



**TOPIC:** Provincial government ban on owning pit bulls

**DATE:** Dec. 18, 2020

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**Enclosed is more information about the Ontario government's law that bans the ownership of pit bulls and the steps the City continues to take to follow the provincial law and care for pets and pet owners' well-being.**

Mayor Bevilacqua and Members of Council know that a family pet is at the heart of many families. Several Members of Council are also pet owners and are sympathetic to the concerns of dog owners, in particular. Vaughan Animal Services (VAS) is dedicated to creating a safe community for pets and their owners. Services include dog and cat licensing, animal control by-law education, pick up of injured or sick dogs, cats and [wildlife](#) (as well as stray dogs), reuniting owners with lost pets and pet adoption.

In response to pit bulls specifically, in 2005, the Ontario government amended the [Dog Owners' Liability Act](#) to ban the new ownership of pit bulls. **Since this is a provincial matter, should you have any questions or comments about this ban, please contact your Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP). Click [here](#) to see who your MPP is and for their contact information. VAS and the entire City of Vaughan must follow the provincial law that bans the ownership of pit bulls.**

There are different ways a pit bull comes into possession of VAS. This can include By-law staff detaining a stray pit bull found wandering in the community during a patrol or when a member of the public contacts VAS about a sighting at a specific location and requests VAS to collect the animal.

When a breed that is perceived to be a pit bull is in VAS's custody, staff immediately investigate to determine whether the animal is, in fact, a pit bull – as defined by the province's law. The investigation includes a visual assessment of the dog, and can also include reviewing medical records, liaising with stakeholders like animal service organizations and veterinarians, and requesting that a DNA test be completed. If an owner can be identified, VAS will contact them directly for additional information.

If the animal in custody is a pit bull – again, as defined by the provincial legislation – VAS actively works to arrange an adoption for the animal with an owner who resides in a province where pit bulls have not been banned.

There have been recent media reports about the dog, Gamboa. In July 2020, Gamboa came into the care of VAS. He was found wandering the community alone. Staff investigated to determine if Gamboa was a pit bull – as defined by the Ontario government's law. VAS connected with Gamboa's owner, who provided additional information as part of the investigation. A DNA test confirmed that Gamboa is a banned breed. Since Gamboa is deemed a pit bull because of provincial legislation – VAS must follow the province's law. City staff are arranging Gamboa's adoption into a safe, welcoming environment in a province where pit bulls are not banned. Again, the City's actions are consistent with the Ontario government's *Dog Owners' Liability Act*.

If the breed is not a pit bull, VAS will reunite the dog with their owners or arrange adoption with new owners into a safe, loving home. You may have seen additional media reports about the dogs Ringo and Kilo. These stories have very happy endings. Two separate investigations were completed, and it was determined that both Ringo and Kilo could lawfully be released. These dogs have been reunited with their owners. VAS took the appropriate steps under this provincial legislation, and we are pleased with the outcome.

If you are contacting the City about a specific animal in the care of VAS, we normally do not release details about animals in its care to anyone but the pet owner, including whether a specific animal is in their possession. The decision to make information public beyond the pet owner is determined on a case-by-case basis. Pit bulls, and all animals in the custody of VAS, are shown compassion and given full care in the form of medical attention, nutrition and exercise.

Beyond pit bulls, VAS is committed to finding [lost pets](#). All stray pets found are posted on [PetHarbor](#), a pet recovery system that searches lost and found reports posted within the community and Ontario.

Please note that as a result of the global COVID-19 pandemic, effective March 14, the Vaughan Animal Shelter located at 70 Tigi Court will be closed to the public until further notice. Please contact us at (905) 832-2281 or at [animal.services@vaughan.ca](mailto:animal.services@vaughan.ca) for assistance during this closure.