

Letter from the Editor – The pits

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Hollywood, MD - A very unfortunate incident occurred in the wonderful town of Indian Head earlier this week. A man was attacked by a dog. The accounts from a highly reliable source—the Charles County Sheriff's Office—indicate the attack was unexpected and vicious. In order to stop the animal from doing any further harm to the man a police officer whipped out his gun and shot the dog. The sheriff's office told TheBayNet.com, which in turn told you, our readers, that the dog involved was a pit bull. That prompted several pit bull lovers to whip out their guns to shoot the messenger.

The objections raised ranged from our identifying the dog as a pit bull without a full investigation being done to see if the dog was, in fact, a pit bull; to the heartache and heartburn created by the image we used with the story. Let's begin with that image. No, it wasn't the dog involved in the incident. It was a generic pit bull but the image was cropped to show the animal's teeth. If the dog involved had been toothless the attack would not have likely been so severe. It occurs to me the victim might have looked at that image and concluded, "oh, it was much worse than that!"

It's sad that dog-fanatics can't feel this man's pain. Of course, there aren't any kudos either for the police officer who felt the only alternative was to use a weapon. Who knows what would have happened if this quick action had not been taken? Citizens should be glad police were there to provide protection. Critics also claimed that TheBayNet.com "sensationalized" the incident. In fact, the details weren't the least bit embellished.

It's understandable why pit bull owners find news reports about dogs attacking humans distressing since they seem to always be focusing on their favorite type—we run the risk of being further chided if we call them a "breed"—of dog. Reporting of the local incident was a double-whammy for pit bull fans since the national news that day also included a dog attack in Atlanta in which a small child lost his life. That dog was also identified by authorities as a pit bull.

Comments on the story appear divided. As much as they are loved, pit bulls still strike fear in the hearts of many others. But the fear is because these animals have often been trained by humans to maximize their physical capabilities. Yes, there are other dogs—Rottweilers, German shepherds and Dobermans, just to name a few—that can also potentially wreak havoc.

If the press needs sensitivity training when dealing with dog stories then the people who think they're the ones qualified to instruct have to change their approach. Mauling the press for doing its job does nothing for public safety and it won't spare a single animal. Love for animals ought to be tempered with empathy for humans.

Going forward, it would appear that we all have a dog in this fight.

The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of TheBayNet.com management.

Here's a link to the [Jan. 16 story](#)

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