

Australian Institute of Animal Management Position Statement: Reducing dog bites to humans in the community

The Institute believes that all dogs should be managed by their owners to ensure community safety. It is recognised that the benefits that dogs bring to individuals, families and communities far outweigh the risks. The Australian Institute of Animal Management advocates the prevention of dog bites as a community goal. The Institute promotes the idea that Animal Management needs to be more than just good at responding to dog bite incidents - it needs to be good at prevention also.

The Institute encourages all levels of government to implement regulatory and educational systems that effectively reduce the number of serious dog bites occurring in the community.

The Institute advocates consistency (at regional, State and National levels) in the standard operating procedures that are employed in responding to dog bite incidents.

The Institute emphasises the need for an evidence-based approach to the formulation of strategies for reducing dog bites in the Australian community.

Gathering information via investigations is vital to provide the information required to develop strategies. Relying on assumptions and generalisations rather than evidence and data is ineffective and doing the community a disservice.

The Institute encourages focus on the two main issues relating to dog bites beingⁱ:

1. Managing dogs that have already caused an injurious bite, by setting specific requirements for their owners to comply with
2. Preventing future dog bites from happening via information dissemination to the public at large about how to safely interact with and manage dogs.

The Institute has identified the following actions that can immediately be implemented by different levels of Government along these lines:-

1. Standardising State legislation pertaining to injurious dog bites
 - a) Ensuring that Standard Operating Procedures and legal processes are applied to the process of investigating reported serious dog bite incidents. Dog bite investigationⁱⁱ (and in particular, dog bite related fatality investigation) should prioritise:
 - i. Scene investigation and evidence collection
 - ii. Forensic investigation and evidence collection
 - iii. Witness interviews and reports
 - iv. Animal handling and observations
 - v. Behaviour evaluation of dog involved using a qualified and experienced canine behaviour professional
 - vi. If the dog is ultimately euthanised an autopsy must be conducted

Taken from “Dog Bites: A multidisciplinary perspective” – Why does investigation matter? A half hearted approach fails to address core concerns and needs of trainers, owners, the public and the legal system, which at the very least might help us develop an evidence based approach to prevention. Clearly if the dog is dead, it will not reoffend, but the destruction of the dog does not help us understand why the event happened and so prevent similar events with different dogs.

- b) Ensuring that Standard Operating Procedures are used to control dogs who have caused injurious bites to humans.
 - c) Ensuring that all officially recorded dangerous dog designations automatically hold valid across all municipal and state borders in Australia.
2. Organising a National Dangerous Dog Database that draws data using a standard data capture format from every recorded dog bite incident causing injury to humans in all States of Australia.

Taken from “Dog Bites: A multidisciplinary perspective” – Dog bite prevention is considered an important issue for many governments, yet there has been very little research into which preventative measures are effective and, if they are effective, why...Furthermore, the factors influencing bite risk have not been fully elucidated, and the circumstances surrounding dog bite incidents are largely just best guesses from witnesses. Many of the problems with dog bite data are perennial and difficult to address but, if this issue is to be understood properly, data collection should be standardized and of high quality.

- 3. Enabling the statistical analysis of all such data on an annual basis for the identification of trends, benchmarks and best remedial options.
- 4. Improving prevention through a standard range of educational system measures.

ⁱ [Dog Bites: Problems and Solutions – National Canine Research Council](#)

ⁱⁱ [Investigating serious and fatal dog attacks – Jim Crosby – AIAM 2017 Workshops presentation](#)