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ANIMAL SOCIETY

Bite Prevention and Bite Statistics

Bite Statistics

Statistics in the dangerous dog arena are questionable to say the least. In Janis Bradley's book, *Dogs Bite But Balloons and Slippers Are More Dangerous*, she points out the many flaws in the "research" reporting out statistics.

One example is a study in which there is a comparison to an earlier study. The researcher, in the first study, questioned 23,838 households about injuries from dogs that required medical attention in the two weeks preceding the survey. There were six injurious dog bites. These six bites for the 62,052 people were extrapolated to show a national figure of 585,000 bites for the year. In 1994, the later research, in which 8,869 people were interviewed, covering a 12-month period, there were 38 dog bite injuries. This was extrapolated to 756,701 bites. The report claimed a 36% increase. The estimates included bites to 15-17 year olds, even though they were not even included in the survey.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention showed that in 2001-2003, accidents from falls numbered 7,714,167, from dog bites, 304,784. Severity of these dog bite injuries were reported to be 92.4% with no injury, 7.5% minor injury and 0.076% severe injuries.

There are a few statistics to show whether legislation made a difference. One study in Oregon showed a drop in injurious bites among 422 dogs whose owners had restrictions placed on them after the first bite. There was no control group in this study, so there can be nothing learned from it.

In addition, Karen Delise, in her book *Fatal Dog Attacks: The Stories Behind the Statistics*, explains the underlying story behind each dog bite, such as a male intact dog being tethered near a female in heat and an unattended child wandering between them.

Statistics are also flawed as to naming pit bulls as the instigators. It appears that in many cases in which pit-bull-type dogs are blamed for fatal attacks, the dogs were few of the recognized pit bull breeds. Glen Bui, vice president of the American Canine Foundation, using statistics on the American pit bull terrier from the AKC, A.D.B.A. and UKC and for the other breeds, AKC/UK statistics, found:

Numbers registered	No. of Fatal Attacks	Breed Percentage
240,000	12	Chow Chow .705%
800,000	67	German Shepherds .008375%
960,000	70	Rottweiler .00729%
128,000	18	Great Dane .01416 %
114,000	14	Doberman .012288%
72,000	10	St. Bernard .0139%
5,000,000	60	American Pit Bull .0012%

Only registered dogs were included. In this finding, the number of the breed is expressed first, then the number of fatal attacks by the breed and the percentage of dogs in that breed who administered the fatal attack. Even though Mr. Bui does not say that the

statistics are for particular years, it appears that it is in the reportable period in which he could get statistics.

The National Canine Research Foundation reported the following fatal dog attacks in the United States:

2001: 23	2003: 25	2005: 28
2002: 15	2004: 22	

As to pit bull types, the statistics were: In 1995 of 22 fatalities, 9 were pit bull types; in 1996, of 35, 3 were pit bull types; in 1997, of 30, 6 were pit bull types; in 1998, of 15, 5 were pit bull types; in 1999, of 42, 8 were pit bull types. Some of these pit bull types were roaming in packs, some were unsocialized, in some a child was left unattended, and in some the dogs were chained.

In the period of time from 1965 to the present, the most fatal dog attacks occurred in California, 57. There were none reported in North Dakota. There were 55 million dogs in the United States meaning there were .0000004% of dogs in the population who fatally attacked people. In the period from 1999-2002, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention reported that of accidental deaths in the U.S., 43,730 were from cars and 16 were from dog bites.

An example of the use of misinformation, Rep. Paul Wesseloft, Oklahoma, stated, "Each year we lose 10 children and 2 elderly people because of Pit Bull attacks nationally." In 1998, there was one child and no elderly people; in 1999, three children and no elderly people; in 2000, there were four children and two elderly people; in 2001, there were four children and no elderly people; and in 2002, there were 3 children and no elderly people. This should be compared with the number of children and elderly people who are killed because of abuse and neglect at the hands of other people.

There are interesting statistics when considering the Denver situation where there was a dog bite fatality in 1986. Since the BSL legislation was originally enacted in 1989, there have been no dog bite fatalities. Here again, the statistic does not prove that this is a result of the BSL. Portland, Oregon, also had a dog bite fatality in 1986, did not enact BSL, is approximately the same size as Denver, and there have been no dog bite fatalities since that date. Dallas, Texas, also had a dog bite fatality in 1986, did not enact BSL and there have been no dog bite fatalities since that date. Dallas is a much larger city than Denver.

The problem with statistics appears to be that there is no consistency in where the figures are obtained, nor are there variables included in most studies. Some studies use AKC numbers, some use HSUS numbers and others use CDC&P numbers. Few include causes or contributing circumstances to the attacks, nor are the total numbers of dogs in a certain breed taken into consideration. There is no national recording system for non-fatal dog bites in the United States.

There was a study in the United Kingdom concerning whether breed specific legislation works. This study, reported in *Canadian Veterinarian* in 2005, examined the frequency and severity of dog-bite injuries at a Dundee hospital accident and emergency department. The study showed, two years after breed specific legislation and covering a period of three months, that the number of bites was the same. Before the legislation was put into effect there were 99 bites in the three-month period, 3% of which were by pit bull types. In the second study of three months, two years after the ban was implemented, there were 99 dog bites, 5% were by pit bull types.

Another study in the U.K. found that prior to implementation of BSL, German shepherds bit 24% of the time, 18.2% of the bites were from mongrels, and “dangerous breeds” (pit bull terriers, Rottweilers, and Dobermans accounted for 6% of all the dog bites. According to the *Canadian Veterinarian Journal*, “this study also showed that typical family breeds, such as Labradors, collies, Jack Russell terriers, and cocker spaniels, were biting at higher rates than the “dangerous dogs.”

In the above-mentioned journal, there was reported that in the City of Calgary, there were 272 complaints of dog bites in 2003. Of these 17.3% were from German shepherds and their crosses and 5.1% were by pit bulls and their crosses. In 1990, the City of Winnipeg, Manitoba, passed BSL legislation banning pit bulls even though a 1989 study showed that dog bites in the city were 31% from German shepherds and their crosses and only 9% by pit bulls and their crosses.

The American Pit Bull Registry (APBR) notes: “The odds of being struck by lightning are 1 in 600,000 in the USA. Comparatively speaking you are 6 times more likely to be struck by lightning than you are to be killed by a dog of any breed. When you further break down the odds of being attacked and killed by a Pit Bull the odds are in your favor – approximately 1 in 145,000,000.”

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The Truth About Pit Bulls. *Why MUST We Stop Breed Specific Legislation?*
<http://www.thetruthaboutpitbulls.com/StopBSL.htm>.

Dog Bite Prevention

Online Information and Lesson Plans

Best Friends Animal Society – *Free Lesson Plans*

“Safety Around Animals”

<http://www.bestfriends.org/atthesanctuary/humaneeducation/crsafety.cfm>

“Dog Bites – How Much Do You Know?”

<http://www.bestfriends.org/atthesanctuary/humaneeducation/crbitequiz.cfm>

Doggone Safe - *A nonprofit organization dedicated to Dog Bite Prevention*

<http://www.doggonessafe.com/>

Bite Free – *Dog bite safety kit from BC SPCA*

<http://www.sPCA.bc.ca/Educators/ThemeUnits.asp>

Denver Dumb Friends League – *Free Lesson Plans*

“Stay Safe While Respecting Animals”

<http://www.ddfl.org/lesson4/respecting.pdf>

Center Hill School – *A Puppet Script about Dog Bite Prevention*

<http://centerhillschool.tripod.com/dogbiteprevention.wps.pdf>