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**HOUSE BILL 1018**

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**State of Washington 64th Legislature 2015 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Appleton, Gregerson, Reykdal, Goodman, and Buys

AN ACT Relating to preventing breed-based dog regulations; amending RCW 16.08.070, 16.08.080, 16.08.090, and 16.08.100; and creating a new section.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) A number of local jurisdictions have enacted ordinances prohibiting or placing additional restrictions on specific breeds of dogs. While the legislature recognizes that local jurisdictions have a valid public safety interest in protecting citizens from dog attacks, the legislature finds that a dog's breed is not inherently indicative of whether or not the dog is dangerous and that the criteria for determining whether or not a dog is dangerous or potentially dangerous should be focused on the dog's behavior.

(2) The legislature further finds that breed-specific ordinances fail to address any of the factors that cause dogs to become aggressive and place an undue hardship on responsible dog owners who provide proper socialization and training. The legislature intends to redirect the focus away from particular breeds and to instead encourage local jurisdictions to employ more effective and data-driven prevention models to control dangerous dogs and enhance public safety.

**Sec.**  RCW 16.08.070 and 2002 c 244 s 1 are each amended to read as follows:

((~~Unless the context clearly requires otherwise,~~)) The definitions in this section apply throughout RCW 16.08.070 through 16.08.100 unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(1) "Potentially dangerous dog" means any dog, without regard to the breed of the dog, that when unprovoked: (a) Inflicts bites on a human or a domestic animal either on public or private property, or (b) chases or approaches a person upon the streets, sidewalks, or any public grounds in a menacing fashion or apparent attitude of attack, or any dog, without regard to the breed of the dog, with a known propensity, tendency, or disposition to attack unprovoked, to cause injury, or to cause injury or otherwise to threaten the safety of humans or domestic animals.

(2) "Dangerous dog" means any dog, without regard to the breed of the dog, that (a) inflicts severe injury on a human being without provocation on public or private property, (b) kills a domestic animal without provocation while the dog is off the owner's property, or (c) has been previously found to be potentially dangerous because of injury inflicted on a human, the owner having received notice of such and the dog again aggressively bites, attacks, or endangers the safety of humans.

(3) "Severe injury" means any physical injury that results in broken bones or disfiguring lacerations requiring multiple sutures or cosmetic surgery.

(4) "Proper enclosure of a dangerous dog" means, while on the owner's property, a dangerous dog shall be securely confined indoors or in a securely enclosed and locked pen or structure, suitable to prevent the entry of young children and designed to prevent the animal from escaping. Such pen or structure shall have secure sides and a secure top, and shall also provide protection from the elements for the dog.

(5) "Animal control authority" means an entity acting alone or in concert with other local governmental units for enforcement of the animal control laws of the city, county, and state and the shelter and welfare of animals.

(6) "Animal control officer" means any individual employed, contracted with, or appointed by the animal control authority for the purpose of aiding in the enforcement of this chapter or any other law or ordinance relating to the licensure of animals, control of animals, or seizure and impoundment of animals, and includes any state or local law enforcement officer or other employee whose duties in whole or in part include assignments that involve the seizure and impoundment of any animal.

(7) "Owner" means any person, firm, corporation, organization, or department possessing, harboring, keeping, having an interest in, or having control or custody of an animal.

**Sec.**  RCW 16.08.080 and 2002 c 244 s 2 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) Any city or county that has a notification and appeal procedure with regard to determining a dog within its jurisdiction to be dangerous may continue to utilize or amend its procedure. A city or county animal control authority that does not have a notification and appeal procedure in place as of June 13, 2002, and seeks to declare a dog within its jurisdiction, as defined in subsection (7) of this section, to be dangerous must serve notice upon the dog owner in person or by regular and certified mail, return receipt requested.

(2) The notice must state: The statutory basis for the proposed action; the reasons the authority considers the animal dangerous; a statement that the dog is subject to registration and controls required by this chapter, including a recitation of the controls in subsection (6) of this section; and an explanation of the owner's rights and of the proper procedure for appealing a decision finding the dog dangerous.

