



Pet Limit Laws Not the solution!

Unfortunately, politicians believe pet limit laws are a cure-all for animal control problems, but in reality they do nothing to address irresponsible owners – only penalizing responsible pet owners.

Prepared by Responsible Pet Owners Alliance, www.rpoatexasoutreach.org
With input from American Kennel Club, American Dog Owners Association, the Cat Fanciers' Association, National Animal Interest Alliance, United Kennel Club, and The Animal Council.

Limit laws are hard to enforce and may cause a decline in the number of animals licensed and vaccinated for rabies. Pet owners will simply hide their pets. With the rabies threat in Texas, the primary concern of elected officials should be that all animals are vaccinated for rabies as required by state law.

A person with one dog that runs loose or barks all night is a greater nuisance than a person with a dozen dogs that are quiet, clean, and kept at home. Numbers have no relationship to nuisances.

How are you going to pick the number of dogs allowed? Five Bull Mastiffs or Five Chihuahuas? Is this fair? Will it come down to "how many pounds of dogs you're allowed?" This makes as much sense as numbers limits. Limit laws target all pet owners, regardless of the behavior of their animals.

Limit laws would severely impact the many responsible people who rescue unwanted animals from the streets and animal shelters and either personally adopt them as pets or find them permanent homes. Dog limits put an unreasonable strain on people who raise show dogs, compete in performance trials, participate in sporting events, foster dogs for service dog organizations, etc.

Alternatives to Pet Limit Laws:

1. Enforcement of Leash Laws, a strong Animal Nuisance Law, and an Animal Cruelty Law.
2. Use of a mediator to resolve neighborhood conflicts regarding animals.
3. For those who violate leash laws and nuisance ordinances, use of alternative sentencing such as community service at the county animal shelter, attendance at a class on responsible dog ownership, and/or participation in a dog obedience training course.
4. Periodic programs: public service announcements, publicity regarding responsible dog ownership and local ordinances; or city sponsorship of an American Kennel Club Canine Good Citizen Test Program to encourage residents to be responsible dog owners. Increased public education efforts are better ways to address the issue of irresponsible dog ownership.

From the American Kennel Club:

"The human-canine bond pre-dates recorded history. Since the dawn of civilization, man has enjoyed the companionship and assistance of dogs. Dog ownership has existed in all cultures, races, climates and economic situations - by monarchs, monks, nomads, and peasants. We oppose unreasonable limitations on pet ownership."

Court cases have ruled that pet numbers' limits are unconstitutional in Minnesota and Pennsylvania, The Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania, the state's highest court, has declared such a law unconstitutional in that state, citing a precedent in *Kadash v City of Williamsport*: "What is not an infringement upon public safety and is not a nuisance cannot be made one by legislative fiat and then prohibited." And, from the same citation: "Even legitimate legislative goals cannot be pursued by means which stifle fundamental personal liberty when the goals can otherwise be more reasonably achieved."