

Responsible ownership is key

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Every summer the dog population explodes in Barrow. Dozens of puppies are born, reared and subsequently allowed to roam the streets



unattended.

Those that are not hit by vehicles, attacked by other dogs, or shot for getting into garbage or raiding food intended for human consumption, eventually find their way to our office. If they are lucky, we can locate a good home for them: if they are not, then they are euthanized (put to sleep).

Last year alone this office euthanized one hundred sixty-seven (167) dogs. Countless others were injured or killed in dog fights, by vehicles or by citizens defending food and property.

Dogs running loose also account for several human injuries each year. In 1982 fifty-seven (57) cases of dog-inflicted injuries were reported to the public health service hospital in Barrow. This resulted in 1977.8 cases per 100,000 people, which is three times greater than the average

for the rest of Alaska and approximately five times greater than the average for the lower forty-eight states. The injuries ranged from minor to life-threatening.

Rabies was a significant consideration also. Eight positive cases of rabies (seven foxes, one dog) were documented within the housing area of Barrow. One person received a bite wound on the lip from the dog. Two others were bitten by stray dogs during the rabies epidemic. All three individuals received rabies shots.

The diseases that dogs can transmit to people and other dogs are numerous. The problems and chaos they create is extensive when it should be minimal.

Responsible ownership is the key to controlling these problems. The health depart-

ment and animal control office are not responsible for sentencing all the stray dogs to death.

You, the owners, are the judge and the jury. You are responsible for the capital punishment (death by chemical injection) we have to carry out. The personnel in the public health office are trained in saving lives, not taking them. It is depressing to put so many dogs to sleep when their only crime is being born and owned by irresponsible people.

You can help alleviate most of the problems and expense these dogs create by keeping your pet restrained. Do not sentence it to death. Capital punishment is carried out in Barrow because of you — for your own safety. Remember, it could be your dog that bites or even kills a child: — It could be your child.