(3) Prior to the authority issuing its final determination, the authority shall notify the owner in writing that he or she is entitled to an opportunity to meet with the authority, at which meeting the owner may give, orally or in writing, any reasons or information as to why the dog should not be declared dangerous. The notice shall state the date, time, and location of the meeting, which must occur prior to expiration of fifteen calendar days following delivery of the notice. The owner may propose an alternative meeting date and time, but such meeting must occur within the fifteen-day time period set forth in this section. After such meeting, the authority must issue its final determination, in the form of a written order, within fifteen calendar days. In the event the authority declares a dog to be dangerous, the order shall include a recital of the authority for the action, a brief concise statement of the facts that support the determination, and the signature of the person who made the determination. The order shall be sent by regular and certified mail, return receipt requested, or delivered in person to the owner at the owner's last address known to the authority.

(4) If the local jurisdiction has provided for an administrative appeal of the final determination, the owner must follow the appeal procedure set forth by that jurisdiction. If the local jurisdiction has not provided for an administrative appeal, the owner may appeal a municipal authority's final determination that the dog is dangerous to the municipal court, and may appeal a county animal control authority's or county sheriff's final determination that the dog is dangerous to the district court. The owner must make such appeal within twenty days of receiving the final determination. While the appeal is pending, the authority may order that the dog be confined or controlled in compliance with RCW 16.08.090. If the dog is determined to be dangerous, the owner must pay all costs of confinement and control.

(5) It is unlawful for an owner to have a dangerous dog in the state without a certificate of registration issued under this section. This section and RCW 16.08.090 and 16.08.100 shall not apply to police dogs as defined in RCW 4.24.410.

(6) Unless a city or county has a more restrictive code requirement, the animal control authority of the city or county in which an owner has a dangerous dog shall issue a certificate of registration to the owner of such animal if the owner presents to the animal control unit sufficient evidence of:

(a) A proper enclosure to confine a dangerous dog and the posting of the premises with a clearly visible warning sign that there is a dangerous dog on the property. In addition, the owner shall conspicuously display a sign with a warning symbol that informs children of the presence of a dangerous dog;

(b) A surety bond issued by a surety insurer qualified under chapter 48.28 RCW in a form acceptable to the animal control authority in the sum of at least two hundred fifty thousand dollars, payable to any person injured by the dangerous dog; or

(c) A policy of liability insurance, such as homeowner's insurance, issued by an insurer qualified under Title 48 RCW in the amount of at least two hundred fifty thousand dollars, insuring the owner for any personal injuries inflicted by the dangerous dog.

(7)(a)(i) If an owner has the dangerous dog in an incorporated area that is serviced by both a city and a county animal control authority, the owner shall obtain a certificate of registration from the city authority;

(ii) If an owner has the dangerous dog in an incorporated or unincorporated area served only by a county animal control authority, the owner shall obtain a certificate of registration from the county authority;

(iii) If an owner has the dangerous dog in an incorporated or unincorporated area that is not served by an animal control authority, the owner shall obtain a certificate of registration from the office of the local sheriff.

(b) This subsection does not apply if a city or county does not allow dangerous dogs within its jurisdiction.

(8) Cities and counties may charge an annual fee, in addition to regular dog licensing fees, to register dangerous dogs.

(9) Except as provided in RCW 16.08.090(4), nothing in this section limits a local authority in placing additional restrictions upon owners of dangerous dogs. This section does not require a local authority to allow a dangerous dog within its jurisdiction.

**Sec.**  RCW 16.08.090 and 1987 c 94 s 3 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) It is unlawful for an owner of a dangerous dog to permit the dog to be outside the proper enclosure unless the dog is muzzled and restrained by a substantial chain or leash and under physical restraint of a responsible person. The muzzle shall be made in a manner that will not cause injury to the dog or interfere with its vision or respiration but shall prevent it from biting any person or animal.

