

# [***Opinion: Kristi Noem shot her 'untrainable' dog. If she thought we'd be impressed by her toughness, she was wrong***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BX5-3691-DY7V-G056-00000-00&context=1516831)

CNN Wire

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**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; "If you want a friend in Washington, get a dog," goes the famous line [*attributed to late President Harry Truman*](https://www.washingtonian.com/2015/02/18/if-you-want-a-friend-in-washington/). And if you do get that dog, be sure to keep it far from GOP South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, who reportedly brags in her [*new book*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/26/politics/kristi-noem-south-dakota-book-killing-dog/index.html) about an incident some two decades ago when she shot her 14-month-old puppy named Cricket because the dog was "untrainable."

Noem - [*a top contender*](https://www.wsj.com/politics/elections/is-vp-contender-kristi-noem-ready-for-primetime-bd2d2bc1) to be former President Donald Trump's running mate in this year's presidential election - [*reportedly writes in her book*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/26/politics/kristi-noem-south-dakota-book-killing-dog/index.html) that she took the pup, a [*wirehaired pointer*](https://www.theguardian.com/books/2024/apr/26/trump-kristi-noem-shot-dog-and-goat-book) who was proving to be high-spirited and something of a handful, to a gravel pit and shot him.

How did this cruel and horrifying act come to light? Noem was not confronted by an investigative reporter with a "gotcha" question, nor was she outed in a social media post. No, according to The Guardian, the South Dakota governor wrote about the incident herself in her book "No Going Back: The Truth on What's Wrong with ***Politics*** and How We Move America Forward." The Guardian wrote that it obtained a copy ahead of the book's publication next month.

Not surprisingly, the report about Noem killing the dog has led to a furor in the media and on the internet. Amid the public outcry, which came not just from liberals but from [*conservatives as well,*](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2024/apr/27/kristi-noem-trump-vp-book-killing-dog) she stoutly defended her decision to shoot the dog, [*writing*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/26/politics/kristi-noem-south-dakota-book-killing-dog/index.html) on social media, "We love animals, but tough decisions like this happen all the time on a farm."

Noem then used the controversy to peddle her book, writing, "If you want more real, honest, and politically INcorrect stories that'll have the media gasping, preorder 'No Going Back'" - including a link to order the book.

I found the passage of "No Going Back" in which Noem describes killing Cricket revolting, and I imagine most people among the [*estimated*](https://www.forbes.com/advisor/pet-insurance/pet-ownership-statistics/) 65 million households that own a dog (and many who don't) feel the same way.

A [*2023 Pew poll*](https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/07/07/about-half-us-of-pet-owners-say-their-pets-are-as-much-a-part-of-their-family-as-a-human-member/) found that 97% of people with pets view them as a member of the family. That, however, apparently was not how Noem viewed Cricket, writing in the book that she "hated" the rambunctious puppy. Noem said she considered the pup "less than worthless" after she ruined a pheasant hunt by going "out of her mind with excitement, chasing all those birds and having the time of her life."

Later that day, after the pooch escaped Noem's car (which many of us would view as a failure by the humans, not the canine) Cricket killed a local farmer's chickens and then bit Noem when she tried to restrain him. That, Noem wrote, was the last straw. As she wrote in the excerpt published in The Guardian, "At that moment, I realized I had to put her down." A short time later, she said, she led Cricket to the gravel pit.

Noem went on to write that her daughter, upon returning from school, [*inquired*](https://www.theguardian.com/books/2024/apr/26/trump-kristi-noem-shot-dog-and-goat-book) as to where the dog was: "Kennedy looked around confused," Noem writes of her daughter, who asked: "Hey, where's Cricket?" The excerpt shared by The Guardian does not include what Noem told her daughter, but the GOP governor boasted that the killing of Cricket - as well as shooting a goat she owned that same day because he was "nasty and mean" - was proof that she was willing to do the "difficult, messy and ugly" tasks of life - and presumably ***politics*** as well.

Perhaps Noem included the tale of shooting Cricket in her book because she had read reports of how Trump [*did not like*](https://www.gq-magazine.co.uk/politics/article/donald-trump-dogs) the beloved pets that bring joy to millions. As Trump's late wife Ivana [*wrote*](https://www.gq-magazine.co.uk/politics/article/donald-trump-dogs) in her memoir "Raising Trump," "Donald was not a dog fan." She noted Trump's hostility to her poodle, Chappy, who would "bark at him territorially." (At least one study does [*suggest*](https://www.kgun9.com/lifestyle/totally-tucson/new-study-proves-dogs-can-judge-character) that dogs are a good judge of character, so perhaps Chappy was right to bark!)

Trump's antipathy to our four-legged friends may explain why he was the first president in [*120 years*](https://www.gq-magazine.co.uk/politics/article/donald-trump-dogs) not to have a pet dog in the White House. Dog-owning by our presidents is a tradition that goes back to George Washington, who owned two American foxhounds. Ever since our first president, most occupants of the White House from both parties have been dog owners, including Abraham Lincoln, who owned a friendly mutt named Fido, and Barack Obama, who had a pair of Portuguese water dogs, Sunny and Bo. Of course, President Joe Biden also has a pet dog - although [*Commander*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/21/politics/commander-biden-secret-service-bites-white-house/index.html) has not been the best-behaved dog at times. He's been said to have [*bitten at least two dozen Secret Service agents*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/21/politics/commander-biden-secret-service-bites-white-house/index.html) over the years, and yet no one has suggested that he deserves capital punishment for that misbehavior.

Trump was a rare exception in not being a dog owner, even [*telling*](https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/president-trump-feel-phony-dog/story?id=61018468) his supporters at a 2019 rally that having a pet dog in the White House would feel "a little phony." Given that history, assuming she knew about Trump's antipathy to dogs, maybe Noem thought that the story of shooting Cricket would give her a bit of an edge as the GOP's apparent presidential nominee chooses his running mate.

My own hypothesis, however, is that she possibly thought that telling the story would endear her to a certain breed of heartless Republican, convincing them of her toughness. If that was Noem's calculation, she might have made a grave miscalculation. She might herself be coming to that conclusion. [*Writing on X on Sunday*](https://twitter.com/KristiNoem/status/1784631108207849781), Noem seemed to take a softer tone about the decision to put down her dog.

"I can understand why some people are upset about a 20 year old story of Cricket, one of the working dogs at our ranch, in my upcoming book - No Going Back. The book is filled with many honest stories of my life, good and bad days, challenges, painful decisions, and lessons learned," Noem wrote.

"The fact is, South Dakota law states that dogs who attack and kill livestock can be put down," she added. "Given that Cricket had shown aggressive behavior toward people by biting them, I decided what I did."

We'll see if that explanation helps to quell the public indignation. After all, people of all political persuasions are rightly disgusted by cruelty to animals, even if they don't always treat their fellow humans with the respect and dignity they deserve.

Opinion by Dean Obeidallah

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