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Shelters fear pit bull influx

By HIMANI EDIRIWEERA, TORONTO SUN

AFTER A CHATHAM family tried to destroy their healthy pit bull because they misunderstood legislation, animal shelters are bracing themselves for what they fear will be breed annihilation. "We strongly encourage current responsible pit bull owners to continue caring for their dogs," Mike Draper, Ontario SPCA's chief inspector, said yesterday. "Unfortunately, we expect that there will be an increase in the number of pit bulls surrendered to shelters, or just abandoned."

Last week, after the government passed a law banning new pit bulls in Ontario, one-year-old Amber, a healthy dog, took its last trip to the vet.

The animal's confused owner said: "This is what they want, they want them all destroyed. If we thought we could get away with it and not comply (with the law), we would."

Bill 132 does not require current pit bull owners to give up their dogs.

A grandfather clause will allow current pit bull owners to keep their dogs, but they will be prohibited from breeding or acquiring new pit bulls. The dogs will also have to be leashed and muzzled while in public, and must be spayed or neutered.

In Toronto, local shelters said they'll refuse to euthanize healthy pit bulls.

Shelter staff said they fear an influx of surrendered pit bulls because of confused owners.

"Don't take a healthy dog in for euthanization -- we won't do it," said Linda Elmy, of the Toronto Humane Society.

"Most pit bull owners are responsible and love their dogs. If anyone chose to surrender their pet we would put it in observation and then re-home it."