



Dear Editor,

As a coalition of organisations who care for animals impacted by Section 1 of the Dangerous Dogs Act (1991) and who hold policies opposing Breed Specific Legislation, we are writing to you following the recent [article](#) calling for three changes to this legislation.

We are all deeply shocked and saddened by the tragic events this year and agree that urgent action is necessary to effectively protect public safety. We strongly believe that the current approach for protecting public safety is not fit for purpose and in addition has a number of unintended negative consequences for both humans and dogs. Changes are absolutely necessary but to be effective, they must be informed by scientific and other robust evidence. We cannot support what the Mirror is calling for and we are deeply concerned about the proposed changes.

Aggression in dogs is a complicated behaviour. It is not simply a product of breed and breed is not a reliable predictor of aggressive behaviour. Analysis of 256 fatalities in the USA spanning a ten year period highlighted the impact of ownership and husbandry factors on dogs and the complex genetic factors and lifetime experiences (along with husbandry) that influence a dog's behaviour and how they respond to different stimuli e.g. people, dogs and other animals. These factors include mismanagement of dogs by owners; abuse or neglect of dogs by their owners and dogs left unsupervised with a child or vulnerable adult.

Adding additional dogs to the current list of prohibited types or measures which seek to manage certain types of dog because they are believed to be more dangerous than others will not effectively protect the public. This is not just our view but was concluded by the EFRA select committee following their inquiry into dangerous dogs in 2018. Quite simply, any dog can bite and can be considered dangerous. In fact, continuing to focus on breed will continue to fail the public and harm the many dogs who live harmoniously with us.

There are undoubtedly people who are attracted to certain types of dog and intend to use them for illegal purposes. The coalition agrees that it is essential that measures are available to deter and punish owners of dogs whose behaviour is deemed dangerous however this cannot be breed specific in approach.

We have long called for a different approach and for the UK Government to learn lessons from those taken by other countries which shifts the focus from breed to encouraging responsible dog ownership and education. We want to see:

- Interventions that focus on safe behaviour around dogs;
- Effective legislation and enforcement with measures that allow early intervention, are preventative, evidence-based and proportionate;

- A better understanding of why a dog bites to help understand better how bites can be avoided.

We are urging you to review this campaign and to support our calls for reform.

Yours faithfully,

**The Dog Control Coalition:**

Battersea,  
Blue Cross,  
British Veterinary Association,  
Dogs Trust  
The Kennel Club  
RSPCA.  
Scottish SPCA