

# How Tethering Laws Impact the Number of Loose Dogs and Dog Bites

## A Report on Ten Communities

This data was collected in the fall of 2007 by Ambuja Rosen of Ashland, Oregon. "Tethering complaints" means complaints that mainly involved violations of the tethering limit. In most cases, the sources were estimating, rather than reporting exact statistics. Please feel free to call the sources at the phone numbers below to verify information.

I've listed the communities in order of population, from the smallest to the largest:

**CARTHAGE, MISSOURI** - Population: 15,000 or 16,000

Sources: (1) Christine Vandegevel, who was an animal control officer at the time that the law passed. She is now a police officer in Carthage. (417)237-7200

(2) David Butler, who is currently an animal control officer. (417)358-6402

Tethering law: Ban on dog tethering. (A person has to hold the leash.)

DOGS AT LARGE: After the law passed in 1993, the number stayed about the same, according to Ms. Vandegevel.

DOG BITES: They decreased--by 25 percent, Ms. Vandegevel estimated. She said this is because:

(1) Dogs who are tied are usually more neglected and get more aggressive. After the ban passed, fewer dogs were tied; and

(2) Children were no longer walking by tied-up dogs and getting bitten.

Comments: "A few people were letting the dogs loose," Mr. Butler said.

**LAURINBURG, NORTH CAROLINA** - Population 16,000

Source: Elaine Modlin, Animal Control Officer, (910)291-1706

Tethering law: In 1997, Laurinburg allowed up to eight hours a day of unattended tethering for dogs. This was too hard to enforce, so in July 2000, it reduced the eight-hour maximum to one hour.

DOGS AT LARGE: Ms. Modlin said that no dogs ran at large due to the tethering ordinance, except for a couple of isolated cases. Once those people found out that it was a violation for dogs to run loose, they restrained the animals, complying with the law.

She said that after the tethering limit passed, fewer dogs were found running loose. Dogs couldn't get out of their pens or fences as easily as they had broken loose from their chains.

DOG BITES: They decreased dramatically--from 12 the year before the law passed, to 3 the year after it passed. Two years after it passed, the number dropped to one bite a year.

**BIG SPRING, TEXAS** - Population 25,000

Source: Marie Wilson, records technician. She keeps all police and animal control records. (432)264-2372

Tethering law: Ban for dogs.

DOGS AT LARGE: The law went into effect on October 1, 2004. The next year, the number of dogs at large increased--from 912 in 2004 to 938 in 2005. In 2006, it dropped down lower than before the law passed--to 876.

DOG BITES: Big Spring records animal bites, the vast majority of which are dog bites. Animal bites increased after the law passed: From 38 in 2004, to 56 in 2005, to 58 in 2006.

**DODGE CITY, KANSAS** - Population 30,000

Source: Glenna Walker, animal shelter director, (620)225-8180. Before becoming shelter director, she was a Dodge City police officer for ten years.

Tethering law: 3 hours maximum a day for dogs. No more than 1 hour at a time, with at least a three-hour break between each hour of chaining.

DOGS AT LARGE: The shelter keeps records of the number of animals running loose (the vast majority of whom are dogs). Since the tethering limit passed, this number has steadily decreased. In June 2004, before the law passed, there were 173. The law passed in June 2005. That month, the number was 172. In July 2005, 159. August 2005, 144. June 2006, 112.

DOG BITES: Dodge City keeps records of dogs who bite people or attack another domestic animal. After the law passed, this number decreased. Before the law passed, it had been 60 in 2002, 56 in 2003, and 62 in 2004. The tethering limit passed in June 2005, and that year the number decreased to 43. The next year, 2006, it was 37.

Dodge City banned Pit Bulls during this time, which may have contributed to the decrease in bites. But Ms. Walker still thinks the reduction in dog bites and attacks is largely because of the tethering limit.

