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Preserving the Human-Canine Bond

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Dog Bite-Related Fatalities

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Multiple, co-occurring factors identified

In December, 2013, *The Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association (JAVMA)* published the most comprehensive multifactorial study of dog bite-related fatalities[1] (DBRFs) to be completed since the subject was first studied in the 1970's. It is based on investigative techniques not previously employed in dog bite or DBRF studies and identified a significant co-occurrence of multiple potentially preventable factors.

The results reported confirm the multifaceted approach to dog bite prevention recommended by virtually all previous studies, as well as by organizations such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Veterinary Medical Association.

The co-occurring factors are potentially preventable

Based on an analysis of all DBRFs known to have occurred over a ten-year period, the researchers identified a striking co-occurrence of multiple, controllable factors:

- no able-bodied person being present to intervene (87.1%);
- the victim having no familiar relationship with the dog(s) (85.2%);
- the dog(s) owner failing to neuter/spay the dog(s) (84.4%);
- a victim's compromised ability, whether based on age or physical condition, to manage their interactions with the dog(s) (77.4%);
- the owner keeping dog(s) as resident dog(s), rather than as family pet(s) (76.2%);
- the owner's prior mismanagement of the dog(s) (37.5%);
- the owner's abuse or neglect of dog(s) (21.1%).

Four or more of these factors were present in 80.5% of the cases.

Family dogs were rarely involved

76.2% of the DBRFs in this study involved dogs that were not kept as family pets; rather they were only resident on the property. The distinction between a resident dog and a family dog[2] was first proposed years ago by NCRC Founder Karen Delise. Dogs are predisposed to form attachments with people, to become dependent on people, and to rely upon their guidance in unfamiliar situations. While it is extremely rare that dogs living as either resident dogs or as

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View Points

Humane Communities are Safe. Safe Communities are Humane. by Cynthia Bathurst

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Reading Suggestions



The Relevance of Breed in Selecting a

family pets ever inflict serious injuries on humans, dogs not afforded the opportunity for regular, positive interaction with people may be more likely, in situations they perceive as stressful or threatening, to behave in ways primarily to protect themselves.

Breed was not one of the factors identified

The authors report that the breed of the dog or dogs could not be reliably identified in more than 80% of cases. News accounts disagreed with each other and/or with animal control reports in a significant number of incidents, casting doubt on the reliability of breed attributions and more generally for using media reports as a primary source of data for scientific studies. In only 45 (18%) of the cases in this study could these researchers make a valid determination that the animal was a member of a distinct, recognized breed. Twenty different breeds, along with two known mixes, were identified in connection with those 45 incidents.

The methods used in this study can lead to better prevention

The trend in prevention of dog bites continues to shift in favor of improved ownership and husbandry practices, better understanding of dog behavior, education of parents and children regarding safety around dogs, and consistent enforcement of dangerous dog/neckless owner ordinances in communities. Having reliably identified the potentially preventable factors that co-occurred in their case file, the authors recommend their coding method as a way of enhancing the quantity and quality of information compiled in investigation of any serious dog bite-related injuries.

This new study and its comprehensive methodology offer an excellent opportunity for policy makers, physicians, journalists, indeed, anyone concerned with the prevention of dog bite-related injuries, to develop an understanding of the multifactorial nature of serious and fatal incidents.



[Click here to read "Potentially preventable husbandry factors co-occur in most dog bite-related fatalities."](#)

Dog bite-related fatalities are extremely rare

Dog bite-related human fatalities have always been exceedingly rare, though they can attract the kind of publicity that creates an impression that they are more prevalent than they actually are. The annual total of such fatalities has risen and fallen with no discernible trend, while the canine population in the U.S. has continued its steady increase. The chart below shows the number for some common and uncommon injury related fatalities for 2010 (2010 is the most recent year which CDC fatalities are available).

Comparison of Injury Fatalities in the United States - 2010	
Unintentional Poisoning Fatalities	33,041
Unintentional Motor Vehicle Fatalities	35,332
Unintentional Fatalities from Falls	26,009
Homicide	16,259
Unintentional Poisoning Fatalities (Motor Vehicle Traffic)	4,383
Unintentional Fatalities from Drowning	3,782
Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities	1,537

About



Companion Dog

Jane Bradley is author of *Dogs Risk: Dangerous and Diligent Dog Shows*. She explores the relevance of breed in selecting a companion dog in the publication.

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US (Responsible Pet Ownership, Breed ID, Dog Legislation, Insurance, Dog Shows, Publications) (Contact Us, Signup)

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Dog Bite-Related Fatalities 33 > HUGE

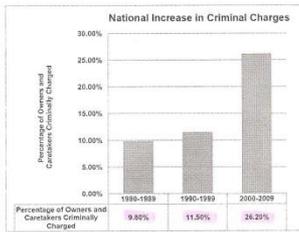
(Source for this graph)

Responsible pet ownership is key to prevention

All dog owners have an unequivocal responsibility for the humane care, including providing a license and permanent id, spaying or neutering their dogs, providing training, socialization, proper diet, and medical care, and not allowing a pet to become a threat or a nuisance.

An increased awareness of these responsibilities may be reflected in the increasing percentage of the investigations that arise from all DBRF's that result in criminal prosecutions of the owners and caregivers (compiled as part of NCRC's exhaustive investigation of each reported case.)

everywhere you read it always says responsible pet owners help prevention



(Source for this graph)

NCRC annual DBRF reports

We strive to understand the circumstances surrounding each case carefully and correctly, in an attempt to increase understanding that can lead to effective prevention.

This careful investigative process takes time, so each report is available approximately twelve months after the end of the year.

2013



#pnrh

2013 Preliminary Report

2012



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