

# [***Politicians and dog experts vilify South Dakota governor after she writes about killing her dog***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BX8-SV51-DYMD-640X-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

Politicians and dog experts are criticizing [*South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem*](https://apnews.com/hub/kristi-noem) after she wrote in a new book about [*killing a rambunctious puppy*](https://apnews.com/article/kristi-noem-book-dog-killing-081bd1d6e73fba046ea7fb534da1c79e). The story — and the vilification she received on social media — has some wondering whether she's still a viable potential running mate for presumptive Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump.

Experts who work with hunting dogs like Noem’s said she should have trained — not killed — the pup, or found other options if the dog was out of control.

Noem has tried to reframe the story from two decades ago as an example of her willingness to make tough decisions. She wrote on social media that the 14-month-old wirehaired pointer named Cricket had shown aggressive behavior by biting.

“As I explained in the book, it wasn’t easy,” she said on X. “But often the easy way isn’t the right way.”

Still, Democrats and even some conservatives have been critical.

“This story is not landing. It is not a facet of rural life or ranching to shoot dogs,” conservative commentator Tomi Lahrenco posted online.

Several posters described Noem as Cruella de Vil, the villain from the Disney classic “101 Dalmatians.” A meme features a series of dogs offering looks of horror.

“I’m not sure which thing she did was stupider: The fact that she murdered the dog, or the fact that she was stupid enough to publish it in a book,” said Joan Payton, of the German Wirehaired Pointer Club of America. The club itself described the breed as “high-energy,” and said Noem was too impatient and her use of a shock collar for training was botched.

But South Dakota Democratic Senate Minority Leader Reynold Nesiba considered the disclosure more calculated than stupid. He said the story has circulated for years among lawmakers that Noem killed a dog in a “fit of anger” and that there were witnesses. He speculated that it was coming out now because Noem is being vetted as a candidate for vice president.

“She knew that this was a political vulnerability, and she needed to put it out there, before it came up in some other venue," he said. “Why else would she write about it?”

In her soon-to-be-released book, “No Going Back: The Truth on What’s Wrong with ***Politics*** and How We Move America Forward,” of which [*The Guardian*](https://www.theguardian.com/books/2024/apr/26/trump-kristi-noem-shot-dog-and-goat-book) obtained a pre-release copy, Noem writes that she took Cricket on a bird hunting trip with older dogs in hopes of calming down the wild puppy. Instead, Cricket chased the pheasants, attacked a family's chickens during a stop on the way home and then “whipped around to bite me," she wrote.

Noem's spokesperson didn't immediately respond to questions from The Associated Press about whether the dog actually bit her or just tried to do so, or whether Noem had to seek medical treatment. The book's publisher declined to provide AP an advance copy of the book.

Afterward, Noem wrote, she led Cricket to a gravel pit and killed her. She said she also shot a goat that the family owned, saying it was mean and liked to chase her kids.

The response to the story was swift: “Post a picture with your dog that doesn’t involve shooting them and throwing them in a gravel pit. I’ll start,” Democratic Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz [*posted*](https://twitter.com/GovTimWalz/status/1784008322787516671) on X. The post included a photo of him feeding ice cream off a spoon to his Labrador mix named Scout.

President Joe Biden’s reelection campaign added a [*photo*](https://twitter.com/BidenHQ/status/1783965571999993991) of the president strolling on the White House lawn with one of his three German Shepherds. [*Two of Biden's dogs,*](https://apnews.com/article/biden-commander-dog-bite-secret-service-e2592d3996381ea82e24a13d6666de77) Major and Commander, were removed following aggressive behavior, including toward White House and Secret Service personnel. The oldest, Champ, died.

Democrat Hillary Clinton [*reposted*](https://twitter.com/HillaryClinton/status/1784954947207143816) a 2021 comment in which she warned, “Don’t vote for anyone you wouldn’t trust with your dog.” She added Monday, “Still true.”

Conservative political commentator Michael Knowles said on his titular podcast that while Noem could have handled the situation differently, “there is nothing wrong with a human being humanely killing an animal.” He later added: “Fifty years ago, this political story would not have made anyone in most of America bat an eyelash. And the fact that it does today tells you something, not about the changing morality of putting down a farm animal, but about the changing ***politics*** of America.”

He later said that the story is “extremely stupid and insignificant” because Noem doesn’t have a chance of being selected as Trump’s running mate.

Payton, who is a delegate to the American Kennel Club and lives in Bakersfield, California, said the situation was a mess from beginning to end.

“That was a puppy that had no experience, obviously no training,” she said. “If you know a minuscule amount about a bird dog, you don’t take a 14 month old out with trained adult dogs and expect them to perform. That’s not how it works.”

The club itself said puppies learn best by hunting one-to-one with their owners, not with other dogs.

When problems arose she should have called the breeder, Payton said, or contacted rescue organizations that find new homes for the breed.

Among those groups is the National German Wirehaired Pointer Rescue, which called on Noem in a Facebook post to take accountability for her “horrific decision” and to educate the public that there are more humane solutions.

“Sporting breeds are bred with bird/hunting instincts but it takes training and effort to have a working field dog,” the group's Board of Directors wrote in the [*post.*](https://www.facebook.com/GWPrescue/posts/pfbid02yHrcVkZ5FebfEpVxQntKp6inTH3ADvvs9ED767XENk86pcvquVaqm1NBLnaE96hal)

Payton described Cricket as nothing more than “a baby,” saying the breed isn't physically mature until it is 2 years old and not fully trained it's 3- to 5-years old.

“This was a person that I had thought was a pretty good lady up until now," she said. "She was somebody that I would have voted for. But I think she may have shot herself in the foot.”

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