



American Staffordshire Terrier Club of Victoria Inc.

PO Box 27
Taylors Lakes
VIC 3038
www.astcvic.com

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Dear members and friends,

As you may be aware, the Victorian Parliament recently passed changes to the Domestic Animals Act relating to restricted breed dogs.

Amongst the changes is the introduction of a "standard" (or physical description) that allows council officers to declare a dog a restricted breed based solely on its physical characteristics and whether those characteristics fall within that described in the "standard". Along with greater powers given to councils to seize and destroy suspected restricted breeds dogs, it is understandable that the changes have caused much uncertainty and concern amongst Amstaff owners.

While the full effect of the legislation will not become clear for some time, we can be clear that within the legislation American Staffordshire Terriers (Amstuffs) are **not** considered a restricted breed. What this means for Amstaff owners is that provided your Amstaff has official pedigree papers issued by the Australian National Kennel Council, or a declaration by a registered veterinarian that the dog is an American Staffordshire Terrier, your Amstaff cannot be declared a restricted breed by any council. Part 1 of the **Standard for Restricted Breed Dogs in Victoria** states:

A dog that meets the description of a dog in this Part is an American Pit Bull Terrier; except a dog in respect of which the owner has one of the following certificates stating that the dog is an American Staffordshire Terrier –

- a. a pedigree certificate from the Australian National Kennel Council;*
- b. a pedigree certificate from a member body of the Australian National Kennel Council;*
- c. a pedigree certificate from a national breed council registered with the Australian National Kennel Council;*
- d. a certificate signed by a veterinary practitioner stating, or to the effect, that the dog is of a particular breed.*

So for owners of pedigree Amstuffs a council cannot declare your dog a restricted breed or force you to comply with any restricted breed legislation nor seize your dog on suspicion of it being a restricted breed, provided you have shown the council a copy of your dogs pedigree certificate and the microchip number on the certificate matches that on the dog. To prevent any misunderstanding between yourself and your council as to the breed of your dog, please keep a copy of your dog's pedigree certificate handy at all times and of course ensure your dog is registered with your local council. Further, Dogs Victoria (03 9788 2500 or www.dogsvictoria.org.au) can provide a wallet sized card stating your dog is a American Staffordshire Terrier that you can keep in your wallet for times when you are out and about with your dog and may be approached by a council officer.

Also keep in mind that if you or someone you know has a dog of other origins (cross breeds etc) that is declared a restricted breed by your local council, every owner has the right of appeal via the Victorian Civil and Administration Tribunal (www.vcat.vic.gov.au).

Attached you will find some information regarding the new legislation that was provided to the ASTCV by the Department of Primary Industries.

While the ASTCV welcomes the measures taken by the State Government to ensure Amstaffs are not unfairly affected by this legislation, we remain categorically opposed to any form of Breed Specific Legislation against any breed or type of dog. Overwhelming evidence attests that breed specific measures have failed to significantly reduce the number of severe dog attacks in any community in which they have been enacted. Not only are breed specific measures ineffective and inherently unjust as they seek to predict a dog's behaviour based solely on its physical appearance, but they also divert attention away from the core issues of responsible ownership, correct training and socialisation, and intelligent, ethical breeding practices. By focusing on breed and not these core issues, this type of legislation is doing very little to address incidents involving dogs in our community.

As an Amstaff owner, there are things you can do to help ensure our great breed is not adversely affected by this type of legislation at any time in the future. The primary measure you can take is being a responsible owner and ensuring your Amstaff is a good canine citizen. Making sure your dog is well trained and socialised and under your effective control at all times is the least any dog owner can do, irrespective of breed.

Also consider becoming involved with the ASTCV. As the officially recognised breed association for Amstaffs in Victoria, the ASTCV provides a voice for our breed and an avenue for all owners to have their input. As a member you can support and assist the ASTCV in its activities promoting the amazing American Staffordshire Terrier.

Finally, if you have questions or issues regarding this legislation and your Amstaff (or any questions Amstaff related), please do not hesitate to contact myself or another club member. I can be contacted on 0409 135 800.

Thankyou,

Lincoln Hancock

American Staffordshire Terrier Club of Victoria Inc
0409 135 800 / amstaff@live.com.au
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