

Perspectives in Veterinary Medicine

The Dogs of Grand Theft Auto

By Dr. Donald F. Smith
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While in New York City recently, I saw dozens of posters plastered on buses, billboards, and the sides of drug stores with a vicious-looking Doberman in the bottom left-hand corner, held by a taut chain just below a sultry blond woman and to the left of a tense, gun-toting man.



*Photo from billboard in Brooklyn advertising Grand Theft Auto, depicting angry-appearing dog, lower left.
(Photo by the author, Sept 2013)*

As the billboard portrays, it would appear that Grand Theft Auto's newest version (number V) has added dogs to its culture of violence. Or should I say, "Comedy of Violence," as the New York Times boasts in its September 16th review of the Grand Theft Auto V release.¹

NPR's September 20th broadcast announced in its "all tech considered" program, "Female Fans Love New Grand Theft Auto Despite Demeaning Content."²

If the demeaning of women that NPR reports isn't enough, the same story reports that you can cruise around and "see wild animals crossing your path [in this] kind of this crazy immersive world".³ I can only wonder if version VI will have the characters getting points for achieving road kill of animals, as it reports gamer Karen Price, 43, saying, "That's what's enjoyable about it. It's like dress-up. You had a hard day at work, you go home and you run over some people and steal their money. You feel better."

The parent image of the barking, chain-held dog above is being advertised as wall paper for gamers.⁴ One gamer reports, "You will have your own pet dog named chop when you play as Franklin. You can customize chop and if you don't keep an eye on him, you can lose him forever!"⁵ An additional YouTube video shows a man shooting and killing a dog that is being mounted and graphically bred by his unleashed Rottweiler. The bitch falls to the ground splattered in blood while the man and male dog walk away. The accompanying audio is vulgar.⁶

Surfing the web yields many examples that come and go with links working one day and not the next. The bottom line seems to be that dogs are entering the game images as companions but with the possibility they will become part of the violent culture for which the game is noted.

Will veterinarians and animal lovers have a role to play in pushing back against this culture? Or do we accept this as yet another piece of evidence of society's further decline into guns, drugs, violence.... and indifference?

¹ New York Times Video Review, [Grand theft Auto V is a Return to the Comedy of Violence](#). 2013 Sept 13.

² Sydell, Laura, [Female Fans Love New Grand Theft Auto Despite Demeaning Content](#). All Tech Considered. 2013, Sept 20.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ [Widewalledpapersh Computer Images Grand Theft Auto V](#), Sept 26, 2013.

⁵ [What's Good in Grand Theft Auto 5](#), Sept 26, 2013

⁶ [GTA 5: Can You Shoot a Dog?](#) Utube Sept 26, 2013

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Pop Culture and Veterinary Medicine

ABOUT THE AUTHOER:

Dr. Donald F. Smith, Dean Emeritus of the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, had a passion for the value of the history of veterinary medicine as a gateway for understanding the present and the future of the profession.

Throughout his many professional roles from professor of surgery, to Department Chair of Clinical Sciences, Associate Dean of Education and of Academic Programs and Dean, he spearheaded changes in curriculum, clinical services, diagnostic services and more. He was a diplomat of the American College of Veterinary Surgeons and a member of the National Academy of Practices. Most recently he played a major role in increasing the role of women in veterinary leadership.

Perspectives in Veterinary Medicine is one of his projects where he was able to share his vast knowledge of the profession.