

Virginia Launches Dangerous Dog Registry Online

Dogs who are declared dangerous after an attack will have their photos and addresses posted online.

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The state of Virginia recently launched a new website that keeps track of dogs who've been deemed dangerous by the courts, part of legislation that was prompted by two high-profile attacks where a toddler and an elderly woman were mauled to death.

The legislation passed in 2006 and the public website launched in July 2007, with nine dogs on the list. Additional dogs have been added since its inception. The registry includes a picture of the dog, why the dog has been declared dangerous, the address where the dog resides, and the owner's name.

"It's sort of like a sex offender registry," says Elaine Lidholm, spokeswoman for the state's Agriculture and Consumer Services division. "The purpose of the registry is that it's an informational tool for people to use to see if there are any dangerous dogs in the neighborhood — for the sake of people who would be defenseless in an attack."

The state's definition of a dangerous dog is one who has bitten, attacked, or inflicted injury on a person or companion animal, or killed a companion animal. Some exceptions apply, such as evidence that there was good cause for the attack or if the incident occurred on the owner's property.

Once animal control officers receive a report of an attack, the courts will decide whether to deem the dog dangerous. If a dog is declared dangerous, the owner must comply with several regulations including sterilization, posting signs on the property that warn of a dangerous dog, muzzling the dog when not on the owner's property, and retaining \$100,000 in liability insurance for each year that the dog is alive.

"We don't have any opposition to it," said Daisy Okas, spokeswoman for the American Kennel Club (AKC). "We're much in favor of initiatives that are specific to dogs rather than those that make assumptions of particular breeds. It's much better than some of the breed-specific legislation we've been seeing."

Lidholm says she's been flooded with calls since the registry began. "It's about half and half," she explained. "Some people think it's gone too far and some think it doesn't go far enough."

The registry is retroactive, and dogs that were declared dangerous prior to the legislation will be added around October, according to Lidholm.

"It creates a greater awareness that there are consequences for not controlling your dog," she adds.

To view the dangerous dog registry, [click here](#).