**SCOTLAND COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA** - Population 36,000

Source: Larry Herring, Animal Control Officer, (910)277-2470, ext. 4432

Tethering law: one-hour maximum for dogs

DOGS AT LARGE: Decreased. Mr. Herring said, "I think we had a lot fewer dogs running loose--at least a 50 to 70 percent decrease." He said this based on statistics from the Department of Transportation. "The number of dogs hit by automobiles has gone down," he added.

DOG BITES: Decreased. In Fiscal Year 2002/2003, there were 33. In Fiscal Year 2003/2004, 50. In Fiscal Year 2004/2005, 48. The law went into effect in January 2006, and in Fiscal Year 2005/2006 the number of dog bites was 33. In Fiscal Year 2006/2007, it was 28.

## **CITY OF BATTLE CREEK / BEDFORD TOWNSHIP, MICHIGAN**

Population: 55,000

Source: Sergeant Edwina Keyser, Animal Control Officer, (269)966-3322, ext. 1007

Tethering law: 3 hours maximum a day for dogs. No more than 1 hour at a time, with at least three hours break between each hour of chaining.

DOGS AT LARGE: Stayed the same.

DOG BITES: Stayed about the same.

Comments: "We get one tethering complaint a month, if that."

[Ambuja's comment: Battle Creek/Bedford does not allow anonymous complaints, so it probably gets fewer complaints than the Ashland police would.]

## **LAWTON, OKLAHOMA** - Population 100,000

Source: Rose Wilson, Superintendent of Animal Welfare Division, (580)581-3219 or (580)581-3443

Tethering law: Ban for dogs

DOGS AT LARGE: Stayed the same.

DOG BITES: Decreased. The law passed in 1990 or 1991. Ms. Wilson can only provide statistics back to 2004. In 2004, there were 252 bites; in 2005, 204; and in 2006, 194.

Ms. Wilson said the steady decrease in dog bites is partly because of the tethering limit. She explained, "It is a proven fact that the act of chaining a dog for long periods of time causes the dog to become hyper, agitated, destructive and aggressive. Also, eliminating chaining, tying, tethering, promotes pet owners to have some interaction with the pet other than just bringing a bowl of food or water to it. ... I believe that improving the quality of life for an animal in any form, reduces the negative."

Comments: "Most tethered animals are not visible from the street."

**TOPEKA, KANSAS** - Population 122,000

Source: Linda Halford, animal control supervisor, (785)368-9484

Tethering law: 3 hours maximum a day for dogs. No more than 1 hour at a time, with at least three hours break between each hour of chaining.

DOGS AT LARGE: Stayed the same after the law passed.

DOG BITES: Stayed the same. The number of bites occurring because dogs were tethered did go down.

**BURNABY, BRITISH COLUMBIA** - Population 230,000

Source: Mark Takhar, Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) director, (604)841-6079

Tethering law: 1 hour maximum of unattended tethering for dogs

DOGS AT LARGE: Stayed the same after the law passed.

DOG BITES: Stayed the same.

Comments: "There have been 44 tethering complaints since the law went into effect [in March 2006]."

**WICHITA, KANSAS** Population 400,000

Source: Gretchen (won't give her last name). She's taken animal complaint calls in Wichita for the past ten years. Before that, she was an animal control officer in the field for 11 years. (316)268-8378

Tethering law: 3 hours maximum a day for dogs. No more than 1 hour at a time, with at least three hours break between each hour of chaining.

DOGS AT LARGE: Stayed the same after the law passed in 2002.

DOG BITES: Stayed about the same.

Comments: "The majority of chained animals aren't visible from the street." "The problem is rampant. That's why we passed [the law]."

## Summary and Conclusion

### DOGS RUNNING LOOSE

Three communities had fewer reports of dogs running loose after the law passed. Six communities said their numbers stayed the same. Only one community out of ten had more reports of dogs running loose after the law passed. So it appears highly unlikely that Ashland's ordinance will cause more dogs to run loose.

