

Can We Get a ‘No Standing’ Sign?



The New York Times By RONDA KAYSEN

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Dog Eviction

Q. Our neighbor's dog has exhibited signs of aggression in our condominium building's hallways, lobby and elevator. In the last several months, he has bitten two smaller dogs, breaking the skin. He has also charged at people in the hallway, though he has not bitten any humans. His owners are working with animal trainers and are keeping him muzzled while in the building's common areas. We appreciate their efforts, but we would like to know what our options are if the situation deteriorates. Can the condo board evict the dog?

Harlem, Manhattan

A. It must be very stressful to have an unpredictable dog living in your building. As unsettling as it might be at the moment, try to be patient. Your neighbors are taking the troublesome behavior seriously and training the dog. They have also muzzled him, which will protect the other dogs — and people — in the building. These are all positive steps. But change takes time.

“It’s certainly possible to change behavior in a dog of any age, but creating new behavior patterns doesn’t happen overnight,” said Kate Senisi, a founder of School for the Dogs in Manhattan. “Keep in mind that even if a dog is charging, it’s likely that he is lacking in confidence in some way or may even be fearful.”

As long as the dog hasn't bitten any people (and now that he's muzzled, he can't) you are going to be hard pressed to evict the dog. If the dog has been living in the apartment for more than 90 days, it is difficult to force him out, according to Rachel Hirschfeld, a lawyer who specializes in animal welfare. "That option is pretty much gone," she said.

You could review the house rules of the condo and see if the unit owners are violating any of them by having an unruly pet. But because they're trying to remedy the problem, your complaints might fall on deaf ears. If the situation does deteriorate, there is a state law that deals with dangerous dogs, although it wouldn't necessarily apply in this case — and it would likely involve hiring a lawyer.

"It's a long shot, because the dog hasn't bitten anybody and the dog is being muzzled, which is very smart of the owner," Ms. Hirschfeld said. "As long as he stays out of people's space that is the best way for him to handle it."