



Limit Laws

Association of Professional Dog Trainers Position Statement

The following statements reflect the opinion of the Association of Professional Dog Trainers.

The Association of Professional Dog Trainers (APDT) supports the adoption or enforcement of a program for the control of nuisance dogs that is fair, non-discriminatory and addresses dogs that are shown to be a nuisance by their actions. The APDT also supports the adoption or enforcement of laws for the maintenance of a minimum of care for a dog's existence.

As an organization comprised of dog trainers, dog behaviorists and other animal professionals, the APDT is fully aware that a single dog can be as much of a nuisance as a group of dogs. Whether a dog is considered a nuisance or not is dependent on the owner's commitment level, living arrangement, and the dog's level of training or lack of training, not by the number of pets an individual owns.

Likewise, a single dog can be housed in sub-standard living conditions as well as a group of dogs. The quality of a dog's care is dependent on the owner's commitment level, available time and other lifestyle factors, not by the number of pets an individual owns.

Approved 2001

ASSOCIATION of PET DOG TRAINERS

Limit Law Position Statement FAQ

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What is a limit law?

In an effort to address puppy mills, dog collectors, nuisance barking dogs and dogs kept in unsanitary conditions, some municipalities have enacted laws that limit the number of dogs/animals that can be legally kept in a single household. This is called a "limit law."

This only applies to puppy mills, confirmed nuisance animals and dogs kept in substandard conditions, right?

These laws do not take into account the conditions of the dogs, the area that you provide for them, or your animal husbandry practices. The sole criterion is how many dogs/animals you have. You may have a large property, large house, keep all of your dogs indoors to prevent them from creating a nuisance and otherwise provide superlative care for them, and you may still be in violation of the law.

How many dogs are too many?

The number varies from one jurisdiction to the next. A commonly used number is four, but it may be as low as two in some communities. The language may specify four dogs, four animals of any kind (in which case five goldfish would put you over the limit), or four dogs with weight requirements. One recent bill stipulated a limit of four dogs and only two could weigh in excess of 25 pounds.

If I already own the dogs I'm exempt, right?

It depends on whether existing dogs are "grandfathered" in or not. If they are not, you may be forced to give up some of your dogs if you do not meet the new legal requirements. You may receive a visit from a police officer, zoning official or animal services officer giving you a specified time limit in which to get rid of some of your dogs.

Why should a trainer's organization be involved in BSL?

Dog trainers are likely to have multiple dogs. Trainers may have clients' dogs staying in their homes for training. Trainers are also likely to be involved in rescue work, including fostering. Depending on how these laws are worded and the number of personal dogs a trainer has, a trainer may be prohibited by limit laws from offering board and train services or fostering rescue dogs. Many trainers' clients also have multiple dogs and risk being in violation of limit laws. Limiting clients to two to four dogs can have a negative impact on a trainer's business opportunities with those clients.

Where does this fit in with the educational purpose of the APDT?

Limit laws are created with the intent of helping reduce neglect and nuisance barking. These are problems that can best be resolved by addressing individual neglect and nuisance situations rather than by blanketing an entire community with an overly restrictive law. In reality, limit laws can and do target people who take very good care of their dogs and are considerate to their neighbors. The more we teach the public how to be responsible with their dogs, the less of a perceived need there will be for measures like these. The more we encourage officials to properly identify and resolve neglect and nuisance cases, the less of a demand there will be for unrealistic regulations like limit laws.

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