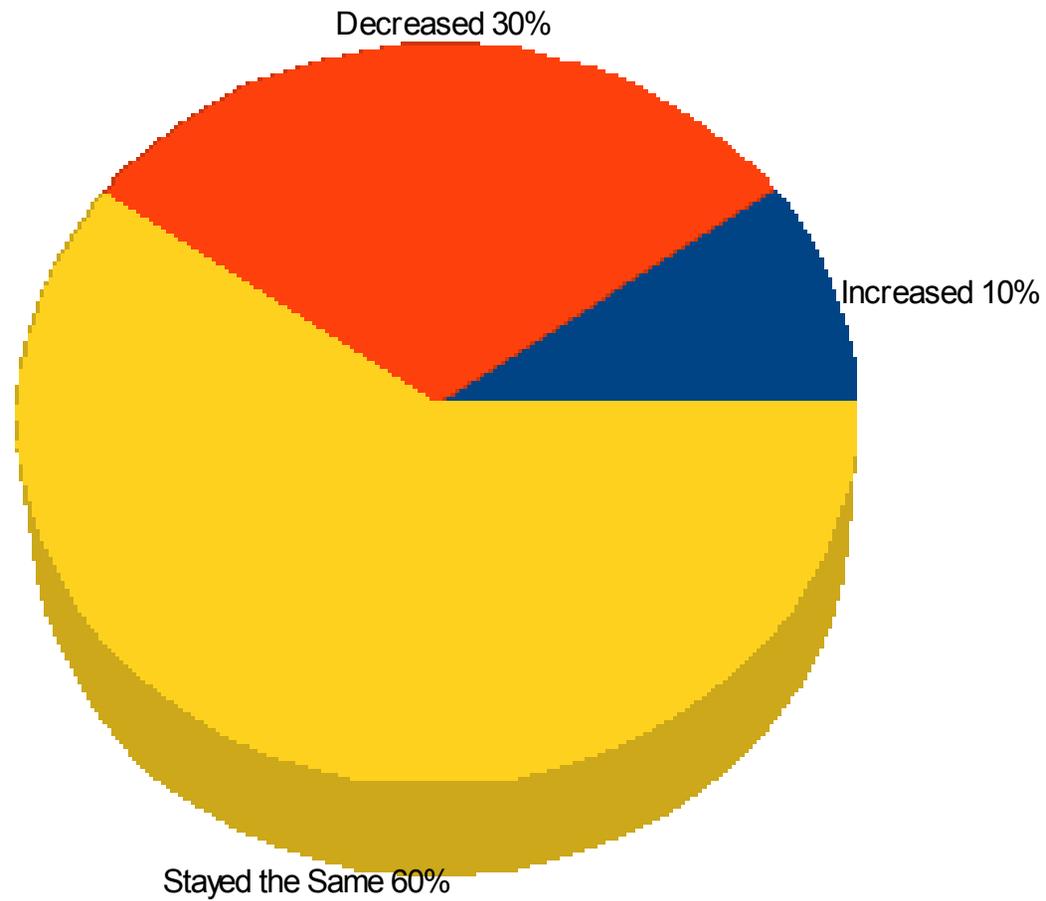
### DOGS BITING

Five communities said that after the tethering limit passed, dog bites went down. Four communities said the number stayed the same. Only one community had more reports of dog bites after the law passed. So it appears highly unlikely that Ashland's ordinance will cause more dogs to bite.

This report was compiled by Ambuja Rosen, a resident of Ashland, Oregon.

