

Pit bulls are not pets

Make no mistake about it, Pit bulls are not pets. Whoever wants to can fool themselves and call those animals pets, but they are not and never will be.

Pit bulls are traditionally bred to be vicious fighters and they have been known to maul, to maim and to kill.

In Britain, The Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 makes the ownership of Pit bulls illegal. The Government had intended seek the destruction of the more than 10,000 American pit bull terriers in that country but instead, owners of dogs bred for fighting were required to have them neutered, obtain a permit, hold third party insurance, and keep their dogs muzzled and on a leash in public.

The dogs were outlawed in many regions of the United States.

Twenty years ago the breed was categorized by the Bahamas Humane Society as a "time bomb" waiting to explode in New Providence. At that time the dogs had been around in the country for some three or four years and were becoming known for terrorizing other breeds of dog and small animals.

Residents became increasingly angry and the calls went out for the amendment of the 1942 dog licensing legislation. Then in May 1993, a pit bull attacked and killed a seven-year-old defenceless Carmichael Road Primary School student, as she played in a schoolmate's yard.

New legislation was drafted by then Malcolm Creek MP Lester Turnquest – who championed the cause before being elected to Parliament – that would seek to prohibit the ownership or the keeping of dogs that are bred for fighting. It was a bill that had "teeth" and if it had become law and was enforced, it certainly would have discouraged many people from having pit bulls in their possession.

More recently two boys in Yellow Elder gardens were attacked by three Pit bulls, which were subsequently shot and killed by police. Both boys suffered extensive injuries and required surgery.

But it is now 2007 and in the 14 years since that tragedy in Carmichael Road, several Ministers of Agriculture have continued to promise that the Government will introduce stricter legislation for the control of the many thousands of stray dogs in New Providence and to contain those that are categorized as dangerous. And no doubt Sunday's attack, which sent David Brown of Carmichael Road to the hospital, in serious condition, will raise the ire of Bahamians once again and will have them, calling for the ban of the pit bull and severe penalties for people who insist on having them in their possession.

According to Inspector Stephen Turnquest of The Bahamas Humane Society:

"...Having a Pit bull is like having a loaded gun. Everybody wants to own one because they know the potential the dog has."

The time has come for the government to take those extensive amendments down from the shelf, dust them off, do what is necessary to have them passed into law and let the relevant authorities go about with implementation and enforcement.

We do not need to dither and wait for another person to be mercilessly and painfully chewed to death by those scissorslike teeth. And we certainly don't have to wait for that person to be someone of prominence before doing what is necessary and right.