(2) Except as provided in subsection (4) of this section, potentially dangerous dogs shall be regulated only by local, municipal, and county ordinances. Nothing in this section limits restrictions local jurisdictions may place on owners of potentially dangerous dogs.

(3) Dogs shall not be declared dangerous if the threat, injury, or damage was sustained by a person who, at the time, was committing a ((~~wilful~~)) willful trespass or other tort upon the premises occupied by the owner of the dog, or was tormenting, abusing, or assaulting the dog or has, in the past, been observed or reported to have tormented, abused, or assaulted the dog or was committing or attempting to commit a crime.

(4) The breed of dog may not be considered when declaring a dog dangerous or potentially dangerous. A local jurisdiction may not prohibit possession of a particular breed of dog or declare a breed of dog to be dangerous or potentially dangerous.

**Sec.**  RCW 16.08.100 and 2002 c 244 s 3 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) Any dangerous dog shall be immediately confiscated by an animal control authority if the: (a) Dog is not validly registered under RCW 16.08.080; (b) owner does not secure the liability insurance coverage required under RCW 16.08.080; (c) dog is not maintained in the proper enclosure; or (d) dog is outside of the dwelling of the owner, or outside of the proper enclosure and not under physical restraint of the responsible person. The owner must pay the costs of confinement and control. The animal control authority must serve notice upon the dog owner in person or by regular and certified mail, return receipt requested, specifying the reason for the confiscation of the dangerous dog, that the owner is responsible for payment of the costs of confinement and control, and that the dog will be destroyed in an expeditious and humane manner if the deficiencies for which the dog was confiscated are not corrected within twenty days. The animal control authority shall destroy the confiscated dangerous dog in an expeditious and humane manner if any deficiencies required by this subsection are not corrected within twenty days of notification. In addition, the owner shall be guilty of a gross misdemeanor punishable in accordance with RCW 9A.20.021.

(2) If a dangerous dog of an owner with a prior conviction under this chapter attacks or bites a person or another domestic animal, the dog's owner is guilty of a class C felony, punishable in accordance with RCW 9A.20.021. It is an affirmative defense that the defendant must prove by a preponderance of the evidence that he or she was in compliance with the requirements for ownership of a dangerous dog pursuant to this chapter and the person or domestic animal attacked or bitten by the defendant's dog trespassed on the defendant's real or personal property or provoked the defendant's dog without justification or excuse. In addition, the dangerous dog shall be immediately confiscated by an animal control authority, placed in quarantine for the proper length of time, and thereafter destroyed in an expeditious and humane manner.

(3) The owner of any dog that aggressively attacks and causes severe injury or death of any human, whether or not the dog has previously been declared potentially dangerous or dangerous, shall, upon conviction, be guilty of a class C felony punishable in accordance with RCW 9A.20.021. It is an affirmative defense that the defendant must prove by a preponderance of the evidence that the human severely injured or killed by the defendant's dog: (a) Trespassed on the defendant's real or personal property which was enclosed by fencing suitable to prevent the entry of young children and designed to prevent the dog from escaping and marked with clearly visible signs warning people, including children, not to trespass and to beware of dog; or (b) provoked the defendant's dog without justification or excuse on the defendant's real or personal property which was enclosed by fencing suitable to prevent the entry of young children and designed to prevent the dog from escaping and marked with clearly visible signs warning people, including children, not to trespass and to beware of dog. In such a prosecution, the state has the burden of showing that the owner of the dog either knew or should have known that the dog was potentially dangerous as defined in this chapter. The state may not meet its burden of proof that the owner should have known the dog was potentially dangerous ((~~solely~~)) by showing the dog to be a particular breed or breeds. In addition, the dog shall be immediately confiscated by an animal control authority, quarantined, and upon conviction of the owner destroyed in an expeditious and humane manner.

(4) Any person entering a dog in a dog fight is guilty of a class C felony punishable in accordance with RCW 9A.20.021.

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