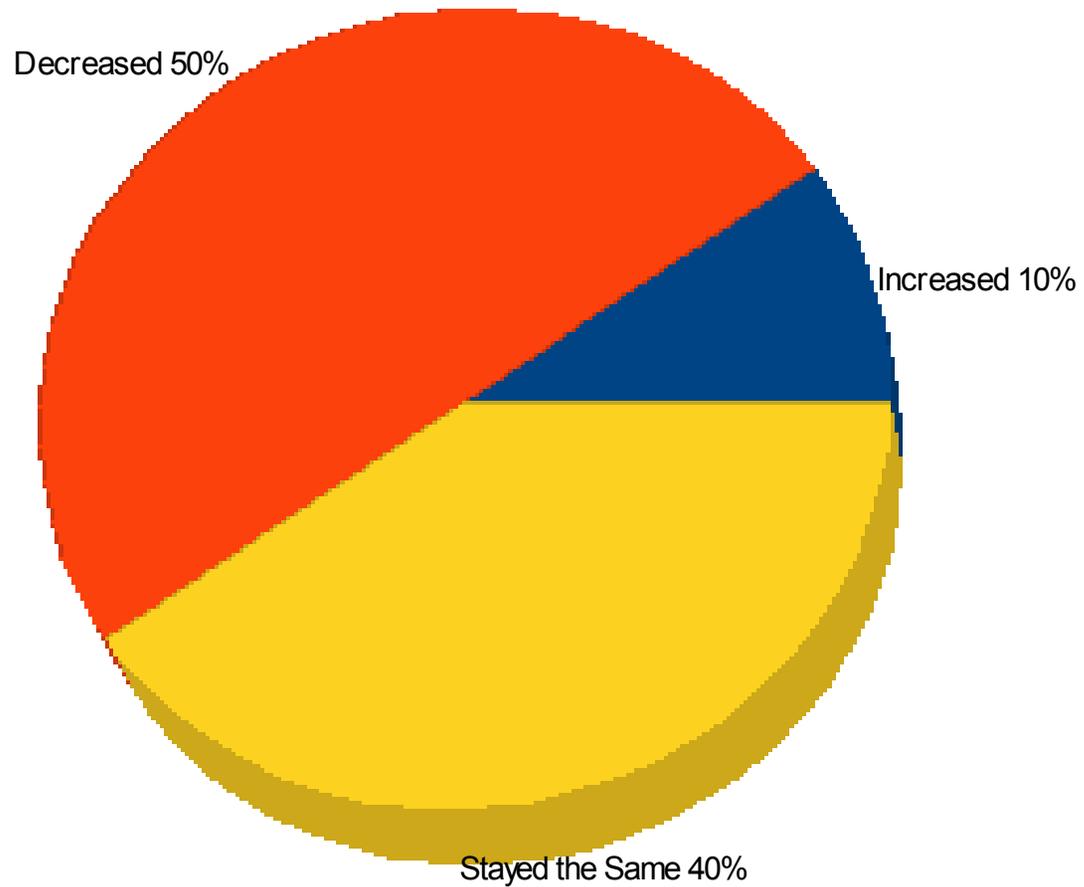
# Dogs at Large

## Based on Survey of 10 Communities



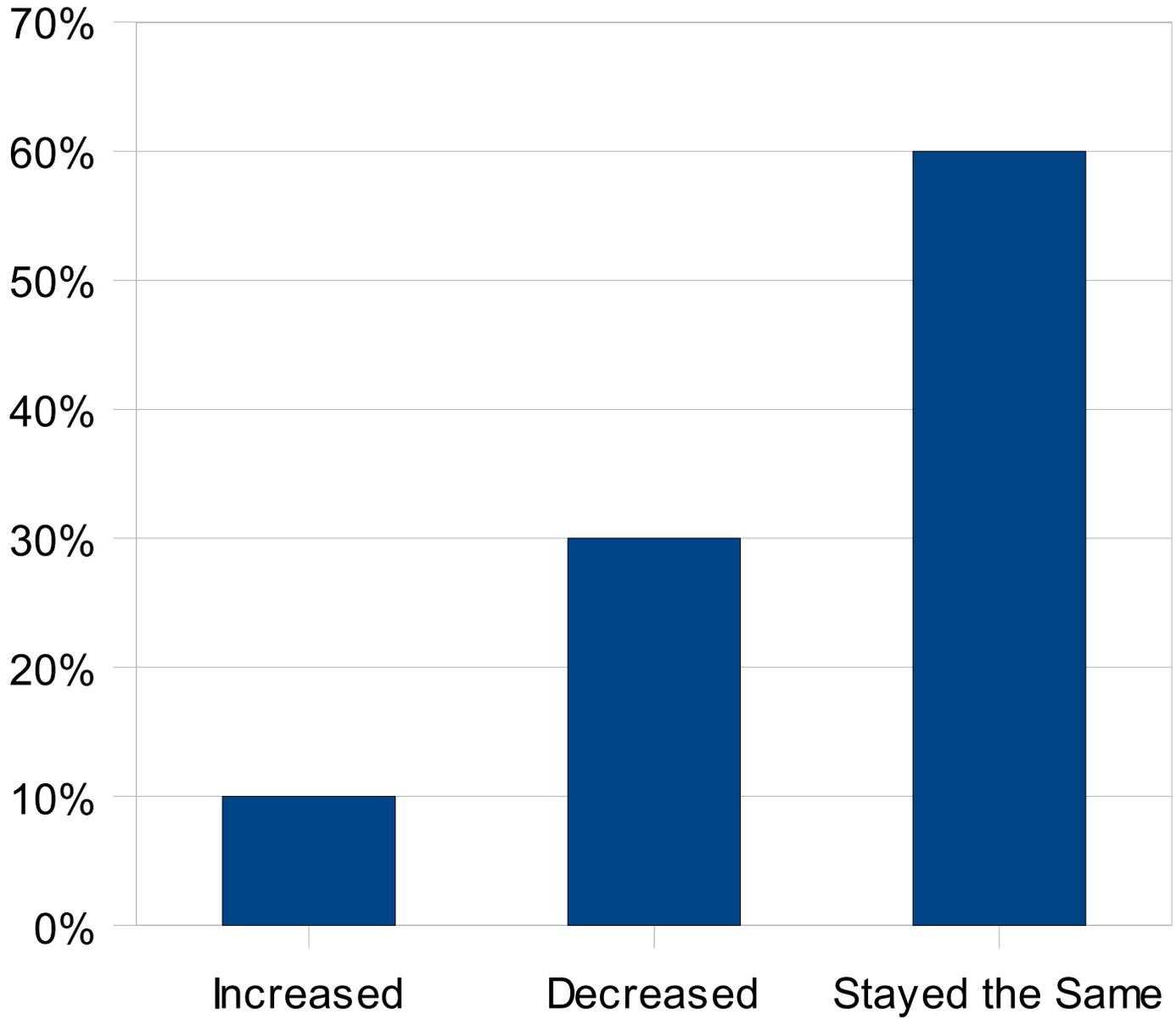
# Dog Bites

Based on Survey of 10 Communities



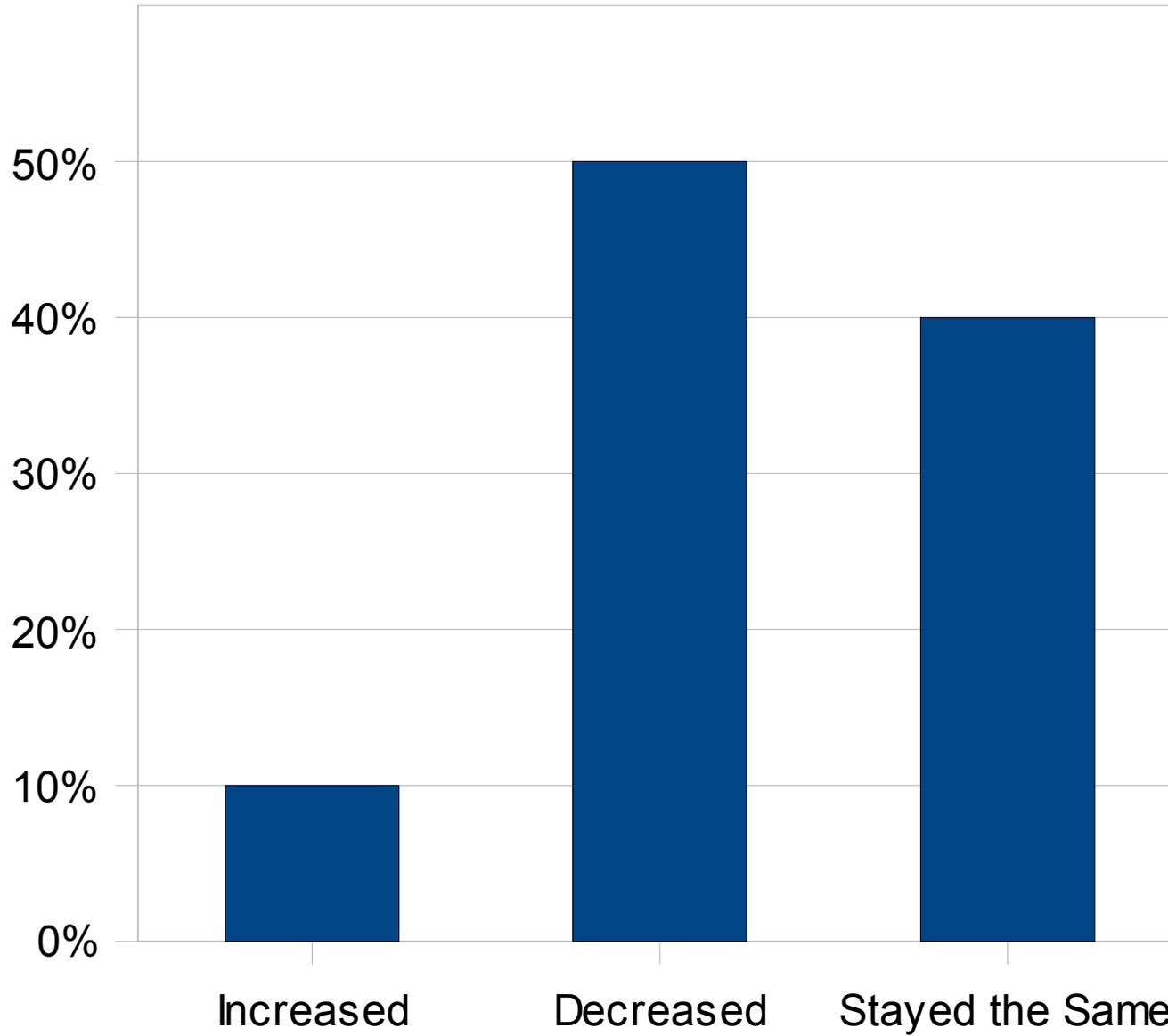
# DOGS AT LARGE

Based on Survey of 10 Communities



# DOG BITES

## Based on Survey of 10 Communities



# DOGS GIVEN UP

For All Reasons  
Not Just Tethering

Specifically for  
Tethering Limit

1 community  
stayed the same

4 communities  
increased

1 community  
decreased

4 communities averaged 4.7 dogs/year  
(prorated for Ashland's population)  
[See next chart]

2 dropped down to normal  
within a few weeks or months

2 did not drop  
down to normal

## DOGS GIVEN UP AS A RESULT OF TETHERING LIMIT

Community	Population	# Dogs Given Up	Yearly Average	Yearly Avg. Adjusted to Ashland's Pop.*
Battle Creek/ Bedford Twnshp.	55,000	0 in 3 Years	0.0 Dogs	0.0 Dogs
Topeka	122,000	≤55 in 2.5 Years	≤22.0 Dogs	3.8 Dogs
Lawton	100,000	0 in 16 Years	0.0 Dogs	0.0 Dogs
Burnaby	230,000	5 in 1.5 Years	3.3 Dogs	0.3 Dogs

*\*Ashland's Population is approximately 21,000*

# DOGS KILLED AT SHELTER

For All Reasons  
Not Just Tethering

1 Community: Burnaby  
0 Dogs Due to Tethering Law

5 Communities  
Increased

4 Communities  
Increased

2 of 4 Communities  
Returned to Normal  
a Few Weeks or Months  
after the Law Passed