

to have the animal seize his arm. When his baby sister tried to pull the child away, the wolfdog refused to let go. In the ensuing tug of war, the child lost his arm.

The next day in Indiana, a child was mauled to death after climbing a fence and falling into the pen of his family's wolfdog and pit bull. Three weeks later in Washington state, still another child lost his arm to a wolfdog.

Several animal experts say that the wolfdogs were not at fault — only that chaining or penning them makes them act in uncharacteristically aggressive ways. (It is commonly believed that a wolf in the wild has never attacked a human being.) Other experts say that wolfdogs are inherently dangerous because thousands of years of domestication has been undone by adding the wolf strain to dog genes.

Even those who would like to see the animals banned, however, say regulation is almost impossible because wolfdogs are often impossible to distinguish from dogs, particularly when the wolf percentage is low. Making matters more confused are the owners themselves: They range from people aware of their responsibility in owning a partly wild, partly domesticated pet to those unwilling or unable to make owning a wolfdog safe or who don't believe that the hybrids are potentially more dangerous than other dogs.

There is nothing new about wolfdog hybridization. The Inuit have been doing it for centuries, periodically breeding the wolf's superior qualities into their sled dogs. In the 19th century, European breeders bred a few wolves with German shepherds for the same reason.

"There are several reasons

land resident who owns two wolfdogs and who requested that her last name not be used.

Megan has just had a litter of pups, which Susan is selling for \$125 to \$200. "Everyone who buys one says the same thing, 'I've always wanted a wolf,'" she said. "They're more like a friend and equal than an ordinary dog."

Wolfdog opponents, however, say that the animals are walking genetic time bombs whose predatory instincts can easily be triggered, particularly by children.

Three of last year's 24 canine-caused deaths in the United States involved wolfdogs, which means that though they account for less than 1 percent of the dog population, they were responsible for more than 10 percent of fatalities — all involving small children.

"We have so many problems with domestic dogs. Why do we have to bring wolf hybrids into it?" said the Humane Society's Joly. "We don't want (wolfdogs) regulated; we just don't want them around."

"If people really loved wolves, they wouldn't continue breeding hybrids — they'd just try to let wolves live safely in their own habitat," she continued. "I also think tigers are neat, but I wouldn't want to have one in my house."

The problem of determining what a wolfdog is or is not is illustrated when Vickie Poe of Stewartstown, Pa., gets her 6-week-old wolfdog pup, Zuni, to start howling. Not only do the other wolf hybrids join in Zuni's high-pitched howl, but Poe's two dogs that are not wolf hybrids also respond and complete the psalmody.

"What most people don't understand is that there is enormous variety in hybrids, depending on how much wolf

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spects them as wolves, and she carefully screens potential buyers. She also takes the responsibility so seriously that she quit her job as a secretary because she considers owning hybrids a full-time occupation.

"I would never sell a pup to anyone with small children or who told me that he owned Rottweilers and pit bulls," she said, explaining that people who chose such breeds might not have the temperament to own wolfdogs, which tend to be shy and unaggressive. "I would never sell to anyone who didn't live in an isolated area with enough space for the dogs."

The breeding of wolf hybrids is not about to stop,

promising — then something happened," she said. "They'd get divorced or change jobs or have to move, or they wouldn't build a pen for it. The effect was that these animals ended up getting shot by neighbors, run over or euthanized in animal shelters."

But the main reason that Jenkins stopped breeding hybrids is what she called "the trouble with kids."

"The reason I never had an accident with my own children is that I kept it from happening," she said. "Several hybrids that I've owned made it pretty clear that the kids were on the dinner list. These animals make wonderful friends for the right person, but they are not pets."