

STATEMENT FROM RENOWNED DOG BEHAVIORIST IAN DUNBAR

March 31, 2011

Dogs and cats and other domestic animals are the new nature in towns and cities where old nature has already been destroyed by concrete and tarmac. If cities further restrict off-leash areas for dogs, most certainly there will be an increase in the number and severity of dog bites for which responsible legislators (GGNRA, SFBoS, City of SF) no doubt will be held legally and financially responsible.

Apart from being fun and entirely necessary for physical and mental well-being, major reasons for play are 1. For dogs to learn to inhibit the force of their weapons, specifically for dogs to learn bite inhibition towards other dogs and people and 2. For dogs to socialize with other dogs and people.

Socialized dogs like other dogs and people and so don't want to bite them. Bite inhibition (having a "soft mouth") prevents serious damage should the dog ever react when frightened, provoked, or hurt. We cannot train dogs to never react but it is easy for dogs to learn not to hurt other dogs or people when they react. And, they learn this by playing and socializing with other dogs and people. A human analogy would be: Whereas it is very difficult to teach people never to disagree, argue or lose their tempers, it is pretty easy to teach people not to punch, stab or shoot when they do so.

There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that restricting off-leash areas for dogs will be a social, public health and legal disaster for parks and cities.

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About Ian Dunbar

Veterinarian, animal behaviorist, and dog trainer, Dr. Ian Dunbar received his veterinary degree and a Special Honors degree in Physiology & Biochemistry from the Royal Veterinary College (London University) plus a doctorate in animal behavior from the Psychology Department at UC Berkeley, where he researched the development of social hierarchies and aggression in domestic dogs.

He has authored numerous books and DVDs about puppy/dog behavior and training, including AFTER You Get Your Puppy, How To Teach A New Dog Old Tricks and the SIRIUS® Puppy Training video.

<http://www.siriuspup.com/index.htm>

