

Containment: the Primary Issue Identified in the 2007 Dangerous Dogs Risk Assessment

Significant Finding: Inadequate Containment is the single most significant factor in preventing dog-human attacks – no matter how aggressive a dog is, no matter how poorly it was bred, how irresponsibly it was raised, how ineffectively it was trained or how inhumanely it has been treated, if the dog cannot reach the public it cannot hurt the public.

Some example Case Studies where adequate barriers between the dog and the victim would have prevented the tragedy are:

- Ontario: Eight-year-old Courtney Tremple was mauled to death by the neighbour's Mastiff – adequate containment would have prevented the ingress of the child into the dog's territory.
- Ontario: Two Pit Bulls jumped their 3-foot brick fence and seriously injured a small boy playing nearby. The dogs had escaped multiple times previously, and the owner had been fined.
- Oklahoma: A woman was killed by a pack of dogs running loose.
- Indiana: A 71-year-old Census Bureau worker attempting to survey an isolated house was attacked by 10 to 20 loose dogs.
- South Carolina: an elderly man was attacked and killed by three dogs, while walking near his home.

In each of these cases, the tragedy could have been prevented if the dog or dogs were unable to reach the victim. High fines for inadequate containment would help, but that approach is essentially a reactive process instituted *after* the bite, when what is needed is a proactive process which can *prevent* the bite.

But what dogs require unbreachable containment? –Certainly not all dogs, as there are millions of dogs that are not at significant risk of attacking. Canine Risk Assessment can help us decide which dogs should be confined by extraordinary measures, but once we decide which dogs present the greatest risk to society, how do we define “unbreachable containment”? Fencing that is adequate for a dog that climbs like a monkey but never digs is not adequate for a dog that burrows like a rabbit, and vice versa. And how can the adequacy of containment measures be assessed, if it is different for every dog? The problems in legislating adequate containment such that dog-human attacks can be prevented are not insurmountable, but neither are they simplistic.

ISCRA is in the process of publishing a fully-illustrated Fencing Guide e-book answering all these questions – pre-orders are being accepted, now.