

Banning Dogs



The American Bully XL, which sounds like a set of underwear, is a dog breed likely to be banned in the UK, joining Pit Bull Terriers, Japanese Tosas, the Dogo Argentino and the Fila Brasileiro. All that might make a reasonable person regret this is that Suella Braverman, the Pit Bull Home Secretary is in favour of it, and the names of banned dogs seems so weighted

against foreign breeds that one suspects some of her obvious jingoism may be at work. One wonders if we might consider letting them in and, as a compromise, ship them to Rwanda.

Actually, I would probably go further than Suella Braverman – which I never thought I would say – and ban all dogs, not just these large, pugnacious breeds, but all of them, including, to name but a few, Afghan Hounds, Airedales, Border Collies, Cairn Terriers, Chihuahuas, Dalmations, Greyhounds, English Cocker Spaniels, Irish Setters, the Istrian Coarse-haired and the Istrian Shorthaired Hound ... well, you get the picture.

It's not that I have that much against dogs. My problem is dog owners, but you can't have a dog owner without a dog, so dogs have to carry the can. Dog owners are, by and large, irresponsible keepers of uncontrollable carnivores. I meet them regularly when I go for walks. They are usually well behind their dog which, spotting you on the path ahead, rushes on barking. Carefully you assess the threat. You clench your right fist ready to deliver a hard blow to the nose. Often, there is no need for this as the dog just wants to jump up at you and sniff up and down your trousers, barking loudly. Well, that's alright of course. But you don't know that this is what it wants to do when the demonic noise of its barking and the sight of its mouthful

of teeth and the spilled saliva puts you thoughtlessly into flight or fight mode.

Dog owners rarely apologise. Their first line is 'He won't bite'. At least this shows it was reasonable for you to worry that it would. This is followed up with something like, 'He was once abused by someone in a red pullover,' if you are wearing a red pullover, so you at least know that if it wasn't your fault he charged at you it had something to do with your taste in pullovers. To which you feel like saying, 'Have you tried therapy?', or, remembering Suella Braverman, 'Have you thought of moving to Rwanda?'.

The problem with banning dogs, of course, is the problem with any kind of ban. It would encourage a black market in dogs, just as Prohibition encouraged secret boozing. This is, of course, what the ban on the American Bully XL will do. These large, man-and-child-eating animals will be slipped into the country secretly through dark ports in Suffolk, from where they will find their way to dog owners' homes near me. I can see it now, this Mike Tyson of a dog, galloping towards me on a country path, its demonic barking, its huge teeth and spilled saliva, the owner yards behind it going, 'He was once abused by someone in a red pullover'. I think I might consider buying a gun.