

Commission Letter # :CC Letter #284-09
Commission Meeting: 9/21/2009
RE: **Report on Vicious Dogs**

September 18, 2009

The Honorable Mayor
and
Members of City Commission

Commissioner Drinkwine requested we include a discussion of vicious dogs on the Sept. 21 agenda. For backup material, I asked Chief Jahnke to provide a report on incidents involving vicious dogs and we are resubmitting a report City Attorney Gillam prepared in January of this year.

The City Clerk reports that Royal Oak has 5,311 licensed dogs. Of those, 650 or slightly over 12% of the total are breeds that some communities subject to special regulation or outright banning. These include Pit Bull (or Staffordshire) Terriers (95), Doberman Pinschers (44), Rottweilers (99) and German Shepherds (412).

Comparing these numbers to the numbers in the Police Department report, it is significant to note that Pit Bulls account for only 1.7% of licensed dogs in Royal Oak but were responsible for about 35% of reported dog bite incidents this year. It appears we have a very real and growing problem with this breed.

However, there are numerous issues involved with breed specific regulation not the least of which is simply identifying a dog's breed. "Pit Bull" isn't a recognized breed at all but is rather a slang term used to refer to several breeds including American Pit Bull Terriers, American Staffordshire Terriers, and Staffordshire Bull Terriers. It is often incorrectly used to refer to other breeds as well. To compound this problem, most dogs are not purebred and most owners don't really know the lineage of their animal.

We may be better served to approach the problem by strengthening the ordinance in regards to all vicious animals rather than attempting to single out specific breeds.

Respectfully submitted,



Donald E. Johnson
City Manager

Attachment