



**ORANGE VILLA**  
VETERINARY HOSPITAL  
BOARDING & GROOMING  
714- 637 - 3660

**Dr. Richard E. Dahlem :**  
drdahlem@orangevillavet.com  
**Dr. Jeffrey Horn :**  
drhorn@orangevillavet.com

This article and many others can be found at:  
[www.orangevillavet.com](http://www.orangevillavet.com)

## **The Dog Mauling Case: What does it mean for our pets?**

Most of you have heard about the horrific case of the San Francisco woman savagely killed. You may have also heard about the verdicts in the trial and that the owners are being held criminally responsible for the death caused by their dogs. These dogs were trained attack dogs and highly aggressive. Although this was an extreme case, it sets legal precedent for district attorney's to go after owners of aggressive dogs in criminal court. Until this time, civil court was the primary place where owners of vicious dogs were taken for accountability.

For most owners, dogs are companions and you have little to worry about in terms of criminal charges. For those of you with aggressive dogs, you may need to seriously consider seeking professional behavioral modification and training at the hands of an animal behaviorist. The law basically states that if you have foreknowledge that your pet is aggressive, you are responsible for its actions. Before, this meant that you could be sued for damages. Now it means that you can face jail time, probation, and/or fines as well.

The biggest crisis is going to be homeowner's insurance. Liability coverage comes with most policies. But recently, some insurance policies have not covered owners of Pit Bulls and Rottweilers. With the publicity of this case, many insurance companies are considering changing the way that they insure owners with dogs of any breed. Mercury has stated a policy where they have dog owners sign a waiver that states that they cannot submit a claim due to dog attacks in exchange for a deduction in premium. But a day is coming, as more and more litigation against pet owners happens, that insurance companies will have stiff premiums or not give coverage at all to pet owners.

We cannot allow this to happen. As responsible pet owners, we need to work much harder at preventing aggression in our pets. This starts with early, professional obedience training. This should start at 8-10 weeks of age. We also must lobby for our rights, with our politicians and the insurance commission to make sure that our rights as pet owners are not taken away by the few irresponsible owners who train these vicious dogs. We should lobby for a special license to be required for attack training, which should be only used for professional security, law enforcement, or military use. We should report to animal control any aggressive dog in our neighborhoods, to stop any attacks from occurring. If we sit back and do nothing, we may end up losing our insurance and our ability to have dogs as pets and a part of our lives.