



Coalition for Living Safely with Dogs

Key Findings from a Five-Year Study of Reported Dog Bite Incidents in Colorado July 2007 - June 2012

Based on a joint data collection effort by the Colorado Association of Animal Control Officers (CAACO) and the Coalition for Living Safely with Dogs (CLSD)

Methodology

- Data was collected to:
 - Assist in making informed decisions about dangerous dog legislation
 - Focus community resources and education efforts
 - Support animal management and animal welfare programs
- Data collection effort:
 - Partnership with CAACO for bite data collection
 - Web-based survey instrument developed for use by Animal Control Officers
 - 22 participating agencies serving approximately 80% of the human and dog populations of Colorado
 - 11 agencies reported for all 5 years

The Big Picture

- Any dog can bite, but most dogs (99%) don't.
- 165 breeds were involved in bite incidents.
- Most bites are minor – maulings and fatalities are very rare.
- Most bites are preventable.

Reported Bite Incidents

- 11,484 bite incidents were reported over the 5-year period.
- An average of 2,297(+/-168) bites incidents were reported each year.
- 8,449 bite incidents (74% of the total) were recorded over the 5-year period by the 11 agencies that reported for all 5 years; these agencies serve municipalities that range from 60,000 to 600,000 in population.
- 95% of reported bite incidents involved a single victim

Characteristics of Dogs Involved in Bite Incidents

- Sex – Assuming an equal number of males and females, male dogs were twice as likely as females to bite. About 60% of dogs that bit were male, 30% female, and just under 10% unknown.

- Reproductive Status - It is not possible to comment on the effect of reproductive status on the tendency to bite without a census of the dog population. In incidents where the sex and reproductive status were known, about 51% were sterilized and 30% were intact.
- Age – 47% of bites were by dogs 5 years of age or younger. The dog’s age was unknown in 29% of reported bite incidents.
- Rabies Vaccination – Only 51% of the dogs who bit had current rabies vaccinations even though the majority of reporting entities are in areas with rabies vaccination requirements; 24% were not vaccinated; and 24% had unknown vaccination status.

Breeds Involved in Bite Incidents

- Overall, 165 breeds were involved in reported bite incidents.
- Labrador Retriever was the breed most often identified in bite incidents at 11.3%.
- 22 breeds were involved in 58 mauling incidents: 28% involved Pit Bulls, 14% German Shepherds, and 10% American Bulldogs.
- 93 breeds bit 10 times or more.
- It is not possible to calculate the bite proclivity for any breed without an accurate census of the dog population by breed, which does not exist.

Bite Circumstances and Severity of Injury

- 57% of reported bite incidents happened at home.
- Running at large was the most often reported bite circumstance at 17%.
- 72% of bite injuries were minor (a tooth scratch, bruising, or minor laceration).
- 3% of bite injuries were severe (multiple punctures and lacerations) with less than 1% of all bites classified as maulings (severe bodily injury).
- One fatality, involving a Miniature Schnauzer, was reported.

Characteristics of Bite Victims

- Age - 24% of the victims were 10 years of age or younger.
- Sex - The split between males and females was almost even, with 51% and 48% respectively (1.5% unknown).
- Relationship to Dog - Approximately 33% of victims had no relationship to the dog, while 29% were members of the dog’s household.

Key Take-Aways

- Provide education about living safely with dogs to reduce the number of bites. Education points include:
 - Select the appropriate dog for your lifestyle and environment
 - Socialize your dog with people and other dogs, and provide obedience training
 - Supervise children around dogs
 - Obey leash laws
- Encourage reporting of bites so that behavior of individual dogs/owners can be addressed.
- Maintain robust animal care and control programs.
- Enact ordinances that effectively address bite circumstances and individual dog/owner behavior.