

Animal Limit Laws: Better Alternatives

Why Limit Laws Don't Work

When animal control concerns arise, legislators often look to limit laws as a quick fix. In reality, limit laws cause more problems than they solve. Here is why:

- Limit laws do not address the heart of the problem, which is irresponsible dog ownership.
- There is no link between a specific number of dogs and nuisance problems. One dog that barks or runs loose will cause trouble, while several dogs that are quiet and stay home will not.
- Limit laws are extremely difficult to enforce and can be evaded by irresponsible animal owners.
- Limit laws may result in a decrease in the number of dogs licensed, since individuals may choose not to license their pets as a way to avoid giving up a beloved pet. Animal control officers therefore have no way of knowing how many pets an owner has unless they make regular door-to-door inspections, an expensive and time-consuming process that in many cases would require a search warrant. A drop in licensing would also severely impact a community's animal control budget.
- Hoping to evade limit laws, pet owners may try to hide the number of dogs they own. To do so, owners avoid taking their animal to veterinarians and getting needed vaccinations. This not only jeopardizes public health, but also affects rabies prevention and threatens public safety.
- People who are forced to give up their dogs due to limit laws usually relinquish them to local shelters, creating additional financial and emotional burdens for animal control and shelter officials.
- Limit laws would impact those who rescue unwanted animals and either adopt them or find them permanent homes.
- Limit laws target all owners, regardless of their actions or the behavior of their animals. Responsible owners should be allowed to use their own discretion in determining the number of dogs they can keep on their own property.



Better Solutions Include:

- Vigorous enforcement of animal control and nuisance regulations, that often already exist, designed to keep communities safe and enjoyable for everyone.
- Effective leash and clean up laws prevent irresponsible owners from letting their pets run loose, possibly endangering the public and other animals.
- Public education campaigns to teach residents about responsible dog ownership, such as how to properly care for and interact with pets.
- Use of an arbitrator to mediate neighborhood animal disputes would help settle personal arguments that are not indicative of an animal control problem.
- Alternative sentencing for nuisance law violators, including participation in obedience training classes or community service at an animal shelter.



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