or dog bites treated in venues other than hospital emergency departments — it is possible that the Canadian dog bite incidence is under-reported by as much as 90 per cent."

OK, we have a problem with the data.

Let's fix it so that we know with accuracy the extent and magnitude of dog-related injuries. Let's have the province show leadership by establishing a standardized B.C.-wide data collection and reporting procedure for municipal and regional animal control authorities.

Let's do this now. It won't prevent the next mauling of some innocent person by an out-of-control dog, but it

20 Comment(s)

[Rancher](#)

15 April 2016

04:23

Leave the stick at home and I think you'll find the dogs are far less aggressive. Dogs are highly wary of people carrying just about anything.

I do agree that there are a lot of entitled and incompetent owners out there.

[lisa duprey](#)

15 April 2016

05:48

Couldn't agree more. Very tired of dogs on city streets without leashes.



[Ricketty Rabbit](#)

15 April 2016

06:09

I agree with Hume - there are both entitled and stupid dog owners. Thankfully, they're not the majority, but there are many.

I've found that if you ignore dogs, a high percentage of them ignore you. But when they do become aggressive, too many of the owners yap fruitlessly at their dogs, failing to control them. If you tell the owners to control their dogs, the response is typical - "he won't hurt you". And most of the time they're right, though very occasionally I've had dogs that "won't hurt you" lunge and snap at me, particularly while riding a bicycle.

Note: I don't ride my bicycle in areas where dogs are allowed to roam off leash - best to leave the dogs and their owners in peace.



[G.A.](#)

15 April 2016

06:40

Agree as well RR, and I also feel that boredom is a factor in dogs going after a person on a bike or while walking down a street or in the park. Boredom is also a factor in why a lot of people get themselves, especially teenagers in hot water as well.

[Rico](#)

15 April 2016

07:08

dog ownership is costly and can be very expensive. Maybe people should have to have a means test to ensure their animals won't be abandoned or turned in to the various shelters when they get sick or otherwise injured. While we are at it expand it to include children.

[Leo Le Couteur](#)

15 April 2016

07:14

While riding my bike recently I came across a dog owner which a leash that suddenly became long enough to go across the road and I almost fell off my bike. Dog owners you to be aware of this when a cyclist approaches

[Stratos](#)

15 April 2016

07:23

Stephen, you lost me when you complained twice about dogs barking at the fence of their yards as you walk by. You are too uptight about dogs if this upsets you so much.

[DER000](#)

15 April 2016

07:27

I agree with the Author.



[The Green Bastard](#)

15 April 2016

07:33



watermaa@telus.net

15 April 2016

07:41

As someone who fosters rescue dogs, I couldn't agree more with Stephen. We constantly see the results of poor dog ownership, and yet are almost always able to ready the dogs that come through our home and organization for a new, happier and settled life with a caring owner. And the dogs themselves seem grateful for the chance.



[Nanny Ogg](#)

15 April 2016

07:56

Having a dog who barks at strangers from within a fenced yard is not encouraging aggression. My dog when out will bark when someone walks by or comes to the gate. It's an early warning system. During the years when my husband was out of town I felt a lot safer letting people know there was a large dog on the premises. I did NOT tell them they were more likely to be licked to death than bitten. I agree that dogs should not be off-leash where it is prohibited. All too many will react in that situation, and even if it's just wanting to say hello, not everyone wants dog interactions.

[Willy P Johnson](#)

15 April 2016

08:42

Rico " dog ownership is costly and can be very expensive " thanks for the humor, yes U2 GB.

[tug](#)

15 April 2016

09:23

Never have been interested in being a dog Nazi. I agree that the author is being very uptight about dogs that are tied up or behind a fence. That's what the dogs are there for, to keep uptight folks like him off the property.

[Bert](#)

15 April 2016

09:33

Hume is absolutely right... and puts the blame where it should be...On the owners who are ignorant and/or defiant of the signs posted and the few laws in place.

I especially disrespect the morons that will not pick up their dog poop or use peoples/neighbors lawns as their dog toilet.

I walk the White Rock Promenade frequently, most every days where dogs are not allowed. Almost every day I see people violating the rules. I have seen dogs pooping on the sidewalk and the owners only picking up after being shamed into it.

The City spends extra money to patrol the area to advise people of the rules or if necessary issue a fine. I have seen dog owners arguing with the officer and being aggressive towards them. Obviously some dog owners need to have their head examined.

On the other hand there are also many, I would say the majority of dog owners who are very responsible and it shows when you see their dogs!



[Art Iskandid](#)

15 April 2016

10:05

A dog owner is liable for damage or injury done by his dog.

The fact that some people have no idea how to train a dog is no more serious than people who don't know how to train their rude and noisy brats.



[skippy](#)

15 April 2016

10:12



[Nanny Ogg](#)

15 April 2016

13:20

My avatar's name is "thank you, now be quiet".



[Lord Asriel](#)

15 April 2016

14:58

Always carry a big wooden stick or cane and bear spray and use it if they come within 3 feet of you.

These morons and their stinking shitting dogs are ruining so many walking areas, it's time to make them pay, and start having a lot more dog free walking trails and parks.

[George T Cunningham Library - CTZ](#)

16 April 2016

09:05

No Rancher, he is correct. I have had several dogs and it isn't the dogs, it's the irresponsible, ignorant, entitled owners that are the problem. And it's getting worse.

[George T Cunningham Library - CTZ](#)

16 April 2016

09:07

Apparently, Stratos, it doesn't take much for you to become lost.