

## features

DOGS

## Good canine citizens

Banning specific breeds is not the answer



ALICE CROOK/SUBMITTED PHOTO

Kaleb, right, and friend Pepper hang out at mealtime. Kaleb was rescued, so his breeding background is unknown. He has a lovely personality but, by appearance, would qualify as a pit bull type dog under a breed ban.

## Alice Crook

Animal Talk



Many of us have experienced the pleasures and companionship of sharing our lives with a dog.

Dogs are generally loyal, loving, uncritical, entertaining and always willing to take us out for a walk.

Unfortunately, some of us have also experienced fear and possibly injury in an encounter with a dog. Dog-related factors may include the dog's temperament, lack of socialization and past experiences. Some circumstances may predictably cause trouble — such as a dog that feels threatened and cannot escape, lack of supervision of young children and dogs or tethered, poorly socialized dogs.

Some jurisdictions have reacted by banning a specific breed or breeds, but this approach does not solve the problem of dangerous dogs. Montreal, for example, has recently repealed its controversial 2016 by-law that banned pit-bull type dogs.

The city is consulting with the



CHELSEA TUFF-HOPKIE/SUBMITTED PHOTO

Ava is a five-year-old boxer/American Staffordshire terrier, which qualifies her as a "pit bull-type dog." There is no actual "pit bull" breed.

SPCA, veterinarians, behaviourists and dog owners to develop a more humane by-law. It will be based on education of owners and appropriate upbringing of dogs. An example is Calgary's

Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw.

This bylaw, as the name implies, puts the onus of responsibility on dog owners.

See DOGS, B6

## Happy ending



MARGOT REJSKIND/SUBMITTED PHOTO

Abitail, the surprised, and Ollie, the love cat, were adopted in the fall of 2017 about a month apart. Owner Margot Rejskind says: "They have both adapted well and are loving and playful sweethearts. They are a wonderful part of our family."

ADVICE

# Dogs become good citizens through training

## FROM BS

What are the elements of such a bylaw? It is the owner's responsibility to ensure their dog is licensed, does not run at large, is on-leash at all times, unless in a clearly designated area or a securely fenced private yard and is under control in designated off-leash areas (i.e. the dog must respond to the owner's commands). Owners must also ensure their dog does not bite or injure anyone, chase or attack a person or animal, or damage property.

What can you do to ensure your dog is a good citizen? Start by getting a dog from a credible, reputable source, to help you select a dog of good temperament.

## AT A GLANCE

- **Calgary by-law:** Go to <http://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/ABS/Pages/Animal-Services/Responsible-pet-ownership-bylaw-dogs.aspx>.

- **Canadian Veterinary Medical Association on dangerous dogs:** Go to <https://www.canadianveterinarians.net/documents/legislation-concerning-dangerous-dogs-position-statement>.

- **Selecting a dog:** Go to [http://www.paw-rescue.org/PAW/PETTIPS/DogTip\\_breedersandpetshops.php](http://www.paw-rescue.org/PAW/PETTIPS/DogTip_breedersandpetshops.php); <https://www.canadianveterinarians.net/documents/commonsense-guide-to-selecting-a-dog-or-a-cat>.

- **P.E.I. dog trainers who use only positive methods:** Go to <https://www.courteous-canine.com/>; <http://www.caninecompany.ca/>; <http://www.fearlessfido.ca/>; <http://www.rainbowpaw.ca/> and <http://www.reddogtraining.ca/>.

This means a recognized animal shelter or a responsible breeder, not a backyard breeder or puppy mill. (Dogs from puppy mills are generally sold through pet stores or over the Internet). See the in-

formation box for tips.

Early and broad socialization is crucial—to other dogs, new people (of different ages) and a variety of situations/locations. Puppy classes, starting between

eight and 16 weeks of age, provide an excellent opportunity for safe supervised socialization and basic puppy training. That includes, for example, polite greeting (no jumping up), sit, come, etc. Adult training classes using positive methods will teach you and your dog further skills and be a good outlet for your dog's energy as well as providing mental stimulation. Such classes are fun for you and your dog, and other family members.

A good canine citizen should be vaccinated, for their own health and that of other dogs. Both male and female dogs should be neutered, to prevent behaviour and certain health problems.

The problem of vicious or dangerous dogs cannot be addressed by targeting all dogs of specific breeds; instead the focus should be on problem behaviours in individual dogs and on owner education and responsibility.

Dr. Alice Crook is coordinator of the Sir James Dunn Animal Welfare Centre at the Atlantic Veterinary College, one of the member groups of the P.E.I. Companion Animal Welfare Initiative (CAWI), whose goal is to improve the welfare of owned and unowned companion animals on P.E.I. Other CAWI members are the P.E.I. Humane Society, SpayAid P.E.I., Cat Action Team, P.E.I. Veterinary Medical Association, P.E.I. Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and 4-H. Readers may send suggestions for topics to [askcawi@gmail.com](mailto:askcawi@gmail.com).

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